Witch Cult Translations

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About Us

by admin - Tuesday, August 21, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/about-us/

Welcome to Witch Cult Translations!

If you'd like to find out more about us, then you're at the right place. We formed as a community on Discord in an attempt to bring out more Re:Zero related translations. We work together to try bring out fan translations of the free Re: Zero Web Novel, its side stories and other unlicensed related materials.

Although we work as a team, different translators within WCT focus on different content to translate. Some of work on Arc 5, some on Arc 6, some on side content, some on the manga; the pace of one categories has no effect on the pace of another. Too many translators working on the same set of chapters actually makes TLs more confusing to do; the current system of only a few translators focusing on an area of content leads to the smoothest and most consistent translations.

Here we provide a list of the members of our team:

Our Translators:

- Warlock of Vainglory, Furuta (/u/GracedHarperd)
- Discount Anon, Nanashi (u/Nanashi-tan)
- Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)
- Sin Archbishop of Gluttony, Ringo (/u/Ringo_17)
- Sin Archbishop of Pride, PaperLightning

Our Proofreaders:

- Beatrice's Marvelous Apprentice, Review (/u/ReviewR524)
- Student of Sages, Azeem (/u/Azeem45)
- The Master Thinker, Nobi (/u/Nobidexx)

Our Transcribers:

- Sorcerer of Sorrow, Usterm (/u/usterm)
- Sin Archbishop of Pride, PaperLightning
- Warlock of Vainglory, Furuta (/u/GracedHarperd)
- Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)

Arc 4: Eternal Contract

by admin - Sunday, January 13, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/arc-4/

Arc 4, Eternal Contract, has been fully translated.

Credit for these translations belongs to the Summary Anon, whose only known identity is his email address, ankaa.burner@gmail.com, as well as his Mega Archive. (This site is not affiliated with Summary Anon). As Arc 4 has 130 chapters, Summary Anon divided the Arc into phases, with each phase featuring a certain amount of chapters.

The anime adaptation left off at the end of Arc 3, without having adapted the interludes bridging Arc 3 and Arc 4; if you've just finished the anime, you'll want to start with those, then proceed to Arc 4.

All credit for header art goes to HaruSabin.

Arc III Interludes

- Interlude I - "The Dragon Carriage"
- Interlude II - "Let's Eat"
- Interlude III - "To Each Their Oath"

Phase 1

- Chapter 1: In the Place we Have Returned
- Chapter 2: Jeers and Thanks
- Chapter 3: Reunion and Disagreement
- Chapter 4: The Next Place
- Chapter 5: Team Emilia
- Chapter 6: On The Road to Sanctuary
- Chapter 7: The Test Site
- Chapter 8: A Long-Awaited Reunion
- Chapter 9: The Cemetery
- Chapter 10: Thirst for Knowledge Incarnate
- Chapter 11: Sloth to Wrath by Pride
- Chapter 12: A Souvenir From the Tea Party
- Chapter 13: Roswaal’s Intent
- Chapter 14: Questions and Answers
- Chapter 15: Qualifications and Trails
- Chapter 16: Morning in the Natsuki Household
- Chapter 17: Love Story

- Chapter 18: Kin
- Chapter 19: Homework
- Chapter 20: Test Results
- Chapter 21: With Resolve Renewed
- Chapter 22: Weakness
- Chapter 23: Step of the Way

Phase 2

- Chapter 24: He waited
- Chapter 25: Forest of Ice
- Chapter 26: Packing of Shit
- Chapter 27: Whispers
- Chapter 28: Talk Over Tea
- Chapter 29: Omnivore Male
- Chapter 30: Unease on the Road Home
- Chapter 31: Maid Maid Maid
- Chapter 32: 1/4
- Chapter 33: A Pathway Escaped of Wind
- Chapter 34: World Ending
- Chapter 35: The Girl’s Gospel
- Chapter 36: At The End of Confusion
- Chapter 37: First Urge to Murder
- Chapter 38: Caterpillar
- Chapter 39: Fhrend
- Chapter 40: Collaborator
- Chapter 41: Tiger
- Chapter 42: Value of a Life
- Chapter 43: And Then Everyone Was-
- Chapter 44: Verboten
- Chapter 45: Condition For the Tea Party
- Chapter 46: Locusts
- Chapter 47: Partner of Poor Affinity
- Chapter 48: Compensation For the Tea Party
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- Chapter 57: The Immortal Experiment
- Chapter 58: Nanna
- Chapter 59: Sweet Pastry, Sweetless Story
- Chapter 60: Tale of the End of the End
- Chapter 61: Scream From Four Hundred Years Past
- Chapter 62: Slaughter at Roswaal Mansion
- Chapter 63: Empathetic Death
- Chapter 64: World Crumbling
- Chapter 65: Passion in the Snow
- Chapter 66: Crimson Snowscape
- Chapter 67: Warlock
- Chapter 68: Taste of Death
- Chapter 69: liar
- Chapter 70: What Comes After Hell
- Chapter 71: Ending List
- Intermission: Tea Party
- Chapter 72: Bad End 1, 5, 11
- Chapter 73: Weakness' Hideaway
- Chapter 74: Witch Cult's Plot and Proposal
- Chapter 75: They
- Chapter 76: ? Satella
- Chapter 77: A Lonely…
- Chapter 78: These Sounds of Shed Tears
- Chapter 79: End of the Dream

Phase 4

- Chapter 80: Rough Tongue
- Chapter 81: Glimmer of Hope
- Chapter 82: A Con-versation
- Chapter 83: Mutual Confessions
- Chapter 84: Denied x Denied x Denied
- Chapter 85: Using Words, Using Feelings, Using Fists
- Chapter 86: With Disregard to Chances of Success
- Chapter 87: Oni Out, Clowns In
- Chapter 88: Garfiel's Intentions
- Chapter 89: Memories of Snow
- Chapter 90: –I'm Sorry
- Chapter 91: False Sleep
- Chapter 92: A Lie
- Chapter 93: Mutual Proposals
- Chapter 94: Left Behind
- Chapter 95: sigma
- Chapter 96: Red Drawn at the Lips
- Chapter 97: Before the Dawn

Phase 5

- Chapter 98: A Bed Lost of Warmth
- Chapter 99: Alone in a Confined Space
- Chapter 100: Memories Buried in Dust
- Chapter 101: Theta Chapter 1
- Chapter 102: Recollections Absent in Memory
- Chapter 103: Start of Sanctuary, Start of Destruction
- Chapter 104: Theta Chapter 2
- Chapter 105: The Merchant’s Trap
- Chapter 106: Otto Suwen
- Chapter 107: With the Final Trap,
- Chapter 108: A Man of Only Good Timing
- Chapter 109: Misstep
- Chapter 110: Reason to Believe
- Chapter 111: Garfiel’s Barrier
- Chapter 112: The Instinct to Reject Weakness
- Chapter 113: Jewels never Come From The Solitary Quene
- Chapter 114: Lies into Wishes
- Chapter 115: You Are Never A Match For The Girl From Your Youth
- Chapter 116: With Grandmother, With Mother, With Sister; As Grandson, As Son, AS
- Brother
- Chapter 117: Love Letters

Phase 6

- Chapter 118: The Day Alpha Orionis Smiled
- Chapter 119: Back Then, Even Now, Love Unchanging
- Chapter 120: Elior Forest, Glaciated Evermore
- Chapter 121: Help Him
- Chapter 122: Booming Reunion
- Chapter 123A: Guthunder vs The Shield of Sanctuary
- Chapter 123B: Happiness Reflected on the Water
- Chapter 124: Listen Up, Stupid
- Chapter 125: The Roswaal Mansion Battle
- Chapter 126: Attack of Guililaw, Ebony King of the Woodlands!
- Chapter 127: The Final Day of Roswaal Mansion
- Chapter 128: Love You to Your Blood and Guts
- Chapter 129: -Choose Me
- Chapter 124B: You Reflected in the Mirror
- Chapter 125B: Starting as Revenge
- Chapter 126B: We’ll Next Meet at a Tea Party
- Chapter 127B: Never Quit
- Chapter 130: Faces in the Snow
- Interlude: Each Gives Concession

- Interlude: Emilia Faction • Warlock • Spirit • Spiritualist
- Appendix: Advent

Arc IV Interludes

Following Arc 4 is a series of interludes known collectively as One Day II, which take place between Arc 4 and Arc 5 (One Day I was the series of interludes between Arc 2 and Arc 3, the stories there are linked on our Side Content document).

- Chapter 1: The Relationship of These Sisters
- Chapter 2: Young Souls and Watcher
- Chapter 3: Pretty Girl, Pretty Lady, Pretty Granny
- Chapter 4: Birth of the Emilia Faction Internal Affairs Minister
- Chapter 5: Annerose's Trap & Brother-Sister Relations
- Chapter 6: Just One More Left
- Final Chapter: A Nonsense Dance, Under the Moonlight

Arc 5 - Chapter 1, "It Always Starts With a Visitor"

by admin - Wednesday, November 28, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/28/arc-5-chapter-1-it-always-starts-with-a-visitor/

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

All rights belong to Tappei Nagatsuki, the original author of the Re:Zero series. This is an English translation of the free web novel which is available at:

http://ncode.syosetu.com/N2267BE/216

This is not a professional translation. Some mistakes, both grammatical and logical, are inevitable. Also, be advised that translators have a predisposition for personal preference and the names and terminology may differ at times from what was used in the anime or is used in the fandom at large. Think of these documents as an extremely detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

Credit for the first five chapters document belongs to Summary Anon, who left behind only the following contact information:

ankaa.burner@gmail.com

Credit for the rest is to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

—He breaks into a sprint, launching himself forward.

Air breezes over the sweat that drips from his brow to his eyes. He blinks it away, ignoring it. His lungs ache with every breath. His innards twist into knots.

He grits his teeth and dispels all his pain. The only thing left in his mind is the world 'goal'.

"—!"

Someone is yelling far in the distance. Their voice draws ever nearer, closing in on Subaru as he runs. With their call as his landmark, as his beacon, he sprints onward, onward—.

"—!"

The frantic voice draws him in. Heedless of the white light swamping his vision, he runs. And,

???:"Goal, in fact!"

The second he crosses the finish line clumsily drawn underfoot, the sky and the earth swap places. Small weeds poke into the crown of his head, and Subaru instantly puts his hand to the ground for a forward roll. The habitual action kills his momentum, and with two more unneeded rolls, he lands sprawled out on the ground.

Subaru: "Bhaahhh! Auhhg! Everything hurts! Everything stings! But it's over! I did it!"

Breathing breath after ragged breath, he still finds it in him to shout. He complains as he does to invigorate his faltering heart. He mustn't feel that his fatigue is simply wear, or that his effort is simply exertion. He must remember that this is not the end, and there is still more to come. Every time he tries to dictate where the finish line is, to give himself that satisfaction, Subaru puts his hand to his chest and thinks of that night.

???: "Good job, Subaru, I suppose."

A small silhouette enters Subaru's view from above. A loveable girl with long, cream hair and an extravagant outfit—Beatrice.

Her fluttering dress looks out of place in the meadow as she presents Subaru with a towel. He accepts it and vigorously towels his head dry.

Subaru: "Ah, thanks. Was looking to cool down so this's perfect."

Beatrice: "I'll tell you that Petra cooled it before you go pinning this on me, in fact. Go thank her and she'll jump for joy, I suppose."

Subaru: "Petra's really considerate that way. But man, weird to see you out here, Beako. Something putting you in a different mood than usual?"

Subaru swings his arms as he sits up and slides over to Beatrice. She puts her hand to her hip, averting her gaze.

Beatrice: "Just whimsy, in fact."

Subaru: "Oh wow so it was whimsy huh."

Beatrice: "...And I wanted to personally see what you're like when you're putting in your best, I suppose."

While keeping her gaze averted, Beatrice easily unveils her hidden intentions. She's so much more honest now. Subaru feels keenly that time has earned him her trust. Beatrice looks like she wants to say something to Subaru as he grins, but,

Beatrice: "Now, this must involve more than just gallivanting about, in fact. What comes next, I suppose?"

Subaru: "I'll have you know this gallivanting is pretty taxing on its own, mademoiselle. While I cannot say whether I'll meet your expectations, I'm tackling the obstacle course of dreams next."

Beatrice: "...Ah, right, in fact. You mean the playground that Garfiel built in the forest, I suppose. 'Obstackle...?'"

Subaru: "Obstacle course. You don't have to force yourself to memorize it. Just ignore it."

Beatrice: "But Subaru, I want to understand every word you say, in fact."

The smooth line makes Subaru's cheeks relax even further. Beatrice looks puzzled by his reaction, before she realises what she just said and her expression instantly shifts. Her cheeks are adorably pink as berries.

Beatrice: "N-no, I didn't mean it like th... it just came out that way, I suppose."

Subaru: "Nonono, no worries, I know exactly what you meant. Everything's cool, I love you too."

Beatrice: "You know exactly nothing, in fact!"

Subaru chuckles as he jumps to his feet and scoops a sour-faced Beatrice into his arms. She looks displeased in his hold, but makes no complaints about being carried.

Beatrice: "Subaru, you reek of sweat, I suppose."

Subaru: "Breathe with your mouth then. Or just drain the mana directly."

Beatrice: "I'll sap you dry if that's what you're asking, in fact."

Subaru: "You're gonna be the one crying after that."

Beatrice: "A-as if, I suppose! Cease your nonsense, in fact!"

With Beatrice in his arms, Subaru breaks into a run. His breathing returns to normal during their banter. Beatrice makes a perfect weight for running from the track in the field to the obstacle course in the forest. Since she's far lighter than she looks. Basically a feather.

Subaru soars with her in hand, so light he may have grown wings.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Their new mansion is surrounded in just as much green as the old one. Shrubs grow in abundance throughout the verdant mountains. Subaru feels the cool breeze wash over his bangs as he launches into a run.

Subaru: "Okay! All! Right!"

The forest is so lush that it drowns everything visible in green. Here, Subaru sprints forward and lightly puts his hand to a sideways log, defeating the obstacle with only a small hop and his momentum. 'Vaulting' proves an effective means of locomotion in places strewn with obstacles, or in urban areas with copious buildings. Parkour champions the technique: a sport that Subaru often watched on television, all while amazed at the superhuman feats of the athletes. He never anticipated once that he would be training himself in this field.

Subaru: "Hup! Hah! Okay!"

The climbing apparatus is the star of this obstacle course that Subaru got Garfiel to construct. One large post composes the central pillar, while logs are assembled together in the space around it. It is essentially a classical jungle gym but with a slight avant-garde flair.

The thing looks a mess to climb even while taking it slowly. Subaru leaps onto it with all the momentum from his sprint, using the slight contact his fingers and toes purchase to shoot himself upwards, as if scaling a vertical wall. He races quicker than the eye can catch all to the top of the jungle gym. But there still more to this stunt, and more purpose to the gym.

Subaru: "Hup! Hup! Hup!"

Subaru reaches the slight footing at the peak before hopping to the uppermost point of the structure. He gazes down. Drop looks about six meters. Obviously, nothing is laid upon the wild, mossy ground. While the earth could have been soft once, it is now well-trodden and hard. Meaning the terrifying fall is definitely going to hurt. However,

Subaru: "—Hah!"

Without any hesitation, Subaru leaps down to the hard earth. Entirely undefended as he is, this jump may appear the worst of his usual recklessness. But Subaru unhesitatingly stretches out his legs and contacts the ground. Suffering the pain of the impact, he writhes in hideous agony—or not.

Subaru "—"

Subaru bends his legs and ducks to dissolve the impact, breaking into a forward roll to further avoid damage. One more roll, and another onto his hands and knees, before he darts to his feet, sustaining no injury at all. He merely brushes himself off, wiping the dirt from his track suit.

This is another parkour stunt: the land and roll. The stunt involves a landing combined with a roll to disperse the impact. It allows one to safely fall from moderate heights. While it's no big deal for superhumans, it is a question of life or death for ordinary human Subaru. Just practicing this technique should be broadening his horizons for what he can do.

Subaru: "So that's basically it. That improve your opinion of me?"

Subaru spreads his arms wide and looks to Beatrice, who watched the whole thing. Beatrice sits calmly on the stump for spectators, her eyes widening.

Beatrice: "Honestly, I am a little surprised, in fact. It did improve my opinion somewhat, I suppose."

Subaru: "You're back in love with me?"

Beatrice: "Subaru, recently, I've been having trouble deducing what you're trying to make me say, in fact!"

Subaru: "I only want to know you love me."

Beatrice's attitude already demonstrates it more than enough. Subaru gives the red-faced, indignant Beatrice a smile before glancing behind him.

As shown by that spot of parkour, part of the forest has been repurposed into an obstacle course for Subaru. No one's going to complain about it, since it's on Roswaal's land. But Subaru has to keep his honest urge to send Garfiel occupationally into construction, having seen how easily he cleared the timber and built this, to himself.

Garfiel is surprisingly nimble-fingered and attuned to detail. Perhaps his young, reckless talent will bloom in more fields in the future.

Subaru: "Anyway, guess we're calling it here for today."

Beatrice: "Huwah, I suppose."

Subaru catches the towel that Beatrice throws to him, and wipes off his sweat as he did in the field. Then he stretches his legs, waist, so on. The old world already drove the importance of limbering up into him, but now that he's seriously exercising his body, he truly does feel the effects.

He can't do the splits, but he has grown more flexible. He puts his foot to a nearby tree-trunk and stretches his body out. When he seats himself and spreads his legs, Beatrice walks over behind him and presses him down, letting him fall forward.

Subaru: "Done stretching. Alrighty, let's get ourselves back to the mansion and blob out."

Beatrice: "Indeed, in fact."

That comment would've earned him an insult before, but Beatrice accepts it without argument. She is both accustomed to how Subaru handles her, and to responding to it. Beatrice reaches out for him. Subaru accepts, and hand-in-hand, they exit the forest.

Subaru: "Beako, are you holding back on the mana drain? It feels like you're taking less than usual."

Beatrice: "I'm at least considerate enough to take care when you're exhausted, I suppose."

Subaru: "My my, how incredibly your opinion's changed in just these two short hours. But we don't want you to suffer from this, go back to the usual."

Subaru smiles wryly at Beatrice as he lifts their linked hands. She glances aside at him and sighs. Instantly, the usual sensation hits. Beatrice is directly entering the interior of Subaru's closed gate. This is the backdoor dedicated to extracting mana from Subaru, without passing through the gateway. Only she can use this backdoor, and it is Subaru's lifeline.

Subaru's abused gate has completely stopped functioning. But the loss of his gate does not stop his od from generating slight amounts of mana. Actually it is proceeding to generate more and more mana despite the lack of an outlet. If left like this, the mana inside Subaru will frenzy, and he'll pop like an overinflated frog—is how he understands it.

But leaving aside whether he'll actually explode, Beatrice tells him it's dangerous. Since the mana exchange required to preserve their contract simultaneously resolves the issue, Subaru and Beatrice absolutely must have physical contact at least once daily. Subaru is constantly stockpiling tiny loads of mana, and Beatrice needs mana to function. Both in terms of personality and constitution, their compatibility is excellent. Although,

Subaru: "If you could mana drain people outside your contractor, we could easily keep you in mega loli mode."

Beatrice: "Don't you go mulling over that, I suppose. I thought we came to an agreement about that ages ago, in fact. And you are amassing mana, even if it is in small amounts, I suppose. Even if it is tinier than a sparrow's teardrops."

Beatrice has an idiosyncrasy where she only mana drains her contractor. She had been constantly and randomly draining mana from people in Roswaal's mansion before, but apparently that involved using the Forbidden Archive as a mediator.

Beatrice: "The Forbidden Archive was arranged to mediate my mana intake, draining it from entities inside the mansion, in fact."

Was Beatrice's explanation. So the plan to drain mana from Garfiel, who looks to abound in the stuff, or from Emilia, initially struggling with her vast pool of it, is a wash. It's like someone's silently telling him: of course it wouldn't work out that perfectly.

But, while it disappointed him at first, he's glad for it now. Touching Beatrice is now a ritual representing more than just their relationship, and he likes feeling the truth of their connection. The relationship between Subaru the spiritualist and Beatrice the spirit differs somewhat from those of normal spiritualists. They need to recognize how their partnership represents them, by doing things like this.

Beatrice: "I'm done, in fact. This is enough to fill me for today, I suppose."

Subaru: "Oh, kay, haauh... nothing, to it... haa... haa..."

Beatrice: "I've already decided not to comment when it comes to your bravado, in fact."

Done with their daily ritual, Beatrice gazes flatly at Subaru. They step off the forest trail and onto paved ground, proving that they're close to the mansion. The path resembles the one from Arlam Village times, but now that it crosses through the nearby town of Costuul, it all fells far less remote.

Beatrice: "If I were going to pick, I'd say I preferred the quiet forest, I suppose."

Subaru: "I think noisy towns and quiet forests both have their appeal. I wouldn't pick one over the other. But since the Capital's the only big city I've seen yet, Costuul feels pretty novel."

Beatrice: "Hrmpf, in fact. Subaru, your ideas are mismatched with Betty's, I suppose." Beatrice pouts in clear dissatisfaction.

Subaru pulls her onward, chiding her with a "yeah yeah" as he heads towards the path to the mansion. When,

???: "—Subaru-sama! Beatrice-chan!"

Someone shouts their names, and the two of them look up. They find a girl running towards them from the road to the mansion. Her face and voice are familiar, and her adorable expression brightens upon sighting Subaru and Beatrice. Her auburn, shoulder-length hair flutters in the wind. The catlike roundness of her eyes give her expressive face even more charm. Anyone would catch themselves smiling at her friendly, lovable attitude.

A sweet wildflower, out of anyone's reach. That would be a good descriptor for Petra Leyte.

Petra: "I was just leaving to go fetch you two. Thank goodness we didn't miss each other."

Says Petra after running up to them, out of breath with her hand to her chest. Subaru gives Petra, who had grown to his chest, a pat on the head in response.

Subaru: "What's the rush? We weren't gonna escape. Did you just get those baked tarts at the perfect temperature for us or something?"

Beatrice: "Then it's sensible that she would make haste, in fact. Since it's incredibly important, I suppose."

Petra: "No! That's so not it! You guys are being jerks!"

Petra puffs out her cheeks as Beatrice nods solemnly, and goes to remove Subaru's hand from her head. But once her hands clasp his own, she stops. She keeps that hold on Subaru's hand, cheeks flushed red as she continues,

Petra: "Leaving the tarts aside for the moment, it's something else. The mansion has received a guest. Emilia-sama said to go and fetch you, and..."

Subaru: "Wait, Petra. Just stop there. I'm getting a terrible feeling about this."

Petra: "Huh?"

Clearly wary, Subaru cuts Petra off. She looks surprised at this, but Beatrice doesn't. Well yeah. Beatrice has witnessed the same things that Subaru has, considering they've been together ever since moving to the new mansion. Quite a few things have happened between now and the day they left SANCTUARY.

Subaru: "And the conversation pattern goes exactly the same. When you show up to fetch me, or Frederica does, or sometimes Otto or Garfiel do, it always means trouble. I've learned that much."

Beatrice: "A guest suddenly appears while Subaru is out... indeed, this absolutely is the pahttern bespeaking misfortune, I suppose."

Petra: "B-Beatrice-chan, you're using words that Subaru-sama does...! Subaru-sama, stop teaching her weird things!"

Subaru: "The mansion's consensus is that Beako gets to do what she wants. But anyway, the guest. Petra, me and Beatrice are absent due to stomach-ache."

Petra: "No! You! Don't! Emilia-sama will be furious! And I have no reason to disobey her. Come on, this way!"

Petra used to be such a Subaru adherent, but living here has led her to oppose him when needed.

Her hands grab Subaru's arm and she pulls him along, putting in her greatest effort to drag him away. As she does, Subaru glances to Beatrice, her hand in his.

Subaru: "Beako."

Beatrice: "Enjoy your day, in fact."

Subaru: "You're coming too!"

Beatrice: "Ghhah, I suppose!"

It starts as a plea for help, and instantly transforms into embroilment. Beatrice quickly attempts to shake him off, but Subaru keeps a tight grip on her left hand. And her right hand is restrained by Petra, leaving her doubly without an escape. With Subaru refusing Beatrice's escape, and Petra refusing Subaru's escape, the trio venture along in their nonsense arrangement to the mansion.

Subaru: "I know it's too late to kick the visitor out... but that just makes me wish we'd been told sooner."

Petra: "You mean, to have a messenger on messengers? But then we won't know far we need to go out to anticipate them beforehand. That much is clear."

Subaru: "I'm just saying it'd be nice for everyone's mental health and relations if we did something about that. Anyway, do you know who today's visitor is, Petra?"

The one receiving the guest is going to be Petra, Frederica, or Ram. One of the three. Since Petra is out here fetching Subaru, one of the other two will be dealing with the guest.

Petra: "Umm, well, not really..."

Subaru: "You don't know? Maybe you didn't see their crest, but you'd have to've seen the messenger. And even if you didn't I'm sure they would've told you something when they told you to fetch us..."

Petra: "They were in an incredible rush, saying that the guest was extremely important. But they didn't look important."

Subaru: "You can't judge much off of people's appearances. Sometimes you get little girls with powerful drills who also command dark powers. Though they may seem a mere dress-wearing loli, in truth they preside over—"

Beatrice: "Shut it, I suppose!"

Beatrice is the one calling off the jokes, leaving Subaru silent. Petra looks at the silenced Subaru, still worried.

Petra: "I don't judge people based on their appearances anymore either."

Subaru: "That's good, Petra. Dunno what happened to change it but it was important you did."

Petra: "I thought the new nasty-eyed choresman who came to the village was a weirdo... but he really wasn't."

Subaru: "It boomeranged!"

Stricken somewhere that he didn't expect, Subaru tilts his head at Petra. Never mind her first impressions of him, the stuff she mentioned earlier is important. Petra doesn't judge people by their appearance, but she still thought this visitor was odd.

Subaru: "So what're they like?"

Petra: "I guess... a kitty?"

Subaru: "A kitty?"

The image of a grey cat spirit, long tail wagging, comes to mind at the word 'kitty'. Subaru's feelings for him are complex, and there are things they must talk about upon his eventual return.

Subaru: "Gotta ask him for his daughter."

Beatrice: "I thought of Bubby too, but Petra's surely seen him before, I suppose. So it can't be him, in fact. Petra, what kind of kitty was it, I suppose?"

Petra: "It's so cute that you're calling them a kitty too, Beatrice-chan."

Beatrice: "Pet! Ra!"

Says Beatrice indignantly to a teasing Petra. Petra gives an easy, "Sorry, sorry," and looks up in thought.

Petra: "I guess they weren't really a kitty. I haven't really seen one before, but I suppose they were a catfolk demihuman. I always think of Big Bro Garfiel when I think of demihumans though."

Subaru: "Garf's mixed race, and he doesn't have any blatantly obvious demihuman traits. Best you can manage on closer inspection is how intense his eyes are."

And I guess you could mention his sharp canines. According to Garfiel, his canines will always keep growing, much like a rodent's incisors, and he needs to chew on hard objects to maintain their length and sharpness. It's not uncommon for Ram or Frederica to flip out at him after catching him chewing on the mansion's banisters.

Subaru: "So a demihuman who looks demihuman has arrived. If they're catfolk then they're probably a beastman, and I do know a couple of those."

It's a given in the Capital, but Costuul also has many beastfolk demihumans. A long period of time has dissolved the discrimination against demihumans in the domain of Roswaal the Demihuman Fancier. Making this area a nicer region for demihumans to live in, or so says the local bunny-eared bartender. But Petra, who spends her time working in the mansion and goes to Arlam Village rather than Costuul on her days off, naturally is less familiar with them.

Petra: "I get it. Could you show me around Costuul on my next day off, then?"

Subaru: "Yeah, sure. I'm sure you'll get to go there for shopping and stuff too, and you wanna be making as many friends as you can."

Subaru gives that poorly-thought promise, and Petra pumps her fist. Beatrice only sighs and smiles wryly at Subaru.

Subaru: "Aaaand we're here. Back at our beloved abode."

The gates come into view during their conversation, and Subaru lifts his hands, linked as they are with the girls'. He ignores their protests as the gesture forces them to stretch, correcting his own posture and looking at the mansion.

This is the new mansion replacing the old, burnt one. Its exterior gives the same western feel that the previous did, and is similarly designed. There is space between the front gates and the doorway, with garden lawns flanking the gravel path. On the right side is a fountain, while the left continues into a path

to the side end of the mansion, where carriages are parked, that has stables for earth dragons.

The fountain comes with an installation of colorful flowers, and at a fixed time daily, it sprinkles them with water. One section of the flowerbed holds Subaru and Petra's vegetable garden, letting them harvest fresh vegetables in-season. It's quite well-praised when the crop is bountiful.

The group pass through the front garden and the gravel path, leading them to large double-doors. The knocker shares the shape of the Mathers family crest, using the raptor motif, which indeed makes this feel like the primary estate of the Mathers.

Subaru: "I noticed an unfamiliar carriage over by the stables. Guess it's the visitor's."

Petra: "The carriage is a dragon carriage, but it wasn't being pulled by anything like Patrasche-chan. It wasn't a dragon, it was more like a big dog."

Subaru: "Pulled by a big dog... actually, maybe it's..."

Thinking back on his internal bestiary, Subaru gets a clue of the visitor's identity. But before he can reach a definite answer, the solution ends up finding him. Which is to say,

???: "Oh! Hullo mister, it's been fooooreeeveeer! Have you been well!?"

A stupidly cheerful, high-pitched voice comes hurtling at Subaru, startling him as he opens the door. Petra gives a wry smile, and Beatrice squeezes Subaru's hand slightly. With these reactions in the corner of his eye, he looks ahead at the figure bounding toward him.

They are small. They are shorter than Petra, but a little taller than Beatrice. Meaning that they're a child's height, but this may be as tall as she'll ever get. Her body is covered in short, orange fur, and her alert cat ears are adorable. Her eyes abound with curiosity and her loud mouth is curved mischievously. Her long, orange braid is very feminine, and her perfectly-fit white robe makes her all the more cute.

She's effectively a bipedal kitten, and in some sense, a cat-lover's dream. A catfolk—and one who Subaru knows.

Subaru: "Mimi! It's been ages. You're as full of energy as always!"

Mimi: "Mhm! Yup! I'm super duper full of energy! You get it, mister! And I even grew bigger and now I'm an adult. Hmhmhm!"

Mimi puts her hand to her hip, smirking boastfully as her tail sways to and fro. She just looks like a lively, energetic girl, but actually she is a vice-chair of the beastman mercenary company Iron Fang, with considerable fighting prowess and many other surprises. She once helped Subaru in fighting the White Whale and Petelgeuse, and shares his tendency to be cloyingly friendly and familiar with anyone, which perhaps makes her the best friend he unaffectedly made during the whole affair.

Incidentally Iron Fang is basically the private army of Emilia's political opponent Anastasia Hoshin, so

they are an enemy going by that. But being hostile towards Mimi is entirely tasteless.

Subaru: "Thanks for coming all the way. Right, introductions. This cute maid here is Petra. She's an upcoming almighty maid who works in our mansion. And this blatantly wary loli is Beatrice."

Mimi: "Okey! I got it! The maid who's Petras and your baby! Got it! I won't forget it!"

Beatrice: "I-I feel she's remembering me by hideously improper means, in fact...!"

Beatrice is trembling, hiding behind Subaru's back. It seems she's scared of Mimi and how unforgivingly forward she is. Mimi mercilessly dives into her,

Mimi: "What? You'll never be big like me if you shrink up like that! Come on, get out here, out you get!"

Beatrice: "Wh, no, wa, stop, I suppose! Betty doesn't mind being small, and you're too small to be saying this anyway, in fact!"

Mimi: "Hmhm! Listen to the rooky. I'm huge inside, so my outsides're gonna catch up to me before long! The Boss said so!"

Beatrice: "It's nonsense, I suppose!"

Mimi pulls Beatrice to the front, manhandling her entirely. Beatrice looks to Subaru for rescue, but he enjoys watching her being people-shy while also making friends, and simply watches over her with a fatherly look.

Petra: "Um, Subaru-sama. Beatrice-chan is looking to you in sheer terror."

Subaru: "People mature by battling their weaknesses. Beako is a little too averse to new things, so it's best she start developing that challenger's mentality now. Let us watch her in silence, mom."

Petra: "M-mom... y-yes, let's."

Subaru senses his mistake as he sees Petra blush and fall silent. But correcting it would be a mess so he decides to go with it. He turns his attention to Mimi, dancing circles around the room with a tight grip on Beatrice' hands.

Subaru: "So if you're here, then are the others... are your brothers or Ricardo with you? Also I'd really rather goddamn Julius not show up without booking in first."

Anastasia's Knight, Julius Juukulius, has a very complicated relationship with Subaru. Subaru doubts he can be sincere with him even when seeing him face-to-face. Subaru knows he has some trouble dealing with Anastasia, but she's still preferable to Julius. But Mimi casts aside Subaru's worries with a shake of her head.

Mimi: "Nope. Not Hetaro or Tivey or the Boss or Julius or my Lady are here! It's just me! I'm here all on

my own! Hmhm!"

Subaru: "That's impressive and all, but... what are you here for, then?"

Mimi: "Ummm, uhhh, oh right!"

Mimi tilts her head, before pouncing onto Beatrice. Heedless of Beatrice as she hurries to support her, Mimi gives a sunny smile,

Mimi: "I'm inviting you to a party! My Lady said let's all hang out! So here I am to invite you! I'm super excited! Super! Excited!"

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Arc 5 - Chapter 10, "The Way to the City of Water"

by admin - Wednesday, November 28, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/28/arc-5-chapter-10-the-way-to-the-city-of-water/

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http://ncode.syosetu.com/N2267BE/216

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

- Credit to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

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Negotiations between Emilia and Kiritaka Muse had proceeded unexpectedly smoothly.

Kiritaka, as a businessman, had likely been trying not to show favor to a single royal election candidate. However, Emilia had approached him directly, meaning that this meeting was a rather major event for him.

Of course, Emilia, who was taking casual sips of the complimentary tea, had not been thinking of her actions in such a way. Garfiel, who was growly steadily addicted to the accompanying desserts, had also not been considering the political ramifications of their actions.

It could be said that, in the reception room of Muse Company, the only one who could read Kiritaka was Otto.

Kiritaka: “I understand that you have come a long way. Please excuse me for being unable to meet you at your convenience. Although I understand that it is disrespectful, due to my position, it is unwise for me to travel freely... in addition, I have become quite attached to this place.”

Otto: “Not at all, that’s a very reasonable way to think. We’re the ones who should be sorry for intruding in your busy schedule.”

Kiritaka: “I will treat whatever you need from me with the utmost priority and care.”

While exchanging polite greetings, Otto scrutinized the man facing him. The famed Kiritaka Muse was well known even beyond Pristella. His behavior revealed a majestic and stylish image.

He was still fairly young, probably somewhere between twenty-five and thirty. His tall, thin body was clad in finely made clothes, and his pale golden hair was meticulously combed to the back of his head. His rather uncomfortable looking ornaments showed fine taste, and his introverted and concise nature revealed that he was probably highly educated.

Otto, as Emilia Camp’s Head of Internal Affairs, alongside Roswaal, had unknowingly accumulated a rather impressive amount of experience in negotiations. So he immediately judged Kiritaka’s attitude to be almost unmatchable.

Speaking frankly, Emilia was incredibly fortunate to have Otto with her.

If Otto had let Emilia face Kiritaka alone, she would surely be swayed by his skilled rhetoric, and would have ended up overspending on expensive but ultimately useless things.

From the past year, this was the impression Otto had drawn of Emilia.

Kiritaka: “May I inquire as to what you need from me? According to Anastasia-san’s messenger, what you want is stocked by our company.”

Otto: “It may be too soon to say so. Actually…”

Interrupting Kiritaka, who had begun to address the main topic, Otto looked to Emilia.

Emilia was content to leave the negotiations to Otto. Garfiel, similarly, maintained his usual attitude, eating desserts while fixing a sharp gaze on one corner of the room, staring at a leisurely looking figure who was dressed from head to toe in white.

In Kiritaka’s words, the man in white was present to protect the staff from excessively assertive visitors. ‘Recently, the world has not been in a peaceful state, so I hope that he can join us.’

Otto knew of the man in white.

It was said that Pristella’s Muse Company had a mercenary force known as the Scales of the White Dragon, a group which was well-known even in Lugunica. This man was probably one of its members.

Rumors claimed that their group was one that operated locally, but, a few years ago, they formed close ties with Muse Company. If those rumors were true, then Kiritaka was the one who had formed an allegiance with them.

Otto: “We have a special request. That is, we are looking for a rare type of stone, even by Muse Company’s standards. We are searching for colorless magic ore with outstanding purity. I hope that this

is something we can buy from you.”

Keeping in mind his evaluation that Kiritaka was not someone he could afford to be careless around, Otto stated his request. Playing around with vague terms would be meaningless. After all, Kiritaka had more than likely seen through the true reason for their visit as soon as it had been prepared.

And Kiritaka also understood that he could not refuse a direct request from Emilia.

Kiritaka: “I see. We do indeed stock magic ore… and we do indeed have some magic ore with a higher grade of quality than those stocked by regular merchants. Emilia-sama, no matter how much colorless ore you want, we are also willing to prepare…”

Otto: “Kiritaka-san. Please be straightforward with us. We have made our request; colorless magic ore of the highest purity. That is all we need.”

Kiritaka: “...this is rather discourteous.”

Kiritaka was not simply lacking in straightforwardness. He was merely using a negotiation technique. Despite perfectly understanding Otto’s intentions, he casually dropped the names of other goods that he believed would appeal to Emilia. To him, the goods had been marked as sold long before the negotiation had even started. The only remaining question was the matter of the price.

Otto: “We are indeed requesting something that may be troublesome for you, so to satisfy the price, we have prepared something that you will find beneficial. Mining rights to magic ore in Elior Forest, part of the Mathers territory which is supporting Emilia-sama.”

Kiritaka: “Please do not turn this into the kind of fraud that muddles prices. We are the only formal company that trades raw magical ore, so we cannot consider this proposal. In our line of work, credit is everything to us. I’m sure you would understand, Otto-sama?”

Otto gave a silent sigh. It seemed that Kiritaka knew of his origins.

The Suwen family’s business was nowhere nearly as famous as the Muse family’s, but it was hardly unknown. The main players supporting each of the candidates were sure to be heavily investigated along with the candidates themselves.

That said, many questions were left unanswered by these investigations, such as Emilia’s own origins. Her mysterious background did not win her too many favors.

Garfiel had lived in Sanctuary his whole life, and Emilia had spent a century frozen in Elior Forest. Both the Lolimancer and his contract spirit were of unknown origin.
Thus, Otto, whose identity had easily been discovered, would certainly have it used against him frequently.

Kiritaka: “Otto-sama? Your complexion seems to have changed. Are you okay?”

Otto: “Of course, please don’t worry about me. I just thought of something disconcerting and it made me a little uncomfortable, that’s all.”

Shaking his head at Kiritaka’s words, Otto decided to save that unproductive line of thought for later. Once again, he urged that Kiritaka provide a straight answer to his question. Kiritaka took on a meditative attitude.
Kiritaka: “Of course, we won’t refuse to let go of our commodities no matter how much you plead, and of course we are going to follow Emilia-sama’s request.”

Otto: “Then…”

Kiritaka: “However, the magical ore you are requesting is special. In truth, on the occasion when I was first sent to Muse Company in Pristella, the president—that is, my father—gave it to me as a gift. Rather than treating it as a commodity, I prefer to think of its sentimental value.”

Otto: “——”

Regardless of whether the story was true or false, Kiritaka had made a cunning move. Hearing Kiritaka’s words, Otto bit his lip.

As Kiritaka had said, the extremely rare magic ore they were requesting was more than a mere trading commodity. Taking into account the magnitude of Muse Company’s transactions, this was too good of an opportunity not to seek an extra profit.
So how could the additional value be compensated? Not with commodities, but with sentiment. Since the ore was important that meant it needed to be exchanged for something important.

Emilia: “I see… I didn’t realize it was something so important to you.”

Emilia’s expression reflected that Kiritaka’s story seemed to have touched her deeply. Otto could only conclude that Kiritaka wasn’t cut out to be an actor, considering how guilty he looked.

It takes both action and effort to get your desired result. Otto thought this to himself as he cleared his throat.

Otto: “I appreciate your kindness. Even so, we still hope to find what we came here for.”

Kiritaka: “I understand. I am a merchant who sells magical ore, and I know that it is better to have it shine in the hands of someone who needs it than to have it sit as a decoration at my home. I am willing to give it to you. There are only a few conditions.”

Otto: “—Conditions. Let me hear them.”

Having established that there would be an additional price tag, Kiritaka commenced the real negotiation. After Otto agreed to hear them, Kiritaka held up three fingers.

What unreasonable conditions would there be? Even thinking about them gave Otto a light stomach pain.

Kiritaka: “First of all. Muse Company knew that Emilia-sama was seeking this very magical stone. However, in order to keep it out of the hands of malicious people, we have hidden our possession of it. I hope you understand this.”

Otto: “...that is only natural. That you tell us this without attempting to hide anything removes all of my suspicion.”

At first, Kiritaka had denied any past knowledge of the affairs of Emilia Camp. But in order to bring this deal to a successful conclusion, he gave up this knowledge.

Kiritaka: “Then the second one. After the deal has been signed on the line, I want to inform Hoshin Company of our transaction and confirm its legitimacy.”

Otto: “I understand... that is no problem.”

It seemed there was also a deal between Muse Company and Hoshin Company. It seemed to be intended to semi-publically reveal that Emilia owed Anastasia a debt.

Although it was slightly uncomfortable, it was a legitimate request, so Otto could not refuse.

So far, none of the requests would be considered deal-breakers. So, the third request—as soon as he said it, Kiritaka’s true intentions would become clear.

Otto held back a sigh as Kiritaka waved the third finger in front of him.

Kiritaka: “Third. —Avoid all contact with the Songstress named Liliana who is currently residing in this city.”

Otto: “—Huh?”

Hearing a name suddenly appear of nowhere, Otto froze.

Of course, Emilia and Garfiel, who were accompanying him, had the same reaction—no, nevermind, those two had remained unchanged since the negotiations started. Emilia sipped her tea and Garfiel stared at the figure in white. Although they had left all the negotiations to Otto, seeing their blatant lack of participation irked him.

Otto: “I’m sorry, but I think I may have misheard you. Did you just say to avoid contact with the Songstress...?”

Kiritaka: “No, there was no misunderstanding there. These conditions are all we ask. If you have any questions, please ask them, and please consider the deal carefully…”

Otto: “If you don’t mind, can I ask for the reason? At this point, I can’t recall our deal having anything to do with the Songstress.”

Kiritaka: “...it’s not something that necessarily needs to be said. Can you agree to that promise?”

His tone sinking, for the first time Kiritaka exposed his emotional side. Otto, who could not understand the condition, was lost on what to do.

Put simply, the third request passed the horizons of his imagination. Accepting posed no future obstacles to Emilia, although she may regret not being able to meet the Songstress she had discussed with Anastasia, it was hardly important enough to scrap this deal for.
That they had so effortlessly come to an agreement was surprising.

Otto had not dared to expect that negotiations could have gone so smoothly (although Kiritaka could, at this point, still change his mind). Subaru, who’d been lost halfway, would be here soon, and would certainly turn that matter into something troublesome. Before he arrived, Otto wanted to tie the deal up.

Otto: “Emilia-sama, is this alright with you?”

Emilia: “Mm. I’m a little disappointed, but I guess it can’t be helped.”

Having earned a confirmation from Emilia, Otto agreed to the deal. Kiritaka was satisfied to accept this commitment, and the most stressful part of the negotiation came to an end. Now, they could discuss the actual monetary price, and maybe pick up a few small items.

Kiritaka: “There are a few other quality goods that you may be interested in… would you like to see?”

Kiritaka stood to retrieve a wooden chest from a shelf. The chest, having been placed on the table, emitted a glow as it opened, dazzling Otto and Emilia.

Inside of it were all sorts of magical stones, carefully arranged on cushions, the most radiant of which was the colorless, transparent one.

This was the colorless stone that Emilia had been pursuing. Kiritaka: “Would you like to inspect it?”

At Kiritaka’s words, Emilia raised her head.
She nodded, then stretched her nervous fingers toward the stone. But, at that moment,

Garfiel: “Emilia-sama.”

Man in White: “Young Master.”

Simultaneously, the two guards called to their respective master. They turned to look at each other, and then to face their surprised master.

Garfiel: “Ths’a two loud’n annoyin’ somethin’ comin’.”

Man in White: “There seems to be the sound of footsteps coming from downstairs. Allow me to go investigate.”

He strode soundlessly toward the door as Garfiel tensed his body. The sound of the disturbances drew closer, until they seemed to be right in front of the door—

???: “You two are so rude, always arguing like that! Shush! Emilia-tan is inside, doing serious negotiations…”

The voice was an incredibly familiar one. As this thought was shared by three people in the room, the man in white opened the door of the reception room, revealing a familiar scary face. With a petite girl on either side of him, this man, Subaru, was truly worthy of the title of Lolimancer.

Emilia: “—Subaru?”

Hearing Emilia’s call, a pale Subaru finally noticed the presence of everyone else. At that moment, Otto wanted to complain, but he decided to observe everyone else’s reactions first and held back.

And so, Subaru held up his hands and smiled weakly. Subaru: “A-ah... Emilia-tan. What a coincidence.”

Emilia: “A coincidence? Why were you being so loud.... Uh, Kiritaka-san?” Hearing Emilia’s surprise, Otto’s own reaction was also delayed.

Kiritaka reached a hand into the wooden chest of magic stones and glared at Subaru with a gaze bordering on frantic. He clutched a blue pure magical stone, and,

Kiritaka: “Do-, do, do, do, do, DON’T TOUCH MY LILIANA!!”

Accompanying his frantic cry was a thrown magical stone. Without anyone to stop him, the stone arched toward Subaru and knocked his body away in a blue explosion.

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Man in White: “My apologies for that embarrassing spectacle. The Young Master is usually calm, but if matters involve Liliana-san, he quickly flies into a rage… I will try to calm him down, but, for today, let’s end negotiations here.”

After the commotion died down, the the middle-aged man in white acted as the mediator who had to calm down both sides. He bowed his head with an apology.

Kiritaka’s frantic voice could still be heard from the closed door behind him. That scene was unsuitable for outsiders, so the members of Emilia Camp had been ushered out of the room.

Liliana: “Kiritaka-san is really troublesome, even taking away my chance to speak to Emilia-sama and Subaru-sama! Ugh, I’m so annoyed, ugh!”

Liliana’s anger, on the other hand, was also endless. Speaking in an angry huff, she announced that she’d come up with a new song titled The Avant-Garde Master of Life and Death, causing Beatrice to furrow her brow.

Man in White: “Liliana-chan, please forgive the Young Master.”

Liliana: “.....I understand.”

Although it took a long of time to understand, Liliana had finally been talked down. Subaru’s interference had rendered a smooth sailing negotiation utterly fruitless.
Subaru: “In other words, Liliana is a rabid fangirl, and is obsessed with us. Kiritaka knew and wanted to keep us from stealing her. That was the point of the third condition?”

Otto: “And just as I was about to have the deal tied down, Natsuki-san had to come ruin everything. I finally understand now. Does having you around do any good for anyone!?”
Subaru: “I acknowledge that this was my fault, but who would have thought that after getting seasick things would turn out like this… that’s hardly something I had any control over.”

Otto could not hide his dissatisfaction at the result of the negotiations.

Subaru spoke lightly, but he was also hardly satisfied, having taken a blow from Kiritaka’s magical stone, and realizing that negotiations tomorrow would be incredibly difficult based on Kiritaka’s angry tone.

Emilia: “Ora, ora, please don’t be so angry, Otto-kun. Subaru didn’t do this on purpose, these things just happen sometimes.”

Subaru: “That’s right. Keep going, Emilia-tan.”

Emilia: “Subaru, I also have something to say to you. You shouldn’t have been so loud with Liliana-san today. We were the guests there, so we definitely troubled them a lot.”

Subaru: “Yes, I’m sorry.”

Subaru bowed his head in an apology, and Emilia nodded a ‘very good’. Otto gave a helpless sigh as he watched his master’s hopeless attitude.

Otto: “Anyway, today’s negotiations have ended here, so we should be getting back to the Water Plumage Pavilion.... however, I have something to attend to first. So, I’ll meet back with everyone later.”

Subaru: “Something to attend to?”

At his unexpected words, everyone turned to Otto, who gestured in the general direction of Muse Company’s headquarters.

Otto: “We’ve gone out of our way to come to the faraway Pristella, so I’d like to take the time to improve relationships here. Although, as for today, it is only necessary for me to go. There may come a day when Emilia-sama may need to come. If that ever happens, I’ll have to trouble you, Emilia-sama.”

Emilia: “Yeah, I understand. But, why am I not needed today?”

Otto: “If you show up unannounced, they may be unable to sufficiently welcome you. We need to be considerate about where you go.”

Emilia: “Yes. I understand. I’ll keep it in mind.”

After hearing the Emilia’s reply, Otto gave a “Please go home promptly”, as if speaking to a group of children, then disappeared into the depths of 2nd Street. As for Garfiel, although he wanted to accompany Otto, he was rejected with “Please prioritize Emilia-sama”.

Emilia: “So, Subaru, what were you talking about with Liliana-san?”

Subaru: “Oh? Is Emilia-tan concerned about me talking to other girls? I wonder. I’m glad to see this subtle change.”

Emilia: “No. Don’t worry, I just want to see what kind of a person the Songstress is. It’s okay even if you misunderstand, though.”

Subaru: “Is it better for me to misunderstand, here!?”

Emilia, as always, naturally and mercilessly cut into Subaru’s heart. But, in any case, she gave Subaru a reason to chat with her, so he began to recount his earlier experience.

Subaru: “At first, when we encountered her in the park, I thought her song was super powerful. It was an astounding performance, even as the Songstress. Right, Beako?”

Beatrice: “I won’t deny this point, in fact. I don’t deny it, I suppose. ”

Emilia: “Beatrice looks so distressed, what happened?”

Subaru: “—Talent in one area comes at the price of competence in others. Liliana perfectly showcased the meaning of that.”

Subaru could fully understand Beatrice’s distress. Liliana poured her heart and soul into music, and became a rather pitiful girl.

Subaru: “In short, rather than striving to be an extremely talented person in one area, you should strive to be a mildly successful person all around.”

Garfiel: “Ooh, th’s pretty philsophical, Captain. Sayin’ her singin’d make people think that, mus’ve been amazin’.”

Subaru: “I won’t deny it. Speaking of which, meeting Liliana was worth coming up with that conclusion.”

Everyone decided to return to the inn by foot. If they were to take the waterways again then Subaru would become seasick again which would mean leaving him behind.

Emilia: “Like Otto-kun said, it wasn’t easy for us to come here, so I want to take a walk and appreciate these beautiful streets.”

Rather than having Subaru feel guilty that they were walking for his benefit, Emilia phrased her reasoning as a cute request. Subaru had no complaints, and Garfiel and Beatrice did not object.

Subaru: “If I hadn’t been able to accompany Emilia-tan back to the inn, I would have gone mad with worry.”

Beatrice: “You don’t need to worry, in fact. If we get into trouble then Betty will place her left hand on a wall, I suppose.”

Subaru: “I think I’ve already told you about the defects of that method.”

Garfiel: “Y’two don’t need t’worry, you’ve got my amazin’ self’s nose. Whether’s the smell’f the inn or th’smell’f that midget devil, my amazin’ self remembers it.”

Subaru: “—Heh.”

Noticing that Garfiel used Mimi’s scent as an example, Subaru unconsciously gave a malicious chuckle. The little kitten’s reaction to Garfiel, though surprising and puzzling, was probably nothing other than goodwill. Plus, they were of similar age. Subaru thought they made a rather good match.

Incidentally, Garfiel was still the same, wanting to dedicate himself to Ram. And Ram just regarded Garfiel as a little brother, nothing more.

Subaru: “In any case, Garfiel. You’re my little bro, so as a big brother I’m praying for your success in love.”

Garfiel: “Ahh? Wh’ya j’say some’all touchy-feely, Captain? Well, y’makin’ m’feel sick.”

Subaru wore an expression of ‘I understand’ as he patted Garfiel on the shoulder. Garfiel cocked his head and laughed, exposing his sharp-toothed grin. Subaru hoped from the bottom of his heart that the kind, well-intentioned Garfiel would find happiness.
Emilia: “This is really a nice city. Everything seems so fresh and the people here look so happy. I can’t help but feel excited.”

Their surroundings seemed to delight Emilia, and, seeing her expression, Subaru felt happy as well. She did have a point, though. The architecture in the city must have taken a great effort to design, and everything functional seemed to serve as artwork. The icing on the cake was, of course, Pristella’s beautiful waterways which doubled as transportation.

Subaru: “Although the city was built like this, the origins of the design are unknown.”

Emilia: “Apparently its construction pushed the limits of technology at the time, because it had something to do with keeping dangerous beasts trapped inside the city. But that doesn’t change its beauty, right?”

Emilia stopped at a bridge overlooking the waterway and smiled.

Subaru, overtaken by the mood, nodded as if to declare, “Yeah”.

For whatever reason, Subaru had arrived here, at this point. The results that he’d earned, and the results he was reaching for, as long as they could be reached, nothing else mattered.

Because the most important part of anything was not the beginning, but the end.

Subaru: “That’s what you said, Mom.”

Subaru: “You mean, if the results're good then everything's okay?”

Emilia: “Just now, what did you say?”

Subaru: “I just remembered the magical words that the woman I respect most in the world said to me.”

The days of those memories were long gone, but even so, Subaru had gained so much courage from them.

It would be impossible to forget them, because the lesson he’d learned from them was something that could not be forgotten. Natsuki Subaru, today, lived with those memories inside him.

Seeing Subaru and Emilia’s shared laughter, Garfiel and Beatrice waited on the side.

Those two were occupied in their own world, and no one could interrupt them. Even Beatrice recognized this point.

Beatrice: “He has such a foolish expression on that face of his, in fact.”

Garfiel: “When’s a man share’n sucha good mood w’the woman he like, s’course he’ll act that way. My amazin’ self’s relieved. Looks’f the Captain’s a man.”
Beatrice: “I wonder what that means, I suppose.”

Garfiel: “No, ‘s j’sthat th’Captain surrounds’m self with girls too small’n too many men... Suppose’n he weren’t s’close w’Emilia-sama, sa’misunderstandin’ might happen.”

Beatrice: “Subaru is a masculine man, in fact! He’s both a man and a pervert, I suppose! He’s always willing to randomly touch Betty and Petra, I suppose!”

Garfiel: “Ths’not really nice way’t vouch fer’m, ya?”

The two talked at length about Subaru’s preferences, and about his reputation of touching girls younger than him. Subaru and Emilia, satisfied with their view of the city of water, did not even hear the irrational dialogue taking place behind them.

Emilia: “Well then, it’s about time to go back. Plus, I kinda want to admire the inn again. Its shape was

soooo odd but interesting.”

Subaru: “Wafu-style architecture. I also want to see it again, although for different, less charitable reasons than Emilia-tan.”(Wafu is ???)

Emilia: “Is that so? Haha, then, we should hurry.”

Emilia withdrew her hand from the railing, and took a few steps backward with an an excited smile. Because she was feeling a bit impatient, she didn’t take the time to confirm that there was no one behind her.

Emilia: “Ah”

???: “Whoops.”

She backed right into a man with a hood who had passing them by. She stumbled slightly, and the man reached out to steady her.

Emilia: “I-I’m sorry. I, I wasn’t looking behind me...”

Subaru: “Sorry from me too. This child, she’s so troublesome. I’ll be sure to scold her.”

A flustered Emilia apologized to the man wearing in the hood. Subaru joined her side and bowed his head to the man. He took care not to call Emilia’s name, taking the precaution of keeping people from realizing who she was and causing a commotion in the streets. Of course, the hood that Emilia wore was one that hindered recognition.

So, if they made only slight contact with someone, it wouldn’t develop into a huge problem. This time included.

???: “This time, I was the careless one. After all, I was a little distracted by you.” Subaru: “Distracted?”

???: “The miss that I just bumped into has the silver hair of a beautiful girl, doesn’t she. A girl I once wanted to marry had that same hair. Remembering that hair, I didn’t avoid you in time.”

His remark should have seemed urgent, but his voice sounded rather slow and intoxicated.

Judging from his voice, the man, dressed in a long robe of the man sounded fairly young. Hearing him mention marriage, Subaru froze, and immediately judged him as a man who he didn’t want near Emilia.

Subaru: “Well, we can consider this a fault from both parties. Since we’ve conveyed our apologies, we can both move on now.”

Emilia: “Wait, Subaru. That was a kind of an insincere and apathetic apology…”

Subaru: “That’s fine, no?” Emilia: “——”

Subaru wanted Emilia to leave, and Emilia herself seemed lost for words. Seeing their behavior, the man in the hood slowly shook his head.

???: “I don’t mind. I don’t place any anger or blame on you. If you want to leave, feel free to leave. If we are to meet again, fate will provide us with another opportunity.”

Subaru: “Ahh, that’s very true. Well then, maybe fate will guide us to a future meeting.”

Accepting the man’s poetic farewell, Subaru responded similarly and left with Emilia’s hand in his. Subaru stole a quick glance at her. In that moment, for reasons unknown to him, Emilia wore a meaningful expression as she glanced over her shoulder at the man they’d just left.

Subaru: “Sure, my attitude wasn’t great, but I wanted protect my Emilia-tan and get her away from that strange guy.”

Emilia: “Hm? Ah, right. I genuinely didn’t think Subaru’s attitude was very nice, since it was my mistake, but, that wasn’t what I was thinking about…”

Stopping here, Emilia’s eyes reflected her confusion. However, with a meditative expression and quivering lips, she continued,

Emilia: “That person just now, I feel like I’ve met him before… that’s how I felt, but, since his face was hidden, I couldn’t be sure…”

Subaru: “Someone Emilia-tan knows? Well, I should probably know them as well.”

Emilia: “Mm... but, I don’t know. Who was he?”

Probably because it was still bothering her, Emilia turned around once more. But the figure had disappeared, and she had no idea where he’d gone.

Garfiel: “Yo, Captain. Why’re y’lookin’ s’nervous clingin’ t’Emilia-sama’s hand? Was ya afraid th’someone gonna steal her?”

Seeing Subaru and Emilia emerging from the bridge, Garfiel approached them, and Subaru stuck his tongue out at him.

Subaru: “Idiot, this is no time for games. If there’s some strange guy hanging around, you have to show up to help. If it’s an opponent that I can’t handle then Emilia-tan would be in danger.”

Garfiel: “Suppose’f that happened, then you’d protect’r with ya life. Th’s w’makes th’Captain a man.”

Subaru: “If I acted as a shield then maybe I could take one hit. Then if the enemy kept going, we’d be in trouble. I have no confidence in my endurance. Both physically and mentally.”

Hearing Subaru’s humble evaluation of himself, Garfiel laughed. He doubtlessly believed that Subaru

was just humble, but, to Subaru, it was indeed a proper evaluation. It was perhaps better to say that Garfiel overestimated Subaru.

Garfiel: “No cause’t worry. If my amazin’ self think’s’th some bastard’s tryin’ t’attack ya, they’ll be sent flyin’, s’no doubt about’t. ‘Sides, th’guy did’n move like h’knew how t’fight. Was jus’n regular guy, one’wh did’n know no martial arts.”

Subaru: “You can tell that?”

Garfiel: “Jus’by lookin’. C’n also tell’th Captain likes’t swing swords ’round. My amazin’ self could tell ‘soon as y’moved yer wrists.”

Subaru: “Really? That sounds like some kind of magic trick.”

Subaru had never told Garfiel of his high school experience with kendo. Subaru had already realized that his so called skill would be of no use in this world. But his exercise bore traces, which the knowledgeable practitioners of this world could apparently see.

Subaru: “Having said that, are you still worried, Emilia-tan?”

Subaru put this thoughts to one side and spoke to Emilia, who was still gazing around, before giving up with a shake of her head.

Emilia: “Mm, it’s okay. Sorry to trouble you. Let's go back.”

Subaru: “Well, when we get back, make sure to hug Mimi for a while to make you feel better. Oops, I’ll be hugging you though, Beako, so there’s no need to be worried.”

Beatrice: “Betty hasn’t said anything yet, I suppose!”

Hearing Beatrice’s complaints and Subaru’s proud expression, Emilia laughed. Then, covering her mouth, she replied,

Emilia: “That’s true, holding Mimi does seem to be very comforting. I’ll be sure to do that.”

As Emilia spoke, she checked her surroundings once again, then dropped her uneasy gaze in exchange for a smile.

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???: “—I see. Now I understand the meaning.”

A man spoke into the cuff of his coat, the man in the hood from earlier. Recalling the girl he’d just come in contact with, his mouth curled into a smile, a smile that gave of a miserable feeling.

???: “I went out of my way to come here. If it had been for nothing then I couldn’t let it go as if nothing

had happened. Since this is a special reward, this is another matter.”
The words themselves were mild, but the voice which had announced them was feverishly sticky. It was as though the feeling had been cooked in a sticky pot, and then had been left out under the sun and the moon. The feeling held that kind of unpleasantness.

???: “I will never let go of anything I own, and I want what I own to be perfectly suited for me. Since I am perfect, I have to be continually satisfied. So, feeling a vacancy would, of course, be unsatisfying.”

The man spoke as he raised his head. At that moment, his hood fell, revealing white hair. With the wind swaying his white hair, the slightly unhappy man announced,

???: “I must make her my 79th wife, to satisfy that vacancy.”

In the city of water, the white haired devil spoke in a voice full of derision.

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Arc 5 - Chapter 11, "A Surprising Reunion, A Fated Reunion, and an Unintended Reunion"

by admin - Wednesday, November 28, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/28/arc-5-chapter-11-a-surprising-reunion-a-fated-reunion-and-an-unintended-reunion/

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This is not a professional translation. Some mistakes, both grammatical and logical, are inevitable. Also, be advised that translators have a predisposition for personal preference and the names and terminology may differ at times from what was used in the anime or is used in the fandom at large. Think of these documents as an extremely
detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

- Credit to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

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After the meeting with the strange man in the hood, the journey proceeded with no further incidents. Occasionally, Emilia would glance into the water, deep in thought, but she covered her discomfort with a smile before anyone could question her about it.

The only distinct feature of the man they’d encountered was his hood, but he seemed to have some kind of connection to Emilia. From Emilia’s perspective, his behavior would have been fairly courteous. He may have been a little extreme in describing her hair but, more importantly, Emilia’s silver hair rarely made a good impression like it had on him.

Subaru: “Speaking of which, the recognition hindering cloak…”

Subaru suddenly noticed that the effects of Emilia’s magical cloak, the one she always wore to keep her identity hidden, did not affect the man just now. If the cloak had been operating at its normal effectiveness, the man would only have been able to notice Emilia’s presence. However, he had apparently seen Emilia’s silver hair.

Meaning that the man could resist the cloak's spell.

Subaru: "Beako."

Beatrice: "So you've noticed it, in fact. Emilia and Garfiel haven't and are walking around oblivious, I suppose. Careless children, in fact."

Beatrice, walking by Subaru's side, knew exactly what he was worried about.
As she led Subaru away from Emilia, Subaru brought his hand to his chin and frowned.

Subaru: "I don't think he used any trick, but that guy was just suspicious. The cloak's cognitive obstruction shouldn't be easily resisted."

Beatrice: "So he's either proficient in magic, or he has some blessing ... anyway, he's not just an ordinary man, I suppose. What a bother, in fact."

Subaru: "Should we say something to Emilia?"

Beatrice: "That's not necessary, in fact. If he were acting with malice then Emilia probably would have noticed it, I suppose. We don't need to over scrutinize this, in fact."

Hearing Beatrice's assertion, Subaru replied with a "I see" and accepted it.

Beatrice had spoken what she believed to be correct. Since she often spent time observing humans, and had been paying close attention to Emilia's attitude, Subaru listened to her. There was no need to unnecessarily provoke unease.

Even so, Subaru and Beatrice must at least remain alert.

In this vast city, meeting the man again by chance was unlikely. But there was a chance that he sought to actively contact them, so they needed to be wary.

Garfiel: "Hurry up, Captain. If ya g'slow's Beatrice then'd be sundown by'time we get back." Beatrice: "Stop saying unnecessary things, I suppose. Smelly, annoying creature."

Garfiel turned back at them and was laughing happily in response to Beatrice's rude insults.

Suddenly, his expression changed. His ears moved back and forth, and his nose twitched.

Subaru: "What's wrong?"

Garfiel: "Nah's just, near t'hotel... c'sorta hear'n argument."

They turned the corner as Garfiel finished talking and Subaru also heard the commotion. Indeed, it sounded like someone was furious.

Subaru: “It sounds like it’ll turn into a fight, what a mess.”

Garfiel: “Seen’s th’Captain caused a fuss during th’negotiation, ya really have a right say’s a mess? If I weren’t at th’Chamber of Commerce, y’would’ve been taken by th’guards.”

Subaru: “That’s just my irresistible charm… Emilia-tan?”

Subaru suddenly found Emilia, who had just caught up, running past him and called out to her, but she paid him no attention.

Emilia: “That voice, it sounds really familiar… actually, I think that’s Joshua’s voice.”

Subaru: “Ah, you’re right. That does sound like the voice of that weak bastard.”

Emilia: “I’d be worried if he was in trouble. Let’s go.”

Leaving the less tense Garfiel behind, Subaru raced after Emilia. Turning another corner, he could finally can see the Water Plumage Pavilion, where,

???: “Alright asshole, how many times are you going to make may say this!? Stop being stuck up and call your master here already!”

Joshua: “You’re so barbaric that I wouldn’t even call my brother here, much less my master! Please leave while I’m still capable of speaking calmly!”

???: “Can you really not understand what I’m saying, oi? Let’s go, bastard!”

A young man with purple hair—Joshua stood with his arms spread in front of the hotel, quarrelling with another man. Although he was facing away from Subaru, his physique was clearly quite burly. Judging from his attitude, a brawl with Joshua would be inevitable.

Emilia: “That’s enough!”

In the time it took Subaru to judge the two men’s difference in combat prowess, Emilia had already rushed over and separated them. Having been jerked away, Joshua wore an expression of abject shock.

Joshua: “E-Emilia-sama!?”

Emilia: “I was on my way back from my business when I heard you two. Arguing in front of the inn like this. What’s the reason for your quarrel? Calm down and tell me about it.”

She spoke as if mediating an argument between two children. In that moment things settled down.

—Garfiel sighed disappointedly, as if to say “Aww, no fight?”, as he caught up with them.

Joshua: “Everyone is arriving one after another… my apologies for troubling you.”

Emilia: “It’s no problem. Now, please tell me about your argument.”

Joshua: “How could I trouble Emilia-sama with such a petty thing…”

Joshua stubbornly refused Emilia’s intervention in the matter, as if worried that Emilia would use this opportunity to her advantage. If that was the case, then he was being paranoid. Even in a hundred years, Emilia wouldn’t be able to come up with such a cunning idea.

???: “There ain’t much to what happened. I was sent here, but this guy wouldn’t let me in. So, I was gonna have to fight him.”

In that tense moment, the man arguing with Joshua spoke up. His sharp eyes glared at Joshua with malice, and his voice was dangerous as he complained about his reception.

Joshua: “How many times are you going to make me say it? If you’re going to disguise your identity at least do an appropriate amount of preparation. Even wearing your neat clothing, you can’t hide your true nature. You can only push a lie so far!”

???: “Oh well excuse me! Hey, I don’t like dressing up like this. I’m running someone else’s errand! Ah, fucking understand what I’m saying!”

The man scratched his head, frustrated, as Joshua refused to accept his claims. Even with Emilia’s interference, the two were still stuck of argument.

Emilia: “Really, how can we set things straight like this? Subaru, how should... Subaru?”

The two stubborn men and a confused Emilia all turned to Subaru, who stood with his hand on his chin, frowning thoughtfully. His gaze rested on the man who had been arguing with Joshua.

Emilia: “What's the matter, Subaru?”

Subaru: “No, I might be mistaken… but I think I’ve seen him somewhere before…”

???: “Huh? What, oi. Are you picking a fight with... hk!?”

Hearing the dialogue between the Subaru and Emilia, the man’s sharp gaze turned in their direction. But after seeing Subaru, he immediately stiffened.

His lips trembling, he pointed at Subaru.

???: “Y-You… that time with Reinhard...!”

Subaru: “That time with Reinhard is really specific… ah” ‘That time with Reinhard’ was Subaru’s main clue.

And then Subaru realized who he was. He was more well dressed than before, and his demeanor was

slightly different, but his malicious eyes hadn't changed.

Subaru: "Chin! Chin, right!? Wow, long time no see. Why are you here?"

Chin: "Don't act like we know each other! Who is this 'Chin'!? My name is Larkins!"

Subaru: "So it's Chin after all!"

Larkins: "Shut up!"

Subaru dropped a hand onto Chin's shoulder, and Chin — Larkins, hurriedly shrugged it off. Subaru pouted at his cold attitude.

Emilia: "Do you know him?"

Subaru: "Ah. Well, he's a familiar face that reminds me of when I first met Emilia-tan in an alley. That was when she rescued me from a robbery."

Emilia: "Eh, that's ri... uh, a robbery?"

Subaru: "The next time was when you were called to the King Candidate Conference and I got stuck in an alley with Priscilla and he got his friends to attack us. Yeah, he's a great guy."

Beatrice: "To a lady like Betty he sounds like scum, in fact."

Hearing Subaru's words, Emilia and Beatrice reacted thus. Garfiel, who'd been hanging back, cracked his knuckles loudly, and Joshua's expression became even more serious.
As the situation became more sinister, Larkins's already pale face turned white.

Larkins: "W-Wait, wait. So maybe that did happen a long time ago, but let me explain why I'm here and let's forgive and forget. Yeah?"

Subaru: "Garfiel. What do you think?"

Garfiel: "Th's gonna be no pity from my amazin' self, yeh?" Larkins: "W-Wait, wait a minute! Really, wait! Waaiitt!"

Larkins felt Garfiel's aura and immediately realized that he had no chance of winning. You could say that being able to realize this was a skill that Larkins developed just this past year. He fell onto his knees, begging with his hands over his head, then pointed at the hotel.

Larkins: "It's the truth! I was summoned here… no, my employer was summoned here! But she said that she'd take a few laps around the city first, so I was sent to the inn to notify them. I'm not lying!"

Garfiel: "Ahh, I gotcha, I gotcha.... but hey, why don't y'try explain' more slowly?"

Garfiel's threatening attitude didn't change as he approached Larkins. Although Subaru felt bad for Larkins, he found no reason to think better of him. His dress had improved, but his character hadn't, and so he had no way to make a good impression. It was inevitable that Joshua deny him entry into the hotel. Honestly, Subaru could empathize with him.

Garfiel: "Hey, th's unlucky, bastard. Pickin' th'hotel my amazin' self's at was tough l—hk!"

Garfiel was backing Larkins into a corner with a clenched hand.

However, Garfiel's movements were suddenly interrupted when he immediately swung to face the other direction. His eyes widened for a moment, before narrowing into thin, wary lines. His hair stood on end, as his teeth, claws and muscles all reacted as if entering into a war zone.

An abrupt and immediate reaction.

Garfiel's primal fighting instincts were awakened, and thus Subaru was also infected by a sense of urgency. He turned to follow Garfiel's gaze, and,

???: "Larkins, I was worried you wouldn't return. Was there a disturbance here?"

In that moment, Subaru saw an illusion of fire standing in front of him.

The flames were shining red, taking a human form. No, not just a human form—they were human. Hair the color of fire, eyes with the color of a clear blue sky. His slender body was clothed in white and his neatly arranged face was one that could never be forgotten.

His aura, slamming into everyone nearby, was the aura one would feel upon seeing a hero. That was exactly what the situation was.

There was no mistake. This man's name was,

Subaru: "—Reinhard."

Upon hearing Subaru's hoarse voice, the young man in question smiled gently. The smile was a soft one, intended to calm others down.

With just that smile, Subaru felt as if he had been taken into the arms of a guardian of peace. Everyone else seemed to relax as well.

Reinhard: "It's been a while, Subaru. I didn't expect to see you here. Although our meeting is thanks to Julius, who called me here."

Subaru: "O-Oh. Long time no see. Wait, are you saying that you were also called by Julius?"

Reinhard: "Technically, it was Felt-sama accepting Anastasia-sama's invitation. I'm just here as her knight, and I didn't expect to see you here."

As always, Reinhard's presence dwarfed everyone else's. Although Subaru had experienced this before, it had never affected him to this degree, and he found it almost difficult to carry a casual conversation.

That Subaru could feel Reinhard's aura, which he was previously unaware of, attested to Subaru's own growth. The more Subaru trained, the more he came to understand the difference between them.

Reinhard: "I see. It's been a year, hasn't it? You seem much better than you were when we last parted ways. That makes me glad."

Subaru: "Don't say it like that, you sound like you're making fun of me. I was a little proud of my growth but seeing you makes me feel like it's nothing."

Reinhard: "I didn't intend any such thing. In terms of my growth, I'm rather disappointed. I haven't changed much in the past year, it's honesty rather embarrassing.

That was probably because he'd already maxed his level and hit a growth limit. Seeing a man who was obviously already so strong but still wanted to be stronger, Subaru couldn't help but feel intimidated.

Reinhard: "By the way, Subaru." Subaru: "Oh, uh, what is it?"

Reinhard: "The one who's been staring at me this whole time, is he your friend? If so, I would be glad if asked him to relax a little."

Reinhard smiled wryly in Garfiel's direction. Garfiel himself was incredibly tense, looking as if he was ready to rush forward with his teeth and claws to attack prey.
Those were weapons that Subaru relied on countless times last year. However, Subaru doubted that Garfiel was capable of harming the young Reinhard that stood before him.

Subaru: "Garfiel, stop it. This is Reinhard. He's my... friend. He's not going to hurt you, I wouldn't allow it."

Subaru hesitated briefly before saying 'friend'.

He was once personally saved by the Sword Saint and his last parting with Reinhard had been after Subaru's humiliation at the knights' training field. When Reinhard had reached a hand out toward him, Subaru had turned it aside.

However, while Subaru considered all of this, Reinhard nodded with ease.

Reinhard: "Now, I've been introduced by Subaru. I am his friend, Reinhard van Astrea. I would be grateful if you would tell me your name."

Garfiel: "—It's Garfiel Tinsel."

Reinhard: "A fine name. You're well trained. Being so young, it's amazing." Subaru was struck by how accurate Reinhard's assessments were.

In the year after Garfiel had left Sanctuary, Garfiel learned much about the outside world and gained a calmer temperament. If he were to calm his demeanor and the manner in which he speaks, then Garfiel would look roughly twenty years old, when in fact he was only fifteen.

Reinhard's remarks indicated that he'd easily seen through this.

Reinhard: "I've heard some of the rumors about Emilia-sama's guards. The Strongest of Shields, Garfiel Tinsel, and the Half-Elf's Knight, Natsuki Subaru. It brings me pride to call you my friend."

Subaru: "I'm glad to be called by my proper title, for once."

Reinhard: "I've heard some of the other titles, but they are a little less pleasant. Speaking of which, is the spirit from the title The Spirit Knight that little girl over there?"

Reinhard's attention turned to Beatrice, who shrank down next to Subaru. At some point, she'd taken his hand. Reinhard knelt down to look into her eyes.

Reinhard: "I can tell that you are a revered and great spirit. It honors me to be able to speak with you like this."

Beatrice: "...Betty is Subaru's contract spirit, Beatrice, in fact. I don't dislike your admiration, I suppose. Just, you should keep your distance, in fact. I'm sure you understand why, I suppose."

Reinhard. "I understand completely. I'm sorry to trouble you."

Unlike Garfiel, she revealed no obvious weariness. However, she clung to Subaru's hand with an unusual tightness, and couldn't conceal its slight shaking.
However, it wasn't because she was afraid. This was something else.

And Reinhard, with his respectful, humble words, turned ceremoniously to Emilia.

Reinhard: "Emilia-sama, it's been a long time. Even in my own territory, I have heard about your achievements many times over."

Emilia: "Yeah, long time no see, Reinhard. It's really been a year since the castle. We've also heard about your achievements, too."

Reinhard: "We've done far less than Emilia-sama has. I've been able to do little to help my master. Compared to all that Subaru has done, I can only feel frustrated."

Emilia: "Hahaha. Yeah, Subaru is amazing. I'm proud of my knight."

Emilia's chest swelled with pride after hearing Reinhard's flattery. Although she'd obviously missed the social rhetoric in Reinhard's words, listening to what Emilia said made Subaru happy, even if the situation was equally embarrassing.

Anyway,

Subaru: “Looks like we’ve done enough greetings, but did you call Larkins’s name earlier?”

Emilia: “Ah, that’s right. Do you know him, Reinhard?”

Reinhard: “Yeah, I do. He’s currently working under Felt-sama’s employ. Although finding places for him to be useful is difficult, Felt-sama has placed high hopes in him.”

Subaru: “That guy, Felt hired him!?”

At this piece of unexpected information, Subaru stared in shock. Reinhard turned to Subaru and frowned apologetically at his reaction.

Reinhard: “My apologies for failing to consider your feelings, especially since I was present in the alley where you two had an encounter. Afterward, a lot of things happened… when I told Felt-sama, she demanded on the spot that I invite him over.”

Subaru: “Ah, well, if you say so then I’ll believe it, but... seriously, what kind of a coincidence is that? That guy, though... is it just him?”

Reinhard: “Felt-sama has hired three men, including him. Those three are indeed the ones who tried to rob you in the alley.”

Subaru: “That trio gets to work together!?”

Facing this cruel, mischievous fate, Subaru couldn’t help but cry to the heavens.

Immediately after being summoned to this world, Subaru had been attacked over and over by the same trio. He hadn’t quite forgotten about them, but he had hardly expected to encounter them here, either.

Emilia: “Well, setting Subaru’s surprise aside... Larkins is under your care, and the employ of Felt-chan, correct?”

Reinhard. “That’s right. Felt-sama wanted to walk around the city and sent him to notify the inn of her arrival. I came since he had yet to return.”

Reinhard repeated what Larkins had said, and Larkins nodded rigorously.

Larkins: “T-That’s right! I kept saying the same thing over and over. Everybody doubted me for no reason. I demand an apology, ora!”

Reinhard: “Larkins. I have said this many times, but your words as a messenger lack mindfulness. Although people can grasp the general situation, believing you is difficult.”

Larkins: “Bastard, whose side are you on!?”

Reinhard: “I’m on the side of justice. And, in this case, I think it was inevitable that my friend’s brother would misunderstand.”

Turning away from a fuming Larkins, Reinhard smiled Joshua, who returned him with a rather embarrassed one.

Joshua: “Long time no see, Reinhard-sama. This time, it seems that my blunder has caused your messenger to…”

Reinhard: “The fault is ours, Joshua. Also, that honorific is so annoying. I know it’s been a long time, but acting so distant makes me feel a bit lonely.”

Joshua: “Although my honorable elder brother and Reinhard-sama are friends, right now they are also political opponents.” (nii-sama)

Reinhard: “You haven’t changed. You don’t have to always imitate Julius in that regard.”

Reinhard gave a wry smile, while Joshua seemed to clenched his teeth.

—Anyway, the commotion had died down safely. Although the temporary problem was gone, it was replaced by the emergence of other questions. That was,

Subaru: “Even so, if both of us were called here then what’s Anastasia planning to do?”

Reinhard: “The invitation sent to us said that she wanted to exchange a useful piece of information in return for something. Although we thought that Anastasia-sama may have been up to something, we didn’t expect that Emilia-sama and you have been invited as well.”

Subaru: “Are you saying that we should be prepared for something even more shocking?”

Reinhard: “That’s a possibility. What about it, Joshua?”

One of the masterminds of the appointment, the young man shifted his monocle and said, “I guess we’ll see”, to deflect the topic.

With his usual pleasant demeanor, Reinhard turned back to the hotel.

Reinhard: “This is a pretty rare structure, the Water Plumage Pavilion. I’ve heard that this style of architecture only exists in Kararagi.”

Subaru: “Ehh, that’s surprising. You haven’t seen it before either. You’ve never been Kararagi?”

Reinhard: “Yeah. I’m banned from going abroad because of fear of a breach of the treaty between each country. I even have avoid the borders. We’re close enough to Kararagi as is, so Pristella is pretty much the limit of where I can go.”

Emilia and Subaru were stunned at Reinhard's prohibition on travel. Maybe it was a joke, but the lightly laughing Reinhard didn't indicate that it was.

Asking about it would feel a little uneasy, so they pushed that line of questioning back.

Subaru: "We've been here for a while, and it's kind of tiring to just linger near the entrance for so long. How about we go inside, since Felt isn't here yet?"

Reinhard: "Sure, I'm not supervising her right now. Sometimes she runs off to play around. It's nice to relax once in a while."

Larkins: "...sometimes? Isn't she always just playing around?"

Reinhard: "Larkins, did you say something?"

Larkins: "Nope, nothing. So, can I go already? This is fun and all but let's hurry this shit up."

Larkins muttered a curse under his breath after requesting permission to leave. Reinhard couldn't help a sigh.

Reinhard: "Join Camberly and Gaston in guarding Felt-sama. Although there should be no danger, Rom-dono didn't accompany us, and if Felt-sama takes any dangerous action, you have to be there to stop her."

Larkins: "Ya I got it. What are you gonna do?"

Reinhard: "I'll stay with Emilia-sama at the inn. If anything happens, send me a signal with fire magic, and I'll be there in five seconds."

Larkins: "You ain't kiddin', are ya, oi."

Finished, Larkins squeezed past Subaru. Halfway past, he gave a Joshua a hard glare, still wary of Reinhard. He was really the model of petty evils.

Subaru: "Well, let's go inside. We'll say hello to Anastasia-san and tell her that Reinhard's here."

Reinhard: "I believe Joshua's in charge of that. Well, let's get going."

Joshua: "...yes, I am. I apologize for the inconvenience."

Joshua looked slightly lost. Was it because the situation had played out strangely? In order to comfort him, Subaru, Reinhard, Emilia, Garfiel, and finally even Beatrice dutifully followed him into the inn.

Subaru: "I'll feel bad if I shove everything onto him." Reinhard: "I'll join Subaru in accompanying him." Emilia: "Ah, the two of them are going, I will too."

Garfiel: "'If th'Captain'n Emilia-sama are doin' it, my amazin' self's gonna too."

Beatrice: "Betty doesn't want to be the only one excluded from it, in fact… but it wouldn't bother me too much even if I were, I suppose."

Subaru/Emilia: "Yes, you're adorable." (Hai, kawaii kawaii ?????????)

Subaru and Emilia, walking to her left and right, both petted her gently. Beatrice swatted their hands away, annoyed, then obediently grabbed their sleeves.

Joshua: "In here. Anastasia-sama is entertaining guests right now."

They were at a different room than the original dining hall. Subaru eyed Joshua wearily. Subaru: "Guests? Did she invite even more people?"

Joshua: "...you're about to find out, whether or not you look at me with that menacing gaze." Subaru: "Come on, my eyes aren't that scary!"

Joshua: "I can understand you even if you don't raise your voice like a witchbeast."

Subaru: "That's pretty harsh, and what kind of witchbeast? Dog, rabbit, or whale? Pick one."

These were Subaru's top three most annoying witchbeasts. Although, to him, the others all seemed to be some lion-faced beast, so they made no extreme impression on him."

While Subaru was sorting through his memories, Reinhard gently whispered "Whale", interrupting Subaru's train of thought.

Reinhard: "Whale, you're talking about the White Whale, right, Subaru?"

Subaru: "...yeah, that's right. That's the worst whale. There were so many times where I thought it was dying and it just refused to die. Thinking back on it, it was such a miracle."

In fact, the increase in the number of white whales honestly did make their victory a miracle.

That witchbeast was such an amazing creature, and the disaster it wrought was also extraordinary. It had caused so much suffering that even now, Subaru's chest tightened in pain at the thought.

Reinhard: "The subjugation of the White Whale, would you mind telling me about it in more detail later? I'm not a man who's completely unrelated to that monster. Although, that would be a be a long story to tell."

Subaru: "—Of course. As for your story, if it's hard to tell then you don't need to."

Subaru was only vaguely aware of Reinhard's experiences with the White Whale. To Subaru, the battle with the White Whale was the fruit of an old swordsman's decade-long obsession with vengeance. And

Subaru also knew of the Sword Demon's origin, and of his relationship to the red-haired youth. As to what had happened between them, Subaru had no way of knowing.

—This wasn't a topic that Subaru could pursue out of curiosity, was how he judged it.

Reinhard: "Thank you."

Thus, Reinhard responded briefly to the Subaru's thoughtfulness.

Subaru sought nothing other than that.

Seeing Reinhard's lowered gaze, Subaru gave a long sigh. Emilia and Beatrice looked at him, worried, and Subaru gave them an "I'm alright" smile.

Joshua: "We've arrived. Please wait in this tea room until their meeting ends."

Joshua, who'd finally led them to their destination, gestured to a cross-style door. Hanging on the door was a paper scroll. Subaru, although delighted, felt that his Japanese soul had become quite a bit strange.

But, his optimistic thoughts could only exist for a brief while.

Joshua: "Excuse me. Would you mind being with other guests?"

He directed the question at the guests already occupying the tea room. Someone inside, who shifted slightly, responded.

???: "—Sure. We don't have much to do right now."

That calm voice gave Subaru a start. It was impossibly familiar. Not only that, Subaru had only just been thinking about its owner.

No one aside from Subaru seemed to notice it; that is, no one but Reinhard. His face became stiff, his blue eyes swaying with hesitation.

Joshua, having not noticed, opened the door. There was a quiet sound of wood on wood, as the occupants of the tea room came into sight.

Then, the occupants, seated on mats of cloth, looked over to the new guests.

Reinhard: "—Honored Grandfather." (ojisama)

Wilhelm: "Is that, Reinhard?"

The voices of the grandfather and the grandson overlapped.

This was the unintended reunion between Reinhard Van Astrea and Wilhelm Van Astrea.

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Arc 5 - Chapter 12, "Crushing Atmosphere of the Tea Room"

by admin - Wednesday, November 28, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/28/arc-5-chapter-12-crushing-atmosphere-of-the-tea-room/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

- Credit to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

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Every one currently gathered in the tea room was someone who was exceptionally important.

Emilia: “Even so, it’s surprising that Reinhard and Wilhelm are related. It’s no wonder that they’re both skilled swordsmen.”

Subaru: “It’s natural that we didn’t know, we had no reason to. If families were based on similarities then they’d be too big, Emilia-tan.”

The wooden floor beneath the long table was covered with mats, in the style of a traditional Japanese living room. Emilia and Subaru were seated next to each other, holding a whispered conversation without discussing anything too significant. They were chatting to calm their nerves.

Beatrice: “Betty is already alert and won’t let anyone try anything, in fact. Subaru can stop staring at everyone so warily, I suppose.”

Subaru: “You know I born with a mean look, I’m not staring at anyone warily. Besides, I know what it’s like to be glared at with cold eyes.”

Beatrice was also sitting near Emilia, keeping a vigilant watch. Emilia sat with her legs folded underneath her, and Subaru had his legs crossed, while Beatrice sat with a rigid posture. It was a position she’d taken

for Subaru's sake, although she couldn't resist fidgeting a little.

Subaru: "In any event, Garfiel's here if something were to happen. And besides, no one here would act so rashly."

Subaru's gaze left Beatrice, whose knees were shaking, and directed his attention toward the corner of the tea room, where Garfiel was sitting. Although he noticed Subaru and wanted to wave at him, his hand was too busy being caught by Mimi.

Right now, several key figures in the Royal Election were gathered at the table, while the others were keeping an eye on the situation from the corners of room. In other words, Garfiel and Mimi were sitting together. Hetaro and Tibby were also present, glaring at Garfiel with dark malice.

Joshua was also seated in the tea room, looking extremely uncomfortable.

Reinhard: "I am very grateful for this hospitality. Felt-sama may be a little late in arriving since she's out in Pristella, but she should be here shortly."

Anastasia: "You don't have to be so formal, especially since you accepted my invitation on such short notice. Oh, but it's a strange coincidence that you all arrived so close together."

Anastasia took a gentle approach to meet the etiquette conscious Reinhard. Reinhard raised his head and looked at Julius, who was standing by Anastasia's side.

Reinhard: "It's been a while, Julius. We last met face to face at the Chamber of Commerce."

Julius: "Ah, that's right. I'm sorry for asking everyone to come in such little time. But, it gives me peace of mind to know that you've all kept safe."

After greeting his friend, Reinhard returned to his seat. If seating at the table reflected the positions of the factions, then Reinhard was seated at the bottom. Sitting at the head was the host, Anastasia. Next to Anastasia was Emilia and her faction, who Reinhard, representing Felt's faction, was seated next to. Across from Anastasia was,

???: "It feels like it's been a long time since everyone has gathered like this." The speaker, who wore a dignified smile, was a beautiful woman with green hair.

Amber eyes which seemed to contain the very picture of harmony, dressed in a feminine navy blue dress, giving off an air of nobility. Although, if you'd known what she was like before, it would be hard to see her as the same person.

Emilia: "We haven't seen you in a while either, Crusch-sama. You seem to be doing well."

Crusch: "Yes, that's right. I previously caused you a lot of trouble, so let me offer my thanks. I've also heard of quite a few of the deeds that you were involved in. When I received the news, I thought that they were things only you could do."

Crusch replied to Emilia in a soft tone. Her old decisive self seemed to have disappeared along with her memory, and she had yet to recover it. She was no longer a savvy, brave politician, but merely a beautiful aristocratic lady.

If the aforementioned events that Emilia was involved in were to happen to Crusch's current self, they would surely ended in tragedy.

Ferris: "Really, hearing people talk about nyou like that was surprising. Eradicating the Sizable Hare and becoming a spiritual arts user, who would have expected that out of Subaru-kyun?"

Next to Crusch, a feminine young man with cat ears and a coy manner spoke up. He was Ferris, both Crusch's knight and the best healer of Lugunica.

Unlike his incredibly different master, Ferris hadn't changed in the slightest. It was reassuring, but, at the same time, he remained difficult to understand.

Subaru: "Well, becoming someone who people rely on has always been of the biggest goals in my life. As for my contract with Beako, well, it probably annoys you, but my life was in danger at the time so I had no choice but to make it."

Ferris: "Even though I gave nyou such a solemn warning? Subaru-kyun will eventually collapse due to his excessive use of his gate. Without Beatrice-chan, it'll crack open with a bang, so you'll have be especially careful."

Subaru: "I know. And there's no other guy who can make Beako this happy."

Although they both spoke in a relaxed tone, Ferris's warning was meant as serious, heartfelt advice, so Subaru also responded with an equally serious attitude. Dropping a hand on Beatrice's shoulder, he considered this the tuition.

Subaru: "Even so… I didn't expect Crusch-san and her faction to also have been invited. I was already surprised to encounter Reinhard outside, but now I'm about to spray nosebleeds."

Ferris: "Agh. That would be overdramatic. But, it is quite a surprise that we'd all coincidentally arrive nyon the same day, though."

Wilhelm: "Since no specific date and time was established for the meeting, that we arrived together was the result of estimates. —It's rare for us all to have a chance to gather together, so this is our good fortune."

This was the last member of Crusch camp. Sitting next to Crusch was Ferris, who was seated in a woman's pose. Next to him was the old swordsmen, Wilhelm, sipping his tea. He was dressed in the same butler outfit as always, but it suited his tea-drinking-look well.

Due to the seating arrangements, Reinhard and Wilhelm had ended up seated next to one another. Anyone who knew of their story, however, would feel uneasy.

Subaru: “They haven’t even met eyes yet…”

Subaru whispered his observation to Emilia, who quietly agreed.

Wilhelm and Reinhardt were, as grandfather and grandson, direct relatives, but, aside from offering mutual pleasantries, they had yet to acknowledge each other.

The tea room was dominated by silence, and Subaru took time to think their situation over. The members of Emilia’s faction were, whether due their attitude, nature, or childishness, all largely unskilled at reading the mood.

It was also hard to forget how Joshua, who had returned after being summoned away, had given a scared “Whaa” when he saw the situation.

House Astrea. The name was so well known that even Subaru knew a little of their family history. Sword Saint was a title that was passed from generation to generation, and the lineage of Sword Saints meant that the Astraa family probably had the history of greatest combat strength throughout of all of Lugunica.

Wilhelm’s obsession with the White Whale obviously came from the defeat of his wife, the previous Sword Saint. Connecting these facts would lead to one question.

—Why did Wilhelm choose to borrow the power of Crusch’s faction, rather than the power of his own house?

Taking the question further, why had Reinhard not participated in the fight against White Whale?

Wilhelm had said that he’d started chasing the White Whale about fourteen years ago. If the Royal Election had been ongoing, then Wilhelm could not cooperate with Reinhard, who was a member of the an enemy faction. That made sense.

But, when Wilhelm had begun his hunt for the White Whale, House Astrea had nothing to do with the Royal Election. Of course, then Reinhard would still have been a child, and would have lacked the ability to defeat the White Whale. But, considering his later growth, why had Reinhard never sought out the White Whale?

Wilhelm’s sentiments and Reinhardt’s thoughts, Subaru had no insight into either.

—If they were ever willing to discuss it, he’d love to listen.

However, asking directly would be like unscrupulously cutting an old wound and rubbing salt on the scars.

And although Natsuki Subaru was incredibly curious, he’d grown quite a bit in the past year. He’d come to understand that if he pressed the topic, people would find him annoying.

Reinhard and Wilhelm, though they were in hostile factions, were both valuable, talented people who

Subaru had a stable relationship with. That single curiosity aside, the level of trust that they placed in him was hardly low.

So, all he could do was hope that someone else would bring it up.

Emilia: “By the way, Anastasia-san, why did you gather everyone here? I think you had some purpose… right?”

Unaware of Subaru’s preoccupation, Emilia directed a question at Anastasia, who titled her head with a smile.

Anastasia: “Of course, I have something that I’d like to discuss with each of you, but, to answer Emilia-san’s question, I had to think pretty hard to come up with something that would entice each of you here.”

Emilia: “We came for the magic stones, but what about the others?”

Anastasia: “Everyone has their own wants and needs. Using just those to gather everyone would have been fairly easy... but there are those odd groups whose wants are mysterious.”

Emilia: “I don’t understand…?”

Emilia frowned and crossed her arms as she considered the issue, although the problem wasn’t a difficult one. Just observing who was currently not present would pinpoint the faction that refused to be communicative.

Emilia: “Were Priscilla-sama and Al-dono not invited?”

Anastasia: “Those two are completely set on their own path and I wouldn’t know where to start finding out what they want. To be honest, even Felt-san treats land and money like they’re completely irrelevant.”

Reinhard: “Regarding that, Felt-sama actually volunteered to come on a whim. That said, I do wish she’d care a little more about those matters.”

Anastasia and Reinhard spoke of the matter plainly and expressed the same opinion. Upon hearing their words, Emilia, who could only agree with them, raised her hand.

Emilia: “I’d also like to know more about everyone’s circumstances. Although I’ve worked hard to learn, it’s difficult to understand everyone’s positions.”

Subaru: “Then let's not talk about what happened today…”

Emilia: “Hmph, Subaru you meanie.”

Emilia’s cheek was being pinched by his right hand. His left hand still rested on Beatrice’s shoulder, where, either as reward or punishment, it had sat for a little too long.

At any rate, the positions of Priscilla’s faction and Felt’s faction were clear. Then all that was left was the reason, perhaps the weakness, that lead Crusch here.

Crusch: “As to why we came to Pristella, it was because Anastasia-sama seems to have some information regarding Gluttony.”

Subaru: “———”

As if reading Subaru’s thoughts, Crusch replied.

Crusch’s words struck Subaru like a bullet, and it was something that he could not overlook. Meanwhile, Anastasia caressed her scarf with a wry smile.

Anastasia: “I wasn’t keeping anything from Natsuki-kun, but, there is a matter of priorities. Under these circumstances, solving Crusch’s problems should take precedence. Isn’t that right?”

Subaru: “Gah, gr... shu-, fu-. F-Fine, that’s fine.” Julius: “I see you’ve grown up a little.”

Subaru: “Shut up! I’m already on the verge of exploding.”

Selling to the highest bidder was the basis of decision making in business.

Subaru managed to put the brakes on his fury at Anastasia’s explanation, which was fortunate, since Julius had begun to look uneasy.

Subaru: “Who are you, my parents? On that topic, my dad could beat me up ten times better than you ever could!”

Ferris: “Eh... Ferri-chan is scared…”

Subaru: “Don’t be shaken so easily! Are you scared of your own family!?”

Subaru snapped at Ferris, who had snuggled into Crusch, but he was joking rather than scolding. On that note, his words about his father, Kenichi were certainly true.

Anastasia's reason was acceptable. However, it would be another matter entirely if the information were to be given to only Crusch and not Subaru. Information on Gluttony was crucial to restoring Rem, who was still sleeping in Roswaal’s mansion.

Even though he’d accepted the reason, he wouldn’t be so easily swayed.

Anastasia: “Even though you’re making such a scary face, you’ll feel more at ease after you’ve heard the full story.”

Subaru: “Then…. it’s true?”

Anastasia: “It’s not a lie, and I’m sure that Crusch’s faction has no intention of keeping it to themselves.”

Subaru turned to Crusch, who seemed to have some difficulty maintaining a composed expression.

Crusch: “It’s only natural. Of course, in order to retrieve my memory, I want the information on Gluttony. However, I also know that Subaru is also determined to defeat Gluttony for that young girl’s sake. Under such circumstances, I have no desire to monopolize the information.”

Subaru: “Crusch-san…”

Crusch: “In addition, the more comrades I find who share my goal, the better. The more people there are working against sinners like the Witch Cult, the more likely we are to win.”

Crusch, who spoke in a light tone, gave Subaru peace of mind.

Her true desire was, of course, to restore her memories and improve her flaws. But that didn’t interfere with her goodwill toward Subaru.

Holding an honorable nature which had not been dimmed at all by her amnesia was this woman named Crusch Karsten.

Subaru: “I’m grateful. Thank you, Crusch-san. I will cherish the opportunity that you’ve handed me. Definitely.”

Crusch: “That said, the information is our priority. We won’t concede that.”

In response to Subaru’s determination, Crusch straightened her back and met his gaze.

Of course. They shared a heated competition. But her benevolent smile was out of place for this occasion, so she and Subaru laughed together.

The one who interrupted the moment was Crusch’s knight.

Ferris: “Nyau. Seeing Subaru and Crusch-sama like this is really annoying, stop it. Subaru’s such a greedy man. Are the two girls at your side not enough? Really nyow!”

Crusch: “Ferris, that’s not a very courteous thing to say. Subaru isn’t someone who’d be swayed by temptations like that.”

Subaru: “Yeah, don’t say that. Certainly, Crusch-san is beautiful and very cute but I have a loyal heart... although it is split in two right now, but—owowowowow!?”

Beatrice: “That’s not a very loyal heart, in fact. You should just stay quiet and reflect on what you just said, I suppose.”

Subaru, who'd been trying to agree with Crusch, had his ear caught in Beatrice's tight grip. His eyes watered in protest, but before he could complain, he noticed that she was pointing at Crusch.

Following Beatrice's finger, Subaru saw that Crusch was wearing a bright blush. Thinking back, what odd words had he spoken?

Subaru: "Oh no, Emilia-tan, did I say something strange?"

Emilia: "Huh? Hmm, I'm not sure. Subaru, you just talked the way you usually talk to me..."

Subaru: "That's right. Then what did I do? Holding Emilia-tan's hand lets me think better, may I?"

Emilia: "Yes yes. Try your hardest."

Subaru tapped his forehead with the hand that held Emilia's, as he cast a gloomy look. Meanwhile, Ferris took the opportunity to whisper to Crusch,

Ferris: "See, it's like that. Subaru-kyun is unconsciously excessively friendly to everyone he meets and always tries to play a cool and handsome act. It's like he's messed up in the head. Don't pay it any attention."

Crusch: "Yes, I'll be careful. Ha, I was a little shocked." Crusch placed a hand on her chest with a sigh of relief.

Subaru found this feminine action incredibly cute. Crusch and Ferris, who were unaware of his thoughts, held hands as if making a promise to each other. Anyone who stumbled across this scene would have assumed that they were girlfriends.

Now, everyone had revealed their reasons for coming to Pristella.

???: "Ehh, everyone's here already. Originally I heard that I was supposed to just meet with the lady from Kararagi."

The paper door was thrown open, revealing the girl standing behind it.

She was an agile, pretty blonde girl with large chestnut-red eyes and a crooked smile. Her small face was full of naughty charm and her slim but agile physique seemed a touch more feminine. Just as before, she was dressed in a outfit focused on enhancing movement speed, one that also happened to leave her navel and legs exposed.

Felt: "What, surprised that I still look this way? It's only been a year, you know." Reinhard: "Felt-sama."

Everyone slumped their shoulders upon seeing her, and Felt caught their disappointment. Reinhard, however, stood up to welcome his master as she approached.

Reinhard: "I was sure I left a change of clothes on the dragon carriage, what happened?"

Felt: “Bah! I wanted to go sightseeing in something comfortable. Saying that, you wanted me get changed in the hotel, but who would wear something that looks so itchy? You should know that about me by now!”

Reinhard: “That’s really just like you…”

Reinhard placed a hand on his forehead, speaking in a helpless tone. Felt, who was dragging the kingdom’s strongest hero around like a plaything, looked happy to enter the room.

Felt: “Right, and here I am. —I’m grateful for your hospitality today and I hope that our discussions will go well. There, all done with greetings.”

For a moment, Felt resembled a noble’s daughter. She gave a naughty smile and mimed a curtsy without a skirt, and immediately reverted to her usual self.

Subaru was quite self-aware of his own disagreement with the aristocratic community, but Felt’s attitude toward them seemed to have worsened notably in the past year.

Felt: “Man, this is a really bizarre building. I’ve never seen one like it before, so I got curious and explored a little before coming here.”

Felt sat down on the mat originally occupied by Reinhard, who moved another one over and sat earnestly next to her.

By chance, Felt was now next to Wilhelm, separating grandfather and grandson.

Emilia: “Well, long time no see, Felt-chan. How have you been?”

Felt: “It’s weird to have -chan added to my name. Well anyway, I’ve been well. You, sister, have been… a little too lively, no? I’ve heard a lot of rumors about really scary things.” (she calls Emilia ‘N?chan’)

Emilia: “It’s Subaru who’s been lively, not me. As for me, I’ve just been lucky to be saved Subaru’s hard work.”

Felt: “Ah! That’s right!”

Upon hearing Emilia's reply, Felt leapt to her feet with a clap of her hands, her eyes fixed straight at Subaru.

Felt: “I’ve heard a ton of ridiculous rumors about you, brother. I’ve just got to know, how many of those rumors are actually true?”

Subaru: “It seems like you’ve decided that they were all fake before even asking me. Your level of faith in disappointingly low.”

Felt: “Because they’re so wild! I heard that you cut the White Whale in half by yourself, you crushed a

sin archbishops skull to bits with you own two hands, and even the Sizable Hare was roasted and eat—”

Subaru: “I was really involved in all of those, but the rumors have been blown hundreds of times out of proportion!”

If Subaru really had done as the rumors said, then he’d be hailed the kingdom’s hero and would probably even have been put on the throne. With that authority, he’d have made Emilia queen and they’d be ruling together.

Julius & Wilhelm: “—Heh.”

Subaru’s reaction had drawn a small laugh from the audience. There two sources of laughter were from people sitting on opposite sides of the room, Julius and Wilhelm.

The two, both of whom seemed to have felt embarrassed at their unconscious reaction, sought each other out and relaxed when they found someone who’d given a similar response. Felt, whose eyes had been darting back and forth in confusion, asked,

Felt: “Why did the old man and the knight laugh? Me, did I say something strange?”

Subaru: “Everything you said was strange! You gave me too much credit. If I did that much then I’d deserve a Nobel Peace Prize!”

Although Subaru didn’t fully understand what he had earned, he knew that it was meant to be a symbol of honor. When he was presented with the medal he hadn’t fully understood its actual and symbolic value, so he’d never personally felt the merit associated with it.

In fact, the medal that he’d received was quite valuable in the kingdom.

Wilhelm: “Subaru-dono was indispensable during the battle with the White Whale. If he were not there, I have no doubt that we all would have perished. It sounds like an exaggeration, but it is no laughing matter.”

Julius: “The same is true of the battle with the Witch Cult. The one who developed our tactics against them was him. Were he not there, myself and the others who had helped would not have been able to bring down the Sin Archbishop.”

Subaru: “———”

Overwhelming faith from Wilhelm and Julius.

Their straightforward support for him struck Subaru speechless. The lively atmosphere left his entire body burning with embarrassment. His face was red from ear to ear, and blood was liable to spray from his eyes at any moment.

Subaru: “N-No, stop it! Don’t praise me so much! The higher you raise me, the more my ego is stoked,

shouldn’t you all be clear on that!?”

Julius: “No, not at all. Although it is true that you made a fool of yourself at the start of the Royal Election, you’ve proven your worth time and time again. You have more than made up for that disgrace. You absolutely deserve to be so commended.”

Wilhelm: “There is absolutely no need for humility. You’ve had a hand in accomplishing great things. Those successes would never have happened had you not been present. I will be proud to have shared a battlefield with you until the end of my days.”

Subaru: “—Ah, um.”

So far, Subaru had died in a number of painful, gruesome ways.

However, this would be by the most horrifying. Being pelted with compliments.

Subaru, embarrassed to the verge of death, looked to Emilia and Beatrice, pleading for help. However, they merely smiled sweetly.

Emilia: “That’s right. Subaru has worked sooo hard. I’m truly proud to have him as my knight.”

Beatrice: “W-Well, since he’s Betty’s partner, it’s only natural that he’s so successful, in fact. He’s only going to be more and more amazing, I suppose. So it’s a good habit to get used to praising him, in fact!”

The situation having gone in an entirely unexpected direction, Subaru was stricken with panic. Then, everyone took turns speaking.

Reinhard: “Amazing, Subaru. Everyone praises you for doing something amazing, something no one else could have done. I’m glad to call you my friend.”

Crusch: “I would have lost so many loyal men without Subaru-sama’s help, even Wilhelm, who has been supporting me to this day. Allow me to thank you again.”

Ferris: “Although you don’t have any combat ability, you never lost heart during the battle with the White Whale. It allowed Crusch-sama to make the speech that changed the tide of the battle. In short, thank nyou very much.”

Anastasia: “Thanks to Natsuki-kun’s information, myself and countless other businessmen are no longer plagued by the White Whale’s fog. You have my gratitude.”

Mimi: “Oohh! Are we taking turns complimenting big brother? He’s very strong! He’s very handsome! The only thing he’s missing is Mimi! Your turn, Garf!”

Garfiel: “Ya, I dunno w’happen, but deservin’ th’praise, that’s th’Captain. Th’s my amazin’ bro. Th’s a, Fame comes with the right way and where in.”

People were taking advantage of the momentum and piling flattering remarks on Subaru, who was blushing from all the warm encouragement. Felt treated him with a laugh.

Felt: “It sounds like they were true, but… it looks like brother’s nature is hasn’t changed. That’s a relief!”

Subaru: “You guys, stop it! Everyone’s ganging up on me!!”

After Felt summarized the farce taking place, Subaru could no longer withstand it and exploded. The tension which had originally cloaked the tea melted away with the sound of laughter.

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Subaru: “Ah, damn, really I’m about to disintegrate and die…”

After the fun in the tea room had dissipated, an exhausted Subaru had left for his room.

Everyone had inexplicably showered Subaru with praise, before occupying themselves with cross faction conversations, as if forgetting about their opposition.

Of course, it couldn’t be said that no one had any intent of trying to delve into the secrets of the other factions, but most of the conversations were just idle, fun chatter.

Although the candidates could at any moment end up in a confrontation, from another point of view, they were all women of a similar age, so conversation on topics other than the state of the kingdom came quite naturally to them.

In fact, Emilia had been very much looking forward to having an opportunity to talk with other girls her age.

Subaru: “Well, it could be said that a conversation between Emilia-tan and Beako would be just like that…”

Beatrice: “Don’t bring up her real age, in fact. Do you want to start a war, I suppose?” Beatrice reprimanded the imprudent Subaru with a sharp voice.

Turning to see the source of the sound showed Beatrice sitting on a quilted pile of blankets in his room, desperately trying to ease her numb feet.

Subaru: “Even though you’re a spirit your feet fell asleep. Aren’t spirits supposed to not have circulation, though?”

Beatrice: “I have circulation, Betty’s body is designed to imitate an actual human body as closely as possible, in fact. Betty will feel the pain that humans can feel, I suppose. If I dive underwater for too long, I’ll lose consciousness, in fact.”

Subaru: “So you breathe, too?”

Beatrice: “Of course I do… hey, don’t try to sniff Betty’s breath, I suppose!”

As Subaru’s nose approached her, a somewhat embarrassed Beatrice pulled the quilts around herself. Subaru took the opportunity to flick her numb foot, which felt like it had sprung back to life. Beatrice’s eyes watered.

Beatrice: “That hurts, in fact... I’m about to cry, I suppose... Subaru’s a bully, in fact...” Subaru: “Okay, okay, my bad, my bad. Come here, come here.”

He patted his knees with a wry smile as he sat down, and Beatrice moved from the quilts to his lap. Caressing Beatrice’s twintailed head, Subaru said to himself, “but then again…”

Subaru: “The interior decor make it a nice room, and it looks like the staff did their best to match the rest of the hotel... but here are some subtle deficiencies.”

It was probably caused by woodworking technology developing differently here than it had in his original world.

The design of Water Plumage Pavilion felt quite similar to the design of a hotel from Subaru’s original world, but in spite of the presence wooden beams and paper doors, there was a certain something that felt off.

The beds probably took many painstaking attempts to figure out before the designers had decided on laying animal skins on a wooden bed.

The feeling wasn’t bad, it was just a slight deviation from what Subaru was used to.

Subaru: “I really can’t agree with not sleeping on the floor just because social norms dictate that blankets have to go on beds.”

Beatrice: “Putting a blanket directly on the floor is poverty, in fact. Betty can’t condone her partner becoming a man with no earnings, I suppose.”

Subaru: “I’m always working you so hard.”

Beatrice: “What’s that supposed to mean, in fact?”

Garfiel: “What’re y’two chatterin’ on about?”

Beatrice, who had been engaging in coordinated banter with Subaru, jumped up at the sudden appearance of a third voice. However, her feet were still numb so she lost her balance and fell into the bundle of quilts on the floor. Subaru quickly reached over and righted her.

Subaru: “Garfiel? Is your adventure over?”

Garfiel: “Th’midget finally let’m go free after an spendin’ th’entire day. Beatrice’s, why’r ya actin’

crazy?”

Subaru: “She’s never been so far away from home before, so she’s super excited! She even had trouble sleeping, isn’t she cute?’

Standing at the entrance to the room, Garfiel laughed hard enough to reveal his sharp teeth.

Because the guest room also had a paper door, Beatrice hadn’t heard it open and was scared at the sudden intrusion. Subaru, on the other hand, was sitting facing the entrance, so he’d seen Garfiel immediately.

Subaru: “So, what’s up? Dinner?”

Garfiel: “Nah, dinner prob’ won’t be ‘till later. Th’s nothing for me t’do alone in m’room, Captain, and ‘sides, Otto-nii still hasn’t come back yet.”

Subaru: “Well, Otto isn’t a kid, so you don’t have to worry too much about him. Even if we incur some debt here, I doubt he’d give us any extra trouble in solving it.”

Garfiel: “Right.”

Otto had left a few hours ago to go settle a debt. Garfiel has no objection to this, since, after all, he knew what Otto was like.

Of course, when it came to asking him for help, there was something incredibly reliable about him.

Subaru: “But those are different things.” Garfiel: “What’re y’talkin’ about now?”

Of course, Garfiel was used to Subaru’s frequent mutters to himself. Garfiel gestured toward the corridor with his chin.

Garfiel: “If y’don’t have anythin’ goin’ on, can the Captain tag ‘long with me for a bit?”

Subaru: “Tag along with you? Oh, a bath? A bath, right? You mean a bath? Open air bathing is too good to pass up on. I was looking around earlier and I found bathrobes, the thought of seeing Emilia-tan in a bathrobe is enough to raise my spirits! They’ve been raised already!”

Tatami and the architectural style were very difficult to reproduce, but the bathrobe appeared to have been commercialized. Subaru gave a mental tribute here to those in Kararagi who had been responsible for it.

However, standing before such an excited Subaru, Garfield wore a serious expression, one that was somber enough that even Subaru couldn’t continue to joke around. A worried look came to his face.

Subaru: “Garfiel. What’s wrong? Is there something you want to do?”

Garfiel: “No, ’s not really th’big ‘f a deal, but...”

Touching the white scar on his forehead forehead white scars, Garfield fell silent for a moment. Then he stared straight at Subaru.

Garfiel: “I jus’ wanted t’know exactly how strong th’world greatest hero is.”

Arc 5 - Chapter 13, "Peaceful Diner"

by Gracedharperd - Furuta - Wednesday, November 28, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/28/arc-5-chapter-13-peaceful-diner/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

- Credit to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

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The Water Plumage Pavilion’s rustic courtyard, paved in gravel, was full of Japanese hospitality. Although expecting an extravagant pond would be too much, the bamboo-like plants on the sides of the stone road were a nice touch.

Subaru: “Even so, Wilhelm-san didn’t join us.”

Subaru sat in a corridor facing the courtyard, picking at the gravel with his toes.

He thought of the white-haired old man had who had indifferently declined Subaru’s invitation with an apologetic expression. What was Wilhelm up to?

Alone in his room, he would certainly feel bored until dinnertime.

Subaru: “That said, he doesn’t seem like the kind of person who’d be concerned with how others spend their time.”

Julius: “Saying it like that makes it sound like we’re spying, even though we were invited here.”

Subaru: “It’s not like I’m here because I wanted to be... even though I am here...”

Subaru replied to Julius with sarcasm, who sat next to him in the hallway with his legs crossed gracefully. Julius nodded with a smile, as if to say “Truly”. However, the man sitting on the other side of Subaru didn’t want to admit it as frankly.

Ferris: “Oh, please. Hah, do you think Ferri-chan’s is here because he wanted to see it? Subaru-kyun just dragged me here and he was just so annyoying that I didn’t want to protest.”

Subaru: “Well, I’m sorry I guess. You should be here in case anything bad happens. Although, it seems that isn’t going to be necessary.”

Subaru squinted at Ferris, who was shaking his cat ears in agitation, then looked past him to the fast-paced battle that was taking place in the courtyard.

Frankly, the battle moved so quickly that Subaru’s eyes could barely keep up. Even so, he could plainly assert,

Subaru: “Really, Reinhard is a damn monster.”

Julius: “Although it’s hard to deny, I don’t like using such a word to describe a friend.”

Ferris: “It would be hard enough to deny it under nyormal circumstances.”

—The sight that was unfolding before them affirmed their conclusions.

In the courtyard paved with gravel, a fierce match was being staged between a roaring blond teenager and the red-haired hero defending against him.

The challenger, Garfiel, burned through an endless flow of motivation as he struck at Reinhard from every possible angle. However, whether using claws, fangs, legs, elbows, or knees, each of his attacks were seen through and evaded with ease.

Not to mention,

Subaru: “That guy, is he really just standing there without moving?”

Julius: “It was the original condition, after all. Reinhard would never violate it. Nevertheless, failing to force him to do so is probably humiliating for Garfiel.”

Garfiel kept launching attacks at Reinhard from different directions, trying to take those opportunities to expose an Achilles heel. But no matter how much he tried, Garfiel wasn’t going to find a weakness that didn’t exist. Not only that, Reinhard was dodging without much effort.

Reinhard had been standing in the same place since the start of this rash challenge, having never conceded an inch.

As Garfiel rushed at him repeatedly, Reinhard’s two feet remained fixed in place.

—At first, when Garfiel visited Reinhard’s room to challenge him, Subaru had summed it up as a reckless move.

Thinking back, that Reinhard even agreed to Garfiel’s challenge was unexpected.

Frankly, the match was solely a product of Garfiel’s desire. Accepting the challenge wouldn’t have provided Reinhard with any benefit. If you consider the difference of strength between the two then Reinhard presumably wouldn’t have a childish sense of masculinity to flaunt.

If you consider the complicated relationship between Reinhard, the royal knights, and his political opponents, then fighting Garfiel is in some respects an unnecessary danger. Even if he’d believed that no one had set up any tricks or traps, accepting the challenge was still unnecessary.

Considering this, the match was unlikely to ever happen and Subaru had certainly considered dismissing the idea entirely.

However, from the bottom of his heart, Subaru wanted to witness its fulfillment.

The one who took the responsibility of serving as the fighting power of Emilia’s faction was, without any doubt, Garfiel Tinzel. However, outside conditions could often influence the outcome of a conflict, so achieving victory solely through battle was plainly impossible. Furthermore, Garfiel’s flaws weren’t few in number, either.

Emilia’s faction had gained much fame throughout the past year and much attention was directed toward Garfiel.

Because everyone within Emilia’s faction recognized and praised his strength, Garfiel himself was quite arrogant. He had always been able to live up to those expectations with results and achievements.

However, this one-sided consideration of Garfiel also posed a troubling fact. Garfiel had yet to face enough opponents as strong as him since leaving Sanctuary.

The only person who had fought him on equal footing was the homicidal demon Elsa, during the battle in Roswaal’s old mansion, and it had ended in Garfiel’s victory. Since then, he hadn’t experienced any hard-fought battles that would have compelled him to show off his full strength.

Although Garfiel had indeed once lost to Subaru, Otto, and Ram, the conditions of that victory could be entirely attributed to their dirty tricks.

In terms of a proper, clean battle, Garfiel Tinzel was a man who had never experienced defeat since birth.

—Therefore, even knowing that it was cruel, Subaru longed for a battle between Reinhard and Garfiel to happen.

To continue without losses, and to remain unaware of his limits. That wasn’t an impossible path.

However, if he remained ignorant of his own limits and merely relied on the luck of continuously facing weaker opponents, then Garfiel would never be certain of exactly where his own strength lay.

Reinhard van Astrea, the hero whom Subaru had only seen in action once. Subaru chose to trust in his power.

Subaru: “I trusted his power... but I didn’t think the difference would be this great.”

The situation had proceeded in the exact direction that Subaru had hoped it would. However, he wasn’t as surprised as he was astonished, to the point where overreactions would have been superfluous.

Having brought an excited Garfiel to Reinhard’s room, Subaru made the blunt request and Reinhard readily consented to it. Subaru had been so surprised he’d almost fallen over.

Afterward, in response to Garfiel’s suggestion of going out of the city to avoid casualties, Reinhard had responded with a smile, “The yard is spacious enough, although we should mention to the manager that we won’t be damaging his land.”

Reinhard probably hadn’t intended for his words to carry any malice but they served as more than enough provocation for Garfiel.

Garfiel had accepted Reinhard’s proposal, exuding an aura of anger so intense that Subaru, who was standing beside Garfiel at the time, barely retained his composure when he felt his rage all but stab into Reinhard.

They had then proceeded down towards the hotel courtyard where a few rules were set. Weapons were not allowed, nor were dangerous blessings. Wounding the other party was also prohibited.

During that time, Subaru had called Ferris in case of any injuries. Subaru also invited Julius and Wilhelm as commentators on the battle itself. Unfortunately, Wilhelm had declined, so it ended up being just Julius and Ferris who watched the battle with him. On that note, Otto still had yet to return.

Subaru: “By the way, I didn’t mention this to the women or Mimi’s brothers.”

Julius: “I think that’s wise. If Anastasia-sama learned of this then she would no doubt turn it into a performance. If it reaches Hetaro or Tivey, then Mimi would surely be upset.”

Julius agreed with Subaru as they surveyed the courtyard. Of course, when there was such an exciting battle happening, people would inevitably become excited.

A handful of spectators gathering was something that Garfiel surely had considered from the very beginning of the match. Rather than regret a poor performance for being unable to go all out, he wanted the fight to be taken somewhere where real skill was all that mattered.

The hotel courtyard was spacious, and the scenery could be appreciated, but if it were to serve as the setting for a fierce battle then it wasn’t spacious enough. And Reinhard had also raised the condition of

“no damage to the environment”.

The setting was meant to push Garfiel to either be considerate or to regret being overtaken by anger, as a boy naturally would.

What would come of this?

Subaru: “Hey, Julius, can I ask you one question?”

Julius: “You can ask me more than one if you like but whether or not I’ll answer is another story.”

Subaru: “Don’t say such ambiguous things. This is why I hate you.”

Subaru dropped his face onto one hand, and began speaking in a serious tone.

Subaru: “In your opinion, how is Garfiel?”

Julius: “—He’s strong. According to the rumors, he is the shield guarding Emilia-sama. It is a well deserved reputation. Although, knowing of his association with you, my expectations were psychologically lowered.”

Subaru: “I’m going to beat you up.”

Julius: “He is strong. His talent is certainly real. In terms of combat alone, I don’t know whether or not I could beat him. And he has plenty of room for growth.”

Julius’s powerful assertion revealed that he was excited to see that possibility and that the potential sleeping within Garfiel was quite genuine.

He also seemed to embrace his envious admiration of Garfiel’s talent. This was no surprise. Julius was also a man of battle.

Ferris: “Buutt, even if there is a bright future awaiting him, it’s sad that right nyow he’s just being toyed with.”

Ferris spoke a cruel truth.

However, no one could say nothing to deny it. Everyone could see that. Garfiel himself could see it more clearly than anyone else.

Perhaps Garfiel would one day walk amongst the strongest. Perhaps he’d be the strongest.

But, right now, facing off against the strongest man in the world, what he was going through would surely best be described as being toyed with.

Garfiel: “——tch.”

Reinhard: “That’s a shame. Too hasty.”

The Sword Saint reaches out forward, catching Garfiel’s arm. With a giant swing, he throws him mercilessly down to the hard gravel.

A cloud of dust surrounds him, knocking the wind out of Garfiel. He quickly attempts to get back on his feet only to find Reinhard’s hand on his forehead, leaving Garfiel motionless before drawing a sigh,

Garfiel: “I lost.”

Even being scrutinized by others, he admitted defeat.

The ability to make that admission most likely indicated that Garfiel was still maintaining his sense of self-esteem, even if barely.

Subaru hoped that would serve as some small comfort to him, at the very least.

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— Garfiel didn’t appear for dinner that night.

Anastasia: “Why’d you go off by yourselves and hide such an interesting thing from us?” Anastasia glared at the men as she voiced her bitter complaints.

Rather than being dressed in her usual white fur, she was wearing a bathrobe, her purple hair dripping with water. Her white skin was silhouetted against the yukata, her childlike charm still evident.

Julius: “I think things are different from the way you’re phrasing it, but I specifically didn’t invite Anastasia-sama since you seemed to be having intimate conversations with the other candidates.”

Julius met her straightforward words with a wry smile and a bow. The men had finished cleaning the courtyard after the contest and had only just returned.

Hearing that remark, a mischievous smile appeared on Anastasia's lovely face.

Anastasia: “Ahh. My knight seems to be speaking some rather sophisticated sophistry. We can’t connect everything to money, can we? But, my Kararagi spirit, who likes fun and turmoil, is still a little upset.”

Subaru: "The spirit of our strongest shield hurts more, so let’s not bring it up again. Ah, he’ll be fine after a night of hanging his head in sorrow, but until then, please let him recover in peace.”

Following what Anastasia had said, Subaru made this request out of concern for his emotionally troubled honorary little brother. Everyone present nodded in assent. However,

Felt: “Anyway, is that what happened? This merciless knight here doesn’t know how to be nice to opponents and the like. Sorry about that, brother.”

After hearing about the incident, Felt gave Subaru a crooked-toothed laugh as she fiercely pounded Reinhard's shoulders, the red-haired knight sitting next to her with a wry smile.

Reinhard: "Felt-sama, speaking like that will lead to misunderstandings. I didn't exert any undue pressure in the battle just now, and I myself was at risk several times. Both my body and mind were enriched from that experience."

Felt: "That's not at all convincing considering how scared Larkins and the others are of you. Did you really have to freak them out so much when you first met?"

Reinhard: "No matter who I face, I can not afford to be arrogant. If I become too trusting in my ability, it will result in my failure."

Faced with Reinhard's resolute determination, Felt gave a disinterested sigh.

Although their dialogue reflected the nature of their transition to proper master and subordinate status, Reinhard's words were of greater concern to Subaru.

Having witnessed the battles in the courtyard, he saw clearly the root of Garfiel's concern. In a brief epiphany, he realized that Reinhard's words contained no irony or hypocrisy.

Reinhard was merely saying what he believed to be truth. Although this speech may sound unpleasant, the authenticity of his words seemed to prevent anyone from thinking so.

Perhaps that was his most dangerous ability.

Reinhard: "Speaking of which, Felt-sama. About that outfit."

Felt: "What is it, are you complaining? I was taking a bath with others, and everyone changed into this, so I did too. 'It's embarrassing, it's disappointing', is that what you want to tell me?"

Reinhard: "Not at all, I just wanted to tell you that it suits you well."

Felt: "Annoying!"

Those sweet words from the respected, revered, and most powerful knight.

Countless women would be incredibly envious of the beautiful bouquet of words that Felt had swatted away with the expression of frustration. The way she wore her bathrobe also suggested that she was someone who was a little rough around the edges.

—As Anastasia had said earlier, the women were in the bath house while the match outside between Garfiel and Reinhard had been going on.

For that reason, all of the women attending dinner were in yukatas.

Not only Anastasia and Felt, but also Mimi, Crusch, Emilia, and even Beatrice were all dressed in bathrobes.

Subaru: “Beako, you unexpectedly took a bath...”

Beatrice: “After Subaru left Betty alone in the hotel I was captured by Emilia, in fact. She forced Betty to go, I suppose.”

Unexpectedly wearing a pale blue bathrobe, the cute Beatrice seemed to be having difficulty figuring out how to correctly don the yukata. Strangely, Beatrice’s wet hair retained its usual drill-tailed form. If he yanked on her curly hair then they would probably bounce more crisply than usual.

Subaru: “So, that’s Beako’s testimony, but what’s the truth?"

Emilia: “Hm? Beatrice looked so lonely when she told me that Subaru left her, and since I’d just been invited to go bathing, I took her with me. I thought she looked happy about it, though...”

Beatrice: “T-That’s a lie, in fact! Don’t fabricate the truth, I suppose! Betty or Emilia, who does Subaru believe more, I suppose!”

Subaru: “I’ll take that as your confession.”

Combine Beatrice’s unflattering claim with Emilia’s assertive judgment, Subaru arrived at the natural conclusion.

Seeing Beatrice unwilling to yield, Emilia gave a happy smile. She also wore a bathrobe, her freshly washed silver hair gathered in the back. Subaru quietly delighted in seeing the whiteness of her neck.

Emilia: “Subaru, you’re breathing heavily. Do you have a fever?”

Subaru: “It’s merely the heat of love. Emilia-tan, can I braid your hair?”

Emilia: “Sure, but food will be served soon. Afterwards?”

Emilia pointed toward the table, and Subaru reluctantly retracted the hand that had been stroking her hair. The people around them seemed to be looking at them strangely.

Subaru tilted his head at the person opposite of him, who happened to be Felt.

Subaru: “What’s so weird?”

Felt: “I don’t know too much about you brother, or you, sister, but I still get a sense of distance between you two. This kind of interaction doesn’t have the slightest bit of an erotic atmosphere. Seems your relationship hasn’t changed at all since our last meeting.”

Subaru: “It's not like erotic flirting happens these days! And there’s no need to bring up what happened

in the capital, and my chest hurts so please stop!”

Subaru reacted to Felt in such a manner. Throughout the past year, serving as Emilia's knight, Subaru’s self-awareness had increased to a sufficient point, and he was aware of the state of the relationship between them as man and woman.

In all honestly, their romantic relationship was probably at a lower point than it had been before Subaru had become her knight.

This was largely in part due to Emilia’s mental age. Emilia's emotional maturity had yet to grow to a degree where she could accept Subaru’s romantic advances on her. So her getting along with him was nothing too significant.

His love had not faded, but the intent behind his interactions with her had changed. As long as there was no change in Emilia’s emotional awareness of him, their relationship would persist like this, intact.

At the least, Subaru understood that even if he took the first step, nothing would come of it.

Subaru: “Put it this way, this feeling might be something close to what Crusch-san’s relationship is going through.”

Crusch: “My relationship, what?”

Subaru sighed absentmindedly and his hand rubbed against his jaw. Crusch looked over at him, wearing an incredulous expression.

Of course, she’d been bathing with the women, so she was also dressed in a bathrobe. The chest that her former men's clothing had hidden was emphasized by the thinness of the bathrobe.

Without her inspiring aura, Crusch’s face had been both beautiful and innocent as she’d obeyed Ferris’s guidance while putting on her yukata.

Crusch glanced to the side, as Subaru rubbed his nose with his fingers.

Subaru: “Yeah. Although Ferris is always clinging to Crusch-san, it could be said that they don’t see each other as man and woman, right? And the starting point between you two is only a little bit before us, so maybe we go about treating the people we like the same way.”

Crusch: “Well, it's a bit embarrassing when you say it like that. Haha. Right, Ferris?”

Ferris: “Ferri-chan is devoted, even if Crusch-sama rejects my heart.”

Crusch: “——”

For a moment, the room was frozen by what Ferris said.

Crusch’s smile became stiff, and Ferris welcomed her response with a smile.

Incidentally, Ferris was dressed in a bathrobe as well, as if he was competing with the girls. Anyway, now wasn’t the time to dwell on that.

Subaru: “I'm so sorry for revealing the secret that I dug up. Alright, I guess it's time to eat.”

Crusch: “Don’t run away after digging up a bomb like that!”

Subaru tried to redirect the topic toward food, an idea which was immediately rejected by Crusch’s cry.

This was really a problem, and Subaru wasn’t expecting to have to encountered it. Hmm, what do to. He cast an uncertain gaze around.

Wilhelm: “Ferris. Take care to not scare Crusch-sama. Your lively and dangerous side feels more prominent than before.”

Before the silence could become awkward, Wilhelm interjected, and the mood shifted again.

The elderly man was the only man present in a bathrobe. It seemed that he’d been to the baths right after the women had left. Both his posture and yukata played their part in restoring the harmonious atmosphere from the its previous tenseness.

(Ferris is also a man though... uh?)

If he had a sword by his side, his image would have been perfect.

Ferris: “What, why would Wil-jii say that?”

Wilhelm: “A respectful love, a treasured love, a romantic love. Love is often taken for granted. Incurring confusion for the purpose of hiding your feelings is unpleasant for innocent hearts. Should I not speak harshly about this?”

Ferris: “Ha nyah. Don’t say it like that, that’s a bit much.”

Listening to Wilhelm’s heavy sermons, Ferris muttered in a low voice and snuggled up against Crusch’s shoulder.

Ferris: “It's okay. It was a obviously joke, so don’t be so nyon edge. If Ferri-chan were to really upset Crusch-sama, it’d be a huge problem.”

Crusch: “T-That’s right, isn’t it? Phew, I was a little scared since I was unused to it, but I appear to have misunderstood Ferris’s thoughts.”

Ferris: “—Not at all.”

Crusch sighed in relief, and a fleeting emotion flashed through Ferris's eyes as he watched her, leaving Subaru feeling unsure.

That complex emotion was something that he could not easily reveal.

During this year, Ferris was the one who had to deal with his master's amnesia.

During that time, he must have tried his best but still felt anxious and guilty, just like Subaru. Even so, his master, lacking the foundation of her memory, had needed to rely on him, and so he could not show any confusion.

Joshua: "The preparations for dinner have been completed. It will be served, does anyone mind?"

As the conversation came to an end, the timing on behalf of the hotel's staff was perfect. Joshua, who had been sitting without presence in a corner until then, had a steady flow of food brought up by the manager.

Everyone watched as their meal was arranged on the long table, their gazes colored with wonder. However, Subaru had a different reason to be surprised than everyone else.

Emilia and others were surprised by the variety of dishes, many of which they'd never seen before, while Subaru was surprised by the sight of familiar dishes.

Since there was no sea in this world, it had been nearly impossible to find such a dish, but Subaru immediately fixed his attention on the sashimi dish before him.

Subaru: "This, may I eat it as is?"

Anastasia: "I guess you're not accustomed to it, since you'd never experience this kind of dish without living close to water. The Water Plumage Pavilion is actually famed for this."

Sashimi wasn't the only thing Subaru recognized. There was a variety of Japanese dishes placed together on the table. In the midst of all the confusion, Anastasia began to bring food to her mouth, and Subaru took that as a cue to start.

He immediately went for the fancy sashimi and soy sauce. Emilia and Beatrice, seated beside him, both issued an "ah!". Concerns about a species of parasite arose as he swallowed, but, taking into account the class of hotel and the host, it was hardly a plausible worry.

Instead, Subaru simply focused on enjoying the tastes.

Subaru: "Delicious! Ah, it's been so long since I've had sashimi!"

Emilia: "I-It's delicious?"

Subaru: "It's not even a matter of delicious or not, since this is simply a proper delicacy. It's probably due to its freshness, but this probably makes the top of my list. If there's any sushi vinegar and rice here,

I could show you guys how proper sushi is made.”

Emilia: “Sorry. I don’t understand what you're saying. But, I’m glad it’s good.”

Partially listening to Subaru’s train-like speech, Emilia imitated him and dipped the sashimi into the soy sauce. As she tasted it, her amethyst eyes widened as she gripped her hands excitedly, exclaiming, “Mmmm!”.

Looking at the reaction of the master and servant, the others also began to taste the food.

Anastasia, who disappointedly drew away, relaxed her gaze as she watched Subaru and Emilia, muttering to herself “Ahh, it’s hopeless”.

Despite some people having missed the dinner, the participants were able to enjoy themselves amidst their restlessness.

—On this night, with its bright moon, the compassionate and forgiving world allowed for this peace.

Arc 5 - Chapter 14, "The Sword Demon Under The Moon"

by Gracedharperd - Furuta - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-14-the-sword-demon-under-the-moon/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

- Credit to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

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The dinner party had been one where everyone had forgotten their hostilities.

After dinner, Subaru had retired to his room, where the staff had already made his bed. Looking at the two futons, placed side by side, Subaru felt his admiration for the hotel increase. It followed the Japanese custom where towels, blankets, futons, and the like were all arranged when the resident had vacated their room.

Although, he’d always thought that such a practice left people feeling rather defenseless.

Beatrice: “Subaru. It looks like while we weren’t here, people succeeded in sneaking into our room, in fact—!”

Subaru: “Ah. It looks like the futons and towels you messed up were rearranged or replaced.”

Beatrice: “That…! Yes, it’s definitely a trap to tempt Betty, I suppose. They’re hiding under a guise of thoughtfulness, in fact.”

Subaru: “Sometimes people just have good intentions. Though, this service isn’t free.”

Beatrice carried herself with an unnecessary alertness and diligence even though she could barely keep

her eyes open. Subaru quickly ushered her to bed.

Since officially forming their contract, Subaru and Beatrice had slept in the same room. Although Anastasia had offered Beatrice her own room, she would just have left for Subaru's room anyway, so they'd respectfully declined.

That wasn't to say that Beatrice was a child who couldn't sleep alone. Rather, Beatrice used their nighttime contact with Subaru to sap the excess mana from his defective gate.

Beatrice: "So, Betty isn't here because she wants to be near Subaru, in fact. Don't misunderstand, I suppose."

Beatrice, who'd originally devised the terms of the contract, had spoken thusly.

But where her intent was no longer mattered. Subaru had long since become accustomed to falling asleep to the sound of someone else's breathing.

Beatrice: "...that green stuff was toxic, in fact. It's unforgivable, I suppose…"

Happy and tired, Beatrice buried herself in the futon and promptly fell asleep thinking of the wasabi that had traumatized her at dinner.

Touching Beatrice's frowning forehead, Subaru took in her cute sleeping face until he was satisfied, then climbed to his feet.

Subaru: "Now then. I'm going to take a bath, too. Have a good rest."

Next to Subaru's futon lay an unused bathrobe. If he hadn't known how to wear it, he could easily just ask a staff member. Of course, Subaru has worn yukatas in his original world and had no issue figuring out the garment.

Subaru: "If Ferris and Anastasia aren't there, I could also go decorate one of the women's bathrobes."

He of course wanted to seek out Emilia's bathrobe. The other Royal Election candidates were all lovely maidens, but if Subaru could tailor Emilia's clothing and dress her up then he could ensure she'd never be inferior to them in the slightest.

Subaru: "Well, it can't be helped. I guess I'll be satisfied that I got to do Emilia's three braids after dinner."

Although she'd let her hair down before bed, they'd launched a "three braids wave!" as they came undone, just as Subaru had planned. Naturally long hair that fell in waves, like Anastasia's, was also beautiful, but Subaru considered Emilia's long silver hair the most eye-catching.

Subaru: "The three braids and three braid wave are lovely. Emilia is definitely a shrewd woman. I could never do such a thing with Beatrice."

Beatrice’s hair inexplicably never left its twintailed drills.

It was probably because she was an artificial spirit. Changing her hairstyle was possible, but it always reverted to its original form as soon Subaru’s hands left her hair. It was so fascinating that he’d played with it a number of times.

While looking forward to the next morning, Subaru collected his bathrobe and made for the baths, treading carefully in order to not wake Beatrice. Thinking of the people whom he shared the hotel with, Subaru didn’t feel the need to be alert. He rather pitied anyone who would dare to launch any type of scheme.

Reinhard: “Although I doubt that anything will happen, I will know if anything is amiss. I hope that everyone can spend the night peacefully.”

Those were Reinhard’s reassuring words as they’d left the dining room. The sense of safety wasn’t just limited to the hotel, it extended to the entire region. Knowing Reinhard, even feeling safe in the entire city wouldn’t be a stretch.

So, for now, Subaru could wander the hotel without taking any precautions. Although it was regrettable that the hotel lacked an open-air bath, Subaru was still excited because he found bathing the most enjoyable part of any hotel stay.

Subaru: “——”

Subaru came to a stop, his relaxed expression shifting as he looked through a corridor into the courtyard, where Reinhard and Garfiel’s battle had taken place. In the evening, its atmosphere was different, and rather pleasing.

A round moon floated in the dark sky, blanketed by thick clouds which gave the scene a glamorous charm. A cool wind blew through the garden, where a lone figure stood.

Subaru: “—Wilhelm-san?”

A sturdy back, and long white hair.

At a glance, Subaru could tell that the yukata-clad figure was elderly, and there was only one man he knew who fit the profile.

Wilhelm: “Subaru-dono, did I surprise you?”

Probably having been long aware of the movement behind him, Wilhelm turned to greet Subaru, a soft look in his eyes.

He stood with his hands tucked in the sleeves of the bathrobe. His posture, combined with the Japanese style garden. Why was the image so perfectly natural?

Wilhelm: “Are you going to the baths next?”

Subaru: “Yes, that’s what I was planning on doing. By the way, I came here to see the garden in the evening, not because I got lost since I’m unfamiliar with the hotel.”

Wilhelm: “That wouldn’t happen to Subaru-dono. I also came to indulge in the beauty of the garden, so I believe that I can understand Subaru-dono’s mood.”

Subaru: “...it’s still embarrassing to be spoken of so highly.”

Subaru turned away, embarrassed, as Wilhelm, without any trace of exaggeration, spoke of him with unflinching trust.

Wilhelm was the person who Subaru had grown to respect the most since coming to this world. There were people who he wanted to stand alongside, and people who he wanted to compete with, but the only person who Subaru looked at with nothing but respect was Wilhelm.

Both as a person and as a man, Wilhelm was Subaru’s ideal.

Wilhelm: “Subaru-dono probably came here searching for the peace and solemnity of the garden at night. My presence here must be very frustrating.”

Subaru: “Not at all. Rather, seeing the Sword Demon in this windy garden is so perfect that I want to forever engrave this image in my heart. I like seeing people who shine in the moonlight.”

As far as Subaru was concerned, Emilia’s beauty was undoubtedly the most commensurate with that of the moonlit night.

Her long silver hair was different from the glow of the sun. Emilia’s beauty was like the illusory of the moonlight, and Subaru wanted to be the stars hovering around the moon.

So, seeing the Sword Demon standing under a moonlit night was a sight that Subaru had been longing to see.

Wilhelm: “...Subaru-dono shouldn’t waste such heartfelt words on an old man like me. If you whispered them to the woman you love, you would surely capture her attention.”

Subaru: “Putting on those airs would just be an insecticide to all the lovely butterflies I’ve attracted. And anyway, the one I want to say those words to wouldn’t understand them.”

Wilhelm: “Trying to bring out her flawless smile, searching for the perfect words… that anxious feeling is one of the pleasures of love, Subaru-dono.”

Hearing Wilhelm’s light tone, Subaru gave a relaxed shrug of his shoulders.

Subaru: “Oh? You seem to be referencing your faraway love story. Did you ever go through that,

Wilhelm-san?”

Wilhelm: “Would you like to hear it?”

Subaru: “Be sure to tell me every detail.”

Subaru gave a ceremonious, respectful bow, and Wilhelm’s “it can’t be helped” attitude was tinged with a look of joy.

Wilhelm: “When I was a young man, I was just as terrible with words as I am now. I never wanted to discuss anything other than swords, since I had no interests aside from swordplay. I must have bored my wife to no end when we first met.”

Subaru: “But, your wife didn’t dislike talking to that Wilhelm-san, right?”

Wilhelm: “She was an open-minded woman. Whether it be the loss of a heavy responsibility which burdened a heart, or escaping a duty, neglecting the thoughts of others, we never discussed any of those in our chats. She was born a gentle, warm person.”

Wilhelm closed his eyes with a wistful smile.

Subaru bent silently over the corridor, listening to the old man’s memories.

Wilhelm: “Because I was such an unsociable person, my wife always supplied the topics during our conversations. On top of that, I initially failed to notice how drawn I was to her. Whenever I spoke with her, I avoided facing the agitation in my heart.”

Subaru: “Wilhelm-san was really bad at talking to women, huh.”

Wilhelm: “Really, I gave everything to the sword. When I gripped my sword, I forgot about everything else, as if merely swinging my sword would give me a way of survival. —The one who reminded me of the reason I took it up was my wife.”

Subaru: “Is that when you realized you loved her?”

Wilhelm: “...you seem to have seen through me, Subaru-dono.”

Wilhelm fell silent, and Subaru followed suit.

Wilhelm was surely unaware of the expression he currently wore. Subaru, however, felt a strong wave of pride wash over him as he saw it.

The look in Wilhelm’s eyes, the wrinkles on his face, the tone of his voice, were all legendary. The wife he loved just as strongly now as he had then, Thearesia van Astrea.

The old man’s expression, attitude, and very existence all generously sang of the love he held for his

wife.

No matter who, anyone who saw him would, without doubt, instantly see that he was in love.

Even if everything in the world were to wither and fade, not a single person would fail to understand the depth of that emotion.

This was the depth of Wilhelm's love, clearly something that should be worn with pride. Subaru: "———"

As Subaru gazed upon Wilhelm's face, his eyes unconsciously welled with tears.

Unbearable feelings arose spontaneously, and gathered as heat in his eyes. He didn't know it had touched him so much. Why did his heart feel so warm upon seeing someone in love?

Crying in such a situation would only serve to bother Wilhelm.

Wilhelm: "Like Subaru-dono said, that was when I realized my feelings for my wife."

Subaru lowered his face, pretending to scratch his head as he hid his tears. Although he should have noticed that Subaru had started crying, Wilhelm continued talking.

Was he just immersed in the past, or was he pretending not to notice Subaru's reaction? Subaru had no way of knowing, so he kept silent and continued to listen.

Wilhelm: "The sword was everything to me, but it was only one part of who I was. It was my wife who made me realize this obvious truth, and so every time I swing my sword, I'm reminded of her."

Subaru: "Is that, true even now?"

Wilhelm: "—That is truer now than it ever was."

Wilhelm took a moment to formulate a response.

Finally, turning his back to the moonlight, Wilhelm turned to face Subaru. The feelings flashing across the old man's face were so complex that Subaru couldn't quite read them all.

Pride. Remorse. Hesitation. Enthusiasm. Shame. Courage.

—But those all stemmed from his love.

Wilhelm: "I try my best to keep holding my sword, so that I will continue to be reminded of my wife. Even death could not take her from my memory, and, when my time comes, I want to die with a sword in hand. I would be with her forever."

Subaru: "——"

This was Wilhelm's awkward, straightforward way of expressing the love that he couldn't otherwise.

Subaru swallowed, repeatedly taking deep breaths to loosen the pressure in his heart and the numbness in his tongue, until he finally judged himself as being able to speak again.

Subaru: "When I die and whatnot, please don't talk about such things that have no sign whatsoever of happening. Wilhelm-san is definitely surely completely absolutely totally entirely even younger than super young, and so even thinking about your retirement is certainly going to trouble people."

Wilhelm: "Subaru-dono?"

Subaru: "Crusch and Ferris both are very dependent on Wilhelm-san. Crusch's memory loss is a very serious issue, and Ferris who is supporting her hasn't expressed this, but I'm sure he's completely spent himself. So they'll be a mess if Wilhelm-san doesn't help! And, I too!"

Wilhelm: "——"

Subaru: "I also have many, many things I'd like to consult with Wilhelm-san. We're obviously in hostile factions, so maybe that's just naivete, but, I…"

Subaru truly liked Wilhelm.

Wilhelm, who had buried in his heart of hearts his love for his wife, and sought vengeance for her, was someone who Subaru truly respected. Even if that hadn't happened, even if their relationship had remained just a ten-day mentorship, then Subaru would still have deeply respected Wilhelm's strength and fortitude.

Hearing the Wilhelm that he respected so much speak of "death" was terrifying to Subaru.

Subaru was far more sensitive to the notion of the people he cared about dying. This was due both to his contract with Roswaal and to Subaru's own views on Return by Death shifting.

There was also a part of him who was always secretly worried about Emilia and Beatrice.

Wilhelm: "...I am the just same as before, truly terrible with words."

Upon hearing Subaru's stubborn, desperate words, Wilhelm smiled.

The old man direct a warm look at Subaru, whose breaths were still shallow, and spoke.

Wilhelm: "It was terrible of me to have you worry so much. Despite my earlier words, I'm not always thinking of death. Although it's an inevitable truth, I've struggled through the hardest challenge already."

Subaru: "…Ah."

Subaru relaxed slightly as he came to a realization. Wilhelm was speaking of the White Whale.

Wilhelm had faced no small sacrifice in the battle against his fated enemy. At that time, he was surely aware of the possibility of his death. But, in the end, he had prevailed, and—

Wilhelm: “I think I’m in good condition. I fulfilled my dearest wish and survived, and now I can live free of shame.”

Subaru: “Wilhelm-san…”

Wilhelm: “I did what I needed to do, and I think there is nothing more honorable than that. Then and now, aside from merely swinging my sword, my chest is shaking with the pursuit of a happiness. I have people who I’ve pledged my support to, and I’ve visited my wife’s grave. I’ve received so many blessings.”

Yes, that was it.

That was right. Wilhelm would not do anything unreasonable.

The old man’s steady, calm smile. Subaru, as someone who was young and superficial, had no way of seeing through it. But that smile was by no means a fake or ironic one.

Wilhelm was not unreasonable. And even in the unlikely event that this was the case, he wouldn’t have spilled a long-held burden to Subaru.

However, from the beginning, weren’t Subaru’s attempts to have Wilhelm reveal his thoughts just arrogance?

Wilhelm: “Subaru-dono. —This is a virtue, but also a weakness.”

Subaru: “.....”

Looking at the troubled Subaru, Wilhelm spoke quietly.

There was no smile in the voice, but there was no criticism either. Rather, the way he spoke was reminiscent of how an older person would caution a younger one.

Speaking more frankly, it was the tone a grandfather would take with his grandson.

Wilhelm: “My wife did this too, the bad habit of neglecting and shoving aside your own feelings as you focusing on those of the people around you.”

Subaru: “Bad habit, is it… No, I’m hardly such a good person. I don’t want anything like everyone’s happiness. I just want the people I’m close to to be happy.”

Wilhelm: “The range of the people who you consider close to you is also a problem. While it wasn’t

what my wife desired, for a woman, she held a great amount of power, and could affect far more people than she ever wanted to.”

Wilhelm’s wife, Thereasia, was the previous Sword Saint.

Despite lacking common knowledge, Subaru had heard plenty about her in the past year. The civil unrest that took place in the kingdom of Lugunica, which came to be known as the Demi-Human War, had been single handedly ended by the Sword Saint.

What she had accomplished with her undue strength was the salvation of the country’s stability. Natsuki Subaru would never be able to compare with such a hero.

Subaru: “I understand, about your wife, but I can’t match up to her in any way.”

Wilhelm: “My wife was just an ordinary woman who admired flowers. Even if she’s a hero of legend, she didn’t always act as such. And Subaru-dono, your reputation is good, and your influence is wide. In the future, your range will surely increase, and you will be able to do more and more.”

Subaru: “This kind of thing…”

Wilhelm: “I am convinced that anything Subaru-dono cannot achieve alone, he will work together with others to do, and will become a great, accomplished person.”

Subaru: “——”

Speechless.

Wilhelm had overestimated him by so much, and that had struck Subaru speechless. That he was someone who could do great things, could Subaru really believe this?

He was fragile and weak, his intellect was lacking, and his ideas were often poor and baseless. Because he was a person who could not do anything by himself, all he could ever do was rely on others to solve his problems.

That method was surely flawed. For now, he was barely struggling along, but eventually he could certainly face failure.

When that time inevitably arrived, Subaru had so many people to disappoint.

Wilhelm: “I apologize for bringing up the same things. It must trouble you to hear them over and over relentlessly.”

Subaru: “Wilhelm-san, I…”

Wilhelm: “There may not be many people conscious of it, but it’s something that everyone will come to understand one day.”

Subaru: “I'm just an immature little child who is clumsy at everything I do.”

Wilhelm: “Well, this immature little child who is clumsy at everything he does is one who I’m very fond of.”

After a moment, Wilhelm nodded in satisfaction.

Wilhelm: “And the people who think like this will surely increase from now on.”

As if deeply touched by Wilhelm’s words, Subaru again fell silent.

Part of him was overwhelmed, and wanted to cast the notion from his mind. However, because the idea had come from none other than Wilhelm, Subaru could not give it up so easily.

In the depths of his heart, he couldn’t believe in himself to that extent. But he also couldn’t discard Wilhelm’s belief in him.

Subaru decided to keep the feelings he’d felt with him, until he’d worked through them.

He was very conscious of his own deficits. So any feelings, encouragement, or words, he’d decided to carry with him.

And that was how he decided to treat Wilhelm’s words.

Subaru, who was desperately sorting his feelings out, failed to notice Wilhelm’s tender gaze.

Wilhelm: “I spoke too much and kept you here for a long time, my apologies.”

Estimating that Subaru was done grappling with himself, Wilhelm spoke up. Accepting it, Subaru judged that tonight’s scene would end soon.

Subaru: “Me too, I’m sorry for asking so much, but I really wanted to hear your love story with your wife.”

Wilhelm: “No, it’s been a long time since I’ve had the pleasure of talking about my wife. Lately, both Crusch-sama and Felix have been busy.”

Subaru: “In addition to hearing a love story, I’ve also gotten insight into how another faction operates!”

Wilhelm: “It’s a little bit excessively sentimental. Hearing an old man’s long ramble is incredibly boring.”

Wilhelm’s blue eyes lit with affection as he smiled lightly. Subaru didn’t notice the fleeting emotion and instead focused on what was just happening.

Initially, Wilhelm had stood alone in the garden.

He’d told Subaru that he’d come to appreciate the garden at night.

The best location for enjoying the view of the garden was the corridor where Subaru was currently standing.

In fact, standing where Wilhelm was meant that much of the garden’s moonlit landscape would be hidden.

Of course, Subaru may very well have been overthinking. But, if there were something else that would bring Wilhelm to the garden, then it would be,

Subaru: “...there, that’s where Reinhard stood.” Wilhelm: “——”

Wilhelm’s location, where he’d been standing all along, was the area that Reinhard and Garfiel had fought in.

That patch of gravel was where the handsome red-haired swordsman had stood, the very picture of unflinching immobility.

That Wilhelm had felt that sense of disturbance and had gone to confirm it would have been perfectly natural. However, only Wilhelm knew the reason that he had yet to leave that spot.

Subaru: “Wilhelm-san. I don’t want to nose into another family’s affairs, and I’ve graduated from being the lively character who insists on hearing everything that’s happened just to satisfy my own curiosity, but…”

Wilhelm: “Ah, feel free to ask.”

Subaru: “Do you not get along with Reinhard? Even though you’re obviously family?”

The grandfather and grandson, and the complex relationships in the Astrea family.

Even understanding that he may have been undermining the trust that had built up between him and Wilhelm, Subaru still breached the subject.

He might have chosen not to do so had he not just spoken with Wilhelm in the garden. He watched Wilhelm’s profile, which overlooked his grandson's footsteps.

After their exchange, how could he refrain from asking?

Wilhelm: “While speaking with Subaru-dono, I thought of it.”

Subaru: “.....”

Wilhelm: “Why am I unable to speak these words to my own grandson?”

Those distressed words came straight from Wilhelm's heart.

Wilhelm's face fell flat. He was expressionless, certainly not emotionless. He was suppressing his feelings to hide his lament behind a hard shell.

What Wilhelm now possessed was pure regret.

Wilhelm: "I am a man with a lot of remorse, but there are three in particular that I can do nothing about. One of them is the distance between me and my grandson."

Subaru: "But, doesn't Wilhelm-san regret it?"

Wilhelm: "Even regretting shouldn't be allowed. The criticisms I spoke to my grandson… to Reinhard, were so harsh. It's something unforgivable, and stupid, that can't be fixed anymore."

Wilhelm, who was still hiding his feelings under a guise of expressionlessness, seemed to be burning with an emotion, a flame, that had consumed Wilhelm for years. It was one of both anger and regret, one that he had always clung to.

Wilhelm: "I used my crusade against my wife's murderer as an excuse to avoid facing that remorse, and, after successfully crushing the enemy, I recognize that I should begin to search for a way to reconcile."

Subaru: "But you lack the courage?"

Wilhelm: "I'm honestly so shameful. My grandson certainly resents me now. Thinking of this, I cannot take a step forward."

Wilhelm issued a deep sigh of disappointment, seeming to shrink in on himself. Subaru was dumbstruck, and, finally inadvertently managed a laugh.

Wilhelm: "Subaru-dono?"

Subaru: "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to laugh, that was inappropriate."

Wilhelm cast a disbelieving look at Subaru. Really, this old man, how many times would he surprise Subaru in one night?

Subaru: "Wilhelm-san seems to be thinking that he's unqualified to be Reinhard's grandfather…"

Wilhelm: "Well, yes. Compared to my grandson, I came to a standstill after realizing my mistakes. He's too kind to the cowardly person that I am…"

Subaru: "If you put it that way, then I can only see a grandfather who's afraid of being rejected by his grandson."

Wilhelm: "…huh?"

Wilhelm shook off his gloom and looked Subaru in the face. Subaru waved his hand, still fighting an impulse to laugh.

Subaru: “I don’t fully understand the reasons for the poor relationship between Wilhelm-san and Reinhard, so I might be misunderstanding. But in the eyes of an outsider, Wilhelm-san wants to reconcile with Reinhard and looks like he really wants to apologize, so making an apology would be a good idea.”

Wilhelm: “But Reinhard will not forgive me.”

Subaru: “If he doesn’t forgive you at first, keep apologizing until he does. You’re not apologizing to be forgiven, you’re apologizing to apologize, right? The person making the apology has nothing to worry about, because they’re not a bad person.”

Wilhelm: “——”

This time, it was Wilhelm’s turn to fall speechless at Subaru’s extreme words.

Of course, Subaru knew that his were very headstrong. Even so, he believed it was necessary to keep insisting.

In order to motivate Wilhelm. In order to let him face Reinhard.

Of course, after being alienated for so many years, a sudden apology would initially be thought of as “what’s going on with this guy?”. However, if many apologies were made, then “what's going on with this guy?” would give way to either “there’s no helping it, then” or “ugh, this guy’s too annoying”.

Wilhelm: “I think things would deteriorate.”

Subaru: “But at least they’ll change. Don’t you think that any change is better than being stuck in the worst-case scenario your situation seems to be in?”

It was universally acknowledged that Subaru had made an awful initial impression. Breaking through interpersonal barriers was nothing to Subaru.

Subaru: “After a few years, if you give him some pocket money, you could immediately soften his attitude toward you. Although the impression of you may be poor, if you do something nice for him, won’t he come to think of you as a nice person? Reinhard is incredible to deal with, and even I unexpectedly became his friend right away.”

Wilhelm: “But… it won’t be that simple with Reinhard…”

Subaru: “—Reinhard said he wanted to hear about the battle with the White Whale.”

Subaru spoke in a humorous tone, and, bit by bit, Wilhelm seemed to relax.

Subaru told Wilhelm of what Reinhard had said outside of the tea room. After listening to his story,

Wilhelm suddenly opened his blue eyes.

Subaru: “I don’t know if the White Whale is related to your poor relationship, but if it is, then Reinhard’s definitely concerned about it. Of course, he’s certainly heard of how Wilhelm-san crushed the White Whale, and I’m sure he wants to know about how you avenged his grandmother after ten years.”

Wilhelm: “——”

Subaru: “That guy is surely also looking forward to changing your stiff relationship right now.”

Subaru had no way of knowing Reinhard’s intentions.

Subaru had always seen Reinhard as a man who was ridiculously perfect beyond perfect, and had never associated him with powerlessness or ignorance before.

But those were flawed ideas. Reinhard was also human. He had worries just like anyone else.

Even the man Subaru had regarded as superhuman, Wilhelm, was, beneath the surface, an ordinary man and ordinary grandfather, filled with ordinary troubles and shortcomings.

It would be no surprise if the same held true for Reinhard.

Subaru’s words just now had surprised Wilhelm, who closed his eyes as if he were meditating on them. Time seemed to be flowing by with the still wind.

Then, after a moment of silence between the two, Wilhelm reopened his eyes.

Wilhelm: “My grandson… Reinhard would listen to me.”

Subaru: “Annoy him with a hello first and bounce back if he rejects you. That’s happened to me with every girl I’ve met aside from Emilia.”

Wilhelm: “Really—”

After hearing Subaru’s reply, Wilhelm shook his head.

Then, the old man looked up, leaning his head back and fixing his eyes on the moon hanging in the sky.

Wilhelm: “Subaru-dono is invincible.”

The words were spoken with the hint of a smile.

Arc 5 - Chapter 15, "A Deafening Silence"

by Gracedharperd - Furuta - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-15-a-deafening-silence/

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Credit to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

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The next morning, a bleary-eyed Subaru stood in the sunlit courtyard. Feeling the hard gravel and sand through his shoes, he took a deep breath of the cool morning air.

Emilia directed a smile at the pleased Subaru as he gave a relaxed, “mmm!”.

Emilia: “What is it? Subaru seems happy today, did something nice happen?”

Subaru: “Many nice things happened. An important event happened last night, Emilia’s charming braid was an unexpected treat, and the baths were spacious and comfortable.”

Emilia: “Ah, I can say the same. I also took a very comfortable bath yesterday. The bathhouse in the Roswaal Mansion is great, but the bath surrounded by stones here is so fresh.”

Last night, the beauty of Emilia’s melodiously flowing silver hair, as the braid Subaru had made swayed, had been breathtaking. Although her usual long straight hair also showed her frosty, snow-like beauty, seeing an unusual hairstyle on her had its own sense of privilege.

Anyway, Emilia, whatever she looked like, was always equally appealing.

With that in mind, Subaru turned his attention back to the present as Emilia spoke again.

Although indoors, the bath went as far as it could to resemble an open-air bath, and the decorations evoked a natural image of the outdoors. Cobblestone covered the ledges along the bath’s wall. If it had been marble instead, the bath would have lost much of its uniqueness.

Emilia: “Since I saw this type of bath for the first time, I ended up having a lot of fun frolicking with Crusch-san and Felt-chan.”

Subaru: “That’s a prime fanservice scene from a galgame. It's a CG that’s absolutely necessary to collect.”

Emilia: “C… G?”

Subaru: “It’s nothing, I was just teasing you. You seem happy, are you?”

Emilia: “Mm, very.”

Emilia, whose happiness was shared with Subaru, also seemed at a glance, joyful, and this feeling alleviated the initial anxiety and suspicion that had accompanied their trip to Pristella. The issue was—

Subaru: “Those two over there have such unhappy, gloomy looking faces.”

Beatrice: “...it's nothing, in fact.”

Otto: “Please don’t mind me... hic. I just had a little, hic, too much to drink.”

Standing where Subaru was pointing was a loli with a frosty expression on her face, and a man whose usually elegant features were pale.

Needless to say, these two were Beatrice and Otto. After some careful consideration, Subaru decided to say hello to the almost transparent Otto.

Subaru: “Otto. You were a no-show at dinner yesterday, where’d you go?”

Otto: “Like I said when we parted ways, hic, it’s rare for me to have a chance to come to Pristella, and while, hic, we’re here, I wanted to establish some connections.”

Subaru: “What’s up with you? You’re even more drunk than you were when we first met.”

Otto: “…? My memory might be messed up, but, hic, my first meeting with Natsuki-san didn’t seem to involve alcohol…”

Subaru: “Well, it’s your own memory, so think what you will.”

Otto, who was reproached for an unknown reason, wore a helpless expression, although Subaru’s comments were all moot.

From Subaru’s perspective, he had numerous first meetings with Otto, but his first one was with a frustrated Otto in a tavern, who had been as equally pale as the current one. Shortly afterwards, however, Subaru had returned from death. Therefore, from Otto’s point view, their first meeting had been the embarrassing one in which Subaru had been responsible for saving him from the Witch Cult.

Of course, it was futile to argue, since both would be wrong.

Subaru: “Don’t do things that would give Beako bad habits. Well, I can understand that you were in a rush to help our faction.”

Otto: “I did this all of my own volition. —Even though I have no idea why I did this to myself.”

Otto, whose head seemed to be feeling rather heavy, was unable to respond to Subaru. After a moment he looked up at the courtyard, changing the course of the conversation with an “actually...”,

Otto: “What happened to Garfiel? It’s rare to not see him up at this time. Isn’t it convention for him to get up earlier than anyone earlier so he can find the highest location to yell from?”

Subaru: “There’s probably not anywhere high up here, but that isn’t why he’s not here. Though, that would be his own juvenile secret. Please be gentle with him the next time you meet.”

Otto: “To someone who has no idea whatsoever as the what happened, aren’t those words too misleading!? …ahh, my head still hurts.”

Subaru: “You’re certainly self-destructive.”

Watching a night-comatose Otto collapse onto the floor, Subaru smiled. He then turned around and looked at Beatrice, who had been silent since the beginning of their exchange.

Subaru: “So, what about, Beako? Yesterday, you were so lively, but now you’re all gloomy. That’s so uncute.”

Beatrice: “Don’t just assume things, I suppose. I’m not feeling gloomy, in fact. Betty just suddenly remembered a few things, which she has to carefully scrutinize, I suppose.”

Subaru: “What's the matter? If you have any trouble, spit it out. If it’s something dangerous, one person might not know how to handle it.”

Surprised at what Beatrice had said, Subaru narrowed his eyes slightly and gave a gesture indicating his readiness. Emilia also nodded as if she were listening carefully.

Beatrice bit her lips, revealing a rare hesitation, before choosing her words with a pompous air.

Beatrice: “It started yesterday, after Subaru abandoned me to play with Garfiel, in fact.”

Subaru: “A questionable interpretation, but go on.”

Beatrice: “Betty had gone to look for Emilia to kill time with, I suppose. On the way to her room, I ran into an employee, who I made a little bit of small talk with, in fact.”

Subaru: “Beako… making small talk…!?”

Learning that Beatrice's ability to communicate had improved somewhat left Subaru speechless. He turned to Emilia, shocked, and she gave an eager nod.

Incredible! The notion of Beatrice initiating conversations with strangers was entirely unexpected. Maybe the freshness of travel had let Beatrice experience an unexpected growth.

After returning home, he needed to update the “Beako’s Growth Diary” with this development as soon as possible.

The diary, which recorded the Beako’s daily growth, had already reached three volumes. Thanks to this journey, he could add a new page.

Unaware that her daily activities were being recorded, Beatrice found Subaru and Emilia’s attention annoying, and always reacted with a dissatisfied “You’re exaggerating, I suppose!”.

Beatrice: “I’ll keep talking, in fact. When the waiter saw Betty, he said he had news and put on a very mysterious expression, I suppose. He told me, ‘At night, something scary will haunt this hotel’, in fact.”

Subaru “.....”

Beatrice: “Honestly, when Betty heard she hesitated to tell anyone so as not to create unnecessary confusion, I suppose. Although, I still decided to do some preparation last night as a precaution, in fact…”

Beatrice’s voice rose as she became worked up, and she didn’t notice how Subaru had fallen silent. Then, she dropped her voice to a whisper, as ceremoniously as if she were spreading a little known secret.

Beatrice: “In the middle of the night, Betty heard something strange, I suppose. I didn’t want to wake up Subaru, who had a stupid expression on his face as he slept, so I quietly left our sleeping quarters alone to investigate, in fact.”

Subaru: “You shouldn’t stare at someone else’s sleeping face.”

Beatrice: “O-Of course I didn’t stare, I suppose! I just gave a glance, as a lady’s etiquette dictates, in fact!”

She might not have looked at the sleeping Subaru at all, but it was so cute that Subaru put the matter aside for time being.

Beako took Subaru’s acquiescence as a sign to continue, and her mysterious expression reappeared.

Beatrice: “Betty found an unusual presence hovering near the hotel, so I tracked it, I suppose. After a while, I finally found its source on the front porch…”

Subaru: “You found it?”

Beatrice: “Well, there was a dangerous pale face slowly emerging from the darkness, I suppose. It seemed

to be besieging Betty, so she confronted it, in fact."

Beatrice's petite forehead shone faintly with sweat, as if she were fully immersed in the grim situation she'd been in last night. Although Subaru didn't understand how a spirit's sweat glands worked, it made the atmosphere rather tense, so he chose to not comment on it.

Beatrice: "Shortly after, probably due to its fear of Betty's power, the figure slowly melted back into the darkness, I suppose. After repeatedly confirming that there would be no trouble later, Betty returned to the room, in fact. Then I stepped over the idiotically sleeping Subaru to return to bed, I suppose."

Subaru: "Don't peep on someone sleeping, it's indecent."

Beatrice: "I only confirmed that you were okay, I suppose! Absolutely no such thing like touching your forehead or eyebrows happened, in fact!"

This was certainly a self-admission, but because it was so cute, Subaru again neglected to mention it.

All in all, that seemed to be the end of Beatrice's horror story. Subaru held his chin and nodded slightly as he began to consider what she had said.

A strange event had happened at the inn.

The incredible, strange things in this world were hardly few in number. Actually, after spending a year in the parallel world, he could navigate its strangeness fairly well. For example, using common sense, he could conclude that no ghosts existed in this place.

As far as common sense goes, even calling this a haunting seemed to be a poor assertion.

Even so, that kind of weird rumor still existed here, and that the hotel had even inherited a story about Japanese-style spirits was really rather incredible.

Subaru heartily admired this phenomenon, as he took a conclusive breath.

Subaru: "So, what happened last night, Otto?"

Otto: "Ah, I remember now. As I lay on the porch, still on the verge of vomiting, I noticed that Beatrice-chan was staring at me, but I was unable to speak at the time. Finally, I couldn't hold back and went to vomit in the bushes, and once I'd come back, she'd vanished."

Subaru: "That would be it, then."

Beatrice: "…how is this, how is it possible, in fact?"

It was almost too much for Beatrice to handle.

It was, at this point, incredibly obvious that the true face of the so-called specter was actually a drunk

Otto, and she had no idea what to say.

What she'd been certain she'd seen was relentlessly denied, and Beatrice looked as if her ability to reason had vanished. Subaru stroked her as though comforting her, but in his heart he concluded that Beatrice was bad at sleeping in unfamiliar surroundings.

The waiter, who described the specter to Beatrice, had surely seen that Beatrice was the epitome of someone who was gullible, and would take any kind of prank too seriously.

Her red face, full of remorse and dissatisfaction, was so adorable that Subaru gave it the highest level of praise.

Felt: "Yo, everyone's gathered here already."

A light female cut into the crowd of laughter.

Looking to the source of the sound, Subaru spotted a figure in the corridor; a girl shaking out her short, golden hair, Felt.

She had replaced the bathrobe with her usual light attire, swinging her slender arms with ease, looking more or less like a girl from the streets.

Subaru: "Morning. You're dressed so casually, I can just feel Reinhard's lament."

Felt: "Don't preach about it, that guy annoys me with it so much, and even Rom-jii is on his side. It's such a bother."

Voicing her dissatisfaction, an impatient Felt leapt from the corridor and landed beside Otto, who wasn't paying much attention to what was going on. She then turned towards Subaru and crooked her head to ask,

Felt: "Having said that, there's a thing that I've been curious about."

Subaru: "What is it?"

Felt: "Ah, that is to say, why have you all been doing this weird dance together?"

Felt wore a curious expression as she watched Subaru's strange dance — his radio gymnastics.

Whether before starting a long journey, or taking a few steps on the road, everyone would start their morning with radio gymnastics.

This scene had long appeared every morning in not only the Roswaal Mansion, but across the entirety of the Mathers territories.

Subaru: "Oh, it's just the secret to health and longevity. Performed by everyone, from the children to the

elderly, the age of the popular 'radio gymnastics' of healthiness will reign. After Emilia-tan becomes the king, our radio gymnastics will become a government mandated morning activity!”

Emilia: “Yeah, I'd be happy if everyone could do it together.”

Felt: “That’s… I can’t help but feel that if such a thing becomes reality, the king’s reputation will be ruined…”

Scrutinizing their movement, Felt muttered her cynical thoughts.

It was saddening to see, but sooner or later, even those who hadn’t wanted to follow along were drawn into it after realizing the benefits of this easily performed activity.

The popularity of this movement after it has spread to the various villages was indeed high.

Subaru: “Beako and Otto were also reluctant from the very beginning, but now they even participate despite having suffered through a lonely night of fear, or a morning of a hangover!”

Beatrice: “Betty was dragged into this by Subaru, in fact.”

Otto: “I obviously just wanted to sleep off my headache, but then I heard the claps and saw the dancing…”

Beatrice: “Even if I've become sick of this, I’m addicted.”

Otto: “Utterly fascinating.”

Beatrice and Otto gave a somewhat weak explanation, while Subaru and Emilia stood proud. Felt scratched her white neck as she pondered the two distinctly different sets of responses.

Felt: “Indeed, I often hear of popular, strange activities happening in sister’s vicinity. Strange dances, hollowed out pumpkins, women carefully baking food for their beloved as a gift. Ah, it's like that.”

Subaru: “Although now they’re only unique occurrences in the border territories, I know that one day it will be turned into a nationwide popularization project. Considering this, we could try using Anastasia-san in our schemes.”

Valentine's Day would revolutionize the snack industry, and the markets would broaden. If the topic of large economical shift came up, Anastasia would immediately find a way to capitalize on it.

If it wasn’t too late, Subaru considered catching Anastasia when she was free to discuss those opportunities with her.

Felt: “Has brother always given off that kind of feeling?”

Emilia: “Well, Subaru has always been that way. It seems like he’s teasing, but he really wants to improve things, even if he pretends he’s always joking.”

Felt: “Yeah but, you don’t even know if he’s joking or not until the dust settles …”

Emilia’s answer slightly flustered Felt.

Occasionally this kind of thing would happen due to Emilia’s spiritual age. For her, seeing eye to eye with Felt was like a child trying to look an animal in the eyes.

Felt, who struggled and crawled her way up in slums, also had her unique way of living.

Emilia: “Why is Felt-chan all alone, isn’t Reinhard worried when you’re not together?”

Felt: “I'm not some kid who needs to be taken care of, and besides, that guy is just annoying when he’s near me, so I just told him to go off somewhere, since sister and everyone else would be here. It’s so annoying, as soon as anything happens, that guy arrives in the blink of an eye.”

Emilia: “Right. Then I feel at ease.”

Emilia carelessly chuckled at Felt’s complaint. Receiving a response which didn’t match her expectations, Felt gave an anxious sigh and began playing roughly with her blonde hair.

Emilia: “Felt-chan, you have such beautiful hair, you shouldn’t play with it so crudely. I’ve been taught by Subaru and Frederica-san to respect hair.”

Felt: “Damn, you’re so bossy… let me mind my own hair, and didn’t I say to stop adding ‘-chan’ to my name? It gives me goosebumps!”

Emilia: “Even if you say so, I can’t drop this habit all at once. I’ll try my best, but if I can’t hold back, I’ll be very sorry. Is that fine?”

Felt: “It’s not fine in the slightest!”

Because Emilia didn’t hold any maliciousness, Felt could only give a low, cat-like growl to vent her irritation.

Simply on the surface level, people hearing their conversation would smile, as their exchange resembled a secret language between best friends.

Subaru: “Well, our radio gymnastics are done, so feel free to go to bed. Or you could take a bath, they’re nice and refreshing.”

Otto: “I’d already taken a bath… but, sadly, the smell of alcohol didn’t seem to wash away.”

Subaru: “Before Garfiel shows up to yell at you, you’d best hurry up and wash it away. In my hometown, there’s a saying that any issue can be solved with a few hot baths.”

Subaru reached out a hand to the weak Otto as he finished speaking.

Otto: “It would be a catastrophe if he saw me like this… since you gave me your advice, I’ll follow it while I still have my life…”

Subaru lifted Otto to his feet and gave his weak shoulder a pat. Otto sighed, still despondent, as Subaru gazed up at the sky.

A sky full of smiles. Thin clouds hung in the early morning sky, reflecting the calm weather. Just as Subaru came to note this,

???: “Good morning, citizens of Pristella.”

Subaru: “Huh!?”

A loud sound seemingly appeared out of thin air, echoing in everyone’s ears, surprising the unprepared Subaru.

It wasn’t an illusion; as Subaru looked around in panic, he saw Emilia, Felt, and Beatrice also glancing around, alarmed.

Subaru: “Hey, what's this? It’s a really loud voice.”

Felt: “It’s not some kind of fantasy, it’s just a loud voice in the streets…”

Felt whispered softly to herself, while Subaru also made his own commentary, while suspecting that this wasn’t unrelated to magic.

Speaking of magic that could send sound to an entire group of people, Subaru recalled the chain magic that Julius used to connect everyone’s consciousness.

Ultimately, however, it was simply a way of connecting people mentally in a limited range, and couldn’t deliver sound directly to the ears.

Pondering this, Subaru thought that he’d found a suitable answer. That was,

Subaru: “Something like a loudspeaker?”

Felt and Subaru had provided similar comments on the phenomenon.

Resounding the sky, the noise was loud enough that the entire city could probably hear it, in a very similar way to announcements made from a loudspeaker.

The only problem was that in this world, there had yet to be any sign of such a scientific and technological development.

Otto: “Ah, you didn’t know? This radio functions with the help of a mana-powered instrument in Pristella’s Metropolitan Government Hall.”

Subaru: “Mana… so it’s magic!”

Otto answered Subaru’s question, nodding as if to say, “yes”.

Otto: “What I heard yesterday, when I was drinking with a great variety of people, was that every morning the city hall’s magically amplified radio would make an announcement to the citizens of Pristella.”

Subaru: “Huh, that’s such a strange daily routine.”

Otto: “Information that needs to be conveyed to all of the city’s areas can be heard immediately and conveniently. In the event of an emergency, evacuations or directions can be given easily. In order to keep such a stressful time from being too chaotic, doing this every morning allows the citizens to get used the the speaker.”

Subaru: “Oh… I wouldn’t have thought of that.”

Using a magical device to prepare for emergencies.

Small villages were trouble enough, but if an accident took place in the city, handling it would quickly become a pandemonium. The preemptive countermeasure that had been taken to prevent this also had practical use.

It was unusual and fairly innovative for someone to take the time to ensure that the citizens would be well prepared for it.

Subaru: “It looks like a pretty smart guy is responsible for this, maybe the mayor?”

Otto: “No, since the device runs on mana, it requires mana stones to fuel, so Kiritaka is most likely responsible for the radio.”

Subaru: “Oh…”

His admiration was suddenly interrupted by that impact.

Kiritaka was most likely the one who’d yelled “Don’t touch my Liliana!” yesterday. Scenes of the negotiation flashed through Subaru’s mind. The screaming. The flash of the magical stone. The elegant man who’d cried for Liliana afterward.

Subaru: “No, no.”

Beatrice: “No way, in fact.”

Emilia: “That seems a little…”

At Subaru, Beatrice, and Emilia’s perfect synchronization, Otto smiled wryly.

Otto: “I thought that you’d reply like this, but the one who manages the radio is in fact Kiritaka. Listen, isn’t that voice familiar?”

Kiritaka: “This is a magical device which can transmit my voice throughout the entire city. If I startled anyone unfamiliar with this, I offer my apologies. You’re very lucky to be hearing this broadcast today.”

Subaru: “Who’s that?”

Despite Otto’s follow up, Subaru still had difficulty associating this voice with his impression of Kiritaka. He was so serious that it didn’t sound like a lolicon at all.

Subaru: “No, wait. Clind-san also doesn’t seem like a degenerate… could it be that lolicons are clever at disguising themselves? Lolicons with social status are terrifying.”

Subaru again recalled the omnipotent butler.

He had overwhelming intelligence and ability, but it was mixed with that kind of irrational nature. Although it wouldn’t be quite right to call Clind a representative of all lolicons, it wasn’t impossible that there would be case of a high-class lolicon who resembled him.

Subaru: “Well, this Kiritaka guy is still very suspicious, and impressions from voices aren’t the most reliable…”

Kiritaka: “And to those who are listening, allow me to deliver, filled with my feelings… no! Filled with your feelings, a world of blessings! The morning has finally come… this is the Songstress Liliana, please be sure to listen!”

Liliana: “Ah, it’s me.”

In the midst of this mess, the man of Subaru’s memories and the man making the broadcast finally aligned.

This bother had decided to plague Subaru even in the early morning. He heard the shuffling sound of people changing locations, and then a slight cough which seemed to contain a smile.

Liliana: “Well~, hello everybody, this is Liliana, who was just introduced. Doing this every morning makes me feel the weight of expectation, but I still want to do my best to sing and play to create joy. Please oblige me.”

Subaru immediately recognized Liliana’s characteristic way of speaking, and felt as if he could see her odd behavior even through the magical device,

Curiously, unlike Kiritaka’s voice, which intermittently faded though the magic radio, not a trace of Liliana’s voice was lost.

Subaru didn’t know if there was such a concept as magical device affinity, but if there were such a thing,

it would suit the girl whose voice shared the name Goddess of Song to be able to sing clearly through the static.

Liliana: “Well, I’m eager to sing. Please listen — “The Sword Demon’s Love Song, Act Two”!”

Liliana inhaled gently as she prepared instrument for playing.

The song’s title stole Subaru’s attention from Liliana’s speech. If the song was indeed the tale of what he thought it was, then—

The song about to be played was the touching tragic love story about a demon, a woman, and a sword.

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The Songstress Liliana’s act of terrorism ended with her song, and Subaru returned to the living room for an early breakfast.

To be honest, the existence of the “The Sword Demon’s Love Song” had struck Subaru like an unexpected bolt of lightning.

He should have realized long ago. No matter in which world, at any time, any heroic deeds would be preserved for future generations.

They could be documented in a number of ways, such as in writing or paintings.

It wasn’t inconceivable that the heroine who had ended a civil war and the Sword Demon who took that heroine as his wife were immortalized in song.

Of course, even if Subaru is aware of this possibility, he couldn’t have done anything about what happened this morning. He hadn’t even known about the magic device, and he couldn’t have known to tell Liliana to think about her actions.

Now, he could only curse the Songstress who’d chosen her song at the most inopportune time without any regard for the situation.

His already poor impression of the Songstress had somehow plummeted even further at her inexplicably poorly timed enthusiasm. Liliana was an idiot, Kiritaka was a fool.

Subaru: “Has Wilhelm-san… come here yet?”

The earliest to arrive in the living room were the previous occupants of the courtyard, with the exception of Felt, who had parted with them after leaving. She’d probably come later together with Reinhard.

Thinking of the song he’d just heard, recalling Wilhelm's thoughts on his wife and grandson, and picturing the old man’s smile, Subaru was unable to suppress the feelings that sprung up in his chest.

As for the words to say upon seeing him, Subaru had no idea how to find them. Even so, as long as there as there was communication, Subaru would be glad. Still, he seriously hoped that Wilhelm had somehow missed the song.

Subaru: “That group of overly serious people, it’s impossible that all of them would be sleeping in on the same day.”

The three main members of Crusch’s faction, even Ferris, worked and rested on a balanced schedule. Even having lived with them only a few days, Subaru was well aware of this.

On a journey to an unfamiliar place, they’d probably be nervous and maintain their schedule even more rigorously, so it was impossible that they would have missed the broadcast.

Emilia: “Subaru, you look awful, what’s wrong?”

Emilia leveled her gaze at Subaru, who sat on a cushion, rapidly tapping his feet in anxiety.

After the broadcast had ended, Subaru had immediately proposed that their faction should go to the tea room. After confirming that the tea room was empty, he claimed its undisturbed peace.

Emilia and the others simply savored the tragic lyrics of “The Sword Demon’s Love Song” and indulged in Liliana’s voice. They were unaware that the Sword Demon in the song was Wilhelm, or of any of the origins of the Sword Demon.

Therefore, Subaru was reluctant to have them share his anxiety.

Even more frightening was that Liliana’s song had even captured Subaru.

Subaru, who’d been plagued with a sense of trepidation upon hearing the song’s title, couldn’t bring himself to leave courtyard while listening to it. Or, rather, that kind of thought hadn’t even surfaced.

Liliana’s singing had to have contained magic. Because of this, even after recovering, Subaru couldn’t shake off a sense of anxiety when thinking of that hasty brunette.

Subaru: “…it’s nothing… nothing, nothing, just, I’m a little hungry… you see, even though the inn’s food is delicious, isn’t it a little lacking in quantity? My body wants me to pilfer snacks so I can eat them and grow…”

Emilia: “Subaru, I don’t believe you.”

The usually gullible Emilia saw right through Subaru’s bluff at this critical moment. Was he so easy to read? Subaru’s confidence vanished.

Otto: “Really, Natsuki-san. Although I don’t know what you’re anxious about, we’re discussing our plans for the afternoon. You should be paying attention.”

Subaru: “This afternoon’s plan, oh yeah, the second negotiation with Kiritaka. Hmm… we could take Liliana hostage so we can exchange her with the magic stone we want?”

Otto: “Why in the world would you propose such a forceful plan!?”

Otto, amazed by Subaru’s words, raised his voice as his face adopted a gloomy expression. Seeing that, Subaru tilted his head with an “eh”.

Perhaps it was due to his still burning the anger toward Liliana, but it probably wouldn’t serve to raise the plan’s success rate.

Otto: “In any case, this afternoon, we’ll be attempting negotiations with Kiritaka-san again, and the one we should try to win the trust of is that member of The Scales of the White Dragon, who is the mostly likely to be able to persuade Kiritaka-san.

Subaru: “The Scales of the White Dragon, that’s such a cool name. Was he at the meeting yesterday?”

Otto: “Yes, the Scales of the White Dragon is a well-known mercenary group in this area. Although they were established a long time ago, they were recently hired as a private force by Kiritaka-san. That man was their representative.”

Subaru: “Of the people who were there… ah, he’s probably the best person to talk to.”

While they hadn’t been there to observe the room the negotiation had taken place in, Subaru had a vague recollection of the presence of a middle-aged man in white before the magic stone’s light had engulfed him.

Kiritaka was mad for Liliana who was often in a state of madness herself. Subaru was certainly eager to talk to someone more rational than the two.

Otto: “Judging by this morning’s broadcast, Kiritaka-san’s anger should have calmed down somewhat, and he should be willing to listen to us, but if Natsuki-san is going to be present, then he would mostly likely be significantly less reasonable.”

Subaru: “I know my scary eyes put people off the first time they see me, but I didn’t expect such an aggressive reaction. That kinda hurt.”

Emilia: “That doesn’t matter, Subaru. I don’t dislike fierce looking eyes. My mother also had very fierce eyes, but she was such a gentle person.”

Beatrice: “Subaru’s face isn’t that bad, in fact… actually, I was mistaken, I suppose.”

Subaru: “No comfort is preferable, actually. Don’t make me face the truth.”

Subtle bore the gentle and stern words before urging Otto to continue. Otto went on saying, “So,”

Otto: “During today's negotiations, I think Natsuki-san shouldn’t accompany us. Is that okay?”

Subaru: “No matter what, I don’t have a choice but to agree, but if you succeed, then what’s the point of my being here?”

Otto: “Between just Natsuki-san having come for nothing and all of us having come for nothing, we’re choosing the smaller loss of just Natsuki-san, who only runs around playing with Beatrice-chan.”

Beatrice: “I feel like you’re underestimating Betty, in fact! It’s annoying, I suppose!”

Beatrice’s anger was dismissed and their plan of action was finalized. Nevertheless, Subaru had also considered what Otto was likely thinking.

Subaru: "This afternoon I'll go with Emilia to take a walk with Beako.”

Emilia: “Ehh? I won’t be going to see Kiritaka-san with Otto-kun?”

Otto: “They’ve surely anticipated that we would likely come to negotiate again, and if we were to take Emilia-sama, we would be making an unannounced sudden visit, and we will fail just as we did yesterday... Natsuki-san, I’m glad you realize this, but I can’t help but think that you’re up to something.”

Otto glared Subaru, who responded with an innocent whistle.

He had told Otto about meeting Liliana yesterday, but he’d neglected to mention where they’d met. Kiritaka had wanted to keep Emilia’s faction from meeting Liliana, so he’d probably sent her out, and she’d chosen a nice scenic park to find refuge in.

Subaru: “I found a nice park, and I’d like Emilia to accompany me there. We could take stroll with Beatrice holding our hands between us.”

Emilia: “Wow, that sounds like fun. But, I wonder if it’s okay for us to be relaxing like that. Well, Otto-kun?”

Otto: “I can’t refuse if you stare at me with those eyes. Well, Natsuki-san and Emilia-sama both can’t go due to a variety of circumstances, so I’ll go with Garfiel. Please don’t cause any trouble.

In affirmation of Otto’s words, Emilia and Subaru nodded earnestly. But Subaru also stuck his tongue out at Otto’s back as an apology.

Liliana would almost certainly not be present at the Muse Chamber of Commerce today. In that case, Subaru could only assume that she would go to the same park as yesterday.

If she wasn’t there, Subaru would accept that there was nothing he could do, but he still wanted to establish a relationship with her if he could.

If Kiritaka truly loved Liliana from the bottom of his heart, there was quite a large possibility that he'd agree to a direct request from her.

Of course, he couldn't just think of using Liliana. If he abused her good intentions, Emilia would oppose it, and Subaru's own conscience wouldn't let him walk free. Thus, Subaru decided to tell Liliana his story without any reservations.

Subaru hoped that the result would would be honest, even if it strayed from the heroic biography that she'd been expecting and disappointed her.

Immortalized in history as a hero by a song. Just the thought gave Subaru goosebumps, but if he had to add fuel to the fire, he wanted to leave an honest impression.

At the very least, Subaru's famed so-called heroic deeds would also be disillusioned when his audience learned of his miserable mistakes along the way.

Anastasia: "—Good morning. You're all up early."

Just as Emilia's faction decided on their internal and external plans of action, the door of the tearoom was opened, revealing the figure of Anastasia. Today's Anastasia wore her usual fox scarf coupled with a kimono.

It was indeed a surprise to suddenly see a kimono, and Subaru was excited. Emilia's eyes gleamed for a different reason, she was delighted to see the clothing. Anastasia gazed at them with pride.

Anastasia: "Very nice, very nice. I'm glad to be shocking people so early in the morning."

Emilia: "Anastasia-san, that dress is so beautiful. Is that what you were talking about yesterday?"

Anastasia: "Yep. This is the kimono I mentioned at bath yesterday. Although it looks a lot like a bathrobe, it takes a lot of preparation to wear."

Anastasia turned delightedly, showing off her blue-dyed clothing, which was charmingly patterned with floating, scattered petals.

—Kararagi apparently shared much of Subaru's familiarity with Japanese culture.

Subaru: "That type of clothing, has it been handed down since the days of Hoshin?"

Anastasia: "Well, you're quite knowledgeable, Natsuki-kun. This type of clothing did seem to appear more frequently since the beginning of the Hoshin's era. Although, that method of production was lost, and only reproductions are currently made."

Subaru: "Hoshin's era."

This man, "Hoshin of the Wastelands", appeared once again. Now, Subaru had no choice but to suspect

that Hoshin, like Subaru and Al, had been summoned.

Only, unlike Subaru and Al, Hoshin had been from four hundred years ago.

Subaru: “The priority is figuring the current situation out, but afterward I might want to take a good look at this Hoshin…”

On the matter of his summoning, Subaru did not intend to start digging for knowledge at this point.

Although he knew the structure of the summons, the purpose of the summoner was completely unknown. However, this call is just a one-way, for him to come here. There was no such convenience that would allow him to go back home.

On this matter, just considering it would be like fishing for the moon in a puddle; there was no solution. What Subaru wanted to know was what predecessors he had had, what kind of footprints they’d left in this world, and where they’d ended up. Nothing more.

Reinhard: “Good morning, Subaru. Did you sleep well last night? You were a great help in reminding Felt-sama to return to her room this morning.”

Felt: "How annoying. It wasn't my intention to go back to there.”

After Anastasia, Reinhard strode into the tea room with Felt in tow. He deposited her on a cushion, giving no indication of whether or not he’d heard the song that morning.

He certainly must have known that the “The Sword Demon’s Love Song” was referring to his own grandfather.

Reinhard: “Anastasia-sama, you look more beautiful with each passing morning. I had been a little concerned about your modesty, but now it seems unfounded.”

Anastasia: “Hehehe, this is my treasured possession. I can’t go into Pristella unless I prepare myself. On that note, I still to have to show off to Julius."

After that, Julius also joined them, and Anastasia showed off her garb to her knight. After she had received her due flattery, Anastasia tilted her head at him.

Anastasia: “Didn’t the others accompany you?”

Julius: “Ricardo said he had something to do and went out to the city last night, but Mimi and her brothers… they seem to be follow Emilia faction’s Garfiel.”

Emilia: “They’re following Garfiel?”

Emilia looked up when she heard the name of one of her servants. Julius nodded.

Julius: “Mimi found Garfiel leaving the hotel, and immediately gave chase. Then Hetaro went after her, and Tivey, who cleans up their messes, said that he’d handle it, so they all left Joshua.”

Anastasia descended upon Joshua with her hands on her hips, who hid behind the tall Julius. The handsome young man bowed his head to his master as he stepped forward timidly, looking extremely pale and concerned.

Joshua: “I am deeply, extremely sorry… I desperately tried to stop them, but Mimi and Hetaro weren’t listening at all. Tivey said to please leave everything to him.”

Anastasia: “Well, if Tivey’s there, they shouldn’t cause any problems. Let’s put it aside, we’re the hosts, but we’re making quite a spectacle of ourselves in front of our guests.

Patiently patting the the ashamed Joshua’s shoulders in a sign of forgiveness, Anastasia turned to face everyone present with a gracious smile. She shook her supple hair, her fingers playing with her scarf.

Anastasia: “As you’ve just witnessed, this embarrassing fiasco is happening, I hope you’ll excuse it… our lovely deputy captain, seemingly distracted by her first love, is having a hard time fighting her impulses.”

Mimi was obsessed with Garfiel and wanted to cling to his side, everyone present could see this. Everyone, with two exceptions. Emilia had tilted her head in confusion, and Joshua issued a sigh of “so that’s what it was”.

Subaru: “By the way, Felt, I didn’t see that Tonchinkan trio at all. Are they all staying here?"

Felt: “You mean Gaston and the others? Well, having them living here would be a waste and a joke, and they’re so unused to places like this that they’d feel awkward. They’re living somewhere cheaper in the city, but…”

As she answered Subaru’s question, Felt grinned.

Felt: “Hey, that Tonchinkan nickname isn’t bad, since their names are Gaston, Larkins, and Camberley. It's not confusing at all, and they don’t seem to mind it.”

Subaru: “I also think it’s a great nickname, I want to praise the me from a year ago. When I first heard their real names, I’d thought a miracle had happened.”

The Tonchinkan trio was what they had started as, and the Tonchinkan trio was where they had ended up.

Crusch: “—We're late, it looks like we’re the last ones here.”

Finally arriving in the tea room was Crusch’s faction. Today, she work her long green hair up, and fitting of her new self, wore a gorgeous ladylike-like floral hairpin.

She took a brief walk into the room, followed by Ferris and Wilhelm, who was, as always, solemnly dressed, his back upright. Looking at the old man's posture, Subaru couldn’t help but shake his shoulders.

He swallowed, trying to steal a glance at the old man's face, and Wilhelm caught Subaru’s gaze.

Wilhelm: “——”

He showed a faint smile, giving a slight bow.

Witnessing this action, Subaru received the message contained in the earlier smile: “You don’t have anything to worry about”.

Subaru’s heart began to beat faster, until he saw Ferris, sitting at Crusch’s side, winking and giving a peace sign.

—No worries, we’ve taken care of it.

That was the message Subaru received from Ferris.

Perhaps Ferris noticed Subaru’s attention. He ceased making his movements and began to cling to Crusch’s side as he always did.

Subaru was conscious of what it was like to be useless and was afraid of appearing nosy.

Crusch and Ferris certainly knew more than Subaru about the connection between Wilhelm and those songs. They were more sensitive and had greater proximity with Wilhelm.

That was natural, because they were his companions. Subaru didn’t need to have worried. Subaru: “Better to say that it is our negligence that we couldn’t help Garfiel.”

This is not to say that he shouldn’t care about others. Rather, it is better to first do something for your own faction, which would leave you free to help others.

However, the turbulent depression in Garfiel's body was something that could only be overcome by Garfiel’s own efforts, so that line of thought would solve nothing.

Anastasia: “Well, there’s still a few people who haven’t shown up, but in all likelihood they won’t be coming.”

Although the number of occupants was less than that of last night's attendees, the number was still impressive. After all, among what happened last night, eating itself was also very exciting.

What to put on this morning — with a short pause of anticipation, Anastasia smiled and said, Anastasia: “Bring it in.”

At her orders, the hotel staff opened the the door, and, immediately afterward, a large heated block of iron was carried in.

Anastasia: “Today’s treat is a traditional Karargi breakfast — the daisukiyaki pancake!” Anastasia rolled

her sleeves up slightly, raising her voice.

In front of a silent crowd, the inn's staff coated the iron with a layer of oil and carried in an assortment of ingredients one by one into the room.

The daisukiyaki pancake — from the name, the iron plate, and the assortment of ingredients, Subaru saw something incredibly familiar. Something called,

Subaru: "A Japanese… okonomiyaki…!?"

As something that had been passed down for generations, the Japanese okonomiyaki pancake arrived on stage.

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Emilia: "Subaru, Subaru, look at my masterpiece!"

Beatrice: "Subaru, this is the best pancake made by Betty, I suppose. You can have it, in fact."

Emilia smile earnestly, and Beako's face was a little flushed. Each placed their best pancake in front of him.

To Subaru, they were just charred blocks of black. The two, however, were completely unaware of their lack of skill.

Subaru: "Try it yourself before you taste it."

With this sensible suggestion, Subaru held back a look of pain as the two obediently started on their pancakes and turned his attention to the other factions.

Reinhard: "Finished, Felt-sama."

Felt: "Oh, it's good, make me some more. I'm always grateful for your food delicious cooking."

Reinhard: "If you count on me for anything else, I'll be living up to my honor as a knight."

This was Felt's faction. Reinhard made pancakes at an impossible pace, and Felt gobbled them up just as fast.

Hidden somewhere in Felt's slim figure was King of Stomachs. Or she was just gluttonous. Either way, she ate far more than her share.

All in all, Reinhard had yet to eat, while Felt had already polished off ten.

By the way, Emilia's faction was faring awfully. As had just been demonstrated, Emilia and Beatrice didn't pull their weight, and the only useful members were Otto and Subaru.

Otto: “Look, Emilia-sama and Beatrice-chan. Oh, eat this… Ah! Emilia-sama! Self reflection is good, but don’t eat them raw! Beatrice-chan, that’s too much sauce!”

Of the other factions, the person that stood out the most was Anastasia.

This was the surprise breakfast that she had planned herself. She had both a deep self- confidence and love for the daisukiyaki.

Anastasia: “Watch carefully! This is the real daisukiyaki!”

She flipped the pancakes neatly and smoothly and had put beautifully made pancakes onto Julius’s plate.

Julius: “I am unworthy of eating Anastasia-sama’s food, but I think they would be better if they were cooked for a shorter amount of time. Of course, I don’t mean to bother Anastasia-sama.”

Anastasia: “Of course, of course, they need to be less charred. Even though Julius is a man, he says so like a tender maiden.”

Unlike Subaru, who redirected his offerings and told his gifters to reflect on themselves, Julius not only ate the pancakes, but kept a straight face and gave Anastasia pointers to improve.

That person was a role model as a knight. Subaru absolutely didn’t want to imitate him, and lacked the ability to do so anyway.

Sitting at their side, eating sticky raw pancakes, was a pitiful looking Joshua. His monocle seemed to be fogging over, preventing him from seeing properly, and he desperately tried to hide his struggle. He’d feel mortified if the Subaru whom he hated noticed this embarrassing spectacle, so he didn’t greet him.

After seeing the difference in elegance between the brothers, Subaru could only conclude that the most stable faction was Crusch’s.

Ferris: “Oh, Crusch-sama, Ferri-chan made really beautiful pancakes, take a look!”

Crusch: “Hmm, you certainly have, but I won’t lose to you.”

Like a passionate competition between two women, Crusch and Ferris conversed. Their confidence was supported by their results; the pancakes they’d made were perfect. Ferris had even added cat ears to his.

Ferris: “Please enjoy my pancakes, they’re filled with Ferri-chan’s love. Crusch-sama, open wide!”

Crusch: “Hey, hey… that, um…”

Although, the happy scene did feel a little off putting. That may have been because Subaru knew they were man and woman, or because he knew of how Crusch’s temperament had changed after her memory loss.

Anyway, master and servant appeared to have no problems. The last member of their faction, sitting next to the peach colored space, and focusing on his own pancake was Wilhelm.

Wilhelm: “Hmmm…”

Wilhelm, who’d been trying to turn the dough over, closed his eyes and sighed.

It seemed that his pancake had been torn apart after Wilhelm had left it on the iron for too long, causing it to stick.

He’d unexpectedly seen Wilhelm’s clumsy side.

Subaru: “I feel like I saw something I shouldn’t have, but in that case…”

Feeling that he should help Wilhelm, Subaru climbed to his feet, then sat back down, reconsidering.

Subaru: “Wilhelm-san.”

Wilhelm: “…Subaru-dono?”

Hearing his name, Wilhelm lifted his head. Noticing that Subaru had seen his clumsiness, his brow furrowed in shame.

Subaru gave him an encouraging nod, and gently pointed with his jaw. Wilhelm, who understood his meaning, swallowed quietly.

Wihelm: “——”

Moving to the place indicated by Subaru, Wilhelm took a seat next to Reinhard. He obediently followed each of Felt’s instructions, producing pancakes without halt and failing to notice the exchange between Subaru and Wilhelm.

Although, Subaru had already communicated everything he’d wanted to say to Wilhelm.

Consternation, confusion, hesitation, doubt, all wavered in Wilhelm’s eyes. He took a long time to reach a decision. Finally,

Wilhelm: “—Reinhard.”

Reinhard: “——”

Reinhard froze as Wilhelm forced himself to call his grandson’s name.

His spatula hovered in midair as his hands stopped moving, and Felt plated the pancake with a perfect catch.

That act was inelegant, but Reinhard took no notice of it.

The red-haired youth faced Wilhelm with wide eyes. Wilhelm met his gaze head on, without so much as drawing a breath.

Wilhelm: “——”

Reinhard: “——”

Abruptly, silence fell.

Not just between the two, but also between the people around them who had noticed.

The entire room stilled, and the only remaining sounds were those of spatulas meeting the iron.

Time seemed to stagnate as everyone held their collective breaths.

Wilhelm: “I, um, that is…”

Reinhard: “What is it, honored grandfather?”

Wilhelm: “I… I’m not so good at this, so, you, if you know any kind of trick to make it easier, could… you teach it me?”

Those were Wilhelm’s clumsy, stuttering words.

Only Crusch, Ferris, and Subaru widened their eyes, understanding what kind of resolve Wilhelm had needed to choke those words out.

Wilhelm himself seem to sag with exhaustion after posing the question.

Wordlessly, Reinhard swallowed as he considered how to answer. His fair features stilled as an unfamiliar emotion washed over his blue eyes.

Reinhard closed his eyes and buried that emotion into a soft sigh. Then,

Reinhard: “Yes, I understand, honored grandfather.”

The corners of his mouth turned up as he closed his eyes. That expression could only be described as a smile.

It wasn’t the reassuring smile that he usually wore to give others a sense of security. This may have been the only time anyone had seen the young man named Reinhard step out of his role as the Sword Saint and show a genuine smile.

Wilhelm’s dumbstruck expression slowly reclaimed its composure.

He lowered his face, closing his eyes as if he were enduring something. He probably had difficulty processing that reaction immediately.

However, the real genuine feeling was there. Once delivered, it only needed to be accepted.

The long divide between the two, grandfather and grandson, could only be offset by a corresponding amount of time.

Subaru, seeing such a possibility play out in front of him, clenched his fist with a plethora of emotions.

From the bottom of his heart, he wanted to greet Wilhelm with joy. And,

???: “— It isn’t so easy, honored father. Don’t think that your relationship will be fixed with just that.”

Suddenly, a red-haired figure threw open the door of the tea room.

The face of the red-haired man who'd spoken those words carried so much malice that everyone froze on the spot, forgetting the flow of time.

Arc 5 - Chapter 16, "Uninvited Guests"

by Gracedharperd - Furuta - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-16-uninvited-guests/

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http://ncode.syosetu.com/N2267BE/

This is not a professional translation. Some mistakes, both grammatical and logical, are inevitable. Also, be advised that translators have a predisposition for personal preference and the names and terminology may differ at times from what was used in the anime or is used in the fandom at large. Think of these documents as an extremely
detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

- Credit to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

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That touching moment was spoiled in the worst way.

The red-haired man’s behavior and attitude all betrayed an ugly nature. A rather repulsive smile spread across his unshaven face. He looked to be in his forties and carried the unpleasant scent of alcohol about him.

Although his actions and appearance all evoked a sense of disgust which seemed to reflect his character, the man underneath the poor grooming was quite handsome.

The beautiful characteristics — their desired form, are contaminated by completely different things. Something about the slender man’s posture exuded an aura of repulsiveness.

Subaru: “…who are you?”

???: “Ahh?”

The first to break the shocked silence that had fallen across the room was none other than Subaru, who reached behind him and gripped the handle of the weapon at his waist.

Having lost his cool, Subaru’s spinning head drove him to act impulsively.

There was nothing that could have angered him more the the interruption of the reconciliation between the clumsy, awkward duo of grandfather and grandson.

Only Subaru knew why he was in such a frenzied rage.

It wasn't just a reconciliation between a friend and someone he respected that had been interrupted.

It was reconciliation between family. The beginning of a family looking for a connection. To dare to treat it like that,

Subaru: "Answer me. Who the hell are you?"

???: "…you're really casting a hostile look at me, kid. As a knight, you do know who you're trying to provoke, right?"

Subaru: "Don't make me laugh, mister. The one being provocative is you. I'm just asking you exactly what you're doing here."

His patience reaching a breaking point, Subaru stood from the banquet.

Beatrice, who was sitting next to him, saw the feelings fueling his reaction and shifted her position so that she could take his hand at any time. His reliable partner had accurately sensed flames of anger residing in Subaru's heart.

Glancing at Subaru with an unpleasant expression, the man scratched his head with a rude gesture.

???: "You're so annoying, kid. Hey, Sword Saint. Or Juukulius too, or even Argyle. Cut down this rude kid for me."

Subaru: "—hk!"

With the hand he'd been scratching his head with pointing at Subaru, the insolent man casually gave an order to three people in the hall, Reinhard among them.

Seeing that humiliation to his comrades, Subaru wanted to strike at that grin with his whip.Julius: "Please watch your words."

But he was interrupted by Julius's words before he could move.

Julius, who had stood up at some point, gently placed a hand on Subaru's shoulder from behind. Julius nodded slightly at the frozen Subaru, then turned to face the man.

Julius. "Ferris is present, and Reinhard as well. We three are on temporary leave from our normal duties due to serving our specific masters. Therefore, even the deputy head should not hold the right to command us."

Ferris: “Yep. Ferri-chan is now an obedient servant to the the venerable Crusch-sama~. Therefore, I have nyo obligation to comply with the order.”

Keeping his sitting posture, Ferris held Crusch’s arm as he offered an immediate follow-up to Julius’s words. Although Crusch, whose arm had just been taken, appeared a little surprised, she still filled her eyes with her strong will as she turned toward the red-haired man.

The expression on everyone else’s faces were similar; no one hid their hostility toward the man. That was natural; they had just shared a pleasant atmosphere, which had been torn apart by the man.

However,

???: “Oh~ oh~, how scary. Is it not obvious that I was just kidding around? It’s not like I don’t know the gravity of my orders as the deputy commander.”

Subaru: “The… deputy commander?”

The alcoholic man seemed to find something funny, slapping his legs in laughter at Julius and Ferris’s reactions. During their exchange, a word slipped past to Subaru.

After hearing his testimony, the man once again leveled his gaze in Subaru’s direction.

???: “Just so. That’s my delectable adornment. Deputy Commander of the Knights of the Kingdom of Lugunica, Heinkel, that’s me.

Subaru: “Don’t give me such a righteous look.”

Heinkel: “Hahaha, this kid’s voice is really harsh. It hurts, hurts, hurts me... so shut your worthless mouth, you dog.”

Subaru: “—hk!”

The darkness twinkling in the man’s narrowed eyes sent a shuddering chill down Subaru’s back. It was different from the overwhelming presence of something like the White Whale or a Witch. It was something more unspeakable.

That something was familiar to Subaru, and yet it was impossible to recall exactly what it was. There was nowhere to escape that sense, and Subaru felt a ringing in his ears.

Julius: “Calm down, Subaru. Don’t let the deputy commander’s atmosphere swallow you.”

Julius, who stood by his side, spoke to the dizzy Subaru.

Hearing him, that man — Heinkel, faced Julius with a dark smile.

Heinkel: “Ha! A worthy reply. An exemplary, polite answer. To show that respect as a knight, you truly

are the Knight of Knights.”

Julius: “Allow me to accept the compliment, Deputy Commander Heinkel… If I may ask, what is the reason for your visit? If my memory serves correctly, your duty as deputy commander should be guarding the capital.”

Heinkel: “Drop those sarcastic words. Just how great of an influence on the vigilant defense of the capital can the absence of one man make? Marcus-sama can handle it perfectly alone, far better than I could… ah, although, a royal family who could suffer disaster is missing.”

Wilhelm: “Heinkel!”

Considering his position, Heinkel's speech was incredibly disrespectful. Upon hearing it, Wilhelm roared his name in fury.

The Sword Demon, shaking with anger directed a sharp glare at Heinkel, who merely shrugged his shoulders.

Wilhelm: “Heinkel…”

Heinkel: “Just calling me once is fine. I’ve yet to lose my hearing from old age. Well, treat that as nonsense and ignore it. More importantly—”

Heinkel responded to Wilhelm’s bitter voice by sticking a finger into his ear as he closed his blue eyes. Then, he opened them to look at Wilhelm.

Heinkel: “This isn’t a very nice feeling. Obviously, I want to offer my congratulations to you for your defeat of the White Whale, but you’ve been avoiding me. This is a feat that took fourteen long years to accomplish, after all. I’d think that I also have the right to join the joyful celebrations. Isn’t that the case, father?”

Wilhelm: “Heinkel, I…”

Heinkel: “Reinhard, what about you?”

Reinhard: “—”

Heinkel viciously stabbed his words into Wilhelm’s chest.

Although the old man's face showed the pain of being cut by a blade, Heinkel showed no sign of caring. Instead, he directed his malice at a new target.

Reinhard, who had silently observed the situation until just now, slowly looked toward Heinkel when he heard his name.

Heinkel: “Shouldn’t you also be congratulating father on the burden that’s been lifted off of his

shoulders? Since he's carried out a wife, a mother, a grandmother's vengeance. At least offer him some nice words. That said…"

Reinhard: "—"

Heinkel: "—With this, father has has finally avenged the previous Sword Saint who you'd murdered, isn't that right?"

— Subaru withdrew his original assertion.

Saying that Heinkel wore a malicious look on his face was a mistake.

Rather, he was the face of malice itself.

Heinkel's words, expression, attitude, tone, behavior, and gaze; all of these were manifestations of his intent, one that could only be described by the term malice.

Indeed, every bit of Heinkel's demeanor contained nothing but pure malice.

Subaru: "…previous Sword Saint, murdered…?"

Subaru quietly blurted out those impressionable words.

In his consciousness, there were other questions swimming about, but Subaru could not reasonably sort through them.

However, malice would always spring on such an opportunity.

Heinkel. "Yeah, the murdered previous Sword Saint. Although I don't know exactly how ignorant you are, you have to be familiar with the title of Sword Saint, right? Our current Sword Saint is the most powerful hero of our day… but that was something he got from murdering his predecessor, his own grandmother. Although that fact was immediately hidden from public knowledge."

Wilhelm: "Silence, Heinkel! You… just how far are you intending to go?"

Heinkel: "If you want to say something that sounds nice, then please stop, father. The reason is nothing other than that you simply don't have the right to disagree with me. After all, when the last Sword Saint died, the first to condemn Reinhard was none other than you."

Wilhelm: "—hk"

Heinkel's words contained a dense, noxious poison of abhorrence. And the contents of his speech were no more than vulgar curses. Reinhard had murdered his predecessor? Inconceivable.

Wilhelm had bitterly condemned that Reinhard? Inconceivable. After all, to Reinhard, his predecessor had been…

And to Wilhelm, Reinhard was…

So obviously, that couldn't have been possible. Reinhard & Wilhelm: "—"

Neither Reinhard nor Wilhelm would deny it.

Why? If either of them would deny it, would even say a simple "no", then Subaru would instantly believe it.

A comrade and a beloved mentor. A malicious man covered with the scent of alcohol. There was absolutely no question as to who Subaru would believe.

Therefore, he wanted one of them to deny those words.

Heinkel: "Is it hard to communicate now? Of course it is. It's been this way for fourteen years. Neither you nor my father have changed at all. Without change, it's impossible for you to reconcile. Would Thearesia van Astrea forgive such a selfish affair?"

In silence, only Heinkel's profane words echoed.

The previous Sword Saint. She had been Wilhelm's wife, as well as Reinhard's grandmother. And, to Heinkel,

Heinkel: "My dead mother is cursing us. Three generations, and none of us have been forgiven." Reinhard's father. Wilhelm's son.

Considering Heinkel's words and deeds, Subaru correctly deduced his origin.

Subaru: "Heinkel van Astrea…"

Testing the name out, he found that it echoed with an air of rightness.

The man in front of him was undoubtedly attached to the Astrea family. Even if his nature as a human was completely different from the upstanding Astreas that Subaru knew.

Heinkel: "Don't attach the 'van' to my name, kid. I haven't been given that honor. It's just Heinkel Astrea."

Subaru: "…?"

Hearing Subaru's questioning breath, Heinkel clicked his tongue and looked away.

For the first time since arriving here, bitterness flashed over his half-visible face. His eyes, which had contained only sadistic glee as he'd insulted his family, seemed to carry a look of pain.

—As soon as he'd begun to ponder what had happened, Subaru was interrupted.

Emilia: “So… what did you come here for?”

Subaru: “Emilia?”

Everyone had been shuddering at Heinkel’s unforgivable attitude. However, it was Emilia who first stood up and questioned him.

Her silver hair floating behind her, she stood next to Subaru, who could feel a wave of anger emanating from her.

To Emilia, not feeling anger over the ruined atmosphere of or such an impolite manner was impossible.

She only ever became seriously angry when the situation concerned the feelings of others. And even she was aware of how Reinhard and Wilhelm had been hurt.

Emilia: “We were originally dining happily. To deliberately spoil such a peaceful moment, what exactly did you intend?”

Heinkel: “...oh, this is unexpected. Are you not Emilia-sama? I’ve heard the rumors. A poor half-witch girl who stands no fighting chance but struggles along anyway.”

Emilia: “Although I’d like to one day talk to you and ask how you think of me, right now I only want to hear one answer from you. Why did you come here?”

Heinkel: “—”

Was he attempting to throw Emilia off with insults? Subaru saw through him, and the surprised Heinkel felt disappointed. The members of the other factions also seemed surprised at Emilia’s calm demeanor.

It was a surprising difference from the innocence Emilia had shown yesterday. To say that she was pretending to be innocent would be a lie, however. This was Emilia being true to herself.

Emilia: “The reason why we all gathered here, was because we were invited by Anastasia-san. It’s very rare that we are all gathered in the same place, so I don’t think you would have randomly targeted such an opportunity, even if you are someone important to the knights. Please tell me exactly what you want.”

Heinkel: “Tch. Not the same as the rumors…”

Emilia: “Answer me.”

Heinkel, who had been again scratching his head, was shaken by Emilia’s momentum.

Although Emilia was angry, she was by no means preparing an attack. The pressure emanating from her had nothing to do with magic. It was merely the strength of her feelings.

Felt: “You marched in with confidence, just to back down when a girl glares at you. Mister, that’s pretty

embarrassing.”

Anastasia: “That’s right. Just when I was looking forward to sharing a fun story, too. Songstress-san is apparently quite the whimsical character, isn’t that interesting?”

Crusch: “Well, is that so? Then, I’d appreciate it if this puzzling man would leave, since I’d love to discuss these rumors about Songstress-san with everyone here.”

Heinkel: “—hk”

Following Emilia, Felt, Anastasia, and Crusch spoke up as well.

Like Emilia, the three joined their domineering forces in opposition to Heinkel. Facing the pressure of all four of them, Heinkel’s face couldn’t help but twitch.

They were on completely different levels. Considering his title, his position was rather lacking.

Julius: “I’m sorry, deputy head. If there’s nothing else for time being then I think, for the benefit of all parties involved, that you should take your leave.”

Heinkel’s reaction, and the attitude of the royal candidates.

Julius calculated that this would be the right time to bail Heinkel out. Subaru would have preferred to crush Heinkel on the spot, but changed his mind after seeing Reinhard and Wilhelm.

He didn’t fully grasp the situation, and so he couldn’t make hasty judgements.

Heinkel: “Grr…”

Julius: “Deputy commander. Please make a decision. Once you do, please…”

???: “—There’s no need for that, commoner.”

That voice shined with self-assurance.

The owner of that confident voice, which could shake the will of its listeners, seemed able to impose their own superiority wherever they went.

Capable of dismissing common sense and establishing a new set of rules, ones which allowed no protest or objection.

All of the members of the tea room looked at the sliding door near Heinkel.

Everyone was fully aware that someone was about to stride in from the corridor. Heinkel had long since ceased to exist in anyone's mind.

The sun’s burning scowl lit the corridor.

???: “So, all of the trivial people have arrived? You’ve prepared a stage for mine debut. You deserve praise for your behavior.”

A boldly exposed chest hugged by a blood-red dress, a mouth coquettishly covered by a fan. Her arms were crossed under her ample chest, pushing it up in the glamorous act of showing off her white skin without reservation.

Her bright red eyes resembling the licks of a flame, an enchantment capable of mesmerizing all the men in the world.

Even seeing her once would scorch her violent beauty into one’s memory forever. Excessive beauty will become violent. Her existence proved this.

A teenaged girl named Priscilla Barielle.

The uninvited fifth candidate of the Royal Election.

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Priscilla: “So is this it? Frozen faces in a lifeless environment. Do you like this stale air so much? Or is it that every time we meet, such an atmosphere forms? If so, that’s incredibly pitiful.”

Priscilla frowned as she looked throughout the room and spoke in a provocative tone while fanning her face.

Due to her abrupt debut, no one was able to rebut her insults.

Priscilla: “What a poor reception. I deliberately graced this place with mine presence. Placing your forehead on the floor and treating me with admiration and praise is what the correct reaction would be.”

Subaru: “...that’s how people would treat a deity. It wouldn’t happen unless you actually become the king.”

Priscilla: “Hmm?”

Subaru couldn’t help but comment on Priscilla's arrogance. Hearing his mutter, Priscilla turned to look at him, trapping Subaru with her bright gaze.

Subaru: “What?”

Priscilla: “…who are you? I had heard that this would be a gathering of fools who know not their place and would compete for the throne. Of course, they would also bring fools who support them. But why is a vulgar commoner like yourself present?”

Subaru: “Are you for real?”

Subaru was halted by the hostility facing him.

Priscilla’s words were neither joking nor mocking. That is to say, she was being genuine. Priscilla had honestly completely forgotten about Subaru’s existence.

Although they’d gone for a year without seeing each other, Subaru’s idiocy in the capitol shouldn’t have been so easily forgotten.

Although it would be correct to say that this was a very Priscilla-like attitude, it wasn’t an attitude that was particularly appreciated.

???: “Princess, that’s a bit much, isn’t it? Although I don’t know how much he’s worth to you, to me he’s almost like a brother. He’s a very interesting opponent, yeah?”

A thin voice cut across the heavy atmosphere.

That voice was a little hesitant, and was accompanied by the sound of metal. A man with a single arm spoke soothing words as he entered from the corridor to join Priscilla’s side.

His face was entirely covered by a helmet, and his solid, broad physique gave the impression that he was a strong man. He was both a servant to Priscilla and, like Subaru, a summoned man from another world.

And, of course, he had accompanied his master here. He inserted himself between Priscilla and Subaru.

Al: “Hey, you remember, right? It’d be hard to forget when a guy appears in the castle and does something dumb to embarrass himself in front of so many people. This is that guy. Princess even clutched her stomach when she had a good laugh about it.”

Priscilla: “I’ve no impression whatsoever. By the way, Al. I would never laugh so hard that I’d need to clutch mine stomach. Do not belittle such an honorable presence as a casual commoner. Even though it’s you, I won’t be tolerant next time. I’ll cut off your head.”

Al: “You see, brother? Sorry I couldn’t do anything. Maybe if you work hard to become better.”

Subaru: “Give me a little more credit for the things I’ve done in the past year!”

Al soon gave up trying to jog his master’s memory and instead turned to apologize to Subaru, his head bowed in apology. Subaru sighed, feeling like Al hadn’t changed at all this past year.

Although, for the middle aged Al, undergoing a noticeable change would be fairly impossible.

Heinkel: “You're a little late, Priscilla-sama. How long were you going to make me act alone? I’d heard that you were supposed to be coming earlier...”

Priscilla: “Silence, commoner. You will dance as ordered to. Until I give the order to stop, you are expected to dance until you die. Those who misunderstand their duties or attempt to correct a mistake they believe I made are condemned to death.”

Heinkel: “Urp...”

On the other hand, Heinkel, realizing that the atmosphere in the room had changed, immediately turned to Priscilla, who was standing behind him. However, any type of argumentative attitude taken toward Priscilla would be entirely futile.

Although Hankel was embarrassed by the uncompromising Priscilla, Subaru raised his gaze after listening to their conversation.

Subaru: “Priscilla. Did you bring that guy?”

Priscilla: “Listen, commoner. Just who allowed you to dare to speak to me without the proper honorific? Even the compassionate and generous I, when faced with such a helpless person, have a limit to my patience.

Al: “Princess.”

Al called briefly to her as he saw the brutal look lodged in her eyes as she glared at Subaru. Then, Priscilla closed one eye and gave a slight breath.

Priscilla: “I don’t know why, but my servant seems to have taken a liking to you. Al, who spared your life… no, there is no need to thank Al. Worship mine forgiveness. If you do so, I’ll spare you.”

Subaru: “…thanks for your generosity and consideration. Then, the answer to my question is…”

Priscilla: “If you’re thinking that I brought this commoner here, then you would be correct. He is present at mine calling.”

Subaru: “For what!”

Subaru raised his voice at the assertive Priscilla and questioned her purpose.

Uninvited guests upon uninvited guests had arrived. What kind of a plot was brewing here, Subaru needed to know.

However, in the face of Subaru’s question, Priscilla merely tilted her head, and,

Priscilla: “Perhaps because I thought that it would make an interesting sight.”

Subaru: “…an interesting sight?”

Priscilla: “That’s right. Distorted family disputes, or the joy and sadness that comes from relationships.

Such ugly performances are so very exciting. In fact, do you see? The Sword Saint and the Sword Demon acted rather human. Such a sight is very rare.”

Subaru: “PRISCILLAA!”

That twisted, crooked perspective enraged Subaru.

As Priscilla said, Reinhard’s family dispute was hardly seen. And that sea of bitterness was hardly something that needed to be known.

If Heinkel hadn’t appeared, such a dark history would never have come to light. Even so, the grandfather and grandson had been trying to restore their relationship.

To have torn that—

Al: “Stop, brother. There’s no meaning to a fight happening here. Princess’s poor character isn’t a thing that’s been here for a day or two. Think of it as bad luck… the stars made a mistake.”

Subaru: “If you know your master has a poor character then you should be trying to lead her onto the right path. Just indulging her is irresponsible.”

Al reached for Subaru with his single arm, slowly shaking his head.

Since his hand was grabbing Subaru’s wrist, if anything happened, he wouldn’t be able to draw his sword on such short notice.

In other words, he was indicating that he had no wish whatsoever to fight.

Noticing this, Subaru took a long breath. He looked around and found that he was the only one who had acted on his impulsive anger.

Outsiders aside, even Julius and Ferris didn’t want to start anything.

Of course. This was a gathering for the throne candidates. No one wanted to entertain the possibility of anyone getting hurt here.

Subaru: “But, even in this case, no matter how much their hearts suffer…!”

Emilia: “Subaru…”

Emilia’s wavering eyes called to Subaru, who had been submerged in his fury. Feeling a tug on his sleeve, Subaru also knew that Beatrice was granting him her support.

Feeling the support of the two, Subaru was unable to bow his head.

Anastasia: “The vicious hound’s fury seems to have subsided. I’m wondering something... even though I

didn’t send you an invite, how did you come to learn of this meeting?”

Priscilla seemed ready to take her leave and carry on her agenda. However, Anastasia took an opportunity to halt her.

Although Anastasia’s tone was soft, she was quite alert.

Anastasia: “After all, a child running their mouth shouldn’t be allowed to run free.”

Priscilla: “Don’t talk to me with that affectation, mine ears are decaying. I am more than capable of keeping up with a quick-thinking fox.”

Anastasia: “Oh my. Could it be that you’re neglecting to mock me as a ‘commoner’?

Priscilla: “If you haven’t seen what you should have, then that level of ignorance places you in the same category as all of those other fools. Could it be that you are foolish enough as to want me to overlook you?”

The two were engaged in a battle of words — however, Priscilla may or may not have been deliberately provoking Anastasia’s natural business focused rhetoric.

Anastasia leisurely caressed the scarf on her neck.

Anastasia: “Leaked information is quite worrying, you know.”

Priscilla: “Anything that reaches someone else’s ear has been leaked from a mouth lacking caution. And the more that’s learned, the more holes that can be found. You’re not the only one who observes and listens to others. It’s just that kind of thing.”

Anastasia: “Ah, but you see, I’d thought of you as someone who wouldn’t engage in espionage to deal with the likes of us.”

Priscilla: “A flying insect buzzes near mine ear. But what can I do without knowing its location? I would have to catch the insect using my eyes and ears which is precisely what I have done. Of course, the same holds true for you.”

Priscilla's implication was that, similarly to dealing with flying insects, there was no need to miss any little piece of information.

Subaru held the same opinion with Anastasia. It was inconceivable that Priscilla had actually adopted the appropriate tactics and put them into practice against her enemy factions.

And the result of that negligence brought about the awful conditions today.

Felt: “That mister is Reinhard’s father, yeah?”

Ignoring the conversation so far, a frivolous voice shifted the topic.

Her gaze sweeping across the room, the still eating Felt, her mouth soiled with sauces, she found Priscilla's gaze.

Felt: "After all, I've had some experiences at the capitol, so I caught what was going on from the conversation. I'm not really interested in this guy's family relations. Only, if Reinhard and the mister are together, that's different."

Priscilla: "...hhoo. If it isn't the little girl from the ghetto."

Felt: "Although I don't really care about him, I'm not unrelated to him. House Astrea's lands are in fact a lifeline for us. Except this guy hasn't actually given Reinhard the lands. The power of the family is still in the hands of that mister."

Next to Felt, Reinhard's cheeks stiffened slightly. Subaru caught on to Felt's concern.

As an orphan, Felt had nothing to her name, and was currently using Reinhard's lands as her base, where, bit by bit, she accumulated support.

However, those lands were not Felt's own. They were the assets of the Astrea family, and were on loan to her.

However, those weren't Reinhard's own territories. Even he had borrowed them.

Heinkel: "Heh. Looks like you've finally realized the seriousness of the situation, idiot."

Interjecting in their conversation was Heinkel, who wore an expression of pride and laughed with an, "as I expected". He looked as if he had been waiting for the topic to return to Reinhard and Felt.

Heinkel: "That's it. The Head of the Astrea family is still me. I haven't passed the position on to Reinhard, nor do I intend to pass it to him. After all, the cumbersome affairs of politics shouldn't burden our busy Sword Saint."

Felt: "As family head, you should be ashamed. When we went to the Astrea territories, only a handful of civil servants and maids with bloodshot eyes were maintaining it. Now that we've been restoring it, you actually dare to return to rule it?"

Heinkel: "Even if only in name, even if I'm irresponsible, the crown of family head is still mine. What's more, haven't my lands begun to improve? The people should be crying out in support of their lord now. I'm so loved by my people, I'm moved to the point of tears."

Heinkel relentlessly mocked Felt, who tried to swallow her rage.

At those vile and poisonous words, Subaru's vision turned white with rage. The room was filled with anger at the disgusting sight.

It was clear now. This man was completely abnormal.

Heinkel: “Your sense of crisis is right, Reinhard’s master. The Astrea territories are mine. However, I’ll never support you. You can clearly see who I’m supporting!”

Heinkel stood as if on a stage, expecting applause. He gestured toward Priscilla, a clear declaration that he would support a different candidate than his son and father.

Heinkel: “I’ve heard about your achievements in the past year, in the place of me, the lord. In addition to agreeing that is a great achievement, I will also say — it is time for you to take your leave of them now. If you understand it, hurry and hand it to me…”

Priscilla: “Hey, commoner.”

Heinkel: “—Ahh? What is it, Priscilla-sama? I’m doing something very important right now.”

Priscilla: “Shut up.”

The ensuing violence had to be seen to be believed.

Shortly after she’d finished speaking, Priscilla trust her fan at Heinkel, who had widened his eyes. Following the unfolding fan was a terrifying gust that slammed Heinkel’s slender body toward the ground with powerful momentum.

Heinkel’s eyes rolled back in his head, having lost his consciousness after the impact. But, Priscilla’s attacked went one step further.

She kicked him into the air with a swipe of her foot, and swiftly reached her hand up to meet his body.

Al: “Princess, end your anger here. Otherwise, he’s going to die.”

Priscilla: “——”

Priscilla was stopped before she could deliver the final blow with her arm by Al, who had predicted her outrage. Priscilla then turned to her helmeted servant.

A crimson sword had appeared in her grabbed wrist. It had a Western style curve and narrow blade, but it was engraved with wave-like flames. Even at a glance, it was an unusual sword, having instantly materialized in, and disappearing from, Priscilla’s hand.

Witnessing that, Al slowly released Priscilla's wrist.

Al: “Really, spare me. You even drew your Yang Sword, that’s really not good for my hear—tgah!”

Priscilla: “That was very rude, Al. From whom did you receive permission to dare to touch mine flawless skin? You won my favor on a whim, so to defile mine body is a mere dream which lies at the end of a

dream.”

Priscilla forcefully slapped her freed hand on Al’s stomach. She exhaled loudly from her nose, then looked down at the pitiful Heinkel who was writhing on the ground.

After witnessing the brutal look in his eyes, he certainly deserved this. However, what Al said was also true.

Priscilla: “However, there is some truth to what you said. It would be excessive to kill him.”

Al: “If you think so… then I hope you’ll be more gentle with me in the future, gah.”

Priscilla: “Quiet. I am not a demon. I will allow you to lick mine feet later as a reward.”

Al: “Don’t put it like I get turned on by that!? It’ll lead to misunderstandings!”

Al, who had fallen to his knees after receiving a blow, desperately defended himself, but did not receive Priscilla’s attention. She gazed at Heinkel with her blood-red eyes, having calmed down for the time being, and snapped her fingers.

Priscilla: “Schultz. Move the commoner out of here. Although dull, he is seemingly a worthwhile recruit. Considering what that took, giving him up would be a shame.”

Schultz: “Yes, Priscilla-sama.”

In response to her call, another figure emerged from the hall.

It appeared that a child who was many years from being fully grown had been waiting in the corridor.

He had pink fluffy curls, a slim, feminine figure, a fair face, and a high voice which indicated that he had yet to reach puberty. Seeing an undeveloped child dressed in a butler’s uniform felt unethical.

A young boy who, if going solely by appearances, looked to be around Beatrice’s age.

Schultz: “I apologize, Heinkel-sama.”

To the unconscious Heinkel, Schultz took Heinkel's feet and began to struggle to pull him outside. Of course, it was very unreasonable to expect a child to carry Heinkel out. However, Schultz made no complaint about Priscilla’s order, and at the same time he treated Heinkel with an attitude of respect.

Al: “Schultz-kun always tries to be brave and strong, no matter what kind of an order he receives. Princess needs to remember to praise him later.”

Priscilla: “That’s only natural. He is under mine employ and serves me wholeheartedly. That undefined status isn’t simply a foolish and reckless loyalty. Later, I'll allow him to lick mine feet.”

Al: “Schultz-kun wouldn’t realize that you’re joking and would tearfully do exactly as you request. Please give him a more normal reward.”

Priscilla: “Hmm. Then perhaps I’ll give him the honor of being held by mine body as I sleep.”

Al: “…well, that shouldn’t be a problem. But now I want to take his place.”

That was the listless dialogue between Priscilla and Al as they watched Schultz and Heinkel leave.

Finally, all of the outsiders had been removed. Now, only the members of the Royal Election’s factions remained.

Felt: “So, what's going to happen with that guy? You seriously want to drive us away from the Astrea territory to weaken us?”

Priscilla: “You do not have to treat that commoner’s words with such gravity. Weren’t you responsible for the revitalization of that territory? If the lord returns to the his house intending to drive you away then who will follow him? Although the people are foolish and ignorant, they are not heartless fools who forget their grace. If you make a large wave, a correspondingly large wave will return to you. He won’t be able to summon any waves.”

Felt: “…then, why was that guy invited?”

Priscilla: “It’s already been said, hasn’t it? I found the situation interesting. Sooner or later, all I want will be in mine hands. That is an established fact. In that case, only mine route will vary. And that route is precisely decided by me. To the end, I brought him in as a toy to kill time.”

No matter what happens the outcome can not be changed.

The absolute confidence Priscilla held transcended common sense and unreasonably imposed her will upon the world. The only way to deal with it would be to give up and bow down, or to fight it with a similar attitude. And so,

Candidates: “———”

Here, four candidates met her gaze without hesitation in an expression of confrontation. Accept those glares, Priscilla gave a hearty, delighted laugh.

Priscilla: “Excellent. The outcome has been decided but mine journey will naturally have its share of happy excitement. Mine self has decided that you are all a cut above the commoners. And, once you have become worthy of being mine opponent… then, mine self will of course welcome you with my full capabilities.”

You are not yet worthy of being my enemies, was the judgement Priscilla had just made.

No, she had said so long ago. She still treated Emilia as an insect. She didn’t think of them as enemies at

all.

Then,

Felt: “I’ll be sure to make you cry and regret that arrogance.”

Felt's declaration was exactly the will of all the occupants of the room.

Arc 5 - Chapter 17, "That Ever Present Armor"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-17-that-ever-present-armor/

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http://ncode.syosetu.com/N2267BE/

This is not a professional translation. Some mistakes, both grammatical and logical, are inevitable. Also, be advised that translators have a predisposition for personal preference and the names and terminology may differ at times from what was used in the anime or is used in the fandom at large. Think of these documents as an extremely
detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

- Credit to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

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—Fully recovering the meal’s original atmosphere was now impossible.

After hearing Felt’s sharp words, a satisfied Priscilla had left the hotel with Al in tow. It could probably be said that she was delighted at having achieved all of her goals there.

Considering the damage she’d wrought, she really was selfish.

Everyone had soon returned to their meals, unable to chat as happily as they had before.

The impact she’d left was incredibly hurtful to everyone present. In particular, the feelings of both Reinhard and Wilhelm must have been unimaginable to outsiders.

Even so, the fortitude of those two men was strong enough that neither would allow any of their anxiety to show in their expressions.

Of course, the imminent reconciliation of grandfather and grandson could only be postponed. Just that was enough for a hard knot to take root in Subaru’s heart.

Otto: “We’re incredibly lucky that Garfiel wasn’t present.”

Those were the words left by Otto as he’d departed for the Muse Chamber of Commerce following the meal.

As he’d said, it would have been a serious matter if Garfiel or someone else who was prone to rage had been at the meal. It wasn’t difficult to imagine Garfiel flying at Heinkel in a rage and causing a violent tragedy.

Everyone at the breakfast had, for the most part, calm and rational natures. Maybe Priscilla had even factored that into her satisfaction.

Subaru: “…how could that be? That’s really a coincidence among coincidences.”

The luck which Priscilla arrogantly prided herself on was next to impossible.

It had only brought them the worst of results. Although irrefutable, it was painful to admit. Emilia and Beatrice’s worry surely hurt more than any indignation Subaru had felt.

Even Felt had been acting reasonably, leaving Subaru the only one who let his emotions get the better of him. To both foe and friend, Subaru wanted to give apologies for his lack of consideration.

Emilia and Beatrice had returned to their rooms for a short break before accompanying Subaru on their walk.

Subaru took the time to try to walk off his frustration, his footsteps harder than usual.

The inside of his shoe pressing against his foot felt rather like a reflection of his frustration.

Landing on that train of thought, Subaru began to apply more and more pressure in his steps, trying to relieve his feelings, until,

Julius: “Don’t step so hard on the floor, Subaru. You’ll cause trouble for inn’s staff.”

Subaru, who had been gazing down at his feet, turned his head toward the sound.

He had apparently unknowingly walked into the corridor facing the courtyard. Standing in the courtyard was Julius, who was bathing in the wind.

His hand swept his purple hair back in a practiced gesture, and it withstood the cool breeze with a dramatic image.

Julius’s handsome face, as always, inspired envy in Subaru, who clicked his tongue at the other young man before taking a seat next to him in the corridor.

Julius: “Emilia-sama and Beatrice-sama are not with you, correct?”

Subaru: “That’d be the case. Neither of them are children. They’re at the age when they want some me-time, and I have the delicacy to respect that right. I’ve set up a time and place for a date later.”

Julius: “Although I’m unfamiliar with some of the phrases you’ve used, it seems that even you have learned to better understand the thoughts of others.”

Subaru: “Ugh, you…!”

In a breach of convention, Julius was the one who spoke the first instigatory words of a quarrel. However, after seeing Julius’s expression, Subaru’s annoyance dissipated.

Julius shook his head slightly,

Julius: “Apologies. If you were truly one who was incapable of being considerate of others, you wouldn’t have been able to so loudly denounce the deputy commander in front of everyone… I should offer you my gratitude.”

Subaru: “That sounds like a thanks, so please don’t give me one. That guy just rubbed me the wrong way. Compared to everyone else who maintained their cool, I must have looked awful.”

Julius: “No such thing happened. It was precisely because of your rash manner that others could calm down, even myself included. Your impulsive reactions were helpful, it seems.”

Subaru: “You, you weren’t planning to praise me from the start, were you?”

Subaru frowned at Julius’s genuine tone.

Julius was always subtly taunting when he spoke to Subaru, although it came from both sides, so Julius wasn’t solely at fault. In any case, it was nigh impossible for the two to speak to each other honestly.

Subaru: “I know. I should be more calm and collected to be like a knight. Even holding the position of knight, I still can’t consciously keep a cool head, even though all would be outlined in a schoolboy’s book of manners.”

Julius: “That’s right. Indeed, from a knightly perspective, your behavior was by no means commendable. However.”

Facing the uncomfortable Subaru, Julius fell silent. His next action led Subaru’s eyes to widen in surprise.

Subaru: “What are you doing?”

Julius: “It’s as you can see.”

Subaru: “All I can see is you bowing at me.”

Julius bent down and inclined his head to Subaru.

This was not a knight's courtesy. Nor was it a ceremonious ritual. There was no formal inspiration of his motion at all. This was completely unlike Julius.

Julius: "Thanks. Thank you. Thank you for showing the indignation that I could not."

Subaru: "…I have utterly no idea what you're talking about."

Julius: "Valuing a knight's honor means that, no matter the occasion, you must act with virtue. Even if your own friend is being disdained, even if your own friend is treated with inhumane words, you cannot indulge in behaving according to your own feelings. But you are not like that."

Maintaining his posture, Julius repeatedly gave Subaru his share of thanks. Subaru could only feel puzzled at the unexpected reaction.

Julius: "Caught between my knighthood and my emotions, I quickly repressed my anger. However, seeing your passionate rebuttals, I felt ashamed of myself. So I want to thank you."

Subaru: "Instead of venting your anger, huh…"

Julius: "——"

Subaru uttered a sound of understanding, and Julius finally looked up.

With just one sentence, Julius had finally revealed his genuine feelings, which were reflected in his gaze. Seeing him, Subaru could only give him a snarl.

Subaru: "What a stupid thing to say. Really, stop kidding around."

Julius: "…stop kidding around, huh."

Subaru: "Of course. Why should I be angry in your place? I was angry purely because I'd personally been ticked off, not because there was someone else who wanted to snap at that bearded guy. I could never do something as clever as express someone else's anger."

As if misunderstanding the matter, Subaru spoke these genuine thoughts to Julius.

Subaru didn't consider his anger some kind of noble indignation. After all, only Reinhard and Wilhelm could understand their own feelings.

Subaru was an outsider who had simply been angry that such an atmosphere had been defiled. His anger was purely for his own sake.

Subaru: "If you were angry, why didn't you say something? I couldn't have calmly dealt with the old man alone but if you'd been backing me up then we might have fazed him."

Julius: “No matter what, he’s still the deputy commander of the knights. It’d be fairly troublesome if I made an enemy of a commanding officer.”

Subaru: “This doesn’t have to do with your rank. Not to mention, you just blurted ‘no matter what’, don’t be so narrow minded. You’re constantly thinking about behaving like a knight, or acting with a knight’s demeanor, or whatever. Is even your heart coated in a knight’s armor?”

Julius: “——”

Facing a silent Julius, Subaru rested his elbows on his knees and with his cheeks in his palms, gave an exaggerated sigh.

What a stupid quarrel! Subaru had not only rejected Julius’s gratitude, but had also been enraged by him.

Thinking of the cause of the incident, including Heinkel, made him more angry.

Julius: “Even my heart is coated in a knight’s armor… ah, that’s pretty harsh.”

Subaru: “Although I think my wording was pretty artistic, just ignore it. I was only kidding.”

Julius: “No, I’ll keep it in mind. I’m glad that I’m learning a lesson from you. This is something that I never would have thought possible a year ago.”

Subaru: “That uncomfortable stuff might be over with, but I still have nightmares about it.”

He still sometimes had dreams set in the knights’ training field, about his confrontation with Julius and his subsequent brutal beating.

Although the physical suffering he’d experienced at the time was painful to recall, what he’d gone through mentally and emotionally hurt far more to remember. The memory of his own incompetence had been clearly imprinted into his mind, where, from time to time, it played like a movie.

Although, of course, his nightmares weren’t merely filled with his duel with Julius, but it was something that could rival the memories of so many deaths.

Julius: “If you can help it, I’d rather that this didn’t continue. Thinking of meeting with you in your dreams every night is unpleasant.”

Subaru: “That’s rich, coming from the culprit. Don’t you think I’d rather share my dreams in intimacy with Emilia-tan?”

Julius: “So your pursuit of her has been reduced to relying on dreams, rather than your own ability. That suits your style.”

Subaru: “You bastard, don’t treat me like trash after praising me. And take a look at yourself!”

Julius: “Anastasia-sama is a lovely woman. There is no greater honor than being able to serve her in at a distance. Naturally, I think I should be very happy with my place.”

At Julius’s calm response, Subaru gave a cat-like growl.

The uncomfortable atmosphere vanished along with his bow as Julius recovered his usual image. Subaru frowned in relief, coughed, and changed the flow of the conversation.

Subaru: “About that bearded old man… he said he was the deputy commander or whatever, is that true?”

Julius: “It’s understandable that you’re doubtful, but that is indeed true. That man was the Deputy Commander of the Knights of the Kingdom of Lugunica, Heinkel Astrea himself.”

Subaru: “Are they blind? Or deaf? Or messed up in the head?”

Julius: “You truly do question everything. Of course, none of the senior knights or squires can question the deputy commander’s qualifications. In fact, the title of deputy commander serves more like a decoration, and no one has seen him perform his duties as of yet.”

Julius answered with a shake of his head, and Subaru’s imagination swam with the mental image of a senior official.

To be given incredible rewards while shirking any truly important responsibilities — that was exactly how Subaru envisioned the majority of senior government officials, and that was indeed Heinkel’s situation.

On top of that, the people around him even understood his incompetence and knew of his demeanor.

Subaru: “Could it be that he’s taking advantage of his status as the Sword Saint’s father?”

Julius: “…that isn’t… the entire case. Taking the role of the deputy commander isn’t something that would escape the attention of his son, Reinhard. Although Reinhard’s fairness is universally acknowledged, how can we judge it if it concerns his family? Not everyone would trust him.”

Subaru: “I don’t think that Reinhard would be willing to bend his moral code for his father.”

Julius: “Even so, he is still Reinhard’s father. No matter what others think, to Reinhard, he is undoubtedly a family member who shares his blood. No one can know what he himself thinks.”

Julius spoke calmly to appease the heated Subaru. Grinding his teeth, Subaru voiced a groan.

As Julius said. No matter how mediocre he is, as long as he was Reinhard’s father, then only Reinhard’s own heart would know whether or not he should renounce their relationship.

As a knight who values fairness and civility, he should not be deceived by paternity. But it wouldn’t be easy for Reinhard himself to freely cut off such a relationship.

Obviously, outsiders could hold a firm stance on what Reinhard should or shouldn't do, but to do so would be incredibly arrogant.

Subaru: "Isn't the entire case', you said, so are their other reasons? What else could there…"

Julius: "He's also the head of House Astrea, and Wilhelm-sama's son. To put it bluntly, he's related to the kingdom's best knight and the previous Sword Saint. The possibility that not gifting him a high-ranking position would lead to treason cannot be overlooked."

This was Julius's brief, emotionless reply.

Hearing it, Subaru only needed a few seconds to understand the implication behind it.

Subaru: "This country! Whether it's Reinhard! Or Wilhelm! I'd never believe that! If Heinkel resented the country then the Sword Saint's family would turn against it…! Treating them so cautiously, as if they were a time bomb, if that's how it is…!"

If so, wasn't that an insult to Reinhard and Wilhelm?

Their honor was so obvious, yet the country still believed them capable of treason.

The anger that Subaru now felt matched the intensity that it had been when he was facing Heinkel. Julius shook his head and pressed a hand to Subaru's shoulder.

Julius: "Your anger is expected. However, the kingdom has to deal with every possibility."

Subaru: "Something impossible isn't a possibility! That kind of thing would clearly, obviously never happen!"

Julius: "…Wilhelm-sama was the former commander of Lugunica's knights."

Subaru: "Huh!?"

Subaru, who'd been trying to escape Julius's grip, unconsciously stopped moving at those words.

Julius: "Fourteen years ago, a member of the royal family had been abducted in the capitol. At that time, Wilhelm-sama had headed the guards, and was placed in charge of the search."

Subaru: "So, what about it? Even I know about famous events like this."

Felt was the member of the royal family who had been abducted in childhood — this was a story that had become widespread. Subaru, who'd already dismissed the story, didn't catch the meaning of Julius's words.

Subaru: "I know the royal child was never found. So what then? Wilhelm-san took responsibility, and then resigned as a knight, so he has a reason to hate the kingdom? But then…"

Julius: “At that time, the former Sword Saint was sent on an expedition to subjugate the White Whale — that is, during the days when Wilhelm-sama had been searching for the abductor.”

Subaru: “——”

Pondering Julius’s words, Subaru fell into a void of thought. Something Wilhelm had once said seemed to fill that blank in.

Wilhelm had said that he hadn’t been at his wife’s side when she’d died.

Subaru: “…he said he couldn’t be with his wife when she died, and since the investigation was what kept him from it, then, Wilhelm-san would end up hating the kingdom, or something…”

Julius: “I don’t know what Wilhelm-sama’s true intent was. However, it’s true that after the search for the abducted princess ended and the great conquest ended in failure, Wilhelm-sama withdrew from the guards. After that, that branch of the knights would have collapsed if it weren’t for the steps Marcus-sama took to reorganize them.”

Subaru: “I don’t give a damn about that! I’m trying to talk about Wilhelm-san! You… is that what you think? That Wilhelm-san would resent everyone because of his wife? That… that’s…!”

Raising a banner of rebellion toward the kingdom due to his own resentment.

Was that really how Wilhelm van Astrea appeared? Why, after seeing someone who was so deeply in love, and willing to give up everything for his love, could anyone think that? Had they never looked him in the eye, or gazed at his steady back?

Had they never seen the Sword Demon’s frank, honest blade?

Subaru: “That person would never do such a thing, why does nobody understand!”

Julius: “——”

This time, Subaru indeed threw off the hand on his shoulder, and shoved at Julius’s chest. He stood and backed up, losing his momentum.

The yellow eyes looking back at him seemed to almost admire Subaru’s anger. He understood. He knew that this degree of anger was inappropriate.

What Julius had said to Subaru had not reflected his own views. Julius’s own attitude was apparent.

After all, one year ago, Julius had comforted Wilhelm after he’d slain the White Whale. He’d comforted Wilhelm, who had spent fourteen long years trying to avenge his wife.

There was no doubt that he would never have suspected that Wilhelm would ever hold a revolt against the kingdom.

Subaru: “…sorry. I was being an idiot.”

Julius: “No, don’t apologize. You’re in the right. I’m the one in the wrong —If anyone should apologize, it’s me.”

Dropping their gazes, they both closed their eyes. They both felt an unbearable weight.

Their helplessness in doing anything to change the country’s doubt in Wilhelm. Subaru and Julius both, even if they vented their feelings, were still ultimately powerless.

Subaru: “So is Reinhard also like that?”

Julius: “…by the same logic, Reinhard would resent the kingdom for sending his grandmother to her death and in turn killing his predecessor, but that isn’t the case.”

Subaru: “Then…”

Julius: “However, the kingdom doesn’t doubt that Reinhard has no intent in holding a rebellion. Rather, that suspicion goes to Heinkel-sama.”

At the appearance of Reinhard’s father’s name, Subaru’s eyes widened.

Even though it was a name he didn’t want to hear, he couldn’t just plug his ears at the topic. Any conversation involving that name wouldn’t be pleasant.

Subaru: “How’s Reinhard’s relationship with his father? Aside from the obvious blood one.”

Julius: “There was a period of time when Reinhard gave Heinkel-sama his complete, utmost obedience. That might seem natural since they’re father and son, but… that time exceeded the bounds of what it should have been.”

Julius averted his eyes from Subaru’s, as if speaking regretfully.

The relationship that he’d said “exceeded the bounds” of a typical parent-child relationship. His words were vague enough that it was difficult to know what he’d meant. However, Julius didn’t look eager to elaborate, and returned his gaze to Subaru.

Julius: “As Reinhard grew to be more self-reliant, that attitude should have disappeared. But, without decisively knowing whether or not Reinhard would still listen to Heinkel-sama’s words, those doubts cannot dissipate.”

Subaru: “…so, to keep Heinkel from giving Reinhard an order to turn against the kingdom, Heinkel was shown favor, right?”

Julius: “Perhaps it’s even worse. Although this is still a rumor that is considered hearsay, I’ll tell you, since you’re also Reinhard’s friend, and you felt anger for his sake.”

With that troubling opening remark, Julius looked over their surroundings with a sweep. Confirming that there were no eavesdroppers, he stood close to Subaru's side.

Then,

Julius: "The deputy commander was a suspect in the investigation of the abduction of the princess fourteen years ago."

Subaru: "——!?"

Julius: "There is no conclusive evidence. However, he has been repeatedly questioned about his suspected involvement."

Subaru: "If that's true, then, the abduction was…"

Julius: "The truth of that is no longer relevant. Such a suspicious character holding one of the kingdom's highest positions of power, that's the crux of the problem now."

The glorious blessing following the title of Sword Saint.

However, as more and more of the situation came to light, Subaru began to think that the title was more curse than blessing.

Subaru: "However, if he really was related to the abduction, then Heinkel is the reason why his father and mother couldn't meet face to face one last time."

Julius: "…that's not all. I've also heard that it was Heinkel-sama who recommended that Thearesia-sama, who'd already set her blade aside, be the one to take his place against the White Whale."

Subaru: "He actually sent his mother to the battle with the White Whale!?"

Julius: "There is an accurate record of this. The deputy commander refused to battle with the White Whale and instead recommended that his mother do it."

Utterly speechless. —Subaru could not find it in himself to formulate a response.

Unlike the unfounded rumor before, what Julius had just said was backed up by real evidence. Records and witnesses meant that this was fact.

Heinkel sent his own mother as his replacement to the battle with the White Whale.

That is to say, his mother subsequently died in battle, and his father took up the blade of revenge when he could not be with his mother in her last moments. However, rather than face any punishment, he used his son's talent as a shield which protected his comfortable and stable life.

How could it be? How could there be a human who was capable of this?

Subaru: “There has to be a mistake somewhere, right…?”

He didn’t want to believe it.

It wasn’t about wanting to believe in Heinkel’s humanity. Subaru had already accepted him as the worst kind of person, and anyone who spoke to him could instantly tell.

However, he was reluctant to admit that such evil beyond evil, such immorality, such depravity even existed.

He hoped to believe in ethics, or honor, human nature, and had thought there was a limit to how much evil human nature could permit.

However, things that would be a sin even in imagination could happen in reality.

Julius: “…sorry. That’s not something I should have told someone who hadn’t fully prepared themselves.”

Julius whispered to the speechless Subaru, his voice shrouded in gloom.

Subaru could fully empathize with the feelings which Julius’s tone had given away, something which was entirely unlike the always calm Julius.

Subaru: “It’s… it’s not your fault, I was the one who wanted to hear. Although it would be a little easier if I could blame you.”

Julius: “I’m not in a position to accept your words. Obviously, what I relayed to you were just rumors about another family’s business, but I still spoke of them as if I’d witnessed them myself. No matter how you look at it, I spoke without thinking of the gravity of those rumors. As a knight, I really should be ashamed.”

Subaru: “But you witnessed it, didn’t you? Since you’re Reinhard’s friend.”

Subaru replied to Julius’s self-deprecation.

Julius again lifted his head toward Subaru, who nodded back at him.

Subaru: “Although I don’t know the specifics of your friendship with Reinhard, I can still see that you’re worried about him. So I won’t condemn your anger or call it too aggressive. I don’t think it’s right to just step out of something like that solely because it’s not your business.”

Julius: “…then, what would you do?”

Subaru: “Is it wrong to interfere if you hear others around you crying? If I saw my friend feeling hopeless, I’d certainly call to him. If you care about Reinhard, doing so would be completely natural. Especially since your feelings aren’t like mine.”

If Julius were to interfere for nothing other than his curiosity, Subaru would regard him with contempt.

However, Julius's feelings, as proven by both his attitude and his words in their exchange, were nothing so shameful.

Subaru: "Didn't I just tell you? There's no need to adhere so rigidly to you knightly honor or whatever. Even if there were, occasionally taking off your armor and becoming 'Juli' wouldn't be so bad. Who's to say that acting casually wouldn't lead to a better situation?"

"Juli" was the pseudonym Julius had given during the battle with the Witch Cult.

Due to his position, Julius was unable to join any mercenary group, so he'd elegantly hidden his identity with a slight falsehood. It was a name that everyone had eventually given up on using, even Julius himself. However, that Julius was the one who'd been least like a knight.

Julius: "Juli, huh… that name really came from out of the blue!"

Subaru: "It was from so long ago, and it was only used once. I'm pretty impressed with myself for remembering it."

Julius: "Don't adhere so rigidly to your knightly honor or whatever.' You've really said some difficult things. I'm sure you know what they all call me."

Subaru: "It's because they've been calling you the greatest and what not that you've become so physically and mentally stiff. You should shed that armor when you bathe, and do some stretches with me before putting it back on."

Subdued bent over, affixing his palms to the ground as if showing off his newfound flexibility. Although his body had been quite stiff before he'd started learning parkour, he'd learned to move with more softness and pliability.

Then, to the Subaru who was showing off his flexibility,

Julius: "If you're trying to show me up, I really can't do anything but sigh."

Subaru: "Oh!?"

As he spoke, Julius spread his legs apart and reached toward the ground. Subaru couldn't help but admire his control over his slender legs and the suppleness of his hips as he lowered himself to the ground.

Was that to say that Julius could easily surpass Subaru in any area?

Subaru: "Gah… but, but! If it were playing a lute-lyre, or sewing, I'd definitely win…!"

Julius: "Although I can't see the merit in triumphing in hobbies, I've also taken up playing musical instruments. Although I'd have to say that tailoring is fairly difficult."

Subaru: “Grrr! You said it! Hobbies! A hobby held by a guy like you can’t be anything but superficial. I’ll never form a band with you. My lead singer role will be taken away!”

Julius unwound his feet and stood with a flourish.

He suddenly flicked his bangs at Subaru, then smiled at the sky as if boasting a victory.

Julius: “I see. As ‘Juli’, gazing at the sky and bathing in the wind feels like this.”

Subaru: “Eh?”

Julius: “In retrospect, the sky I saw back then was also somewhat different from how it usually was. So this would be the reason, then.”

Subaru: “You keep getting more and more unreasonable. You fake bastard.”

Subaru shrugged his shoulders in annoyance and flopped onto the floor of the corridor. Julius narrowed his eyes at him as if still dazzled by the sun.

At last, the uncomfortable air surrounding their conversation had dispersed.

Of course, what they’d discussed was still lodged in their memories, and knots still remained in their chests. But, even so, they could at least work through their frustration together.

—Looking at only that image, those two seemed like a pair of ordinary friends.

Arc 5 - Chapter 18, "A Time for Song and Dance"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-18-a-time-for-song-and-dance/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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Subaru finished his simultaneously important and trivial conversation with Julius and left the Water Plumage Pavilion with Emilia and Beatrice.

Emilia: “In the courtyard, you were chatting in a friendly way with Julius for once. What were you talking about?”

Subaru: “First of all, thinking that I was being friendly with that guy was a mistake, but what do you think we were talking about?”

Emilia: “Where should we go play next time?’ Something like that.”

Subaru: “Are we school friends!?”

Even if Emilia’s casual assumption about their relationship was right, even assuming that Julius and Subaru went to the same school, they would be in entirely different social groups. Schools, just like society, ran on a hierarchy.

In a sense, didn’t something similar to a division between classes exist universally?

Subaru: “Whether in this world or another world, those hardships are the same…”

Emilia: “Hey, hey, what did you talk about?”

Subaru: “I was anxious to ask about those hostile recent events. What exactly happened earlier? What preceded that? What’s going to happen next? Those kinds of topics.”

Emilia: “Isn’t that being friendly?”

Emilia tilted her head in question. Subaru followed suit with a sigh.

Looking at only their trivial words at the end of their conversation, maybe they did look like friends. But it was himself and Julius, so that wasn’t possible. He wasn’t a friend, he was something infinitely more annoying.

Although it was impossible to say exactly what that was.

Subaru: “Well, he’s definitely not a friend. There’s no doubt about it.”

Emilia: “Honestly…”

Emilia turned around to look to Beatrice, who wordlessly sighed in response. Subaru felt somewhat annoyed by the air of mutual understanding between the two.

In any case, his conversation with Julius in the courtyard had concerned Reinhard, Wilhelm, and their relationship with Heinkel Astrea.

So if he truthfully conveyed the contents of their conversation to Emilia then Subaru would feel rather guilty.

In addition to hesitating to reveal the private affairs of the Astrea family, Subaru didn’t want to cause unnecessary stress for Emilia.

After all, this was a helpless, tricky situation.

The history of the Astrea family wasn’t something that outsiders could easily approach.

Julius had been involved in the history himself and, acknowledging Subaru’s concern, had relayed everything to him.

—And still, Subaru felt a nauseous itch in his stomach.

Emilia: “So, Subaru. Although it’s a pleasure to take a walk like this, what are you planning?”

Subaru: “——”

While Subaru wrestled with his inner anxiety, Emilia suddenly smiled and uttered such a remark.

Subaru, taken by surprise, was momentarily lost for words. He hurriedly blinked and shrugged.

Subaru: “That’s harsh to hear, Emilia-tan. I just had a pure wish to wander the beautiful Watergate City with Emilia-tan. At most, I have only a trace of a temptation to lure you too close to a fountain and appreciate your appearance when soaked with water.”

Emilia: “Huu~, Subaru, to say such a thing. You really are a stubborn person. Even I know that something so trivial isn’t your real intent.”

Beatrice: “...…”

Emilia raised her pouting cheeks, and Subaru pressed an uncomfortable hand to his forehead. He looked to Beatrice for aid, however, the young girl walking between Emilia and Subaru gazed up at Subaru with the same expression Emilia wore.

Without any support, Subaru quickly raised his hands in surrender.

Subaru: “Okay, I surrender. I’m sorry. I won’t splash Emilia-tan.”

Emilia: “Su-ba-ru.”

When his name was called out in anger, Subaru dropped his raised hands and surrendered for real this time.

Emilia: “Subaru, you naughty.”

Subaru: “You saw through me, Emilia-tan. Although, I was your mentor, so I should be rewarded… right, right, I’ll be serious now.”

Emilia: “Honestly.”

In response to Emilia, who’d raised her hand in an “I’ll hit you” gesture, Subaru could only smile.

Subaru: “I wasn’t trying to hide anything, I just wanted to give you a little surprise. Right now, we’re headed to Pristella’s city park, where yesterday I had unexpectedly met the Songstress.”

Emilia: “Wow, Songstress-san? Um, then, will she be there today?”

Subaru: “Your shining eyes are adorable. Yeah, I have the famed Songstress’s contact information. Although I have faith in Otto's ability to negotiate, I also have faith that his bad luck will probably cost us this opportunity. So this is insurance.”

Emilia: “I see. And if we’re on good terms with Songstress-san, then asking Kiritaka-san to trade us the ore would be like a personal favor.”

Subaru: “That's it. Well done.”

Subaru gestured his arms over his head in the shape of a circle. Emilia was so innocent.

In fact, although the transaction would hardly be as simple and straightforward as Emilia had said, there was no need to point out her mistake.

Emilia was only purely looking forward to getting along with Liliana. Subaru could handle all of the other stuff in secret.

Subaru: “I can’t help but feel that the likes of Emilia-tan and Liliana will have some kind of a chemical reaction…”

Emilia: “Chemical reaction?”

Subaru: “From the looks of it, I think Emilia-tan and Liliana will get along well.”

Emilia: “Will we? Haha, I hope so.”

Although somewhat apologetic to Emilia, who was just looking forward to meeting, Subaru had already been somewhat beset by the fatigue that would surely follow any meeting with Liliana.

Even while hoping that Liliana would be in the park to fulfill his goals, Subaru prayed that he wouldn’t have to see her again.

Of course, if she wasn’t there, the afternoon would just be a date with Emilia — although he wanted to avoid that, Subaru couldn’t deny that he would enjoy it.

Subaru: “Emilia-tan, don’t you want to go water cruising with me? I think that’d be fun, and it would strengthen our bonds.”

Emilia: “I’m not sure what cruising is, but I think Subaru would get seasick if we did. That would tire you out, so we should avoid it.”

Beatrice: “Not to mention, the park is right in front of us, in fact. Now isn’t the time to give up, I suppose.”

Beatrice pulled on an uncomfortable Subaru’s wrist, and led him onwards as she continued to walk forward.

They arrived at the destination without any hesitation, and Subaru gave up any resistance after seeing the entrance to the park.

The fountain located at the center or city’s park showed an unexpected spectacle. The audience gathered in the park was larger than yesterday’s.

Subaru: “Since we came here earlier, I was prepared for the possibility that Liliana wouldn't be here...”

Seeing the crowd gathered, however, that thought turned out to be just a mere worry.

Today’s performance seemed upbeat, with both rallies and applause from fanatical listeners, an atmosphere which dominated the park.

Subaru: “Clapping and yelling?”

Beatrice: “Today looks quite a bit more lively than yesterday, in fact.”

Met with the same confusion as Subaru, Beatrice titled her head to the side.

Although it had been delivered by this morning's magic device, Liliana's singing typically peacefully, quietly drew its audience away from reality. It was precisely because of that nature that the presence of this frenzied crowd seemed off.

The expected situation had been mixed with something unexpected.

Emilia: “Everyone seems to be enjoying themselves. She really deserves to be Songstress-san.”

Although Emilia was eager to push through the hustle and bustle to have a good look, Subaru had a bad feeling about the entire situation.

As they approached the front of the crowded audience, Subaru began to feel an uneasy sense of regret.

Subaru: “——”

However, he couldn’t quite vocalize that feeling, and so Subaru had no excuse to stop.

Not to mention that Emilia was looking forward to the seeing the commotion for herself. After all, Subaru could not betray those amethyst eyes which sparkled with expectation.

Soon after, the fanaticism of the masses turned into a thunderous round of applause as they continued to push through the crowd.

That is to say, the cause of that commotion was coming to an end. The place where the crowd’s excited sight was concentrated became visible.

There,

Liliana: “That was a really amazing dance! After seeing this extraordinary dance I started to lose myself!”

Priscilla: “Not at all, your performance and singing were what captured mine attention so completely. Just as it deserved to. It has been a long time since I’ve seen such a display of skill.”

There, talking and shaking hands tightly with each other, were the Songstress and a woman of crimson.

Subaru’s intuition had been right.

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Today, Subaru again bore witness to an audience shedding tears to Liliana’s playing and singing.

If something today were different from yesterday, it would be the presence of Priscilla, who stood beside Liliana, also being showered with “your dance was too powerful”, “so touching”, “I’ll definitely come again”. The recipient of all this generous praise, Priscilla, fanned herself and spread her arms wide in response.

After that rough interaction with their fans, the only people left were Subaru, Emilia, and Beatrice. Noticing their obtrusively idleness, Liliana’s twintails bounced once more.

Liliana: “Oh, hey! If it isn’t Natsuki-sama and Emilia-sama! And Natsuki-sama’s little girl-sama! What are you all up to?”

Beatrice: “I wouldn't know who this girl-sama is, I suppose. Subaru, explain it to me, in fact.”

Subaru: “Why don’t we let the one who came up with the name explain it? Here, I’ll give you some tasty candy, so behave.”

Beatrice: “You won’t mmm… fool me like this, I suppose mmm….”

Setting aside Beatrice, who was busy sucking on the sweet in the mouth, Subaru turned to Liliana, whose twin ponytails bounced eagerly like dog tails. Although Emilia exaggeratedly widened her eyes in response, Liliana’s presentation of her odd behavior was only just beginning.

Subaru: “Although it’s only been a day, here you are, staging another grand performance. Were you kicked out by Kiritaka again?”

Liliana: “Eeeh! Well~, that would be right. The one who loved me gave me such an earnest plea, so I complied. Isn’t that the mark of an excellent woman? I think it is.”

Subaru: “So, even after being booted out, you thought that holding a performance would be perfectly fine…”

Liliana straightened her thin chest and stroked a nonexistent moustache. Next to her, Priscilla stood with arms crossed across her ample chest. Catching sight of Subaru, she snorted at him with contempt.

Priscilla: “What have you been doing? Even if you were taken in by mine allure, resting your gaze upon

me like that is incredibly rude. Men who are obsessed with mine beauty are at most allowed to inhale my scent to fuel their sweet dreams."

Subaru: "I didn't see your dance, but even if I had I wouldn't have been too excited. I only like delicate type girls like Emilia-tan, so your alluring body doesn't do much for me."

Priscilla: "Preferring a half-witch over me is a mark of utter helplessness. Of course, I am not so narrow minded as to accept strange tastes. Moreover, if you can not understand true beauty, then your gaze can only be dismissed as hopelessly short-sighted."

Subaru sensed a certain futility in attempting to argue with her.

Their values were too different. Subaru couldn't direct common sense at Priscilla, who genuinely believed that the world itself belonged to her.

Anyway,

Emilia: "An amazing dance', that is to say, Priscilla was dancing?"

Priscilla: "Feel regret that you missed it. Dancing is not something I do lightly. That is to say, the this artist's song had something to offer."

Priscilla presented Liliana to the stunned Emilia.

Subaru was shocked by her answer, while Liliana rolled her eyes at him. Ignoring Liliana, who began to pretend she was blowing bubbles, Subaru stared straight at Priscilla.

Subaru: "You danced for people? That's completely unexpected."

Priscilla: "Then, how would you regard the frenzy of that crowd of fools just now? Although that artist's song did have magic in it, without the presence of mine dance, the audience would have merely fallen into a stupor and become puppets who could only listen. Although that could be said to be a form of enjoyment, I am not fond of it. Fools will remain fools, and the ignorant will remain ignorant. Why not have color added to both mine and their day?"

Subaru: "…in other words, fools indulging in foolishness will be happier?"

Priscilla: "Ho. You're obviously a commoner, but you're quite adept at comprehension."

Feeling grateful at Priscilla's praise would be impossible.

Not to mention that Priscilla showed no sign that she'd remembered that she'd completely forgotten about his existence in the inn. He'd just settle for being fine with Priscilla remembering about Emilia.

Liliana: "But, but, Priscilla-sama and Emilia-sama. So many exciting people are assembled here, I really appreciate it."

Liliana had withstood the sinister atmosphere and offered that reaction.

She had picked up on the rivalry between the two and had designated herself as the mediator, rather than the awkward Subaru doing so. Maybe her odd quirks and airheadedness were just a mask.

Liliana: “Ehehe. Was my song so beautiful? Honestly, that just embarrasses me. Hehehehe.”

Subaru: “Nope, this is her real nature.”

Liliana was blinded by her own praise and fell into a fidgeting embarrassment. Subaru realized he’d overestimated her and slumped his shoulders disappointedly. Then, he suddenly noticed that there was no one around Priscilla.

Subaru: “Are you alone? No Al, or that damn bastard, or the cute butler?”

Priscilla: “I allowed Schultz to go for a walk, but he seems to have gotten lost. He tries very hard, but is a good for nothing at everything he does, that’s the cute kind of child he is. Since Al’s constant nagging is annoying, I sent him out to look for Schultz. As for the damn bastard, I am unsure. Perhaps he’s at a tavern somewhere.”

Subaru: “So ‘damn bastard’ is actually a common language between us…”

Subaru was thrown off by the unexpectedly serious reply. It seemed that Heinkel was poorly received even by his own faction.

Although he fully understood why Heinkel was treated that way, why had Priscilla bothered to invite sometime like that to her faction?

Subaru: “She’d definitely say something like ‘because having him nearby would interesting’, though…”

Priscilla: “You seem to understand quite well. Well, I collected him for some rather small reasons. Those who approach me and attempt to market themselves will be welcomed so long as I can find them a purpose for mine amusement. If they become an obstacle, they can be discarded at any time. That man is, at best, this kind of person.”

Subaru: “No, how do I say this… he doesn’t seem like he’d live up to your expectations in any way whatsoever.”

It seemed as if it was precisely because her expectations had not been met that Priscilla had flown into a violent rage. But perhaps Priscilla had even already long forgotten that event.

Subaru: “But don’t you feel like this is dangerous? At this point in time, I’d never let Emilia-tan go out alone.”

Priscilla: “Mine attendants are absent, and were I to be in danger, then I would be at a disadvantage. Such a line of thought is only fitting for those who can only gaze at mine back.”

Subaru: “Ah, is that it?”

That was quite a disdainful judgment of Al’s capabilities. However, after seeing Priscilla in action, that perspective was understandable.

At the earlier meal, the ability that Priscilla had demonstrated was superior to humankind. Subaru: “Speaking of which, I’ve also been kicked in the jaw before.”

During the loops that had happened in the capitol, Subaru had once displeased Priscilla enough to have been kicked in the face. His body had flown so high it had hit the ceiling, and he’d landed in the adjacent room.

That severe pain had felt like a broken jaw.

Subaru: “So, you threw Al aside and came to see Liliana?”

Priscilla: “This mere urban landscape has done well to soothe mine boredom. Unlike the narrow structure of the capitol, the city has many a place worth viewing. As I explored, a lovely river of song flowed to me.”

Liliana: “Yeah~, at first when the dancing created a frenzy I really had no clue what would happen. Sometimes there are people who recklessly join my performance and change the mood. Although most of the time my song hits them and they change their minds.”

Subaru: “You really don’t act like the Songstress should at all…”

To just invade a song like that was too bold of a move.

And, indeed, it was rather a shock that Priscilla had joined in with a dance. That the audience had been so taken with it meant that her dancing was on par with the song itself.

Priscilla: “Although it would be a stretch to say you could win hearts and minds like I can, there is in fact a certain value in your voice. How about it? Come to mine side. Let mine influence give you status, and allow me to offer you the honor of playing for mine mansion.”

Liliana: “——”

In other words, Priscilla rather appreciated Liliana's song and gave her an unreasonable demand. Although the idea painted Liliana as Priscilla’s personal musician, darker implications behind Priscilla’s words were present as well.

If her anger at being unable to win Liliana reached the same level as her appreciation for Liliana’s music, what would she do? It was that terrible implication.

Then, Liliana replied,

Liliana: “Thank you very much! That’s such an uplifting evaluation, and it makes me really happy! But! but! but! Please allow me to refuse...”

She didn’t know about Priscilla’s terrible anger, nor was she capable of reading the mood.

With that horrifying ignorance, she rejected Priscilla’s proposal with casual enthusiasm. Priscilla: “Ho, you refuse. Why?”

Sure enough, Priscilla’s voice lowered, and her gaze darkened.

Shivering. Subaru, who was completely unrelated to the situation between them, felt a blade of cold brush his back.

In one sentence, the atmosphere was about to turn deadly.

In her own world, free of tension, Liliana stroked the box which held her instrument.

Liliana: “I am Liliana, a traveling bard. Although it is true that I am being asked to stay in the city like this, I am a traveler who will return to wandering with the wind sooner or later. Not bound by the land, not bound by others, that is how I serve my profession — such a way of survival that has long been decided.”

Priscilla: “Therefore mine invitation was refused.”

Liliana: “Whether my mother, or her mother, or her mother's mother, my family has always walked that path. We are all people who have chosen to forsake everything that is material so we may live on through song in the hearts of others. No one can capture the wind, just as no one can stop a song. Therefore,”

Priscilla: “——”

Liliana: “Although I am very happy about your invitation, please allow me to refuse. After all, even I can not know where my song will travel, because every decision has been entrusted to the wind.”

Lifting her instrument, speaking proudly, Liliana’s expression bore no trace of hesitation.

Her usual tricky expression was gone, as was her deliberately affected atmosphere that existed to provokes the nerves of others.

There was just a bard — the Songstress who wanted to preserve her stories in song.

After listening to Liliana's reply, Priscilla held one hand aloft and closed one eye. With her other eye, she trained a scorching crimson gaze at Liliana.

Then, at Liliana’s unwavering expression, Priscilla suddenly gave a sigh.

Priscilla: “— Excellent. That determination is also pleasing. I will allow it. The vulgar one here seems to

have been I.”

Liliana: “No, no, not at all. I am very, deeply sorry.”

Toward Priscilla, whose mouth was on the verge of blooming into a smile, Liliana offered a heartfelt response.

Really, the interaction between the two left Subaru dumbstruck. Squinting at his frozen expression, Priscilla frowned as if displeased.

Priscilla: “What is it, commoner? You seem bothered.”

Subaru: “It’s really nothing other than shock. I thought you were going to bisect Liliana after she rejected you and I started to shiver…”

Priscilla: “That’s a rather ridiculous worry.”

No such thing would happen, was what Priscilla’s “hmph” indicated.

However, before she had heard Liliana's reasoning, Priscilla had no doubt intended to kill her. Before that decision had been consciously reached, however, Liliana’s opportune words had the balance to tilt in a lucky direction. At least, that was how Subaru saw it.

Emilia: “But, I was also a little surprised. Since Priscilla-san seems like a ‘I’ll take whatever I want’ kind of person.”

The landmine that Subaru had taken pains to avoid was unexpectedly triggered by Emilia.

Emilia bluntly blurted out her impression of Priscilla. Subaru involuntarily straightened his back and spun around to face Priscilla. But, Priscilla merely closed her eyes, and,

Priscilla: “What foolish words, half-witch. How could your clouded eyes ever judge mine character? There is a limit how many impolite insults I will stand for.”

Beatrice: “What an unforgivable girl, in fact. If you have time to muse on the helplessness of others, then you should reflect on yourself and your own demeanor, I suppose. Betty thinks that would be more meaningful to both parties, in fact.

Emilia: “Beatrice…”

As she listened to Priscilla’s relentless derision, Beatrice gripped the confused Emilia's hand. Priscilla, however, raised her eyebrows, looking at Beatrice as if noticing her for the first time.

Priscilla: “Such a little girl dares to speak like that. Mine magnanimity is not determined by age. If you hold the incorrect notion that your youth will spare you mine wrath, you’d best change your attitude right now.”

Beatrice: “Your meddling really is unnecessary, I suppose. Watch who you call little girl, in fact. Taking Betty’s appearance at face value cost you dearly.”

A flame burst into existence between Priscilla and Beatrice.

The two girls dressed in elaborate dresses both looked to be terribly angry.

Although Subaru never doubted for a second that Beatrice would win, he knew that these conflicts were inevitable when the royal candidates met. This was just the type of relationship they had.

Subaru: “Don’t be so stubborn, Beako. Priscilla’s just volatile like this, and arguing with her is pointless.”

Beatrice: “Subaru, do not stop Betty, in fact. Aren’t you angry that Emilia is being belittled, I suppose? Show me your masculinity, in fact.”

Subaru: “Could you not say such terrible things!? Not to mention…”

Subaru was shocked that Beatrice, who rarely showed concern toward people who weren’t him, was angry for Emilia’s sake.

Even Emilia, the recipient of that concern, was surprised.

Emilia: “Beatrice, I’m fine.”

Moving Beatrice's hand out of the way, Emilia gently touched the girl's head. For a second, a tearful expression appeared on Beatrice’s face.

But it only lasted for a moment. Beatrice adopted her usual expression as she turned back to Priscilla.

Beatrice: “Be grateful that you’ve been spared, I suppose.”

Priscilla: “That’s how you should feel. Thank your own cute face.”

Both Beatrice and Priscilla snorted slightly.

Although at the end Priscilla had ended up praising Beatrice’s appearance, the infuriated Beatrice was completely unaware. Anyway, ‘I’ll let you go because you’re cute’ — that was an odd explanation. Subaru didn’t understand at all.

Subaru: “You really are an irrational woman…”

Priscilla: “Of course. Are you so proud that you believe yourself capable of seeing through any woman, let alone I?”

Subaru: “Are you saying it’s my fault...? What really started this incident was you telling Liliana ‘I want

you’.”

Priscilla's reasoning for allowing Liliana to escape the palm of her hand remained a mystery. Subaru directed a curious gaze at her. Unexpectedly, Priscilla covered her mouth with her fan.

Priscilla: “Everything in this world is already mine. As such, there is no necessity to hold all that is beautiful and lofty in mine palm. Those things just need to exist. As long as they continue to exist, then there is no problem.”

Subaru: “……”

Priscilla: “This world is already mine courtyard, that is to say, where a songbird sings is unimportant. Placing her into the cage? Vulgar. Guarding her from an outside enemy's hands? Vulgar. In fact, those are all rather troublesome actions.”

Priscilla’s views drove any of Subaru’s presumptions into the ground. Her alienation from even alienation left Subaru speechless.

That wasn’t to say that Subaru couldn’t understand what she was saying. However, what she saw was just too different from what Subaru saw.

Therefore, Subaru would never understand her for as long as he lived.

Frankly, he thought it was horrible. But maybe it could be seen in another light. This terrible feeling, perhaps, might also inspire admiration or longing in others. Maybe that was exactly why Al chose to follow Priscilla.

Liliana: “Hey, hey, hey! Now that everyone’s calmed down, let me serve as an ambassador and show off goodwill as I show off my voice! Yeah, I’ll do just that!”

In this way, slicing through the atmosphere, Liliana abruptly made her own proposal. She took her lute-lyre and played a quick chord on its strings, before concentrating on swaying her own body along.

Liliana: “Only this time, Priscilla-sama doesn’t need to join in with a dance, just enjoying the song is fine. I will open fire with the full passion of the Songstress! Please listen carefully!”

Priscilla: “Ho?”

Liliana’s words brought an expression of interest to Priscilla’s face.

Liliana: “Emilia-sama seemed to have first arrived as my first song ended. I hope that instead of seeing me as a singer whose selling point is her cuteness, you’ll come to see me as poet who has earned a little bit of money with performance skill.”

Emilia: “Wow, really?”

Liliana: “Although I’m not the most qualified of musicians, I hope you’ll be satisfied.”

Regardless of Liliana's assertion, Emilia was undoubtedly interested in her performance and singing. That was why Emilia, who had been taken in by their previous interaction, looked forward to Liliana’s proposal.

Taking note of the subtle sense of distance between Emilia and Priscilla, Liliana appeared to enter a state of preparation. She discreetly waved Subaru over and said in a quiet voice,

Liliana: “Natsuki-sama, Natsuki-sama. Although this is just my personal opinion, are Emilia-sama and Priscilla-sama on poor terms?

Subaru: “That’s hardly a matter of opinion, it’s obvious from their exchanges. Besides, Priscilla doesn’t get along with anyone, of course there’s tension with Emilia.”

Liliana: “This is huge!”

Liliana seemed shocked, and her hair jumped like an alert dog’s tail. Were her nerves linked to her hair? He really wanted to reach out and grab it.

Liliana: “So, so, let me come here and cut that tension away, and unite the two in a world of charm and song. Ah! Just now, did your imagination just annoyingly turn somewhere dangerous when I said ‘cut’? That’s no good!”

Subaru: “It's exhausting when you say both inspiring and uninspiring things in one sentence, so don’t do that anymore.”

Subaru marveled at Liliana, who seemed like a madman, yet was capable of caring for others. Sweeping away the bad air with a song, something simple and straightforward.

Both were companions in shared interest to Liliana's singing. Even Priscilla wouldn’t act cynically toward Emilia as she listened to the Songstress she so admired.

Liliana: “After the song ends and they chat again, shouldn’t we prepare food and drinks for them? Indulging in sweet snacks will certainly create a mood that will close the distance between them, don’t you think so?”

Subaru: “No, I don’t think so.”

Liliana: “After the song ends and they chat again, shouldn’t we prepare food and drinks for them? Indulging in sweet snacks will certainly create a mood that will close the distance between them, don’t you think so?”

Subaru: “Is this a parody where I can’t advance unless I say yes?”

Liliana presented that false choice with the same inflection and tone, and Subaru had no choice but to

give up and choose “yes”. Liliana’s expression suddenly became open again.

The high degree of difficulty in communication between the human species and the Liliana species had yet to be considered properly.

Subaru: “Alright, I’ll buy some snacks while Liliana sings. Emilia-tan, I’ll be right back, so don’t argue with anyone and wait here quietly, okay?”

Emilia: “Really. You don’t need to worry so much, and besides it wouldn’t happen anyway. I don’t want to fight with Priscilla-san.”

Subaru had cautioned Emilia just to be sure, but she wore a large smile. Although he didn’t doubt Emilia, even if she does not initiate an argument, the presence of Priscilla made the likelihood of one rather high.

Subaru: “Beatrice. If something happens with Emilia-tan, I’ll leave it up to you.”

Beatrice: “I know, in fact. That girl, if she tries to talk again, I’ll turn her into ash, I suppose.”

Subaru: “You won’t argue either, right?”

Committing that task to Beatrice, who was much more volatile than Emilia, Subaru prepared to leave the park. But, before that,

Subaru: “Priscilla, is there anything you won’t eat?”

Priscilla: “How unexpected. A commoner like you is actually showing consideration. Well, in that case, prepare something interesting. If you find something boring, I’ll lift you up by your head and slam you down again.”

Subaru: “Guessing what you’d like would be like playing rock-paper-scissors, why’d you have to impose that cruel condition!?”

Subaru thought about giving her the first delicacy he could find. Priscilla being Priscilla frowned at his answer.

Priscilla: “Rock, paper… scissors?” She tilted her head to the side.

Since she’d once forgotten Subaru, maybe she’d forgotten the condition she’d imposed. Already,

Subaru had no idea what to say. She truly was impossible to deal with in every sense of the word.

Emilia: “Subaru, be careful.”

Beatrice: “If anything happens, call for Betty, in fact.”

Sent off by Emilia and Beatrice’s gazes, Subaru waved his hand. Afterwards, he waved his hand and

winked at Liliana as if flirting, then ran from the park.

Soon afterwards, Liliana's light melody came.

Hearing it, Subaru thought of returning to the park as soon as possible. If he didn't join her solo at all, it wouldn't work. He injected more power into his running stride.

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It had been ten minutes since Subaru left the park.

Subaru: "I'm so worthless, really."

After leaving the store, Subaru looked at the contents of his bag and sighed.

In order to procure proper desserts, the errand boy Subaru went for the first suitable store he found and completed his shopping as soon as possible. Although he was intrigued by Pristella's famous delicacy, a rare product called Gina Jelly, he didn't have the courage to bring it back to Priscilla.

Although phrasing it as fearing the of deterioration the relationship between the two factions sounded nice, what Subaru in fact feared was Priscilla herself.

Subaru: "But, I wonder if this tastes the same as Unagi Jelly. Although I do feel ashamed about lacking the courage to confirm it for myself, I don't quite hate myself."

Subaru whistled at his complicated self-examination, running along the road to the park at a brisk pace.

He'd counted the ten minutes since he'd left, and there had been no change in his contract link with Beatrice.

Even so, his masculine pride bid him to return as soon as possible, but,

Subaru: "Gah, sorry."

Turning quickly around a corner, he nearly collided with someone. Although he'd hurriedly avoided them, Subaru turned his head to make sure.

Subaru: "Sorry. I don't think I hit you, but are you good?"

???: "Hey, brother. Are you apologizing? Then you should show me more sincerity!"

The man who Subaru had almost collided with replied in a rough voice, his expression changing as he saw Subaru.

At the same time, Subaru himself was also stunned.

Subaru: “Whoa, is it Chin? You were even hired by Felt, why are you still doing the same foolish things?”

Larkins: “You’re so damn annoying! I’ve told you that it’s not Chin! And what are you even doing here!?”

The man who angrily spat those words was yesterday’s messenger who’d made a mess of delivering his message. According to what Felt had said, he had supposedly been instructed to spend the night at another hotel in the city.

Subaru: “You’re all alone, and not with Ton and Kan? That’s really curious.”

Larkins: “Curious or whatever, what do you even know about me? There’s nothing between us, so why do you keep trying to start something? You’re so annoying, goddamn move already.”

Subaru: “You’re so cold, even though we have a relationship of life and death.”

Larkins: “I don’t remember that kind of thing!?”

Larkins, who was unfamiliar with Subaru, made an irritated face as he tried to avoid him.

Even Subaru himself had trouble understanding why he felt such a kinship. Perhaps the sensors in Subaru’s heart treated Tonchinkan as mortal associates.

So many of the people in this world were ridiculously strong, so facing them would have Subaru breathe a sigh of relief.

Even though they’d obviously once killed him. He was really getting bolder.

Larkins: “Anyway! Don’t bother me! I’m working right now!”

Subaru: “The you who used to screw around and mess with people is now doing proper work… I’m so happy for you.”

Larkins: “Who is this!”

As Subaru pretended to weep, Larkins escaped from him and headed for the crowd. Having received a cold reaction, Subaru scratched his head in self-reflection.

If you had the bad habit of not taking the initiative to talk to people, there would also be a lingering sense of distance.

Watching Larkins disappear into the sea of people, Subaru turned toward the park again. And then his feet suddenly stopped.

Subaru: “Hmm?”

Subaru turns his head and begins to feel suspicious.

Before his eyes, in that subtle moment, is the reason that Subaru stopped — there were people who had stopped.

The crowd that Larkins had headed toward were all frozen in their tracks, and Subaru inadvertently followed suit. Larkins curled his lip and pushed his way out of the crowd.

Larkins: “This guy, that guy, and this guy too! What’re you all looking at!?”

Filled with irritated insults, Larkins also aligned his gaze with the gaze of the masses, which pointed above the roof of a towering building.

An exceptionally tall building, inlaid with a mosaic of crystal engravings, a building that held a bell. In any metropolis or town, this building would be taken for granted. Each city or town would have several of these clock towers.

In the city of Pristella, there were also a number of clock towers scattered about. The clock tower here was merely one of many.

However,

???: “— Gosh, honestly. Please excuse me, I’m very sorry.”

There, a figure stood, staring out from the open window of the clock tower, dangerously close to its edge.

The figure’s attire drew the attention of everyone nearby, and its voice trembled as if bathing in the weight of all that attention.

???: “Thank you. I really only need just a little bit of it, so please let me borrow your time.”

It spoke words of apology, but, compared to genuine words of regret, its words felt far more self-righteous, as if prioritizing its own intentions.

That shivering voice broke, sharply. Listening to it was painful on the ears, and there was a fierce, desperate need to remove that discomfort immediately.

The reason for that strange feeling could perhaps be traced to that figure’s off-putting appearance.

— The figure’s head was entirely wrapped in bandages, leaving only its dazzling eyes uncovered. Its body was wrapped tightly with a black jacket, and both wrists were captured by a long chain, the ends of which dragged on ground, swaying both left and right as their owner paced the tower.

It offered the masses a strange gesture — a smile, perhaps, but the bandages concealed and distorted its mouth too much for the expression to be comforting.

???: “My apologies, I’m the Witch Cult’s Sin Archbishop of Wrath.”

After saying that terrible title, the figure reported its name.

???: “— I am called Sirius Romanee-Conti.”

With malice, she smiled.

Arc 5 - Chapter 19, "Theatre of Malice"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-19-theatre-of-malice/

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This is not a professional translation. Some mistakes, both grammatical and logical, are inevitable. Also, be advised that translators have a predisposition for personal preference and the names and terminology may differ at times from what was used in the anime or is used in the fandom at large. Think of these documents as an extremely
detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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Those words were spoken with both intimacy and graciousness.

Hearing the bandaged figure’s opening speech, the crowd could only gaze up in stunned silence.

The figure standing high above them had a peculiar, striking appearance. Its voice was ear- piercing yet incredibly entrancing.

However, those notable features were secondary to something much greater.

The reason why no one dared to move their eyes from that figure was, in fact, incredibly simple. Calling that reason biological instinct would be no exaggeration.

— No one would be so foolish as to heedlessly look away from a life-threatening enemy.

“Huh, what?”

“What did that person say just now?”

“This a joke, right? The Witch Cult, what’s with…”

Delayed understanding gradually spread through the crowd.

However, no one took action. Everyone merely questioned the people near them, as if doubting what they’d heard.

Larkins: “Just now, what did that bastard say? Did you hear it!?”

Larkins, who’d raced back toward Subaru, shared that reaction.

Although he crossed the crowd while and approached Subaru while keeping an eye on the clocktower, Subaru, standing at a distance from the crowd, didn’t let his gaze waver for even a second.

A disaster would surely occur as soon as he looked away.

That figure’s identity being what it was, that was a doubtless fact.

— That is, that figure was a creature from the same species as Petelgeuse.

Subaru: “Also, claiming to be a Romanee-Conti…?”

The bandaged figure had given its name: Sirius Romanee-Conti.

Ridiculously enough, Romanee-Conti was in fact Petelgeuse’s surname, although it was impossible for that evil spirit to have blood relatives.

Subaru: “That can’t mean that all the cultists share that surname.”

An entire family named Romanee-Conti would be far too much of a nightmare to handle.

A wicked religion spreading the teachings of the witch, all under the name of Romanee-Conti? Even the thought seemed distorted and foul.

At the same time, an endless wave of anger rose inside Subaru.

Although this was not the Gluttony that he’d been pursuing, if this was someone who could give him a lead, then,

Subaru: “— I’ll try capture him and force him to explain everything.”

Although difficult, that could open a path to Gluttony.

Determined, Subaru calmed his blazing heart, and focused on finding his connection with Beatrice. Beatrice would appear for Subaru as soon as she was summoned.

This was an effect of the contract between a contractor his spirit.

Deep within himself, Subaru grabbed onto their connection, and prepared to seize it, when,

Sirius: “— Alright! That’s enough!”

Subaru: “—!?”

Just as he was about to call Beatrice, a shrill, dry voice called loudly from above.

That voice gave the impression that it could permeate the entire city. The bandaged person clapped his hands, and Subaru opened his eyes to see him watching the crowd beneath him.

Sirius: “Everyone took 22 seconds to fall quiet. However, thank you all for your attention. I’m very happy. In addition…”

Despite the irony in those words, the bandaged person, Sirius, kept his arms crossed as his entire body shook. Although he looked incredibly happy, the friction between the chains hanging from his arms and the walls of the clock tower created an uncomfortable sound.

Sirius: “You and you there, and the two buddies there, and you there too. I’m sorry, but please don’t be so angry. I’m very sorry to take up everyone’s precious time. Sorry, and thank you.”

Subaru: “What…”

Sirius twisted his body around, as if he were genuinely complaining.

Subaru had be prepared to yell “what a joke”, but, before the words finished leaving his mouth, he noticed that he’d been included amongst the four people who Sirius had pointed a finger at when he’d said “don’t be angry”.

Looking around, he saw the other people who Sirius had pointed out; they all seemed to possess some amount of skill. A beastman with a sword at his waist, a woman in a blindfold, and Larkins, who each wore a blush.

Those who had been named had all been people who had been prepared to take some action against Sirius. This was a warning that their plans had been seen through.

Subaru: “——”

Subaru felt cold sweat begin to bead his forehead, and he stopped calling for Beatrice.

He’d long understood how terrifying an attack by the Witch Cult was, and knew that survival was everything. In the square around Subaru, no fewer than thirty people had gathered.

If he couldn’t find an advantage somehow, then his situation was already deadly.

Subaru gave a wink to the other four who had been mentioned by Sirius, forming eye contact.

The beastman and blindfolded women both caught his eye, as did a sharp looking city resident. Only Larkins's face revealed a vague confusion as he looked away from Subaru.

Larkins held the most powerful card; the ability to summon Reinhard.

Yesterday, Reinhard had cautioned Larkins to remember to signal him in case anything happened. So there was a well-established sign between them, and as soon as Larkins used it, Reinhard would come. And as long as Reinhard rushed to the scene, then whether it were with Witch Cult or Sirius or whatever, any enemy would be cut down without fail.

However, there would certainly be casualties as soon as Larkins made the signal. That was probably what led Larkins to hesitate.

If sacrifices were disregarded, that would be the best way to deal with Sirius.

But did they have to resort to that immediately? Would those sacrifices be worth it?

Sirius: "Okay, thank you. It looks like we've all calmed down a little bit. I understand your restlessness. Hearing the name 'Witch Cult' didn't evoke a good impression, did it? So, I didn't plan to do anything too special. The reason I took everyone's precious time today is because I wanted to confirm a matter."

"To confirm… a matter?"

Sirius: "I'm sorry, please don't chatter so much. My head isn't too good, so if everyone speaks at the same time, I'll feel troubled. Then I'll be very sad. That isn't good, is it? If there's anything bothering any of you, please tell me. I'm taking up everyone's time, and I feel very guilty, so no matter what the question is, I'll answer. Is that okay?"

Sirius, from beginning to end of that speech, spoke in an intimate, rational manner, but that attitude was off-putting, which was a given, considering the sense of disgust people would direct toward a bandaged figure who revealed only his teeth and eyes.

Presumably, everyone thought like this. Even at Sirius's suggestion, the crowd remain silent and eyed the people near them. In that case,

Subaru: "With all due respect, can I ask you a question?"

Since no one raised their hand, Natsuki Subaru spoke up.

Subaru, detecting himself at the center of a wave of surprise, kept his gaze fixed intently on Sirius, who looked down to Subaru.

Sirius: "Yes, please do. Thank you. You were the someone who got a little angry just now, so I'm very happy that you're willing to talk to me. What do you want to know?"

Subaru: “Although I don’t know what’s going on here, I’m keeping some girls waiting. Four of them, actually. So it’d be nice if you could let us go as soon as possible.”

Sirius: “Oh, my! That’s truly terrible, I’m sorry. But I didn’t expect that from you. Is it a man’s dream to have four girls to serve? That’s really bad. Isn’t it sad to leave some of them crying? We have to put an end to this unallowable disloyalty that absolutely can’t happen that must be completely banned.”

Subaru: “H-Hey?” (oi)

Sirius’s voice grew more and more energetic halfway through the speech, before dropping into a whisper. However, after hearing Subaru’s puzzled voice,

Sirius: “No, no, I just got a little emotional. Sorry. Although I try so hard to remain level headed, I always become unwittingly excited. Thank you for worrying about me. Well… you asked when I’d let everyone go?”

Subaru: “…Ah, that’s right. We would appreciate it.”

Sirius: “I’m sorry bother you, I’m really very sorry. But it’s okay. Even though I’m in the Witch Cult, I honestly hate troubling anyone. My compatriots often give people trouble, and I feel very sorry about that.”

Unexpectedly, dialogue was fairly easy to establish.

A soft waist, an extremely humble attitude, the dialogue they’d exchanged — taking all that into account, could it be that Sirius was a woman?

The bandage rendered that face invisible, and the body was covered with a coat, so it was difficult to discern. The voice was high, but rather than sounding feminine, it sounded mechanical, so that was also difficult to use as a criterion for judgment.

But maybe it was a woman, Subaru thought indifferently.

In fact, judging from Sirius’s behavior and attitude, there wasn’t any particular danger.

Her abnormal appearance and the way that she’d introduced herself led to several people being on guard, but if these factors were disregarded, then she was easier to talk to than Priscilla.

In the surrounding crowd, the lingering tension gradually soothed, as people watched on curiously, as if waiting for her to make her point.

Subaru did so to, although he still felt slightly nervous.

Sirius: “Thank you. And I’m sorry. It looks like I scared everyone. But I’m very happy that you’re all willing to hear me out like this.”

Subaru: “It’s not like we won’t forgive you. But let’s get down to business already.”

Sirius: “That’s right, thanks for reminding me. Let’s get down to business. I appeared in front of everyone to affirm something.”

Sirius shook her body while rubbing her two chains together, creating a jarring sound.

In fact, rather than being off putting, that action looked entertaining. She seemed much more like a jester or performer than someone dangerous.

Subaru’s face eased into a smile, and his apprehension vanished.

He no longer found it necessary to call for Beatrice. He just hoped he could quickly hear Sirius out and leave.

Subaru: “So, what do you want to affirm?”

“Yeah, yeah, hurry up and tell us!” “Yeah, I’m about to be late for work!”

As soon as Subaru urged her on, a pandemonium of chattering began.

One man pointed at the tower Sirius was occupying and burst into laughter.

As the whirlpool of laughter spread, Subaru couldn’t help but relax even further. Sirius looked like she’d lost to the atmosphere and put a troubled hand on her head.

Sirius: “Sorry, I’m sorry. Really sorry. I know everyone is busy. I will finish my speech immediately, so please stay with me for a while.”

Subaru: “So tell us already!”

Sirius: “Okay! Well, I’ll say it. The matter I want to affirm is very simple. To put it bluntly, there’s something I want to affirm about Love. Wow, that was embarrassing.”

Although the bandages should have covered up any blushing, Sirius covered her face with a hand, trying to cover her shame up. As everyone laughed silently and infectiously, Sirius’s appearance began to seem increasingly out of place.

Sirius: “Although I expected that I’d be laughed at, it still makes me feel troubled. Thank you for listening to me. Thank you, and I also have a request.”

Subaru: “Request?”

Sirius: “I think, if everyone can stay with me for a while, I can affirm that Love. I’m sorry, I can really say some unruly things.”

Sirius stumbled through her words, rubbing her hands and chains together as she made her suggestion.

Faced with such a lovable sight, the crowd reacted with a “what, is that all?”. Subaru also crossed him arms, nodded as he felt the joy spread through the crowd.

Sirius lit up and begin clapping her hands.

Sirius: “Really? Thank you, thank you! I’m sorry. The world is really very gentle. Full of love and tenderness. Whenever I understand this, I cannot help but to want to express my gratitude. People are able to understand each other and care for each other. Maybe I always speak with ‘thank you’ and ‘I’m sorry’ so that I can confirm that.”

“Yeah, yeah, we get it, Sirius! So what next—?”

Sirius: “Ah, I’m sorry!”

The blindfold female adventurer had cheered at Sirius. As if hearing the voice of a classmate who’d she’d been friends with for a decade, Sirius caught her gaze and began laughing with her.

Then, as if finally remembering her purpose, Sirius retreated into her clock tower and reached out a hand. Then,

Sirius: “I’m sorry to keep you waiting. Well, come here.”

???: “_____!”

She spoke with a friendly voice as she pulled someone through a window.

A little figure moaned and writhed in her grip — a little boy whose entire body was bound.

He was only about ten years old, and his entire body, from ankles to shoulders, was wrapped around with a the chain. He was also gagged with that chain, the corners of his mouth dripping blood. Only his neck and above were free, and he desperately moved his head, crying as if pleading for something.

Sirius: “I’m sorry that you’re so scared. However, as a man, crying like this isn’t good. Although I wanted to keep that a secret for you, you look like you’re about to urinate yourself. It’s a hard feeling, and it’s sad when everyone can see it.”

???: “Mmm! Mmgh!!”

“Yes—! It’s so very embarrassing!” “If you’re a man then don’t cry!”

“Men only cry three times in their lives, and even then for only a moment!”

As Sirius coaxed the crying boy, the crowd below mocked that little boy.

Everyone had gone through a period of time where they cried over little things, so their teasing wasn't malicious, but their lack of thoughtfulness was a clamor.

Sirius: "Alright, that's enough, everybody! It's true that this child is a little clumsy, but he's in fact very brave. Isn't that right, Lusbel-kun?"

Lusbel: "———!"

The teenager, who was bound by chains, couldn't have been light, but Sirius held him up with one hand as she reproached the crowd while stroking his head.

Lusbel, as the boy was so called, desperately moved his head as if to place distance between himself and Sirius's face.

That sight was rather humorous, and although knowing that it would be demeaning to the boy, the crowd still unconsciously laughed.

Sirius: "Excellent. Well, please pay attention. My apologies. This is Lusbel, a nine-year-old boy who lives in Pristella. His family name is Kallard, so his full name is Lusbel Kallard."

Lusbel: "Mmph! MMPH!!"

Sirius: "His father is named Muslan Kallard. Muslan-san works to maintain the stability of the waterways. Ina Kallard, Lusbel-kun's mother, is pregnant. Her stomach has just started to grow larger, and so Lusbel-kun is looking forward to having a younger brother or sister. The Kallard family lives on Third Street. They often go the city park with a family friend, Tina. Lusbel-kun and Tina-chan are childhood sweethearts, and they love each other dearly. Lusbel-kun's dream is to have Tina-chan stand at his side and support him. Tina-chan is a girl with pale blond curls, and her growing beauty as she blossoms into adulthood is much anticipated. That Tina-chan also wants to support Lusbel-kun's dream. Upon hearing of the song Delphin Betrayed by the Sunset, Lusbel-kun wanted to become an adventurer just like Delphin. It's a very commendable dream for a boy of his age. Although there may be people who would laugh at that childish dream, I wouldn't do so at all. Who could laugh at the manly spirit? I believe that Tina-chan also thinks so, which is why she gives Lusbel-kun her heartfelt support. Right, although Lusbel-kun's dream is to be an adventurer, he's also really looking forward to meeting the child inside his mother. His original plan was to immediately embark on the journey of adventure, but he put it on hold out of consideration for his newborn brother or sister. Because of the large difference in their ages, that child will certainly be very much loved. Lusbel-kun is a good kid who is considerate of others, so I think he will be a very good brother. I would also be happy if everyone could support Lusbel-kun's feelings. Ah, yes, we can't forget about Tina-chan. In fact, the one I originally wanted to bring here was Tina-chan rather than Lusbel-kun, because I think girls are closer than boys to the kind of Love that I want to affirm. However, my heart was impressed by Lusbel-kun's desperate pleas. Sorry, I'm not a very strong-willed person. So I changed my mind… ah, although, being temperamental is just my usual attitude. When I talk about my love, I speak wholeheartedly. Oh, how annoying, I'm so embarrassed. Really, my business doesn't matter. We should be focusing on Lusbel-kun and Tina-chan. Because they already love each other so much, I do not know how much they'll come to adore to each other in the future, so separating them would make me very, very sad. So I decided that I'd respect Lusbel-kun's feelings and

help him. So, although Lusbel-kun was just slightly scared and even cried a little, he's really a very brave child. Thanks, and, I'm sorry. I've finished talking in a way that's convenient for everyone."

Lusbel: "Mmph! Mmmph! Mmgh!"

Listening to that child's, to Lusbel's, life, everyone understood and agreed.

It turned out that, although mixed with a little bit of shame, Lusbel's courage was indeed commendable. With that in mind, Subaru wanted to hit himself for having such a ridiculous, demeaning thought earlier.

But this was not the occasion to blame himself. Showing support for the boy was far more important than taking the time to be self-deprecating.

And so,

Subaru: "Lusbel, don't cry! You're the best!"

Subaru shouted loudly, praising the courage of the young boy's tears.

Knowing the true courage buried under those tears, how could he laugh at that shame? Larkins, who stood next to Subaru, joined in the encouragement.

Larkins: "Yeah, don't cry anymore! You're a man, right!? If so, show us your handsome side, kid!"

"Yeah, listen well, Lusbel! You're Pristella's pride!" "Lusbel—! Amazing—! You'll be a great man!"

The audience cheered up, and everyone present began clapping.

That was not only a scene of praising a young man's dedication and courage, but also a beautiful scene showing the kindness of human nature.

No matter how weathered or desperate one appeared, what mattered was their will to protect what they valued, and that light was what attracted people to them. For such a revelation, they could only pray.

Sirius: "Ah… thank you, thank you, thank you! Ah, this is amazing! I believed that we could all understand. I knew everyone would praise Lusbel-kun's courage. Because, he demonstrated the will of Love with it! If you know him, you will love him. Because of this mutual understanding, everyone now has an in-depth understanding of each other's Love!"

"Sirius—! Thank you, thank you so much!" "Lusbel-kun—!!"

Sirius's eyes widened as tears began to flow freely. Seeing the bandage around her their eyes becoming stained with those tears, Subaru felt something hot welling in his own eyes.

His shoulder was gently nudged. Larkins, who stood by his side, was laughing at the crying Subaru. However, the tears in his eyes, even as he smiled, didn't escape Subaru's notice.

Looking around, the surrounding groups of people also seemed to share their emotions. Subaru thought of watching the World Cup. When the world the world stood together, people always wanted to share their joy with those who they weren't were acquainted with.

And now, that peace and understanding was gradually spreading. There was indeed a solid bond.

Sirius: "Our inability to understand each other creates barriers between us. Our minds being unable to empathize leads to antagonism. Our inability to reach conclusions has us giving up on one another. That's all very heartbreaking. In fact, it's a tragedy. But now, everyone, are you sad? Do you feel heartbroken?"

"Not at all! Sadness or whatever, none of us feel that way!"

Sirius: "Thank you! So, do you feel happy? Does everyone feel happy?"

"Of course! It's been a long time since I've been so happy! Thank you, Sirius! You've worked so hard, Lusbel!"

With a splash, a whirlpool of applause formed, giving birth to a circle of gratitude for the exalted Lusbel. Now, the only focus of anyone here was in one place, thanks to the two standing on the clock tower.

Lusbel twisted his body and sobbed, finally opening his mouth, disregarding the chain and screaming through his broken teeth,

Lusbel: "Gu, gah! Wake up, save—! Please, …me! Hel… hk!"

Sirius: "I want to commend your courage, your love, Lusbel-kun! Please look below. Everyone, so many people are affirming your feelings! Ah, thank you! I'm sorry, Lusbel-kun. Although you were a last resort, I just want to affirm this scene. Ahh, ahh, the world is so gentle!"

Sirius held Lusbel tightly in her arms.

In the face of this beauty, thunderous applause began. Subaru put his hand to his mouth and whistled. The recipient of that warm applause, Lusbel, stared in surprise.

That was a man who had struggled his hardest. Even if he had no strength left to even cry, not a person laughed at him.

Sirius: "Sure enough, there it is. We have Love. It existed, here. Everyone's heart is one, and in a scene of joy as well. We do not need tragedy. We are tired of a world which would have us cry. No one wants such a world. If our hearts want to connect, then they should do so through sharing joy and happiness. Whether it be tragedy! Or Wrath! We don't need any of it!"

"That's right! Tragedies or whatever, we don't want any of it!"

Sirius: "Ah, that forbidden Wrath that causes hearts to tremble so! Rage, that passion! If that passionate

sin is rooted in our hearts, if we are unable to unroot that retribution, then we should fill it with joy! At this moment, everyone's heart is connected as one!"

Sirius cried loudly, and once again lifted Lusbel into the air.

However, the movement did not stop there. Sirius, bathing in everyone's admiration, tossed Lusbel into the air.

Sirius: "Please give! Thunderous applause!" Crowd: "——"

Sirius had given the flying Lusbel the best possible stage.

Watching the young boy soaring through the sky, as if flying into the sun, Subaru led the crowd into a round of applause.

Roaring thunderous applause, a heavenly blessing to Lusbel, who skated through that sky.

That little body spun and spun, but as soon as it reached the top of its trajectory, it began to arc downward. Lusbel headed straight to the ground.

The panicked crowd, vacating where he was about to fall. That was the triumph of a hero.

Endless applause, praise for the falling boy.

"MMMMMM!!"

Lifting his head and seeing the ground rushing toward him, Lusbel moaned.

He desperately wriggled his small body that should have been exhausted, wanting to do anything that he could to avoid that rock solid ground, tirelessly fighting to his last moment.

Everyone shed tears at seeing the unwavering tenacity of humankind. Then,

Sirius: "— Ah, the world is so gentle!"

Before the fierce collision, Sirius let out a shout.

The applause of the crowd, who heard that voice, became louder and louder—

Crowd: "——"

As if eggshells had fallen to the ground, the sound of something breaking echoed, and everyone's field of vision was dyed red.

The whole body was crushed by the hard ground, Lusbel's body, which had once contained the breath of life, became a splatter of flesh in the square.

— But just after seeing that scene,

Crack.

The sound of breaking eggshells echoed like a round of applause. The square became a pool of red.

That was an ending.

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Liliana: “After the song ends and they chat again, shouldn’t we prepare food and drinks for them? Indulging in sweet snacks will certainly create a mood that will close the distance between them, don’t you think so?”

Subaru blinked at the dark skinned girl in front of him.

She put on a clumsy, flirtatious attitude as she stuck out her tongue and scratched her cheek.

As if in a trance, he turned his head to see a smiling silver-haired girl who was watching him from nearby, and a red-haired woman wearing an impudent attitude. And then a petite girl who held his hand—

Liliana: “…ah, ah, what’s going on? Ignored? Are you ignoring me!? P-Please stop it, don’t look at me with that bitterness. Ah, ah, stop it, stop it… d-don’t sigh like that after hearing my song… don’t look so disappointed, forgive me… hk”

Faced with his silence, the girl in front of him, Liliana, shuddered as if remembering something she was unwilling to recall.

Witnessing this situation, Subaru said bluntly,

Subaru: “…I feel sick.”

Liliana: “Huh!? Did that actually just happen!? Looking at a girl’s face so intently, at such a close distance, and the first thing you say is that you feel sick! I, Liliana, am even more ashamed of Natsuki-sama than your mother is!”

Liliana pretended to be tearful, turning her face away, still keeping an eye on Subaru’s reaction, but Subaru couldn’t even notice her annoying attitude. He shook as he stood, and couldn’t help but collapse on the ground.

Emilia: “Subaru? What’s wrong?”

Beatrice: “What’s wrong, I suppose. Subaru? Subaru?”

Beatrice, who was holding his hand, and Emilia, who stood nearby, looked down at Subaru with concern. Subaru grew so pale that the two couldn’t help but hold their breath.

Subaru: “—I feel sick.”

It had been a year since he’d Returned by Death, and the overwhelming incident that had just preceded his Death left him on the verge of vomiting as he held his shaking knees.

Thus, the spiral of Death began once more.

This time, the cycle of nightmares was staged in the city of Pristella.

— Once again, the curtain rose.

Arc 5 - Chapter 2, "Pedigree of The Poseur"

by admin - Wednesday, November 28, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/28/arc-5-chapter-2-pedigree-of-the-poseur/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

Credit for the first five chapters document belongs to Summary Anon, who left behind only the following contact information:

ankaa.burner@gmail.com https://mega.nz/#F!VNdzDYYK!nK9fNU3LeprlZSbRAnlsRg

Credit for the rest is to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

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Subaru tilts his head, Mimi merrily waving her arms as she takes the lead. 'Party' is a pretty extravagant word, and it's coming out of nowhere.

Subaru: ?A party invite... from Anastasia-san? But that's still like, what happened? Is there something to celebrate??

Mimi: ?Celebrate? Celebritty? Whatever! Who cares, it'll be so much fun eating food and getting drunk! So much! Fun!?

Subaru: ?You're clearly too young to be drinking.?

Mimi: ?Heeheehee. I'm an adult as of this year! The Boss says I can drink! But my Lady says I can't.?

Mimi puffs out her chest, and the belled ornaments in her hair chime. Subaru's eyes shoot open in shock,

Subaru: ?What, you're allowed to drink, then you're fully grown!? No way. How old are you!?

Mimi: ?I just turned fifteen! So I'm an adulty adult. I'm a big girl!?

Subaru: ?Big girls don't talk like they're still in grade school! But anyway...?

Having regained some composure, Subaru puts his hand to his chest as he recognizes the differences in adulthood between this world and the old one. It's essentially the same as genpuku. The age of adulthood is about fifteen in this world, and that's when it's legal to drink and smoke.

Subaru: ?...would be the right way to consider it, Petra??

Petra: ?Yes, that's right. But going into more detail, boys leave their homes and find work at fifteen, while some girls start getting married around then. If they don't get married, it's also when they'll usually start working. Like me.?

Subaru: ?Which means you left your home pretty early. You're a feisty girl, you.?

Petra: ?Heehee, I'm feis... I don't think that was a compliment.?

Petra glares at Subaru, who heads over to an exhausted Beatrice. Mimi has released her, and her pigtails are in some disarray. She looks bitterly up at Subaru.

Beatrice: ?After participating in your training and being manhandled by this cat, Betty is exhausted, I suppose... Subaru, carry me, in fact.?

Subaru: ?Participating? All you did was watch...?

Beatrice spreads her arms out, reaching for Subaru, and he scoops her into his arms. He's more muscular than he used to be, and since she's light as a feather, the weight doesn't bother him at all. Though, he does sort of look like a dad cradling his daughter now, which is not ideal.

Mimi: ?Oooh! You're holding the baby! That's awesome! Hold me too! Me too!?

Subaru: ?Your Boss'd be another story, but I physically can't do it. Request denied.?

Mimi: ?What! That's no fair! No fair! Unfair! Unfair!?

Mimi scampers around Subaru as he holds Beatrice. For some reason Beatrice smiles victoriously. Eventually Mimi grabs onto Subaru's track suit,

Mimi: ?Okey then! I'll just climb up!?

Subaru: ?Idiot! Stop, you'll topple me over. Petra help me stop he—what're you doing??

Petra: ?Ah, erm, I'm not jealous or anything. I'm not. But would you mind if I climbed you, Subaru-

sama??

Subaru: ?Um yes!??

Subaru holds a little girl, with a kitten girl and a maid girl pursuing him incessantly. The shenanigans in the foyer continue without resolution.
When,

???: ?—I thought you were taking forever to return, and here you are monkeying about in the foyer.?

The frigid voice makes Subaru and Petra stand up straight.
Mimi's eyes sparkle with curiosity for the new speaker, while Beatrice sighs.

The voice is coming from the stairway overlooking the foyer. Subaru glances up to find a girl standing there, where she can see the four of them She has pink hair, and wears a short-cut maid outfit. Her cerise eyes look apathetic, and though she is cute, there is nothing cuddly about her. This is Petra's colleague, Ram, the head of the maids in the mansion.

She gazes coldly at Subaru and snorts a breathy, ?Ha.?

Ram: ?Filthy.?

Subaru: ?You're the filthy one for reaching that conclusion! Maybe you can argue about how sound this is, but it's still a heartwarming scene!?

Ram: ?You always bend reality to suit your purposes. But, Barusu, you mustn't forget. —I judge only by what I've seen.?

Subaru: ?Maybe you could take off your weird filter before you start looking please??

Ram glances at him disinterestedly, apparently unwilling to hear him out. She ignores the stunned Subaru and looks over at Petra, who instantly starts to quake.

Ram: ?Petra. I told you to drag Barusu here by the neck if you had to. Would you like to explain why you are playing with him in the foyer??

Petra: ?I-I'm sorry, Sister Ram.?

Ram: ?It seems you weren't listening, Petra. I believe I asked, why are you dawdling here in the foyer??

Subaru: ?Stop acting like the sister from hell. It was just me screwing around. Petra's not to blame.?

Ram: ?Of course she's to blame. I'll pummel you, Barusu.?

Subaru: ?She's only a little to blame!?

Pleased with that concession, Ram jerks her chin to the room behind her.

Ram: ?You mustn't keep Emilia-sama waiting. Barusu, to the upstairs parlour. Petra, the dining room. Beatrice-sama, accompany Barusu.?

Beatrice: ?Of course, I suppose.?

Mimi: ?What about me? Come on, what about me??

Petra regretfully lets go of Subaru's sleeve, but he remains caught in the energetic catgirl's firm grip. Ram brushes aside her hair, caught on her cheek.

Ram: ?I ask you accompany Barusu to the parlour, dear guest. I'm afraid that your companion is unsettled by your absence.?

Mimi: ?Hokay. Guess I gotta go back then. I done a no do.?

Even Ram is polite when receiving guests. Mimi laughs boisterously in reply, but Subaru catches something that he can't ignore.

Subaru: ?Companion? But I thought you said you were alone??

Mimi: ?I did, and I am. Not Hetaro or Tivey or the Boss or Julius or my Lady are here. But Joshua's here. I'm alone being Joshua's boddygar, boddygard??

Subaru: ?Bodyguard??

Mimi: ?Yes! Boddygard!?

Mimi puffs out her chest, smirking. Subaru pats her head before looking back up at Ram.

Subaru: ?I'm sorry. I was so sure it was only Mimi. I didn't realise I was making someone wait.?

Ram: ?So it seems. It's fine, but do hurry. Emilia-sama's patience will tire before long.?

Subaru: ?Can't have that. Okay, see you later Petra. Let's go, Mimi.?

Mimi: ?Whoo!?

Who is this mysterious Joshua?

He must be someone from Anastasia's faction who Subaru doesn't know. If they're sending him as a messenger, and appointing Mimi as his bodyguard, he must have suitable rank. He could have an important post if Mimi refers to him without an honourific, but then again considering how indiscriminately friendly Mimi is, it doesn't exactly indicate much.

Petra: ?I'll bake the tarts once everything has settled down. You will taste them, won't you, Subaru-sama??

Whispers Petra before darting out of the scene. Frederica must be waiting for her in the dining room. Subaru doesn't know whether they'll serve food in the parlour, but either way, it seems like it's going to be a while before he gets to eat Petra's tarts.

Subaru: ?Who else is in the parlour with Emilia-tan??

Ram: ?Roswaal-sama has not returned yet, which leaves her with Otto and Garf. If the visitor is an assassin in disguise, Garf will be enough to manage them.?

Subaru: ?Doubt we need to be so worried about direct attacks. I already told Emilia-tan to use Otto as a human shield.?

Ram: ?If I ever feel in danger, that's what I'll do too.?

There are no words for how they treat Otto. Well actually no there are. Either way, if those three are the ones in the parlour, Otto must be stuck pulling more than his weight. Should they neglect to lessen the strain upon him swiftly, they are liable to lose their precious Internal Affairs Minister.

Beatrice: ?He never gets his reward, I suppose. I don't understand why he's even friends with you, in fact.?

Subaru: ?It might be invisible to others, but me and Otto are tied together with a solid bond of masculine friendship. Rock solid.?

Mimi: ?Ooh! Rocka solid!?

Ram's sigh guides the three up to the parlour: the very first room after scaling the foyer staircase. Ram knocks on the door, which then opens from inside. The face that peeks out belongs to,

Garfiel: ?There yer are, Captain. Yer were takin' so long I was thinkin' I'd haveta go'n get ya.?

Subaru: ?It would've been funny if you all said you were leaving to look for me and left Otto there on his own.?

Garfiel: ?Crap, it wouldda. Now'm imaginin' him panicking everywhere n' freakin' out.?

Garfiel, with his short blond hair, sharp fangs, and characteristic forehead scar, shares a mischievous grin with Subaru. He jerks his chin, his arms crossed, apparently keeping himself posted at the door.

Garfiel: ?Get in here. Th'guest's sayin' y'gotta be here if we're gonna talk. Otto n' Emilia-sama were tryin' t'give 'im a welcome, but it all juss looked like a comedy.?

Subaru: ?Honestly I'd want to see that.?

Ram: ?Cease this foolishness and enter the room. We're already delayed.?

Subaru: ?Guh?

Ram drives her foot into the small of Subaru's back, and he goes stumbling into the room. His odd posture as he bursts into the scene earns him stares from those in the parlour. The predominant emotions are relief, exasperation, and confusion, respectively.

Subaru suppresses his urge to make excuses to the relieved and exasperated parties about his tardiness, and turns to face the confused individual.

???: ?—?

The prim, handsome man gazes back at Subaru. A well-tailored outfit garbs his slender frame, and his long violet hair is tied in a ponytail. He exerts a scholarly air, and his monocle only supports that impression. His yellow eyes are rather sharp, and between that and his pout at he peers at Subaru's unfamiliar face, he looks displeased.
Neither party makes the best first impression on the other.

Man: ?And this would be...??

The visitor is the one to speak first. He looks away from Subaru, and to the two people seated before him. A beautiful girl, with silver hair flowing down her back, is the one to nod and answer him.

Emilia: ?Right. I apologize that he arrived late. —This is my Knight, Natsuki Subaru.?

A tingle shoots down Subaru's spine. The words 'My Knight' are simply so wonderful that they captivate him every time.

Man: ?M-May I point out that he seems, ah, enraptured...??

Beatrice: ?Subaru. Stop making funny faces, I suppose. He's going to think... huh? Erm this feels quite forceful, in fact. No, you're, holding too tigh—Suba–Subaru! Ow! Ouch, I suppose!?

Subaru: ?—Aah! Ahh, sorry. Was tripping.?

He had almost unwittingly squeezed Beatrice to death to distract himself from his feelings. A Beako Hug or also a bear hug. That's what it was. Anyway. The guest looks on skeptically as Subaru clears his throat and puts down Beatrice.

Subaru: ?As stated a moment previously, I am Natsuki Subaru. I serve as Knight to Emilia-sama, who makes her presence before you. It pleases me to make your acquaintance.?

Man: ?—?

The track suit makes it a little slovenly, but his manners align perfectly with courtly etiquette. He used to

think cynically of the pretentious attitudes of knights, but now that he's trying it himself, he finds it works surprisingly well for him. It's not a question of whether it suits him or not. It's that he feels himself being more of a knight. The pressure, knowing that one misstep will leave him a laughingstock, gives the rigid seriousness meaning. Under the tutelage of Garfiel, with his extensive knowledge as a Knight Fanatic, Subaru has fostered etiquette that disgraces him not as a knight.

Subaru glances to the door to find Garfiel watching him, satisfied. Garfiel notices Subaru's glance and flips him the bird. Subaru taught him the gesture, but he's using it wrong. While he may be a good teacher, Garfiel is a failure of a student.

Man: ?You humble me. I am... I myself am Joshua Juukulius , visiting you as an envoy on behalf of Anastasia Hoshin-sama.?

Subaru: ?Then you would be Joshua-san. What a fine name. Still, I must apologize for my poor punctuality. Allow me to—Juukulius??

Halfway through the diplomatic fineries, Subaru finds himself tilting his head at the familiar word. Joshua nods with a, ?Yes,? and adding onto that,

Emilia: ?That's right, Subaru. Joshua is Julius's little brother. And they're both supporting Anastasia together, it's sooo sweet.?

Laughs the girl, her chaste demeanour gone, and her speech far more casual. Her face as she looks at Subaru is her true face, naturally. Subaru sighs, staring impolitely at Joshua as he seats himself opposite him. As he seats himself beside Emilia, like it's natural.

Subaru: ?What, so he's Julius's brother. Actually now that you mention it they are pretty alike. You have that disdainful... or not, intense, gaze of his. Or that mocking... or not, elegant, smile of his. Or that hellish... or not, pretty, hair colour of his.?

Otto: ?If you need force it every time then would you care to refrain from commenting!??

Says Otto, unable to hide his sweat. He's the Head Minister of the Emilia Faction's Internal Affairs, or more rather he's the only one capable of being said minister so that's why he has the title. But diplomacy terrifies him immensely.

Subaru: ?Did you lose weight??

Otto: ?Life here is simply too exhilarating, yes! When things in this exact vein keep happening in constant succession, the mental fatigue leaves me too exhausted to exercise, and thus skeletal! Skeletal!?

Mimi: ?Skellytall! Skellytall!?

Cheers Mimi, unintentionally aggravating Otto further. It looks like the only thing keeping Otto quiet is the fact that Mimi is the guest's companion. She disregards him entirely as she scampers over and leaps onto the seat, beside Joshua. Beatrice also looks at the seats. But Subaru, Emilia, and Otto are fully

occupying the seat opposite Joshua and Mimi. They could scooch together to open room for Beatrice, but it would look lame. And so Beatrice promptly seats herself on Subaru's lap. Subaru naturally loops his hands around Beatrice's waist, making sure she won't fall.

Subaru: ?Now, finally getting to the main topic...?

Joshua: ?P-Please wait! Who is this girl??

And Joshua winds up too flustered to talk. He points at Beatrice, sitting on Subaru's lap, and leans forward so forcefully that his monocle slips. Apparently he lacks Julius's composure. Subaru decides that he prefers this to Julius, while Mimi instead speaks up.

Mimi: ?Geez, you're so behind, Joshua. This is Beako, she's Subaru's baby. It's so obvious. And beside him's the mommy, and beside her's the housekeeper??

Otto: ?Honestly I am far too unconfident about what my current standing is to be hearing that I'm the housekeeper so would you please care to stop?!?

Mimi: ?Housekeeper! Housekeeper! Wow! It's like a witchbeast name!?

Otto's pleas are entirely ineffective on Mimi, the embodiment of dumb innocence. Nobody bothers to react to Otto, who slumps his shoulders. Subaru puts his hand on Beatrice's head.

Subaru: ?Sorry for not introducing her. We're just so used to sitting like this that I completely forgot to explain.?

Emilia: ?Otto-kun forgot to mention it too. And it caught me unawares as well.?

Subaru: ?Who says caught me unawares anymore??

It's Emilia's usual phrasing, but Subaru agrees with the sentiment. And Otto must be getting so accustomed to this life that he's forgetting to interject with common sense. It's a good problem to have.

Subaru: ?This is Beatrice. Mimi's right, she's the child of myself and Emilia-sama.?

Joshua: ?What!??

Joshua, aghast.

Emilia: ?Geez. No she's not, Subaru. Look at how you shocked Joshua. I know we kissed but you can't make babies by kissing. I've been studying.?

Subaru: ?Ah, sorry, Emilia-tan. I think some private stuff just got thrown right into the open. It was my bad so I'll just introduce her normally.?

Beatrice: ?This is what you get for using me for tomfoolery, in fact. You best regret it, I suppose.?

Subaru forces a smile at Emilia and Beatrice. Emilia's misunderstandings about making babies have only been rectified when it comes to 'making babies by kissing'. Subaru couldn't go any further into the topic, and, anticipating the shock the subject would give Emilia, the faction's women decided to wait until she's more mentally mature.
Basically everyone is overprotective.

Joshua: ?Ehrm... so, Miss Beatrice's true station would be...??

Joshua fixes his monocle, overwhelmed with his initiation to Roswaal Mansion and its people. But shouldn't the unruliness of everyone here be pretty close to Anastasia's Faction, which has Iron Fang?

Subaru: ?I'm sorry that the conversation keeps slipping. Beatrice may look like an ordinary, lovable little girl, but she is actually my contracted spirit. She is a loligranny.?

Beatrice: ?Exactly, I'm a spirit, in fact. And I know that you're mocking me with that word 'loligranny', I suppose.?

Beatrice brushes Subaru's hand aside and digs her head into the underside of his chin. She has grown rather proficient in Subaruese, making verbal gaffes generally impermissible. 'Loligranny' is just a combination of 'granny' and 'loli', a word that he has already explained to her, so of course she saw through this one.

Joshua's reaction to Subaru and Beatrice's heartwarming exchange is extreme. His prudish but charming face falls frigid.

Joshua: ?—I see. She's a spirit.?

Nobody who catches his whisper can decode his sentiment. It's not that he's hiding his emotions. It's the opposite. The emotion is so convoluted and complex that it's impossible to tell what lies at its core. But everyone can see that it was not a very friendly statement.

Garfiel: ?Hey, guest. You got a problem with our Captain havin' a spirit with him??

Garfiel has inherited Subaru's old role. Which is, practising disrespect to anyone. While everyone else deliberates on how to address the problem, he fearlessly dives right in. Joshua promptly shakes his head,

Joshua: ?No. It's nothing important. Just, it struck me that Natsuki-dono is a Spirit Knight. As I myself am sure you already know, my brother is a Spirit Knight. The title is so rare that you could call him the only holder in the nation.?

Subaru: ?Yeah, I know. When we were fighting the Witch Cult, he... um, he. He really hel... h-hel— ghk. Helped me, out a... lot, so...?

Otto: ?Are you truly so reluctant to accept that he saved you!??

No. But thinking back on his battles with Julius makes him feel awkward about what he's saying, and

makes the old wounds from his beatdown sting.

Beatrice: ?I heard that there was another knight who uses spirits, in fact. What an odd turn of fate for it to be your brother, I suppose.?

Joshua: ?What do you mean by 'odd turn of fate'. Spirit.?

Beatrice: ?It's obvious what I mean, in fact. Precursors are destined to be excelled, I suppose. His best place is as an ornament on the glorious road that Subaru and I—nhaaha!?

Subaru: ?Don't pick fights with people we just met. And I've got nothing on Julius. I'm never gonna beat him in what he does. I don't beat people who're good at puzzles by challenging them to puzzles, I beat them by challenging them to Mario Kart.?

Subaru musses Beatrice's hair and bows his head to Joshua. While pushing Beatrice's head into a bow as well.

Subaru: ?I'm sorry. I wasn't trying to make a fool of your brother. Or really, I know that I'm less capable than him. This spirit here is just being a braggart.?

Joshua: ?An admirable, and correct judgement. When comparing yourself to my brother, it's natural to recognize your inferiority.?

Subaru: ?Uh??

Subaru was looking to make a mature compromise, but Joshua's abrupt arrogance makes things precarious again. Heedless of Subaru as he furrows his brows in confusion, Joshua catches the light on his monocle,

Joshua: ?Yes. My brother is amazing. At the age of twenty is the second most capable of the Imperial Knights, the finest Order of Knights of the Kingdom. His service to Anastasia-sama currently distances him from his station as an Imperial Knight, but once her wishes are fulfilled he will be secured a place as Head of the Imperial Knights. He has a close, amiable relationship with the Sword Saint Reinhardt, and holds himself impeccably in both public and private contexts. He is strict on himself and others, disciplined, ambitious, always seeking improvement. His beautiful looks enrapture scores of women, and his personality is accordingly excellent. Yes. My brother is amazing. You're nothing compared to him.?

Subaru: ?...uh.?

Joshua speaks with passion, his face red as he goes on and on and on.
Subaru has no reply, and Beatrice recoils too. Garfiel and Otto stay silent, unsure whether this could get deadly, and Mimi is too busy stuffing her cheeks with snacks to help him out of this. There is only one person here who can counter Joshua's screed.

Emilia: ?Heehee. Joshua, you love your brother Julius sooo much.?

In this room exists an angel who will take anything positively. Her words make Joshua realise what he just said, and his face reddens in shame rather than excitement. He clears his throat, managing to compose himself.

Joshua: ?M-My apologies. I may have fired myself up. I have some difficulty restraining myself when it comes to my family.?

Emilia: ?No, it's okay. I want to hear you talk about Julius more. I've only ever seen Julius while in the Capital here and there, so there's lots more I want to know about him.?

Joshua: ?R-Really! Well, there are several memories of me and him that—?

Subaru: ?How about we save those for another occasion, and finally get to the point!? How does that sound, Otto! Garfiel!?

Both: ?Huh!??

Subaru cuts in, forcing the other two into the conversation while they pleadingly try to stay out of it. But they do promptly nod in agreement. Joshua then notices that the conversation has strayed incredibly far, and,

Joshua: ?T-Then, we will save the stories of my brother's magnificence for another time. I must... I myself must also fulfil my duties and reconvene with Anastasia-sama shortly.?

Emilia: ?Right. I'm sooo excited for them. So, it really took us a long time to finally get here... but what is this visit all about??

Joshua's awkwardness lingers as he feigns calm, while Emilia easily enters Royal Selection Candidate Mode. The tone of their voices drop, bringing a tenseness to the parlour. Emilia can establish tension like this because she has come to recognize her place as a budding politician.

Joshua: ?—I speak to Emilia-sama on the behalf my master, Anastasia Hoshin-sama.?

The prickly tension makes Joshua's expression regain its former warmth. He puts his hand in his pocket, withdraws a letter, and sets it on the table. He opens it. Looks down at the letters and their black ink.

Joshua: ?Anastasia-sama wishes to invite yourself and all of your associates to the city of Pristella.?

Emilia: ?An invitation to Pristella City... Pristella is the Watergate City, yes? The big city near the border between the Kingdom of Lugnica and the Kararagi City-States.?

Joshua: ?You are correct. Anastasia-sama is presently sojourning there, rather than the Capital... and she wishes to invite you.?

Joshua quietly lowers his head. Emilia looks away from him and glances to Subaru. Obviously, this gaze means, ?what are your thoughts??

Subaru feels similarly to Emilia about the whole thing. Everyone knows that Anastasia is staying in a mansion in the Capital's noble district while she's in Lugnica. When Mimi mentioned an invitation to a party, Subaru was certain it would be to that mansion.

Joshua: ?Pristella is a scenic place. The city is distinctive in itself, and makes for a popular tourist destination. Anastasia-sama finds herself delighted and at ease there.?

Subaru: ?It'd be great if you were just showing us a nice place, but... you're not, are you? Emilia and Anastasia aren't friends.?

If Subaru remembers this right, then Anastasia was particularly harsh on Emilia during the dialogues in the Palace. The candidates most unsparing toward Emilia were her and Priscilla. Crusch is simply not racist, and Felt is in Emilia's debt. So, while Anastasia did help during the White Whale and Witch Cult fights, Subaru's personal opinion of Anastasia is not very good.

So he doubts that this invitation is anything so kind-spirited. As if supporting Subaru's doubts, a grin etches itself over Joshua's face. And,

Joshua: ?Anastasia-sama invites you out of her beneficence. She has noticed the valuable object you are searching for in Pristella.?

Emilia: ?What I'm searching for??

The instant that Emilia shows her interest, Otto's expression screams: He got her! This tells Subaru that Joshua snatched away predominance before they could stop it, but he still cannot see the crux of this deal.

In that delay, the opponent takes full control of the conversation. Grinning, Joshua speaks on:

Joshua: ?—In Pristella City there is a shop selling spellstones, in which slumbers the high-grade colourless stones that you desire. I believe that you are currently seeking an anchor for the Great Spirit??

—The second that Joshua gains dominance, the Emilia Faction are fated to leave for Pristella.

Arc 5 - Chapter 20, "Shared Empathy"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-20-shared-empathy/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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Squatting on the ground, breathing heavily, Subaru finally resisted the urge to collapse.

Emilia and Beatrice surrounded him, wearing looks of concern, and even Liliana seemed worried. Priscilla seemed faintly interested, cooling her face with her fan.

Bathed in their concerned voices and gazes, Subaru gradually reoriented himself.

Feeling like time was slowly accelerating back to normal, Subaru realized what the taste in his mouth was.

He was reminded of switching channels on a TV.

There was no sense of a loss of smell, taste, or sight, but his surroundings had suddenly disintegrated into powder, and transformed into something entirely different.

Subaru’s eyes, ears, nose, and skin had all adapted to the new world, but his consciousness could not forget the previous channel, so there was a sense of violation.

All he could do was ignore it, to chew, chew, chew, and swallow the sense of unease that came from

switching channels until it was finally over.

Subaru: “——”

Subaru clenched his teeth and finally climbed to his feet.

He shook his head and looked around. The park full of bright sunshine, fountains and green lawns, and a colorful spread of flowerbeds.

Subaru was presently surrounded by four beautiful girls — Emilia, Beatrice, Liliana, and Priscilla. He’d heard Liliana’s words twice now.

Emilia: “Are you alright, Subaru? Your complexion doesn’t look so good.”

Subaru: “…Emilia-tan. Just now, did Liliana say that she’d sing another song?”

Liliana: “Where do I even start!? I, Liliana, was ignored to such a degree that this situation shocked and hurt my heart! Compensation! I demand compensation!”

As she spoke, Liliana seized Subaru’s sleeves in a frenzy, declaring a lawsuit, only to be shaken off by Subaru. He ignored the indignant “hey!” the Songstresses issued and turned to Emilia, who seemed to pick up on Subaru’s seriousness.

Emilia: “Yes. Liliana said that she’d sing us another song that we missed. Then Subaru and Liliana started quietly chatting about something.”

Subaru: “That happened just now? I got it, thanks… thank you.”

Thank you. Just saying those words, he felt an unspeakable sense of disgust.

Subaru couldn’t help but raise a hand to cover mouth. Seeing him in this state, Emilia made a puzzled frown.

Emilia hadn’t done anything wrong. Needless to say, his appreciation wasn’t a bitter one. However, it evoked the painful memories of the previous world.

Subaru: “So, this means that I…”

Died, he finally realized, but he was unable to vocalize the word.

— Natsuki Subaru had died.

After he died, he returned again from the time he said goodbye to the world. Although he was relieved at his successful return, remorse also rose in his chest. Obviously, Subaru should have been so fully awake.

In that forest a year ago, in Sanctuary, during the Trial, Natsuki Subaru had resolutely rejected

Death, and the grievances that accompanied it.

But he had still died. And so easily, too. Without resistance, without a sense of defiance, without even awareness.

Why was that? The situation had obviously been abnormal, obviously this is a fact, but even Subaru himself had no clue what had happened. He'd clearly experienced it himself, but he couldn't rationalize any of it.

Subaru hadn't even realized how abnormal that situation had been. And it wasn't only Subaru. Everyone present had been afflicted with the same madness as him.

They'd obviously seen the chained up, howling boy, but they had all frenziedly cheered for his solidarity. Not to mention the insane round of applause that had accompanied the child's fall.

Exactly what had triggered all of that?

And when Subaru had witnessed all that, how exactly had he died?

He hadn't been able to recognize an agent for his Death and, even now, he couldn't find one. Or perhaps it had been in front of him all along, and he'd failed to see it as a threat.

But he couldn't trust anything he'd felt then. Although he'd registered the abnormality of the situation after he'd died, until that very moment, he hadn't been able to think clearly.

How had he died, in the end?

Were there any explosives attached to the boy's body? They could have exploded upon his impact with the ground, taking everything with them. In fact, that was almost exactly like the memory of this death.

It was all very vague. His memory at the instant of his Death was greatly blurred by his madness at the time. Even if he were completely calm now, the state of mind he'd been in at the time prevented him from being able to rationalize that memory at all.

If Subaru had been in a state of madness then it would be virtually impossible to remember what had actually happened.

Emilia: "Are you really okay, Subaru? Even Liliana's wearing such a bothered expression."

Liliana: "I'm not doing anything so pointless. How Natsuki-sama thinks of me doesn't make me sad at all, so please don't get the wrong idea."

Emilia: "See? It's so obvious that it's really bothering you."

Even the clueless Emilia had seen through Liliana's brazenness. Through their dialogue, Subaru remembered his current situation.

Subaru, at this point in time, was supposed to take advantage of Liliana's song to go run an errand and buy reconciliation sweets. And shortly after buying something, he'd met the monster who was called Wrath.

— There were less than fifteen minutes before that nightmare of a speech would occur.

Subaru: "You're kidding me…"

In his experience with Return by Death, never had the time between the save point and the death been so close together.

Time ranging from a few hours to a few days, that was what Return by Death had always given Subaru in the past. The time he had now was short, almost to the extreme.

In just fifteen short minutes, what could Subaru do?

But even while he puzzled over this, time flowed on.

In this situation, merely avoiding death would be incredibly simple. Subaru only needed to avoid the place where the speech would be delivered. That way, the cause of death, such as the possible bomb, wouldn't affect him.

It was incredibly unlikely that a bomb affecting the entire city had been prepared.

So, if Subaru only wanted to live, he could just not go. Sirius wouldn't appear near Subaru. There didn't seem to be any specific target, and Subaru just happened to be there.

Therefore, even if Subaru weren't present, that square would still be Sirius's crime scene. The speech that was unrelated to Subaru's presence would happen in its original location, and everyone there would be affected.

However, no matter how that turned out, that falling child would be doomed to die.

Subaru: "I have to stop it… damn, I have to…!"

Subaru scratched his head and arrived at a decision.

He couldn't not save him. That child, Lusbel, was looking forward to a newborn brother or sister, and had taken his childhood sweetheart's place on that tower. How could anyone be so shameless as to think only of themselves and not attempt to rescue him?

Subaru: "Beako and I…"

Will go together, Subaru hesitated to declare.

Beatrice: "And what, Subaru?"

Turning to face Subaru, Beatrice voiced a serious question.

Now that he knew a critical situation was imminent, bringing Beatrice with him was the obvious option to choose in terms of combat effectiveness.

If she were absent, Subaru's combat strength would be cut in half. Even so, Subaru hesitated. It wasn't for a sentimental reason like not wanting Beatrice to fight.

Of course, saying that that wasn't a consideration at all wouldn't be true, but it wasn't Subaru's key reason.

That would be Emilia. Or rather, leaving Emilia here.

Subaru: "——"

The Witch Cult was in this very city.

Those fanatics — although he had yet to know whether or not that phrase should be plural, at least the Archbishop of Wrath was present. He had no clue as to whether or not she was working with any other cultists.

However, in a city where the Witch Cult was active, the notion of leaving Emilia alone with no one to protect her left lingering anxiety in Subaru.

Leaving someone important in a place beyond his reach was far too dangerous.

Someone beyond sight, the Witch Cult's devilish hands would reach or those important people will reach out to the key terrorist.

Deep in his heart, turbid fear plagued Subaru.

And, taking Emilia to Wrath? That was out of the question. Having Emilia encounter the Witch Cult would undoubtedly lead to tragedy. Only that was certain.

Just recalling Petelgeuse made that clear. Subaru couldn't let Emilia near the Witch Cult. That wasn't a matter of why. That just was.

Subaru: "Beatrice and I…"

Beatrice: "And what, Subaru?"

Subaru: "We'll eat the same dessert, is that fine?"

Beatrice "…?"

Beatrice frowned as she heard Subaru. She probably suspected that he had been thinking something else

entirely. Subaru nodded at the lost looking Liliana and turned to Emilia.

Subaru: “I’ll go on a short trip to buy some sweet snacks, then I’ll be right back. Emilia-tan, just wait here while elegantly and steadily listen to Liliana’s song and be good.”

Emilia: “I got it. But don’t you want me to come?”

Subaru: “That’s fine, believe in me. I’ll protect you.”

At his words, Emilia blinked her wide eyes and nodded with a blush. Then, Subaru quietly beckoned Beatrice, who treated him with a suspicious gaze.”

Subaru: “Protect Emilia for me. If I need your strength, I’ll call you immediately.”

Beatrice: “…what did you encounter that you can’t even tell Betty about?”

Subaru: “Just be well prepared. If I come calling, regardless of whether or not you’re willing to face it, we’ll be in a pretty terrible situation.”

Subaru gently pinched the slightly displeased Beatrice’s nose, then waved and took off as he felt the eyes of four people on his back.

Running down the road, he reached the square in less than five minutes.

However, his departure time had been a little late. In this strained situation, the slightest difference in timing could be a matter of life and death.

Subaru: “Although this is the case, without shopping, I’ll have nearly ten minutes…”

Subaru slowed into a walk, and surveyed the square where he’d arrived.

Before, he’d focused on the tower and didn’t have a chance to observe the surrounding area, but, at least for now, no conspicuous, black clad strangers were anywhere to be seen.

Then, the sin archbishop was most probably acting alone.

Subaru: “The question is what to do next. Once that speech begins, I could very well be forced to fall into that hazy state of mind again.”

Since the origin of that anomalous space was unclear, once it captured him again, he had no idea if he could regain his senses. Thus, Subaru assumed that it would become be impossible to recognize the anomaly as anomalous due to the frightening power of the brainwashing.

Subaru: “Should I tell everyone to take refuge somewhere away from here? It’ll be like the situation with Petelgeuse… no, there’s not enough manpower, and if Sirius acts preemptively in the meantime, that would be self-defeating.”

He could ask the victims who shouldn't be involved in the situation to take refuge. But how would be accomplish that? After all, if Sirius's speech didn't have any particular target, then she wouldn't limit the location to this square.

If there were no audience here, she'd just go elsewhere. As a result, the incident would only unfold to a different set of victims.

Subaru: "In that case, the only way is to eliminate the culprit…!"

His primary advantage was knowing that Sirius planned to appear here.

This was very similar to the battle with Petelgeuse and his sect. No matter what, the Witch Cult couldn't be allowed to run free. To prevent the evil cult from carrying out their crimes meant that the fundamental causes needed to be eliminated. Otherwise, tragedies would only repeat themselves.

He had realized far too late.

If he'd came to this conclusion immediately, Subaru would not have come alone. It was already too late to return to the park.

He wondered if it would be possible to return to the hotel, to turn to Wilhelm or Julius for help.

Subaru: "Wasting time on these thoughts is useless. I'm the only one here now. As soon as the speech starts, I have to be ready to act… no, the solution is actually much simpler!"

Subaru had noticed a small window at the bottom of the tower, which was presumably where Sirius had entered to give her speech from above.

In that case, she should already be in the tower, preparing for her speech that would be happening shortly. Even if she wasn't, Lusbel himself might be bound in there, awaiting rescue.

So, Subaru glanced cautiously to his left and right, and quietly approached the inconspicuous iron gate, opened, and slipped inside the tower.

The inside of the clocktower was dark beyond compare, its frigid air filled with dust.

The entire tower was entirely silent. Unlike clock towers from his world, this one had no gears. The timekeeping mechanism was run entirely by magical stones, and those produced by the brilliance of the magic filling the atmosphere. That gradual change would be reflected in a change in the color of tower's crystals.

— Therefore, the only sound that would ever be heard inside the tower would be made by someone else.

???: "...Mmgrr!"

???: "No need to cry so noisily. Are you a good boy? You must be a strong child. Daddy Muslan and

Mommy Ina, and your younger sibling too, they must be so proud of what a strong boy you are. You're such a good kid."

An unpleasant voice echoed. Terrified childish whimpers echoed.

A sound accompanied the sobbing from the top of the spiral staircase. It sounded like a grudge, a blessing, a hate, and a love.

It was distorted. It was twisted. It could never be said to be normal.

Subaru: "——"

Subaru determined that this was indeed Sirius, inhaled deeply, then held his breath.

His heartbeat began to accelerate, his chest thudding as he ascended the steps. Fortunately, the stairs were stone. With care, he could silence his steps, especially since the enemy's attention should be focused elsewhere.

Subaru prepared to call for Beatrice at a moment's notice as he slowly climbed the stairs. The tension escalated as the sound coming from above grew louder and closer.

Although the tower itself is high enough that Subaru needed to crane his head to see the top, there wasn't anything particularly notable on the journey up. A large pillar sat in the center of the tower, and the spiral staircase encircled it.

The voice of a demon and hero came from the end of those stairs. Only one single window faced the outside of the tower, presumably to give people access to adjust and check the engraved carvings on the magical stones. The sound came from the space before that window.

That feeling was comparable to an attic.

Subaru stealthily peered out from under the stairs and saw that there were indeed two stray figures interrupting that silent darkness.

There was no one else. No fodder cultists seemed to be present.

— Then, Subaru also needed to be prepared for her to attempt to displace his own soul.

Subaru: "——"

Capturing her alive wouldn't be a possibility.

Although that was what he'd wanted to do, the degree of difficulty would be too high. Not to mention that as long as she were alive, who knew what kind of tricks she could pull?

Subaru crouched down, and put his hand on his waist.

He grabs hold of what was supported by his belt and yanks it loose.

In his two handed grip was a weapon with an elongated, curved end, woven from special fibers.

The weapon was commonly known as a bullwhip, and archeologists in some of his world's most famous movies had been known to carry them while exploring ruins.

Whips had a longer range and were more difficult to manipulate than movies had made them seem, but in the past year, under Clind's tutelage, Subaru's skill had vastly improved.

His reasoning for choosing the whip was simple.

Unlike swords, hammers, spears, and bows, the whip was incredibly versatile. More importantly, with weapons like the sword, Subaru's potential improvement in just a few short years was incredibly limited.

Subaru already had a little familiarity with swordplay in kendo, and knew exactly how difficult it would be for him to reach any heights using that weapon.

Therefore, Subaru chose neither the spear nor the sword, but the whip. Originally, he'd always relied on his smarts, creativity, and trickery to win.

In that case, a weapon that played to his strengths would allow him to better exert his power. Whips would also allow him attack from a farther range.

Subaru: "——"

Subaru inhaled gently and exhaled slowly. Then he held his breath again.

He stood up and continued to climb the stairs, clutching the whip with his right hand. The figure hidden in the shadows didn't detect him. That gave him the upper hand.

Subaru took a half-step forward and flung his arm upward. With a sharp whistle, the tail of the whip flew toward its target.

This preemptive sideways attack, which sought to prioritize its curved, angled speed over power, seemed to mirror a move in badminton.

The head of the snake cut through that air, biting toward its target's unprotected back, trying to down that wicked figure.

However,

Sirius: "Why are you so angry?"

The silhouette whose back was facing him replied in a distracted voice.

Immediately thereafter, she swung her right hand at lightning speed to deflect the blow from Subaru's whip, using the chains that hung around her arm.

It was as if one snake had soared through the sky to intercept another.

For a second, Subaru was stunned by that sight, but recovered and tilted his arm to the edge as he determined that the front of the whip had indeed made contact with its prey.

Sirius: "Oh, my?"

With a little giggle, the collapsed figure, Sirius, regained her balance and climbed to her feet.

Although the chain dangling from her right arm deflected Subaru's blow, the whip bit into part of the chain's locks, dragging Sirius to the ground as Subaru yanked.

Subaru: "H-Ha!"

Facing that struggling Sirius, Subaru further tightened his grip as he rushed toward that bandaged freak in a semicircle, ramming into her with a shoulder. Her body, which was lighter than expected, easily flew forward under his body mass.

Sirius: "Mn, Gah!"

Sirius gave a soft cry, and, after thudding onto ground, tumbled through the window, just as Subaru had planned. From here to the first floor was much more than ten meters high, a child who fell to the ground from here would be crushed.

Subaru: "Are you okay, Lusbel!?"

Subaru did not confirm Sirius's impact, instead running to the other figure on the floor. That small body belonged to Lusbel, who held the ends of a chain in both hands, gazing up at Subaru with fear.

The chain in his hand was connected to the chain wrapping around his entire lower body, another expression of Sirius's bad taste.

Subaru: "That guy…! Forcing you to tie yourself up…!"

Little by little, he realized the extent of the horror that Lusbel must have tasted, being forced to hold that chain against his neck. Even now traces of terror were still engraved in his face.

Once aware of that maliciousness, Subaru felt an uncontrollable anger. He immediately grabbed the boy's shoulders, taking the chain from him.

Subaru: "Enough! You'll be fine. You'll never have to do such a thing again. Come with me!"

Lusbel: "But, if… I, I don't follow, the terms of our agreement, then Tina… Tina will…!"

Lusbel replied, eyes watering and lips quivering.

Seeing him, Subaru’s throat became choked with emotion.

That child had, in an attempt to protect his childhood friend, agreed to the devil's transaction. And, even experiencing what he had, Lusbel was more worried about his friend than he was about himself.

Even though his legs trembled, even though his teeth chattered, even though his vision was blurred by tears, even though he was no longer capable of forming coherent sentences.

Subaru: “No. In this city, there are… many… reliable people.”

His hoarse voice was unable to convey say what he wanted to say.

In order for the youth to feel at ease, he needed to speak comforting, authoritative words. The Sword Saint was in the city right now. As were the Knight of Knights, and the kingdom’s leading healing, and various people who could destroy a city.

Therefore, there was no need for any fear. No evil forces could rampant. Yeah. Exactly. Fear was completely unnecessary. There was no need for it at all. And, so,

Subaru: “So… legs, stop, shaking!!”

In front of Lusbel, whose eyes had become unfocused from fear, Subaru desperately beat his unresponsive legs and yelled.

His voice, laced with grief, unexpectedly echoed and compounded the fear residing in his chest. Subaru felt as if there were a sense of disgust, with an unidentified origin, entangling his entire body.

Lusbel: “— Guuhk”

Lusbel vomited with a sound like the bursting of a bubble. He started to spasm as he exhaled, collapsing in a pool of his own vomit. Subaru wanted to help him up, but then he too felt as if own organs were being twisted inside him, and he spewed out the contents in the stomach, feeling as if he’d been thrown into flight.

The Daisukiyaki he’d eaten in the morning had become unrecognizable, and the acrid, visceral smell of his gastric acids were overwhelming. Gulping, Subaru continued to retch vigorously, tasting only pain as his vomit threatened to drown him.

While he vomited and vomited, dizzily, tinnitus ringing in his ears, his was still shivering

non-stop. Not from cold. An invisible hand was twisting his stomach, his internal organs being knocked askew. Subaru was aware of its origin.

They were, undoubtedly,

Sirius: “— Your fear is but proof of your gentleness.”

Hearing the gentle voice coming from behind him, Subaru vomited again.

Almost drowning in the fluid overflowing from his stomach, Subaru collapsed onto the dirtied ground. He felt a touch of slimy liquid on his cheek. He was so close to the accumulation of filth on the ground that, every once in awhile, a short breath led to the bursting of a yellow bubble.

Most people wouldn’t be able to bear such a terrible sight, yet she gazed it at with a soft smile.

While Subaru and Lusbel looked at each other, desperately struggling to breathe in their own vomit, wracked by invisible tremors,

Sirius: “People are able to understand each other. People can become one. Gentleness does not exist for one’s self. It exists for others. Gentleness only shines because it exists for the sake of others. Only being gentle to yourself, that is selfishness! So, your gentleness, existing for the sake of others, is worthy of reverence! Ah, ah, this is Love!

Subaru: “Gu, ah, hk...”

Sirius: “Please feel comfortable. Let me witness. Feel, and let me witness your Love. Your endless tenderness. Your virtue that bid you to save Lusbel-kun!”

As she spoke, Sirius broke into a dance as she gazed at the two, both lying in a pool of vomit. She crossed her arms with one hand pointing to Subaru and the other to Lusbel, shaking her waist. As if dancing. As if offering a tribute.

Sirius: “Lusbel-kun’s fear, you two gentle souls will feel together. You’ll feel Lusbel-kun’s fear, and, through that, Lusbel-kun’s feelings will pass to you. Lusbel-kun, through your fear, feels what you will feel again from him. Your fears once again felt, and Lusbel-kun’s own fear is compounded. Your compounded fears, felt by Lusbel-kun, will in turn compound your own fear. That fear, mixed with Lusbel-kun’s fear, will become a brand new, fresh fear, and the freshness of Lusbel-kun’s fear will again passed to your true fear. The true fear that you feel, and the second fear born through Lusbel-kun, will lead to the his fear, and the next level of fear generated by Lusbel-kun’s heart will be added to your own new greatest level of fear…”

Something was whispering into his ear. That overwhelming momentum approached nonsense. Subaru had no time to try to comprehend those words. Why? Because for Subaru, everything passing through his hearing and his vision were terrifying. If breathing were terrifying, then blinking was terrifying. But not blinking was very painful and unbearable. Even that pain existed only to symbolize of terror Subaru. Feeling one pain means feeling the pain that he’d feel the next time. That would make Subaru feel a continuous, endless, infinite fear. So it wouldn’t do to refuse to blink. But, if he blinked, the world would fall into darkness for an instant. In that dark moment where nothing could be seen, he wouldn’t know what was happening. Although there might be nothing at all happening, he had no way of knowing for certain. Being unable to confirm anything was terrifying. If the unknown instinctively aroused fear, then to live was but an endless attempt to overcome the fear. In the end, the so-called fear had always been the

feeling of weakness that began to plague a creature when it felt a threat to its life. Being able to have this emotion was synonymous with being a life form. The function of this horror was similar to pain. After all, creatures who left their instincts of danger behind could not survive. To numb your fear was to condemn yourself.

Sirius: “Oh my? You two look to be losing your minds. Loving and emotionally enriching people can sometimes be very fragile. Ah, that’s because Love is just painful. However, it is precisely because love exists that we can survive. This is really very difficult. Then, I’ll get Tina- chan to help me. Lusbel-kun has worked hard.”

Being numb to the value of life meant violating an inherent survival ability. In other words, fear was necessary. Therefore, there was absolutely nothing to be ashamed about even praising the performance of feeling so frightened, like right now now. Of course, that kind of thing was just an assumption without any meaning. But, conducting such thought experiments was the best method to resist an overwhelming, dominating fear in the hope of finding a victorious breakthrough, wasn’t it? Subaru certainly thought so. Lusbel, in front of him, began to convulse as his eyes rolled back in his head. The candlelight of that young boy’s life was about to be extinguished.

That was sad and regrettable. However, Subaru couldn’t be discouraged. He would struggle and fight to the end, wasn’t that what he had so vowed? Even in that terrible, toilsome, damaging trial last year. If not, why exactly did Subaru find it so sad and painful to survive, even so? Scary.

Very very scary. Terrifying. Everything was terrifying. Alive. Terrifying. Blinking. Terrifying. Breathing. Terrifying. Rancid. Terrifying. Disgusting. Terrifying. Scary. Scary. Scary. Scary. Scaryscaryscaryscaryscaryscaryscaryscaryscaryscaryscary—

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Liliana: “After the song ends and they chat again, shouldn’t we prepare food and drinks for them? Indulging in sweet snacks will certainly create a mood that will close the distance between them, don’t you think so?”

The world immediately flipped upside down in the blink of an eye, and Subaru collapsed as soon as he heard the fresh sound. A girl’s awkward face caught his fall as he collided fiercely with her forehead.

Liliana: “Gah!?”

Subaru: “Huh?”

A sharp voice cried out.

Subaru stumbled several steps backward from the sudden, piercing pain. Somewhere in front of him, a sound of something falling into grass was made. Subaru did not respond immediately as he was too busy rubbing his forehead.

Subaru: “W-What just…?”

Emilia: “What’s wrong, Subaru? You suddenly headbutted Liliana. That’s no good. If you don’t like, you should resolve your differences by talking it out.”

Beatrice: “That’s right, in fact. Before resorting to violence, we should give that uncouth looking girl ample warning that we want to send her flying, I suppose.”

Liliana: “Am I really so ugly!?”

Liliana leapt to her feet with an unexpected cry.

Upon hearing her words, Emilia and Beatrice exchanged glances without speaking. Liliana suffered another blow and collapsed again.

Priscilla: “What a ridiculous farce. Commoners are not allowed to treat mine songbird in such a manner. This will never happen again.”

Refusing to stand for the violence being imposed on Liliana, Priscilla issued a complaint about Subaru’s behavior.

Subaru gave her a perfunctory nod, confirmed his location, once again, and,

Subaru: “…disgusting.”

A second reset hadn’t changed his evaluation of that freak at all

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Arc 5 - Chapter 21, "Optimal Solution"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-21-optimal-solution/

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http://ncode.syosetu.com/N2267BE/

This is not a professional translation. Some mistakes, both grammatical and logical, are inevitable. Also, be advised that translators have a predisposition for personal preference and the names and terminology may differ at times from what was used in the anime or is used in the fandom at large. Think of these documents as an extremely
detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

- Credit to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

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— Subaru’s second Return by Death hit him with an unprecedented sense of fatigue. Falling under the spell of that madness twice had a placed tremendous mental burden on him.

Especially the second one. That overwhelming fear had been imprinted deeply into him, and he had been fully aware of himself in that moment of death.

The shivering that came from deep within his being, the fear that would never cease, the individual named Natsuki Subaru breaking, his fragile spirit crumbling into powder.

This death was probably due to a mad, fear-induced heart attack. Sirius had been delighted to see the terrified Subaru, who had been reduced to a machine whose purpose was to excrete fluid.

He had wanted rescue Lusbel and challenge her, and that futile attempt had come at an incredibly heavy price.

However, although Subaru had died twice in as little as thirty minutes, and had yet to produce material results, his time hadn’t been completely wasted.

Sirius, perhaps wanting to give Subaru some small comfort before his death, had, in her sincere and respectful manner, explained exactly what had been happening to him and Lusbel.

That was,

Subaru: “Our fear, compounding as we felt each other’s feelings… could that be the same principle as resonance?”

Subaru felt Lusbel’s fear, and Lusbel had felt that augmented fear from Subaru, which then transferred to Subaru. The never-ending cycle of fear overrode any previous state of fear and eventually grew so extreme that it became fatal.

This death had doubtlessly come about because of that. The first death, and now the second death.

The developments to date, the statements from Sirius, and status as Wrath. Those clues led Subaru to a conclusion.

A scene that should have made people feel disgusted or angry had instead drawn smiles and laughs from them.

Fear that had belonged to Subaru being transferred to a child, frightening him even further, before returning twofold to Subaru.

— Wrath, Sirius, could viciously manipulate the feelings of others for her own enjoyment.

That was most likely a special form of magic not belonging naturally to this world, just like Petelgeuse’s Unseen Hand. It was an ability belonging to the Witch Cult.

The ability, closely related to emotions, was quite fitting for Wrath. This was also known as a Sin Archbishop’s Authority.

However, although Subaru had finally pieced this together after his two deaths, this was the only intelligence he had.

Now, the question was the enabling condition of this power — in other words, the method that was used to open a connection.

Once the trick behind Petelgeuse’s Sloth was known, he became fairly easy to defeat. Subaru had been able to see the Unseen Hand and resist Petelgeuse’s bodysnatch.

Although he could resist it, he didn’t understand why. Although he now had his Invisible Providence, Subaru was still confused as to why he could use a form of the [Unseen Hand].

In fact, pondering the presence of the Witch’s scent surrounding his Return by Death and his immunity to the memory manipulation from the White Whale’s fog, Subaru had optimistically considered that perhaps the Witch’s Cult’s authorities didn’t affect him. His recent murders at the hands of Wrath seemed to

disprove that theory.

Given his two encounters with Wrath, in the worst case, the triggering condition may even be Contact with Sirius.

As soon as he'd heard her speak, as soon as he'd seen her figure, Subaru had probably fallen under her spell. Taking that into consideration, finding a way to deal with her would be difficult indeed.

The most straightforward and reliable solution would also be the most extreme; the tower could be destroyed from a distance with magic.

No contact would be made with Sirius, and he wouldn't need to lay eyes on her. Knowing where she'd appear, he could take the opportunity to launch a preemptive strike, and he'd be able to ensure that he wouldn't have to trigger Return by Death again.

Only, he would need to disregard the sacrifice of a courageous child, and so Subaru could never seriously consider such an option.

Sacrifices were necessary, who would be self-righteous enough to say such a thing?

To decide to on a utilitarian greater good at the price of other lives, from the perspective of those who were sacrificed, meant that the entire world would be lost. Subaru could not tolerate the loss of his own life, so how could he arrogantly place a price tag on the lives of others?

His goals were as he'd just determined. He needed to rescue Lusbel, and to prevent any unnecessary sacrifice. What troubled Subaru was achieving both at the same time.

Subaru: "Then, to rescue Lusbel… the only viable way is defeating Sirius."

The same situation as last time would inevitably develop if he tried rescue Lusbel by himself. No matter how he struggled, trying to fight Sirius alone was tantamount to suicide.

Sirius's combat skills were evidently nothing to scoff at. Although she'd been wielding a chain, even deflecting Subaru's surprise attack was impressive.

Even considering that Subaru was an amateur at combat, the strike of a whip was too speedy to be followed by the untrained eye. To have been able to react so quickly to a surprise attack, and to deflect it with her chains, how skilled must she be?

Subaru couldn't even begin to imagine.

In other words, what Subaru needed was someone who could match Sirius in combat, who trusted Subaru enough to help him, and who could resist the power of Sirius's Wrath.

Subaru: "What kind of a miracle would it be if I just found a guy who coincidentally satisfied all those requirements…?

Subaru sighed to himself as he considered this opportunistic line of thought.

However, the notion that there would be someone who could remain unaffected by Sirius's power was not a baseless one.

The presence of someone like Subaru, who could see through Sloth's power, being immune to Sirius's Wrath was not so inconceivable.

After all, Subaru's accreditation as Petelgeuse's killer only came from his unique resistance to Petelgeuse's power.

Since everyone in the square had been taken in by Sirius's speech, he could assume that no one there had any such resistance to Sirius's authority.

At the square, four people, including Subaru, had been prepared to fight Sirius, but she had taken special care to point them all out. And then, Subaru finally realized it.

Larkins had been at the square.

Subaru: "Reinhard!"

Although Subaru, extreme opportunist that he was, tried to resist engaging in commonplace thinking, he finally remembered the man whose presence was the very peak of opportunism.

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Although Subaru wasn't attempting to justify his delayed reaction, the reason it had taken so much time to connect Larkins with Reinhard was arguably the short interval between his Deaths.

A Death followed by a Death, madness followed by madness, all happening in the span of a mere fifteen minutes.

In that state, being able to calmly identify the crisis and calmly explore countermeasures before choosing the best solution was nigh impossible. If anyone tried to belittle him, Subaru would have liked to respond with a sharp complaint about Return by Death.

Subaru didn't want to trigger a Return by Death.

If circumstances would permit, he'd rather share a tranquil, peaceful life with Emilia, Rem, and Beatrice.

However, this world would never permit Subaru such a happy life. He was destined to live though his every day while struggling desperately.

So at this moment, Subaru was desperately making an argument.

Subaru: "I finally found you, I'm not letting you go so easily! Please, call me Reinhard right now! This is

an emergency!”

Larkins: “So annoying! Why should I take the risk of being lectured by that red haired bastard? You must be kidding!”

A lively crowd had gathered around the two, who were angrily roaring at each other.

The crowd seemed to relish the tense atmosphere, eagerly expecting a fight to break out at any given moment.

Upon resurrection, Subaru, after arriving at an epiphany, began to act immediately.

Like last time, he left Beatrice as Emilia’s guard, and used his errand as an excuse to leave the park. After arriving at the square, he’d searched desperately for Larkins. Now, he had finally entered the negotiation stage.

His search for Larkins had really been quite time-consuming, so upon seeing him, Subaru had roughly grabbed his shoulder, which had led to their current quarrel.

Larkins had only further agitated Subaru by shouldering him in retaliation.

In any case, an argument was now inevitable. Subaru spoke rapidly and anxiously under Larkins’s harsh glare.

Subaru: “Can you listen? Calm down and listen to me. I'm not playing around. If you don’t want to die, hurry up and call Reinhard for me right now.”

Larkins: “Huh? You devilish brat, are you looking down on me? You think you could actually kill me? Forget that bastard Reinhard, see if I don’t kill you right here.”

Subaru: “Ah, that isn’t what I meant…!”

Larkins regarded Subaru’s words as a provocation, and his anger started growing out of control.

After all, Subaru and Larkins had never been on good terms. In addition, it seemed that Larkins had a poor impression of Reinhard, who should have been his comrade. Someone he was already reluctant to call was requested by someone who he disliked and so he stubbornly refused Subaru’s request.

Subaru: “You stubborn, inconsiderate idiot…!”

Subaru gritted his teeth toward Larkins and grabbed his head in his hands.

Needless to say, Subaru, who had failed to speak clearly and calmly, was also to blame. However, seeing his negotiations being refused to such an extent, he couldn’t help wanting to make a complaint.

Although, to Larkins, Subaru must have looked to be a raving madman. Subaru’s hands were tied due to

his inability to reveal any of his foreknowledge.

— However, the situation being what it was, Subaru had no other way.

Subaru placed a hand on his chest, attempting to suppress his fear.

Subaru: “Larkins. This is not a joke. The reason why I want you to call Reinhard is because there’s a strong enemy who I can’t handle.”

Larkins: “Someone who you can’t handle? Don’t think so highly of yourself.”

Larkins snorted derisively.

Seeing that expression, Subaru lowered his gaze, took a deep breath, and opened his mouth.

Don’t come, don’t come, Subaru spoke while making such a wish.

Subaru: “— The Witch Cult will show up here.”

Larkins: “— !”

Subaru opened his eyes as, at his disturbing words, Larkins’s face froze.

Finished, Subaru immediately looked down to his chest, but the expected pain did not come. That is, the punishment for disclosing information that could potentially reveal his Return by Death.

First of all, he was decidedly relieved about this.

Although Subaru hadn’t triggered Return of Death for a year now, the penalties associated with it had remained.

In particular, when he’d attempted to spill everything to Beatrice, Subaru had been wracked by the pain he’d come to associate with the witch.

It was as if that black-handed witch had forgotten his commendable farewell gift to her at the tea party in Sanctuary. How rude.

So, Beatrice was no different from to the others, and Subaru was unable to discuss anything of his questions or concerns with her.

Needless to say, that had killed his hope that he could share his knowledge with his partner, Beatrice, without having to face punishment.

But that was a long story that he didn’t have time to consider right now.

At any rate, what was important now was that Subaru had successfully told Larkins his legitimate reason

for needing Reinhard, without being punished by those black hands.

In fact, hearing the name “Witch Cult”, Larkins seemed to reconsider his stance, dropping his gaze and narrowing his eyes in contemplation.

Larkins: “Hey, brat.”

Subaru: “It’s Natsuki Subaru. Stop always calling me brat, Larkins.”

Larkins: “That’s Larkins-san to you. Bastard Subaru. How much credibility does that statement have? Using the Witch Cult as a bluff isn’t something to do lightly, you know.”

Larkins spoke with a low voice, casting a hostile gaze at Subaru.

In this world, the name of the Witch of Envy and the Witch Cult were incredibly weighty no matter where they appeared. This stemmed from the idea of the Witch being the embodiment of Absolutely Evil being deeply rooted in the world’s history.

Even Larkins wore a serious expression that he would normally never reveal. He was finally taking this seriously, so now Subaru could only respond equally carefully to him.

Subaru: “I’m not kidding around or lying. The Witch Cult will come here. Many people will be in danger.”

Larkins: “Where did you hear this… Ah, damn it. That’s right. Your faction did away with the Witch Cult’s Sloth. Damn, so there’s actually credibility behind what you’re saying…”

Before Subaru could come up with a response, Larkins found his own conclusion. Although that was in fact mere speculation, that merit seemed effective in having Larkins believe him.

Larkins: “Are they targeting the city? Or this specific square?”

Subaru: “So you’re going to believe me?”

Larkins: “You’re the who said to stop messing around, right? Listen up, bastard Subaru. Although I don’t want to be lectured by that bastard Reinhard, I also don’t want to run into some trouble that could kill me. Since what happens next is entirely dependent on my mood, you’d better take care.”

Although Larkins still held some measure of doubt, he wanted to hear the details. Surprised at this reasonable judgment, Subaru decided to continue with the conversation.

Subaru: “I understand, sorry. The Witch Cult’s Wrath is planning to attack this square. She’ll appear at that clock tower, and her target is everyone in the square, not any specific individual.”

Larkins: “That’s consistent with the Witch Cult’s style. Damn it, how much time do we have?”

Subaru: “There's probably only five minutes left. So, seriously, call him right now.”

Larkins: “Five minutes!? You’re kidding! Why didn’t you say that sooner!?”

Subaru: “That’s what I was trying to tell you five minutes ago!”

Although Larkins was outraged at the lack of time, Subaru had spent ten long minutes finding him and convincing him. If possible, Subaru hadn’t wanted to walk this kind of tightrope.

Running around the city and calling for Reinhard would be more reliable than talking to Larkins. However, time didn’t allow that of Subaru.

Subaru: “Anyway, please, could we stop messing around so you can call Reinhard? According to your conversation yesterday, it’s through something like fireworks, right?”

Larkins: “Fireworks, what's that? … I shoot magic in the air, and that bastard Reinhard can see it and recognize it as the signal.”

Subaru: “…That’s simple and clear, which is good, but what would happen if someone else suddenly fired magic into the air?”

Larkins: “There’s no need to worry about that. Apparently the red haired bastard can tell who was responsible for which magic.”

That was such an odd detail, and Subaru logged it in the back of his head. It seemed that, in course that in the past year, Larkins had set a goal of learning to use basic magic.

Based on Subaru’s initial encounter with him, it was hard to imagine that he was capable of using magic a year ago.

Larkins: “I’m not a performer, so move aside already, you annoying bunch!”

Larkins finally gave in to Subaru’s persuasion, and prepared to call Reinhard.

The crowd, who had been whispering “are they starting yet?”, “is it finally happening?” backed off, disappointed, as Larkins raised a hand, beginning to call a fireball.

Seeing the swirl of the red mana of the fire attribute, Goa, Subaru felt an odd sense of unsettling disconnect.

This time, the situation should have drastic changes.

Although it was a rather extreme case of persuasion, Subaru was still excited to learn that he could work with Larkins like this, even if the latter’s actions were based on self-preservation.

This could be said to partially amount to Subaru’s growth in the past year, and his defeat of Petelgeuse.

Larkins, too, had changed in the year past.

Whether Subaru or Larkins, if neither of them had changed, then this collaboration could never have happened.

Therefore, this result was born of a simultaneously optimistic yet realistic positive growth. Reinhard would come here.

As a result, dealing with Wrath would also be easy. No matter how powerful the enemy was, they would be dwarfed by the Sword Saint. The power of Wrath surely wouldn't work on Reinhard. For some mysterious reason. Subaru just trusted Reinhard that much.

Larkins: "Goa!"

Larkins recited the incantation, and a red flame burst forth from his raised arm. The flame skyrocketed, and soon exploded with a dry sound in the blue sky.

Call it fireworks or magic, it seemed a little shabby, but that signal was presumably more than good enough for the hero it was meant to reach.

Perhaps what happened next was due to that hazy relief.

Subaru, taking what had just happened for granted, allowed his guard to grow lax.

Had the thought of Reinhard's arrival caused him to relax so much that he neglect to pay attention to his surroundings?

Sirius: "— Oh my. There seems to be a fireball in the sky. What a beautiful, blinding light."

Of course the enemy would be aware of any commotion near the tower.

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Sirius, appearing on the tower, wore, as always, that bandage concealing her face.

However, the expression she wore was obviously a smile; something about the tone of her voice reflected a little bird chirping in the sunny spring.

Sirius raised a hand over her eyes and squinted at the light of the fireball.

She seemed to be regarding that red flame with the same admiration that most people would treat fireworks with.

Sirius: "This is great! Well, everyone, I'm sorry. Good morning!"

That unusually high-pitched sound snatched that crowd's attention from the fireball, and they turned to

face Sirius.

Even Subaru did. So, he couldn’t blame their collective reaction.

Subaru: “No, don’t look!!”

Seeing that fierce, bandaged smile out of the corner of his eye, he immediately issued a loud warning.

However, not a single person heeded his warning and looked away. Of course. Subaru himself had held the same feeling about Sirius since their first contact.

Even if he turned his face, his left cheek could still feel that intensity. There vicious wave of danger that existed to threaten him.

Faced with a bloody carnivore, how could anyone avert their gaze? Looking away from a dangerous pair of sharp fangs could only be done by those who had already given up on living.

Refusing to die, their human instincts directed their gazes upon Sirius.

Sirius: “Oh my. Silence came much faster than I expected. This must be thanks to the fact that the two of them attracted your attention before I appeared. Thank you. Please applaud those two young men.”

Sirius clapped her hands together as she spoke, the chains attached to them clattering on the floor, as she regarded Subaru and Larkins, who still held his arm outstretched.

Subaru, feeling a cool breeze on his face, clenched his teeth and attempted to refrain from reacting to Sirius’s gaze.

Redirecting Larkins’s attention would be impossible. He had already been entrapped by Sirius. No matter what Subaru did, he would be unable to get through to Larkins, and then Sirius would only entrap him as well.

In fact, now, Subaru couldn’t bring himself to cover his ears.

He had expected that even awareness of Sirius would mean that her charm would become irresistible. Therefore, what Subaru had originally intended to do was immediately avert his gaze and cover his ears. Even if such measures would render him defenseless, he wouldn’t be subjected to her mental manipulation.

However, that premeditated countermeasure was no longer available after his eyes had been captured.

And why would he cover his ears? Because he didn’t want to hear Sirius's voice. However, why would he willingly deprive himself of such a pleasant sound?

Subaru: “——”

His attention placed on her, Subaru forgot himself and turned to look at Sirius.

Sirius watched Subaru as he did so, gleefully clasping her hands together and shaking her body from side to side. The chains again rubbed against the ground with metallic friction, issued clang, as if reflecting Subaru's heart crashing to the ground.

Sirius: "All right! It took 19 seconds for everyone to see me here. Sorry. But I am very happy. And, although I don't know why, it seems to me that there's a child here who loves me far more than I expected. Well, then, I have to introduce myself."

As she spoke, Sirius lowered her head respectfully, facing a whirlpool of anxious gazes. Raising her head, basking in everyone's gaze,

Sirius: "I'm the Witch Cult's Sin Archbishop of Wrath. I am called Sirius Romanee-Conti." She reported her daunting name.

That title should have been symbol of disgust and terror, and should have evoked an incredibly negative response.

Instead, as she opened her speech, the crowd reacted as if she'd introduced herself as a friendly, close neighbor.

Sirius: "Oh, thank you. I'm sorry to take up everyone's time like this. However, please rest assured that I put an end to all this soon."

???: "— Will you? Then it seems fortunate that I rushed here as soon as I could."

Sirius: "——"

Sirius lowered her gaze once more, and Subaru and the rest of the crowd turned to the side.

They were all facing the waterway which ran behind the square. A smooth flow of water erupted alongside the wind of someone moving at incredible speed.

There, a red flame burned, and clear, sky-colored eyes blinked.

His fair, calm face was revered by all who gazed upon him.

A hero is what all humans had wished for, deep in their hearts, and the existence of that hero was now a reality.

Reinhard: "Searching for a shortcut took a little bit of time. Sorry for being late."

The hero took not five minutes, but thirty seconds to arrive, and offered his apology.

Having sprinted through the roads — no, having traveled by waterway, the recently arrived

Sword Saint swept his eyes quickly through the circle of people, before raising his eyes toward

Wrath and sighing.

Reinhard: “I understand why I was called. That judgment was correct, Larkins. Or was it you, Subaru?”

Leaping from the water to the ground, and then into the square, Reinhard relieved the stiff Larkins, then patted Subaru’s shoulders with his hands.

Recognizing the touch of those palms as real, Subaru gave several gasping exhalations as his whole body shuddered.

Subaru: “Rei, Reinhard?”

Reinhard: “Yes, it's me. From the looks of it, this is quite the emergency. Standing at the top of that tower… is a Sin Archbishop, right?”

Reinhard, offering a reassuring nod, stood in the spotlight.

Subaru saw his fair eyebrows wrinkle as he deliberately chose not to face Sirius. Reinhard seemed to also understand the danger.

Subaru: “She has a brainwashing ability. Although it feels a little better now… if I heard her voice or looked at her now, I’d immediately fall back under it.”

Reinhard: “I know. And not just with sound and sight. It seems that even being in her presence will have that effect. If I’m near her for too long, I don’t know if I could remain calm.”

Subaru: “You’re kidding, even you…!?”

Hearing Reinhard’s vulnerable statement, Subaru fell into a speechless desperation.

Although he had no basis in believing so, he’d been convinced that as long as Reinhard were here, everything would be fine. However, Reinhard himself had told Subaru that he wouldn’t be unaffected by Sirius.

In that case, even coming up with an idea of how to defeat that evil presence became exponentially more difficult.

Sirius: “I'm sorry if I’m mistaken, but could it be that you’re the famed Sword Saint? If so… what a wonderful day this will be!”

Reinhard: “As you said, I’m Reinhard van Astrea, the current inheritor of the title of Sword Saint. Unfortunately, I think that title is too heavy for me now.”

Sirius: “Nonsense! But that’s no problem! It's very nice to have you here. Because this country bears the

greatest trust and highest expectations in you as a knight. Everyone loves you, and you love everyone. You are the embodiment of my hope, the ideal of my Love!”

Reinhard: “Am I?”

Sirius was indeed shaking her hands noisily and engaging in an ecstatic dance. Reinhard, although facing away from her, was chatting with her quite casually.

If communicating with her would lead to falling under her spell, then Reinhard’s lack of action equated suicide.

Subaru spoke up anxiously.

Subaru: “Hey, hey, Reinhard… going on like this isn’t good. It’s not good at all. It’ll be really bad. Although I can’t say why.”

Reinhard: “…that looks to be the case indeed. And that doesn’t apply to just me. Taking the others into consideration, I shouldn’t drag this on for to long.”

Subaru should feel anxious, but gradually became unaware of why he didn’t. Reinhard sighed at his puzzlement, and took a step forward.

Then,

Subaru: “Reinhard?”

Reinhard: “I can’t hold on for too much longer. — So, I’ll get rid of the problem as soon as possible.”

As soon as that those words faded, Reinhard tensed his legs slightly, and leapt forward.

That was the same movement he’d used to leave the waterway — but this time, it produced a rippling explosion, and everyone in the area gasped as they felt the impact of waves spread over the ground.

Leaving behind that share of amazement, Reinhard turned that energy into momentum.

Sirius: “Hahahaha! Ah, how impressive this is —”

The Sword Saint kicked off from the ground, and, effortlessly, struck Sirius out of the tower, far into the sky above.

Arc 5 - Chapter 22, "A Casual Response"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-22-a-casual-response/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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Could this be called aerial warfare?

Reinhard had leapt toward Sirius, knocking his opponent from the tower and sending her flying through the sky.

Sirius: “Hahaha! Ah, how impressive you are!”

As the heroic figure flew toward her, she raised her voice, ecstatic, and waved her arms about. Accompanying that motion was the piercing whine of her chain unraveling from her wrist.

That fully extended chain could now be used as a whip, although its merit as a weapon was based more in intimidating appearance and violent sound than convenience. Someone who chose to wield such a weapon was clearly out of touch with common sense.

That iron snake had undoubtedly tasted the blood of more than just a few people, and, at this moment, was partaking in a routine hunt, attempting to crush its prey with its iron jaws, the whistling wind it created resembling applause.

But even that blunt snake, who could approach the speed of sound, was clueless.

— In this world, there existed a human existence that exists in the same sense as that of Sirius that departed from its usual course.

Reinhard: “A chain, how troublesome.”

Hearing the sound of the chain entering the fight, the Sword Saint frowned and gave a troubled mutter.

In the midst of such an intense battle, he seemed be giving the slight grievance that better suited the atmosphere of a brief break between classes.

Sirius: “Hahaha!”

Sirius, on the verge of panting, revealed her passionate smile to the spectators.

Surely, that was inevitable. However, the reasoning behind Sirius’s delight was mysterious. Whether it was because of desperation, or whether she was genuinely happy, one face was clear to all the spectators.

This was a situation that only Sirius would have laughed in.

Reinhard: “——”

Sirius flew upwards, and Reinhard pursued her from below.

With Reinhard as her target, Sirius delivered a quick, precise blow. Even facing that oncoming chain, Reinhard didn’t reach for the sword hanging at his waist.

If his words from long before were true, it wasn’t that he didn’t intent to draw his sword, it was that he couldn’t. Reinhard’s legendary sword would only allow itself to face worthy opponents.

In that case, he was condemned to be unarmed while fighting that horrible freak. Even Reinhard, who Subaru had the utmost trust in, would have to undergo a bitter struggle — perhaps he would even fail to live up to Subaru’s expectation, in a show of human weakness.

If so, then that trust would soon be broken.

Aiming her second strike at Reinhard's, a high-pitched voice spoke up.

Shock waves and sparks danced at the scene. To Subaru and the other spectators, lightning seemed to flash through the sky.

The ability to accomplish that kind of witchcraft was precisely the proof that Reinhard transcended the boundaries of human skill.

Reinhard met the chain head on, lifting a slender leg to defend against it.

That attack was so surprising that it would have elicited a laugh. After that impact, Reinhard turned

attention to wrapping his foot with the chain, moving it to suit his own will.

The movement itself was nothing too special. Reinhard had met the approaching chain with his right leg, and wound it around his foot in a makeshift weapon, using it to open an immediate follow up.

In only a moment, he'd easily alternated between offensive and defensive.

Needless to say, not everyone could keep up with the fight. Only the handful of people with combat training could follow those rapid, continuous attacks.

In that moment of understanding, there was an impulse to laugh. Subaru gave a long sigh and relaxed his shoulders. Fortunately, Reinhard was a comrade, so those thoughts were unnecessary. If he were the enemy, then Subaru's shoulders, knees, and bladder would have all given out.

Sirius: "Haha, hahaha! AHAHA, HAHAHAHA!!"

Sirius laughed loudly, her right arm spinning wildly like a tornado.

Since her left arm had been captured by Reinhard, she could only resort to using the right one. However, although the whistling snake tore through the sky, flying from every direction, it was blocked by the chain on Reinhard's right foot, creating a high-pitched whine and a shower of sparks.

Every spark dancing in the blue sky, was accompanied by a metallic instrument whose sound permeated the square, in a whirling performance of red and yellow.

A strike, another blow, but during that period, Reinhard had further closed the distance between himself and Sirius. Soon, after exchanging an array of blows, he'd reached her.

Sirius: "How unexpected! You've actually reached this point! Amazing!"

Reinhard: "You're very adept. I find it a shame that you've committed yourself to evil."

In those moments, the two exchanged words the way they did attacks.

Reinhard quickly pulls back his right leg and thrusts his left hand with aligned fingers. Sirius greeted it with a powerful swing of her arm, the undulating chain diving at Reinhard with exposed fangs.

Although that chain was made of steel, Reinhard had used his own hand as a blade and cleaved it in two.

In the past, Subaru had witnessed the perfect splitting of disposable wooden chopsticks — a party trick. If Reinhard were to partake in those performances, he could split a steel blade like paper. He was the very portrait of beautiful swordplay.

The severed portion of the chain was propelled by the attack's momentum into the clocktower,

the violent collision shattering one of the building's walls. The sight of smoke and the rubble crashing

into the square shook Subaru out of his trance.

He'd been completely fascinated.

Reinhard and Sirius's fight, no, Reinhard's fight, had entranced him. Whether envy or fear caused fascination was another matter entirely.

Subaru: "Leaving her to Reinhard is fine. Then, I…!"

He couldn't continue to dawdle here, blindly ogling the fight and waiting for an outcome.

Subaru squeezed through a gap in the crowd, running to the opening of the tower. Lusbel, who had been scheduled to be part of Sirius's speech, had probably been abandoned in the clock tower when he responded to Reinhard's inability to withdraw.

Saving him would ease Subaru's worries.

Just in case, so that if Sirius got away from Reinhard, Lusbel's safety would be guaranteed. Subaru climbed anxiously up the spiral staircase, again tasting that dark, damp air.

The tower was much brighter than it had been fifteen minutes ago, thanks to the light flooding in from the walls that had been broken by Sirius's chain.

After safely ascending the spiral staircase, Subaru found the bound Lusbel on the top floor. He'd been left face down on the ground, where his tears had pooled into a puddle. The child's sobs touched Subaru deeply.

Subaru: "Lusbel! You're safe now, don't worry!"

Subaru tenderly took the chained Lusbel into his arms.

He ignored the warm torrent of tears as he returned Lusbel's desperate, terrified gaze with his own reassuring one.

Lusbel: "Mmm!"

Subaru: "It's alright, I'm on your side. And as for that monster, a reliable hero is fighting her right now. So, let's take this time to get you out of here."

Lusbel: "Mmm."

Subaru spoke with the utmost sincerity. Gradually, the struggling Lusbel's body lost its strength, and he faced Subaru with a tearful but clear expression.

After Subaru nodded in response to that inquiring gaze, Lusbel began sobbing anew, for a different reason than before.

Subaru: “Wait a second. Let me get this off of you.”

After gently touching crying boy’s head, Subaru started cautiously working on the chain.

From the shoulders to ankles, the chain was wound tightly, and he was also gagged with it. Subaru took care to avoid hurting the child as he unraveled it.

Subaru: “Well, I got it off. Can you stand up? If not, I can carry you.”

Lusbel: “D-Don’t worry, it’s... thank you... hk.”

Lusbel rose unsteadily to his feet, shaking his stiff legs, offering his gratitude. Although his face was stained with tears, he was still a strong child. Subaru patted his head again.

Then, as he pondered the intense battle taking place near the tower,

Subaru: “Staying here might actually be safer, but we should probably get out just in case. Can you walk? Are you hurt anywhere?”

Lusbel: “My right hand, just a little bit…”

Lusbel frowned and obediently presented his wound to Subaru.

On his outstretched right hand was a sharp laceration that had clearly been made by a snake-like weapon. Seeing the blood oozing from the wound, Subaru contorted his face in discomfort.

Subaru: “Bastard, tying up such a small child, and even doing this to him.”

Lusbel: “No, no. This just suddenly… suddenly hurting when I was tied up.”

Subaru: “Suddenly?”

While he had been tied up, Subaru registered distractedly.

At least, Subaru shouldn’t have hurt him in the process of unraveling the chain. His movements had been cautious, and if Lusbel had suffered so serious an injury, Subaru would have noticed.

— A terrible, ominous apprehension rose in Subaru’s heart.

Subaru: “…at any rate, we can’t stay here. Let’s go.”

Subaru took Lusbel’s uninjured left hand and led him to the bottom of the spiral staircase, to the exit of the tower.

When Subaru returned to the square, he heard,

Crowd: “—Kill her! Kill her! Kill her! Kill her!”

The mob had plunged into a frenzy, eagerly awaiting the execution of that captured freak, calling for vindication.

Eyes filled with bloodlust, mouths twisted in snarls, howling for murder.

Endless abhorrence of evil. Incredulous aversion to the unnatural. Wanting to be rid of the presence of an enemy who wasn’t physiologically acceptable. This emotion was one of murderous intent.

And what was this called?

— This was known as Wrath.

Crowd: “—Kill her! Kill her! Kill her! Kill her!”

A crowd of complete strangers stood side by side as comrades, moving toward the same goal.

Crowd: “—Kill her! Kill her! Kill her! Kill her!”

Their very hearts united in that moment, facing the spirits of good and evil.

Crowd: “—Kill her! Kill her! Kill her! Kill her!”

Choosing to be united, pushing that limit, that was—

Crowd: “—Kill her! Kill her! Kill her! Kill her!”

Sirius: “Joining feelings into one… this is surely Love, correct? Well, there is no doubt that this is a scene only Love could achieve, don’t you agree?”

Rather than devising a scheme, Sirius murmured in her usual voice.

Sirius had been pressed to the side of the tower by the hero. The surrounding crowd eagerly cheered for the death of the unnatural person, and knowing that their Sword Saint had the power to kill the abomination.

The desperate Sirius seemed to have lost even the chain has on her left hand. If both hands were unarmed, she had no way to defend against Reinhard's knife-like hand.

This was clearly a dead end — however, Sirius wore her usual placid smile.

Reinhard: “Are there any last words you want to say?”

Sirius: “Thank you. Then, allow me to offer you an piece advice. The other archbishops may not be as docile as me, so if you want to ask their last words, you might suffer for it.”

Reinhard: “— I will keep that in mind.”

In the face of Reinhard’s warm kindness, Sirius spoke a calm statement. Reinhard nodded in compliance and stepped forward, ready to execute her with the blade that was his hand.

Crowd: “—Kill her! Kill her! Kill her! Kill her!”

As the voice of the crowd grew in intensity, Sirius’s fate had been sealed. This was obvious, so why?

Standing at the entrance of the broken tower, Subaru felt a throbbing chill threatening to break his heart.

Why? What did that mean? He desperately wanted to speak, but his mouth couldn’t move. Once he began to speak, Subaru knew what he would say.

Subaru certainly would join the loud cries of “kill her!”

Sirius: “We know each other. Mutual humility. Mutual recognition. We forgive each other. That’s exactly the correct form that Love should take.”

Ignoring the subdued Subaru, Sirius continued to preach her rhetoric.

At first glance, she seemed to make sense, but, taking into account that Sirius was saying so, that proposition and the atmosphere itself turned unpleasant.

Reinhard: “——”

Reinhard seemed to have made the same judgment as Subaru.

There was no longer any meaning in letting Sirius speak, so Reinhard moved forward. However, just before Reinhard reached her, Sirius smiled and held her arms into the air.

Immediately, accompanied by a crackling sound, chains were ejected from the cuffs of her coat. Those chains were fired through her sleeves, and then wrapped around the tower as Sirius began to fly once more.

She intended to escape — but just before she could, Reinhard stomped on the ground. Shock waves spread upward, like an explosion.

His hand struck at her in a smooth, upward motion. In that moment, Sirius’s life would end.

Crowd: “—Kill her! Kill her! Kill her! Kill her!”

And that result, will be prompted by the crowd's cry.

Subaru’s heart spiked with fear. Driven by a sudden impulse,

Subaru: “REINHARD!!”

He yelled the hero’s name, but, falling under the sway of the crowd,

Subaru: “—KILL HER!!”

Reinhard slashed.

A clean line swept neatly from Sirius’s left shoulder to her right flank.

That exquisite cut was so sharp that there was a delay of several seconds before Sirius’s body could react. Finally, the blood in her body noticed the wound, and her body collapsed as blood began to spray.

Sirius: “… Ah, this gentle world.”

Her internal organs spilling out, Sirius's body was cleft in half.

Her upper body continued soaring upward, pouring blood and intestines through the air, while her lower body, left in place, became a fountain, sprinkling blood through the square.

This was hell come to earth.

No one could bear to look straight at that horror. However, no one looked away. No one could look away.

Reinhard: “…it can’t be.”

After landing, Reinhard uttered a stunned mutter.

Subaru saw that his blue eyes were shaking with grief, a desperate shadow enveloping his fair, handsome face.

— And then Subaru could see no more.

Subaru: “——”

Subaru, and the rest of the crowd, lay scattered in the square that had turned into a pool of blood. From their left shoulders to their right sides, everyone had been clearly bisected.

Subaru: “——”

Blood and viscera spilling out, Subaru’s consciousness didn’t have time to understand what was happening before he was pulled into the embrace of death. Just before that happened, he felt something else.

A boy's left hand, holding on to his own, whose owner had also been cleaved enough, squeezed tightly, looking to Subaru for salvation.

He seemed to have felt that somewhere before.

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Liliana: “After the song ends and they chat again, shouldn’t we prepare food and drinks for them? Indulging in sweet snacks will certainly create a mood that will close the distance between them, don’t you think so?”

Subaru: “——ghk!”

Beatrice: “Ow! Ow, that hurts! It hurts in fact, SUBARU!!”

Blinking rapidly, Subaru was surprised by what he just heard.

The sudden switch in consciousness had him clinging to Beatrice’s hand with the same vice grip that he’d been making before his Return by Death.

Beatrice tearfully kicked Subaru’s leg after suffering from that sudden atrocity, who recoiled in pain and loosened his grip on her hand.

Liliana: “W-W-W-Why did you do that? Why would you attack Beatrice-sama’s lovely hands so suddenly? You’re going to ruin then… but it’s okay, I... I-I’ll kiss them and make it better for you, ha... haha.”

Beatrice: “It’s alright, I suppose! That’s quite gross, in fact!”

Beatrice flushed with panic as Liliana grabbed her hand. She ducked behind Subaru. Even if he had injured her hand, her trust in her partner had not diminished.

Emilia: “Subaru, are you alright? Just now, you suddenly turned pale…”

Subaru: “E-Emilia-tan…”

A concerned Emilia had joined his side, reaching a hand to his forehead. Subaru saw himself reflected in her amethyst eyes and breathed a sigh.

He’d come back.

He patted his shoulders and chest, which had been nearly bisected. His abdomen was cut, and his head had been smashed. Although Subaru was confident in his experience with deaths, this had been his first real beheading. Taking precedence over pain was a sense of astonishment and loss, the knowledge of his Death tugging at Subaru’s spirit. This was a death that Subaru, who was commonly subjected to them, could accept.

Subaru: “Why, can’t I find a simple conclusion...”

Once again catching up with the memories he'd inherited memory, this Death taught him the reality of Sirius's power.

Although he hadn't registered much pain, the sense of loss and shock hit Subaru one after the other. His partial understanding of the phenomenon grew.

That is, this time, the cause of death —

Subaru: "Disgusting…"

Needless to say, he had long understood.

Subaru was beheaded and killed this time exactly the same way that Sirius was. In other words, to put it bluntly, Subaru went through the same deathmatch as Sirius. Looking back thirty minutes before the first reincarnation, Subaru only saw Lusbel's death in joy and then he died. The previously unknown cause of death had now been identified.

— Sirius could transfer Deaths if anyone died in her vicinity.

Not just brainwashing with emotional changes. Even changes that occurred in the body could be shared. It wasn't merely brainwashing, but bodywashing. Or could it be called soulwashing?

In other words, killing her meant killing all of the people in that square.

Subaru: "What to do?"

Defeating Sirius using brute force could be achieved by calling Reinhard.

Only, that would come at the price of the life of everyone in that square. In that case, the result would be no different from Sirius's intended atrocities.

Summoning Reinhard was nothing more than a concise and easy-to-understand solution at first glance, but it was, in actuality, the wrong answer. In this case, what could he do?

Subaru: "Call Reinhard, and tell him to take her alive…?"

That was unlikely, but perhaps not impossible.

Since Reinhard was capable of killing Sirius, he should also be capable of detaining her. The problem was that if she were caught alive, there would be no way to end her spiritual control.

Subaru had come in contact with Sirius and Lusbel, and had gone mad and died. If that insidious, insane infection were to be repeated, then capturing Sirius would be fruitless.

If she were killed, the everyone would be buried with her.

If she were caught, there was a possibility that she'd spread her contagion.

Just existing made her a threat to others, she was this kind of bomb-like existence. She truly deserved her title of Sin Archbishop.

Subaru: "What else?"

Unable to find a breakthrough, Subaru found himself in a dilemma.

If Reinhard were called, he would surely be able to kill or restrain Sirius. Was that okay, ignoring the possibility of falling into madness?

Subaru: "——"

Time was passing even as Subaru pondered.

Seeing the silent Subaru, those around him all appeared uneasy. Whether to keep them from worrying or to keep them in the dark, Subaru had to offset that impression.

He hurriedly changed the expression on his face and announced,

Subaru: "Ah, right. That is… yes, I suddenly felt like I'd puke up the grilled meat from this morning. My chest was a bit uncomfortable."

Liliana: "Ah, I see, I see. I, too, often feel nauseous, which is accompanied by a lot of gas…"

Subaru: "Stop right there. No matter how you act, you're still a girl."

Subaru interrupted Liliana's jokes with a smile and turned towards Emilia. Seeing that, Emilia lowered her gaze.

Emilia: "I'll believe Subaru since he says so, but... this is a special case, okay?"

Subaru: "Mm, thanks… then, I'll go buy desserts, as Liliana suggested. Emilia-tan, please continue to enjoy the song."

Thanks to Emilia's kindness, Subaru was able to make an announcement after his wavering. Then, holding Beatrice's hand again,"

Subaru: "Beako. Come shopping with me. Let's take a walk and banter like we always do."

Beatrice: "What are you suddenly — Mm. I understand, in fact."

Beatrice cast aside her usual attitude when she saw Subaru's face. To put it more appropriately, she accepted his offer after noticing his pleading expression.

Subaru took a confused Beatrice’s hand and ran from the park for the fourth time.

This time, rather than leaving Beatrice behind, he’d bring his reliable partner with him. Even though he had yet to reach any kind of breakthrough.

Priscilla: “—Hmm.”

— Staring at the retreating figures of Subaru and Beatrice, the red-clad woman watched the duo with a thoughtful expression.

Arc 5 - Chapter 23, "Disrupted Situation"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-23-disrupted-situation/

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All rights belong to Tappei Nagatsuki, the original author of the Re:Zero series. This is an English translation of the free web novel which is available at:

http://ncode.syosetu.com/N2267BE/

This is not a professional translation. Some mistakes, both grammatical and logical, are inevitable. Also, be advised that translators have a predisposition for personal preference and the names and terminology may differ at times from what was used in the anime or is used in the fandom at large. Think of these documents as an extremely
detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

- Credit to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

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Beatrice: “So? Tell me what happened, in fact.”

Having left the park, Beatrice determined that they’d left Emilia’s line of sight, and slowed her steps. Although she’d slowed to talk, Subaru grabbed her arm and led her forward.

Beatrice: “Subaru?”

Subaru: “Sorry. We have to talk where no one else is around. There are many things that I want to discuss thoroughly, but we don’t have enough time. —In fact, we have less than 15 minutes.”

Beatrice: “... I understand, I suppose. Explain while we walk, in fact.”

Beatrice marched along obediently as Subaru turn his face away, trying to hide his anxiety.

The presence of his understanding partner lightened Subaru’s heart, and he carefully sorted through the thoughts swimming in his mind as he tried to relay them to Beatrice.

Subaru: “The witch cult will attack the square that we’re heading to, and we have to stop their

wickedness.”

Beatrice: “Witch Cult… hk”

Beatrice’s breath caught, and she urged Subaru to continue.

What troubled him were the rules and penalties for giving out information learned through Return by Death. Even if he’d been able to safely relay tidbits to Larkins, there was no certainty that he could do so with Beatrice. That was the nature of the devil of shadows who bound him.

The handicap that prevented Return by Death from showing giving out information only judged the punishment after that had already happened.

If that weren’t the case, Emilia’s heart wouldn’t have been crushed when she’d learned the secret. This was the only explanation he could think of.

So Subaru paid careful attention to what he told Beatrice.

Those devil’s hands, when reaching for Subaru, were terrifying but not unbearable. However, if they reached Emilia or Beatrice, Subaru would be crippled by his guilt.

It could be forgiving to Subaru, but it was merciless to others.

Beatrice: “As usual, you can’t say anything, I suppose?”

Subaru: “…sorry. I’m so unreasonable.”

Beatrice: “Fine, in fact. I’ll believe it without any basis, I suppose. They’re Subaru’s words, so Betty will believe them, in fact.”

Beatrice took the useless Subaru’s hand with her own.

The warmth in the palm of her hand gave him the strength to speak his next words.

Sirius, Wrath, could connect senses and brainwash souls, and, taking into account the difficulty of communication, Beatrice’s perception of danger would be skewed.

Subaru: “First of all, the Sin Archbishop of the Witch Cult who will appear is Wrath, who is, uh... a pervert.”

Beatrice: “If that’s the information that needs to be conveyed then Betty thinks that Subaru is having bad thoughts, I suppose.”

Subaru: “Anyway, there’s something very important that we’ll have to deal with. Her abilities… she can control emotions, or is it sharing senses between people?”

Beatrice: “Controlling emotions and sharing senses?”

Beatrice lifted her head.

She was unable to concretely picture it. Of course, Subaru also could not clearly understand the effect of that power.

Subaru: “Explaining is a little difficult… if Wrath is overjoyed, then no matter how angry I am, I’ll also feel happy.”

Beatrice: “... I don’t really underhand how that’s a threat, in fact.”

Subaru: “Recognizing danger is impossible. No matter how dangerous the situation is, there’s no fear. You’ll accept it with delight and won’t be able to correctly grasp the situation, understand?”

A crying, pleading child who didn’t want to die had been cheered for by the masses.

They found joy in everything in front of this. This was comparable to delight at being stabbed with a knife, up until your life was ended by that blade.

Beatrice: “The sharing of emotions, I understand, I suppose. What about sharing senses, in fact?”

Subaru: “That’s not all. When someone else feels pain, I’ll feel it too. If the Sin Archbishop’s head is cut off then mine will come flying off as well... it’s overwhelming, isn’t it.”

As he explained further, his frustration at the hopeless situation began to surface again.

This explanation was rather straightforward; if she died, so would he. He’d been able to escape through Return by Death, but every who’d suffered before had no way of overriding that at all.

Subaru: “If she’s alive, then there’s a possibility you’ll go crazy just by being nearby. If she’s dead then we’ll all die too. She’s really the worst kind of enemy, troublesome alive or dead.”

On his second death, Subaru had been swallowed by fear and driven mad. The origin of that fear had been Lusbel, who desperately sought help.

On that occasion, he’d continually felt Lusbel’s madness as well. Their spirits had weakened, driving them into that state.

It was hard to say “I should have been better”. It was also hard to imagine that Lusbel, who he had spoken to earlier, would resist such overwhelming terror.

But something other than just fear should have killed Subaru during his second death.

Finding a strategy that could defeat Sirius would be difficult without the knowledge of what that something was.

“____”

Subaru didn’t continue to speak, but he still kept a grip on Beatrice’s hand.

Obviously, he’d taken Beatrice, but he still hadn’t found a solution. As such, Beatrice would probably be entangled in a battle with no real hope of victory.

The easiest thing to do would be to have Reinhard take Sirius alive. Subaru considered just summoning Reinhard like last time and telling him to capture Sirius.

He’d simply tell Reinhard what to do before he engaged in battle.

Before the sudden attack on the square, he’d talk to Larkins again, and Reinhard would be called to deal with the crisis. Reinhard wouldn’t attack directly without asking for details. Even explaining the need for an emergency call, there would be at least a few minutes until Sirius would make a move.

Subaru: “I’m an idiot. No, I’m a moron. If Reinhard’s called then Sirius is going to react immediately. There won’t be time to explain, just like last time.”

Subaru needed to tell Reinhard before he started fighting Sirius.

Could he do it? Subaru had no confidence that he’d be able to express his thoughts in time. In the last loop, although he’d wanted to tell Reinhard to capture her, his mouth had disobeyed him and joined the crowd in yelling “kill her”. This was an undeniable precedent.

Beatrice: “Subaru. There’s still more bad news, in fact.”

Subaru: “…Seriously? I don’t want to hear more bad news.”

Beatrice: “I understand, I suppose. But, I have to tell you... Betty would be useless in a battlefield with Reinhard, in fact. I’d just be a cute little girl, I suppose.”

Subaru: “Huh?”

Beatrice spoke suddenly, her eyes downcast.

Beatrice: “Because of his physiology, Reinhard acts as a beacon for mana. The surrounding mana in the atmosphere will follow him blindly, causing damage to the environment, which becomes a burden to him. Spirits and magic users will be unable to use mana, and I won’t be able to do anything.”

Subaru: “What... the... That there should be such a thing...”

Even as he said so, Subaru recalled the circumstances of his arrival.

On the first day Subaru had been summoned to this world, Reinhard and Elsa had fought a battle over Emilia’s Royal Election emblem.

Subaru recalled how Emilia had mentioned how magic became ineffective as Reinhard had revealed his true ability.

Beatrice: “If Reinhard can solve the problem, then it wouldn’t matter if Betty can’t do anything, in fact. But, if just Reinhard isn’t enough…”

Subaru: “Beako won’t have the option of being useful.”

That fantasy was also killed.

Just his presence would cause magic to lose all function. Calling Reinhard would now be counterproductive.

— Awful, awful, awful, awful, awful, awful, what a disaster. Subaru could no longer see any light.

Was it right or wrong to call Reinhard? What about bringing Beatrice?

Ignoring Sirius and trying to save people in the square. In that case, Sirius would only find another place to do the same thing. There was no point.

As he contemplated, anxiety began to burn through Subaru’s mind.

Subaru expended as much effort as he possibly could in search of a solution, but could find none. Even so, time was ticking on mercilessly.

Beatrice: “...Subaru, we’re at the square, in fact.”

Subaru: “—hk”

Hearing her, Subaru suddenly looked up and saw the square.

The two had arrived at their destination, which would soon be marked by tragedy. No solution had been found yet. Their remaining time just vanished little by little. The white clocktower. The crowded square.

There were less than ten minutes before the tragedy would take place. How to to solve it correctly. What to do?

Beatrice: “Subaru, I might have come up a solution, in fact.”

As Subaru’s face was taut with tension, Beatrice spoke up. Subaru’s blanking mind was startled by her sweet voice.

Subaru: “Came up with a solution!?”

Beatrice: “I might be wrong, but Subaru’s description of Wrath’s abilities sounds familiar… I’m thinking of a higher level magic called Nect that has a similar effect.”

Subaru: “Nect…!”

Nect — It was a form of magic that Subaru had experienced in the past. With Nect, magic users could share the awareness and feelings of others. Indeed, it seemed similar to Sirius’s authority.

While wondering why he hadn’t noticed at first, Subaru thought out loud.

Subaru: “So is there any counter for Nect?”

Beatrice: “…usually, countering Nect is unnecessary, I suppose. It is intended to unite comrades and express feelings, in fact. Using Nect as a weapon seems strange, I suppose.”

Beatrice gave her unhappy reply to the anxious Subaru.

Subaru had once reluctantly shared his vision with Julius using Nect, in order to defeat Petelgeuse by making his Unseen Hands visible.

Nect’s ability was used for cooperation between allies.

It was absolutely not the kind of magic that should be used to take hostages.

Beatrice: “Normally, there is a condition for Nect that requires contact through mana circulation, in fact. The Archbishop’s authority probably has the power to circumvent such a condition, I suppose.”

Subaru: “So her authority can forcibly achieve it. More than that…”

Beatrice: “How to counter it, I suppose. — Shamak is the most obvious answer, in fact.”

Subaru: “Shamak-san has arrived! That’s magnificent!”

Subaru perked up at Beatrice’s proposal.

Shamak was an incredibly familiar magic. In painful, hard, dangerous times, in the hopeless of situations, Shamak had always faced adversaries alongside Subaru.

Prior to contracting Beatrice, Subaru’s main sources of strength were Rem, Patrasche, and Shamak.

And even after the destruction of the his mana gate, through his contract with Beatrice, Shamak was still helping Subaru.

Subaru: “I see, Shamak, huh... If it’s Shamak then surely everything is somehow...”

Beatrice: “Subaru seems to have an unusual level of trust for Shamak, I suppose. It’s the most basic of Yin magic and it’s really not that useful, I suppose.”

Subaru: “Even Beako isn’t allowed to badmouth Shamak like that…!”

Beatrice: “What’s made Subaru defend Shamak to this extent, in fact?”

Beatrice listened to the incomprehensible ramblings with a sigh, then glanced around carefully while holding a finger up.

Beatrice: “Shamak is rooted in altering consciousness — it’s a magic that forcibly breaks the mind’s contact with surroundings, I suppose. Subaru uses it strangely, in fact, but Betty doesn’t have any problem with it at all.”

Subaru: “In other words…?”

Beatrice: “When that magic is cast on the crowd, everyone’s minds will be blinded with Shamak, and the Sin Archbishop shouldn’t be a problem, in fact. Though I’m worried about whether or not I can control it from affecting Subaru, I suppose.”

Beatrice spoke with confidence and Subaru clenched his hands with excitement at this new glimmer of hope.

Subaru: “Alright, good. I’ll be depending on your magic. Then... what’s next?”

Beatrice: “Aside from Reinhard, who can defeat the Sin Archbishop, in fact?”

Subaru: “…...”

If they called Reinhard then Beatrice wouldn’t be able to use her Shamak strategy. Therefore, he needed to be excluded from their calculations.

However, on this occasion, Reinhard was perhaps the only one who could defeat Sirius.

Beatrice: "Speaking of which, since Betty needs to maintain Shamak, Betty won’t be able to fight, in fact.”

Subaru: “That’s right. Then... we’re back at square one.”

Without Beatrice’s backing, Subaru would almost certainly be unable to defeat Wrath. Without his trump card, just his whip alone wouldn’t allow him to escape unscathed.

Subaru: “At that time, it seemed like there were other places to fight than the square... Subaru thought of the first time at the square.

Upon detecting a threatening presence in the tower, several people reacted immediately. A beastman, a blindfolded woman, a serious looking businessman, and Larkins.

Excluding Larkins, how would the remaining three fare? Adding Subaru to their number would total four, perhaps meaning that there was yet a way out.

Subaru: “What a stupid train of thought, asking strangers to trust me. I don’t think there’s anything I haven’t thought of now…”

???: “— In that case, should I play a part since I know of your strength?”

Subaru: “—— !?”

A sudden voice from behind pierced into his hopeless thoughts.

At that all too familiar voice, Subaru and Beatrice looked back in surprise. Standing behind the two with their hands on their hips,

Subaru: “E-Emilia-tan? Why are you here...”

Emilia: “Subaru seemed to be acting strange, so I was worried that something bad was happening. It looks like I was excluded, that’s one of Subaru’s bad traits.”

Having been criticized, Subaru pressed his mouth shut.

Astonished at Emilia’s sudden appearance, he couldn’t respond. Beatrice took his place and looked up at Emilia.

Beatrice: “You should have stayed in the park, in fact. Why did you come, I suppose?”

Emilia: “…I couldn’t just wait. Subaru told me to stay, but Priscilla told me otherwise.”

Subaru: “That woman in red?”

Emilia: “She said that if I didn’t follow you, I’d certainly regret it. When I caught up and saw that nothing had happened, I thought about leaving quietly, but you two seemed to be discussing something serious.”

Emilia's decision was influenced and the source of that evil comes to mind.

Subaru gritted his teeth, mentally cursing Priscilla and her arrogant, disruptive meddling. That malicious whimsy had perfectly arranged the situation Subaru wanted to avoid the most.

Subaru: “Emilia-tan, I’m happy. I’m glad, so, from now on...”

Emilia: “The Witch Cult will appear? I heard you... even if Subaru tells me to go back, I won’t. This concerns me, too.”

Subaru: “Emilia!”

There was little basis for his line of thought.

He spoke sharply, desperate to drive Emilia away. She couldn't meet the Witch Cult.

Subaru couldn't quite articulate a reason, but it wasn't anything like stubborn protectiveness. He instinctively understood that she just couldn't.

Emilia absolutely couldn't meet the Witch Cult. To Emilia, that cult was a poison to be avoided. Although that held true for the majority of people born in this world, Emilia was a special case.

Subaru: "We'll manage something. Emilia doesn't need to be involved. This has nothing to do with you."

Emilia: "Even so, what if Subaru is hurt because I'm not there? I'd never let that happen. If Subaru fights, I'll fight by his side. If Subaru wants to protect something, I'll do my best to help. And since Subaru will certainly protect me…"

Subaru: "——"

Emilia: "I also want to protect Subaru. I promised I wouldn't cry like that anymore."

Emilia spoke with an unyielding heart.

In order to keep her away from danger, Subaru had to summon every drop of his courage, face adversity with a heart of steel.

However, Subaru, right now, was afraid. He was terrified of fighting. Three times.

Three times Subaru had lost to Sirius, and three times he'd lost his life.

No matter how experienced he was with death, he'd still died so much, in such a short span of time.

Death was horrible, unacceptable, and no matter how much he experienced it, he couldn't grow used to it.

Having his life taken was completely unreasonable. That denied his self, trampled on his existence, insulted his soul. It was something that stole from him.

Although he tried to cover everything up, Subaru couldn't brush off everything that affected him.

Even while stubbornly maintaining that he had people he wanted to protect, he could never cast off the weak heart that was afraid to die.

Natsuki Subaru, no matter what, hadn't been able to overcome that weakness.

Beatrice: "…Subaru. You should give up, in fact."

Subaru: "Beatrice…"

Beatrice: “Emilia is stubborn, I suppose. She won’t change her mind, in fact. Betty also understands Emilia's feelings, I suppose. Betty wants to protect Subaru the same way… Betty isn’t able to deny her that, in fact.”

Beatrice is key to the strategy and also the decision-making party. If she waves a white flag, then Subaru won’t be unable to resist.

Emilia looks to Subaru sincerely, and Beatrice adorably. Under their gaze, Subaru finally gave in.

Subaru: “…the cultists will target you. If that happens, think of yourself as a priority.”

Emilia: “Mm, I understand. Even if I’m caught, Subaru will definitely save me. I believe in you and I’ll do my best.”

Subaru: “Don’t jinx it… so, how much of our conversation did you hear?”

Having been accepted by Subaru, Emilia gave a relaxed smile.

She touched her fingers to her lips.

Emilia: “I heard the gist of it. The Witch Cult is going to wreak havoc with Nect, which Beatrice wants to counteract with Shamak. During that, I have to work hard to scold that villain.”

Subaru: “That’s a childlike way of understanding it, but it works. Emilia, can I depend on you?”

Emilia: “Leave it to me. I’m plenty strong.”

Emilia makes a guts pose with her hands. That lovely action showed a certain lack of tension, but she seemed to have understood. Subaru felt restless and useless about relying on Emilia.

Moreover, the timing of Beatrice’s magic was difficult for him to get a grasp on, which made it another element of anxiety. But,

Subaru: “Emilia-tan and Beako are both here, so I can’t fail…!” Instead of feeling anxious, he used that to fuel his determination.

Subaru: “Besides, it’s almost time.”

Between Beatrice’s proposal, and Emilia’s joining, more than half of their remaining time had gone by. They’d try their best when it came to Sirius.

If they could, avoiding Lusbel’s location and knocking the tower down would be preferable.

Subaru: “Emilia-tan. Soon a strange person will appear on the tower. Attack then with a big shot. Having her fall from the tower would be ideal. Afterward, Beako will prepare her spell, so when the signal comes we’ll start fighting.”

Emilia: “Mm, I understand. Although I do not know if things will go that smoothly, but I’ll try.” Emilia’s expression stiffens and both Subaru and Beatrice nod at each other. The plan is set.

Subaru: “—She’s here!”

A figure could be seen moving about in the clock tower’s window.

A body wrapped in a black coat, a head wrapped in bandages. The ends of hers chain, hanging from her hands, struck the ground with rattling sounds as she looked down at the square.

The people there had yet to notice that anomalous presence.

Sirius stood on her stage, shaking her body and opening her arms as though admiring the people who were unprepared for the imminent threat.

And then she began to clap — the people who heard the sound noticed her, and her speech began.

Subaru: “——”

Swallowing, Subaru witnessed the moment.

With imposing gestures, Sirius raised her chest to speak fiercely—

Emilia: “Ul Huma!”

A huge icicle appeared in front of the tower, hanging in the air near Sirius.

The thick icicle, which was around the size of five people, struck the tower with a violent crash. An icicle speared through the front of the tower, and the walls split apart. Subaru’s jaw dropped in amazement.

Subaru: “E-Emilia-tan?”

Emilia: “Subaru said we needed to strike first, so I did… did I mess up?”

Subaru: “No, GJ. I just didn’t expect you to attack before her introduction.”

Subaru hadn’t motioned for her to act yet, and was surprised that Emilia had spotted the threat at a glance.

Since Sirius had been equally unprepared. Maybe the blow had even taken her out. Moreover, the panicked crowd were all fine, so perhaps Sirius had indeed been incapacitated.

That was entirely from Emilia’s great contribution.

Subaru: “Beako, what do you think?”

Beatrice: “First of all, think of a way to address the misunderstanding people around us, in fact.”

As Beatrice’s surprise turned to pride, Subaru wanted to ask whether or not they’d gotten Sirius.

Emilia surveyed the destruction of the tower while Subaru slowly turned to face the uneasy crowd. The beastman and the blindfolded woman were there — how unfortunate, they were people that Subaru had wanted to ally with.

Subaru: “Uh, well, what do I do now? Explain that we didn’t mean any harm?”

Emilia: “—Mm. You better do that, Subaru.”

While Subaru scratched his head, pondering the explanation, Emilia suddenly grabbed his shoulders, placing herself in front of the crowd.

In that moment, a crack sounded through the air, and a blue sword of ice appeared in Emilia’s hands. She assumed a battle ready posture, facing down the crowd.

Subaru: “Emilia-tan? You don’t have to go that far…”

Emilia: “It’s not that. Look closely, Subaru. There’s no sign of sanity.”

Subaru: “—Eh?”

Scared by Emilia’s suddenly firm voice, Subaru surveyed the crowd around them, and couldn’t help but exclaim. Like Emilia had said, their eyes held no trace of cognizance.

The people around them were red from neck up, the blood vessels in their faces on the verge of bursting, bloodshot eyes glaring at Subaru’s group.

Their gazes were filled with only fury.

Subaru: “Beako! What about Shamak!?”

Beatrice: “… It failed, I suppose.”

Subaru: “What?”

Beatrice: “This magic is nothing like Nect… no, it’s evil, in fact. This is nothing like magic, I suppose. A curse... it is magic, in fact!”

Beatrice raised her voice in anger, and Subaru could only answer with a frown.

He wasn’t sure of the specifics, but Beatrice’s Shamak hadn’t worked. He understood the issue but had no solution.

Then, the masses were completely engulfed by madness.

Crowd: “It stinks. It stinks. It stinks. It stinks. It stinks. It stinks. stinks, stinks.”

It was a terrible, viscous, sound that was cursing the world.

“____”

With the sound of a detonation, the clock tower collapsed.

The remainder of the tower cracked apart, decimating the rest of it, and the icicles embedded in the tower shattered to pieces. Shimmering, the ice crystallized in the sun, accompanied by the faint sound of footsteps.

The footsteps of an abomination.

She wasn’t unhurt. Half of the bandages wrapped around her face were stained with blood, which also dripped from her left arm and her chain.

Emilia's premeditated attack had no doubt played an effect. Only, it had also caused something undesirable.

Sirius: “Disgusting, the stench of that woman, filthy and detestable, the stench of the one who stole my husband from me, the stench of maggots, endless filth. Hate, I hate it so much, burning it to cinders isn’t enough.”

Subaru: “...what are you saying?”

Sirius: “And that other woman, she’s obviously not that person, but she has such a similar stench, how shameless, the stench of rotting insects, ah, ah, ah ah aaAAAAAAH! How hateful! How rancid! How vile!”

The anomalous woman clutched her bleeding head with a harsh cry. Spittle flew from her mouth as she ruthlessly stomped her feet. Subaru knew this odd behavior. It was wild as ever, but it’s direction was obviously different.

Sirius: “My! Are you testing the love for my husband, spirit?! Were you not satisfied with taking my husband from me, YOU HALF HALF-WITCH BITCH!!?”

Gritting her teeth, she issued a wrathful cry as she leapt forward.

Sirius, who’d fallen from the tower, folded her arms in front of her face, and red flames flared into life. They sprayed from both arms, and a line of flame had formed as she landed in the square.

Exercising her limbs, armed with her flame, the madwoman raised her head.

Emilia held her sword of ice ready as she stood in front of Subaru and Beatrice, guarding them. Swinging her gaze back and forth, Sirius yelled with a furious voice.

Sirius: “I! Am the witch cult’s sin archbishop of Wrath!!”

Red flames gushing forth, she bathed the crowd in heat as she raised her arms.

In a frenzied crisis completely different from the situation Subaru had expected, the madwoman introduced herself.

Sirius: “— Sirius Romanee-Conti!! Damn half-elf and spirit, I’ll scorch your corpses and scatter your ashes at my husband’s tomb!!”

Arc 5 - Chapter 24, "Resolution of Ice and Fire"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-24-resolution-of-ice-and-fire/

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Sirius hadn’t registered Subaru’s presence.

She merely glared with passionate hatred at the two standing in front of Subaru — that is, Emilia and Beatrice.

Subaru: “What’s up with her? She’s not the same as before…”

Subaru could not hide his wavering confusion at Sirius’s rage.

In the short span of time since he’d encountered her, Subaru had met a relatively normal Sirius three times. Among those encounters, although Sirius hadn’t followed any expectations common sense would bring, she was not someone irrational who was overrun by rage.

In fact, she had always been attempting to justify her claims to force on others. So, the Sirius in front of them was completely foreign.

She’d lost her rationality and fallen prey to rage. Putting it simply, she now seemed a perfect fit for her

title of Wrath.

Sirius: “I could keep burning and burning you, but it wouldn’t be enough… like maggots, like flies. Haha, how much do you hate me!? Even in my saddest days, am I not allowed the freedom of mourning?”

Emilia: “… I don’t know what you’re talking about?”

Sirius: “Ah, ha!?”

Emilia responded fearlessly to Sirius’s enraged allegations, even at Sirius’s fierce reactions. She pointed the tip of her sword of ice at the crowd behind Sirius.

Emilia: “If you feel angry at me, I’ll hear you out. After all, the sudden provocation came from us, so of course you’d be angry. However, this has nothing to do with the other people here. Please liberate them.”

Sirius: “That’s the wrong attitude! If you want to let everyone go, do it right! Of course I’ll be angry? Then show me the right attitude! Apologize, repent, cry and beg for forgiveness, then let me shoot flames into your ass and scorch your internal organs away!”

Emilia: “Having my organs burned would be troublesome. —So, let’s settle this simply.”

Sirius tilted her head upon hearing Emilia’s low voice.

Emilia immediately twisted her upper body slightly and darted forward. Her pale wrists wielded her sword of ice as if it were weightless.

The sun glistened off of the sharpened tip of the sword as she drove it toward Sirius’s shoulder.

Subaru: “Emilia-tan?”

Sirius: “Gah!”

Subaru’s exclamation overlapped with Sirius’s snarl.

Facing that swinging, Sirius immediately lifted her left wrist, bringing flames to the swords. However,

Sirius: “Damn half-witch!”

Emilia: “Please don’t say that anymore. It’ll make people feel dirty.”

Emilia's sword, although bathed in Sirius’s flame, didn’t vaporize into air.

The silver tip of the sword won against the heat, and met Sirius’s burning left wrist — only, Sirius’s chain was also wrapped around it.

With a sharp ring, the sword and chain collided with a brilliant flash of mana. After only a moment of

contest, Emilia's sword broke with a crisp snap.

Sirius: “You, damn…!”

With a look of glee, Sirius used her wrist to knock Emilia back. If the flaming chain made contact, she would be in trouble.

Emilia’s beautiful face was about to be deformed, but, in that moment,

Emilia: “Hahh!”

Sirius’s wrist bounced back up; Emilia’s sword of ice had deflected her.

Sirius: “Ah ah aaaah! Ah ah ah ah ah! Just die already!”

Sirius’s cries of wrath pierced the air as she swung both arms over her head. The center of the area she was targeting was occupied by Emilia.

Emilia’s ice blade extended at the hilt, changing shape into a hammer. Sirius met its blow with both hands, retreating, only to be pursued by Emilia.

Emilia: “Haah! Hahh! Yah!”

Sirius: “Disgusting! Half-witch! Maggot! Fly! Insect! Loathsome bug!”

Through use of centrifugal force and control over her body, Emilia demonstrated an unimaginable show of combat.

Against the ice hammer, the flame wielding Sirius had been reduced to defense. Looking at Emilia's one-sided attack, Subaru, as an observer, judged that she would triumph. Even so,

Subaru: “This isn’t the time to be in a trance! No, Emilia!”

Beatrice: “Subaru, you can’t be distracted right now, in fact.”

If Emilia killed Sirius, the last Death would certainly repeat itself.

Although Subaru had foreseen this crisis, Beatrice quickly scolded him. Subaru, wondering what had happened, followed Beatrice’s gaze.

Crowd: “—Dirty insect.”

Subaru: “—Crap.”

The members of the crowd behind Sirius were all flushed with anger.

The crowd looked at Subaru and Beatrice and made cursing gestures reminiscent of Sirius- in fact, they were sharing her Wrath.

That wave of anger focused on Subaru.

Subaru: “It's not just sharing feelings, but also doing things like brainwashing a crowd into acting on her will.”

Beatrice: “Identifying the situation is good, I suppose. If a solution doesn’t exist, then all we can do is escape, in fact!”

As Subaru groaned, considering his troubles, Beatrice immediately jumped onto his back. The crowd advanced toward Subaru.

Subaru: “Emilia, help stall for us!”

Emilia: “I won’t be too messy about it!”

Receiving her strong reply, Subaru broke into a sprint, fleeing from the crowd. Fortunately, the pace of the masses who had lost their rationality was far from normal.

They chased Subaru with hands outstretched, empty wrath in their gazes, looking not unlike zombies. The main different was that rather than wanting to eat Subaru, they wanted to tear him apart with their hands.

Subaru: “If we keep stalling like this, someone could come…”

Beatrice: “Even if someone comes, without figuring out the conditions of victory, it would be meaningless, in fact. Even if Reinhard comes, would he be able to solve this, I suppose?”

Subaru: “In short, our worries won’t end even if he comes…”

In any case, the one who could summon Reinhard, Larkins, was presently part of the crowd threatening Subaru. He was one of the people pushing forward, trying to be the first to reach Subaru.

Subaru was uncertain of what action to take before solving Sirius’s emotional link.

Subaru: “So we have to think of something!”

Crowd: “Dirty insects!”

A man leapt at Subaru, who ducked his head and threw himself past his opponent's arms, before sweeping the man off of his feet and sending his body flying.

The masses showed no consideration to the tumbling man until he knocked them over. Turning from this bowling-like scene, Subaru spoke.

Subaru: “They’re so angry that they aren’t thinking at all.”

Beatrice: “However, that isn’t what I would recommend, in fact. In such an atmosphere, they probably won’t hesitate about killing whatever is near them, I suppose.”

Subaru: “That won’t do!”

He didn’t want any sacrifices.

The reason why Subaru fought so hard for so many was precisely this. Of course, Subaru understood the scope of his wish.

There were many things he wanted to protect. However, there was a limit to how much he could reach.

Of course. Subaru wasn’t an omnipotent being.

Subaru: “However, I’m the one who chooses that limit!”

Beatrice: “That's Betty's Subaru, in fact!”

Hearing the greatest possible support from his back, Subaru drew his whip.

I’ll save as many lives as I can. So please forgive me for any injuries — that was Subaru’s train of thought. Aiming at the feet of the crowd, his whip launched through the air.

With the crack of a small thunderbolt, the whip hit the stone pavement.

Although it wasn’t lethal, it was still a weapon, and, when wielded mercilessly, could produce the an incapacitating degree of power.

If maybe, after witnessing that power, the mass of people be cowed into retreating,

Subaru: “It won’t go that smoothly.”

Then, there was no other way.

Subaru swept his whip through the crowd, this time targeting the leading figure. A medium stature, light blue hair, sharp eyes — wasn’t that Larkins?

Attacking people who he knew would make Subaru feel sad.

Subaru: “Although this aches my heart, I can’t let myself be torn apart either. Sorry, Chin!”

Larkins: “I’m not Chin!?”

Subaru lashed his whip at Larkins’s feet and yanked upward. His body spun in a half circle, and he

caught the people surrounding him as he fell.

The fallen members of the crowd blocked its advance. In order to reach Subaru, they needed to find another route.

Subaru: “Right, they can’t think… in that case, as long as I—”

Just as he was about to say “stall long enough”, Subaru felt a chill rise on his back.

To Subaru, that chill was like the imposing intimacy of his gloomy lover. Even if he were reluctant to meet her, she gave Subaru the help he needed most. They had that kind of complex relationship.

— That was the breath of Death.

Subaru: “Ah!”

Beastman: “You maggot!”

A large blade whistled toward Subaru, accompanied by a shrill wind.

The beastman had leapt from the crowd, aiming at Subaru’s neck. Although he had prominent pointed canine ears, his nose and mouth seemed to resemble the cunning charm of a fox.

The half-fox, using his white tail as a brace, was unaffected by Subaru’s tricks as he took another heavy swing.

Subaru: “Beako!”

Beatrice: “Shamak!”

Beastman: “——!?”

In a serious confrontation, Subaru could be cut down in only five seconds.

In a flash, Subaru had determined the difference in their power, and called Beatrice’s name. She immediately realized Subaru’s intention and cast a Shamak which enveloped the beastman’s face.

His slender body and large sword were also engulfed by the dark fog, stripping his combat effectiveness away.

Subaru: “Does that cut off the link with the others?”

Beatrice: “There’s nothing to that effect, I suppose. Even take the fighting, the link itself did not cut off, in fact! Most likely, that compulsion will stop only taking effect after that freak dies, I suppose!”

Subaru: “What do we do!?”

Beatrice: “Betty in desperately thinking, in fact!” Solving that mystery was a task best left up to Beatrice.

The only thing that Subaru could do was to give Beatrice ample time to survey and think, and to keep the brainwashed masses from disturbing her.

Subaru: “And on Emilia-tan’s side—?”

Subaru turned his gaze to Emilia, who was still busy confronting Sirius.

During this year, Emilia had dedicated her time both to learning about politics and combat. Her combat effectiveness was much higher than Subaru’s.

Even so, Subaru worried about Emilia, not because he thought he was better, but because Subaru was a man and Emilia was a woman, nothing more.

Most people would probably dismiss that worry as meaningless.

Emilia: “Hahh! Yah! Hah!”

Emilia was shouting slightly listless battle cries, but Sirius was ignoring all of them.

Emilia spun around, her sword slashing toward Sirius’s hand, who whipped her burning chain through the air and knocked the blade away while cursing angrily.

With a crash, ice fragmented into powder and dispersed, but Emilia had already formed a spear, which stuck upward with, its defensive power sending Sirius flying away.

She was making use of her huge store of mana, refining the weapons of ice for the purpose of carrying out destruction.

Subaru had named this combat technique Arts: Ice Blade, in honor of its illusory beauty which reminded him of an ice fairy from tales of fantasy.

The wreckage of smashed ice illustrated the intensity of the fierce battle between Emilia and Sirius. Fighting with fire and ice, the fiery heated battle between the two warriors wielding opposing arms continued to unfold on the frosty stage.

Emilia: “Haah!”

Emilia spun around, twirling her spear at Sirius, knocking her back. She immediately followed up with another blow, lashing out with the tip of the spear. Sirius nimbly twisted her body in mid air, avoiding her strike and capturing the spear in her grip.

Sirius: “Blazing! Boiling! Burning! My heart is trembling! Ah ah aaaaAAAAAH! This is Wrath!

Emilia: “Ah!?”

As if echoing her call, the intense heat redoubled its efforts.

Emilia's spear was consumed by the blaze as she involuntarily released it, leaving no remains.

Sirius: “Your dirty amethyst eyes, your dirty bell-like voice, your dirty silky silver hair, your dirty fair skin, your dirty cute face! Those all exist purely to seduce men! Ah, such lust! You bitch, you dirty whore! Just die! You just want to tempt men? You want to take that person from me? You filthy slut! You disgusting half-witch!”

As a wave of heat passed over Emilia’s squinted eyes, she once again created a blade of ice. This time, the weapon was a two pronged spear, which held the flames away from her.

With an intense grinding sound, the madwoman and Emilia exchanged their gazes.

Emilia: “My eyes, my voice, my silver hair! All of those came from my favorite person, from the most beautiful person in the world! Treating them as though they’re dirty infuriates me!”

Sirius: “Fury!? Did you just say fury!? Don’t kid with me! Fury is mine! It’s the precious thing that I received from that person! This duty and the name are all gifts from that person! To, without authorization, without permission, take that away from me… I won’t allow it! Won't, won't, won't, won't, won't, won't, won't, won't, won't, won't, won't, won't, won't, won't, won't, won't, won’t!”

As her speech came to an end, Sirius’s attitude changed dramatically as she cried out in grief. She caught the spear in her grip and snapped it, and Emilia created another sword.

But had Emilia been affected by Sirius’s cries? Her face, which had previously worn a strong sense of purpose, seemed to have slackened.

Subaru: “—This is bad.”

After catching a glance of the side of Emilia's face, Subaru’s instincts began to scream of bad news.

There was no basis. But Subaru was sure.

Emilia's expression had changed, that is, had adopted the feelings of Sirius.

She was still fighting on, and her movements had not dulled. Even so, that response had indeed happened.

Emilia had fallen prey to Sirius’s power.

However, she hadn’t immediately fallen into the palm of Sirius’s hand.

Emilia, currently in a defensive battle, was still matching Sirius blow for blow. She wasn’t as far gone as the crowd, as was just as lovely as usual.

Then, inspecting the situation,

Subaru: “When Sirius first appeared, why weren’t Emilia, Beako, and I affected by her emotional link?”

Just as Emilia and Beatrice had resisted her power just as Reinhard had. Was there any individual trait, or something similar to that, which they shared? Subaru’s initial assumption had been that Reinhard would be able to resist it just because he was Reinhard.

But if there was in fact a specific reason, then he could start hypothesizing.

Subaru, who had seen Sirius three times, could now resist her like this — that was also something to take into consideration.

If that was the key to a breakthrough —

Subaru: “Bea…”

Beatrice: “Subaru!!”

The moment Subaru had wanted to convey his newfound realization, an anxious cry echoed in his ears.

As Subaru’s eyes widened, something collided with his right side.

Subaru: “Guu—”

His body folded into a K shape from the power of the blow, and Subaru immediately hopped to the left, attempting to lessen its impact. As he coughed up stomach acid, he attempted to check the damage the blow had caused.

The blindfolded woman, moving like a shadow, had suddenly approached him. That defenseless looking woman had delivered a rather piercing blow into Subaru’s side.

Beatrice: “Subaru! Don’t die, I suppose!”

Subaru: “Even I wouldn’t reach a game over from that… but that hit was super effective…!”

Although his ribs ached, Subaru judged that his other bones and internal organs hadn’t been harmed. He judged that it wasn’t too serious. As long as there was no internal bleeding.

Subaru: “This guy and that guy too, why are these enemies so troublesome?”

Beatrice: “Either Subaru looks unreliable just because the enemies are strong, or because he himself is too weak, in fact.”

Subaru: “Really, you…!”

His whip bounced as it chased her feet, and as she turned her attention to below her, Subaru tossed a handful of grit in her face. Although it didn’t affect her blindfolded eyes, it distracted her enough for

Subaru to throw himself at her shoulder.

Subaru: “My lack of fighting strength seems to have come in handy. If the attack had been serious, I probably would have died on the spot.”

Beatrice: “…although I can’t say that that’s something I’d accept eagerly, that works, since we have more trouble coming up, I suppose.”

Beatrice reiterated her annoying remarks about Subaru, who breathed a sigh of relief after defeating the blindfolded woman. He tilted his head in a gesture of “I’m not listening” as Beatrice frowned and gestured with her chin.

She indicated the large waterway connected to the square.

Subaru: “You’re kidding me…”

Subaru moaned as he caught sight of the waterway, where another gathering of enraged people had emerged.

Beatrice: “Betty thinks that they heard the commotion and rushed over to see what’s happening, in fact.”

Subaru: “The entered the scope of her power and were swallowed… are you serious? Is her ability contagious on a wide scale?”

— Panic, fear, madness, would be transmitted between people.

The feelings and feelings shared by Schiller's are precisely the result of the factual reflection of that phenomenon.

Ah, so that was it. The severity of her threat, her poison which was worse than even Petelgeuse’s.

Subaru: “The more you try to flee, the more victims she finds… how can that be stopped!?”

Beatrice: “However, something is off about this entire situation, I suppose.. Subaru knocked over that woman, and I cast Shamak on that man. Try coupling that with how Tonchinkan’s injury didn’t appear on anyone else, in fact.”

Because the situation was pressing, Subaru didn’t correct Beatrice’s mistake of calling Chin “Tonchinkan”. What was more, the details that Beatrice had just pointed out could serve as a basis for speculating on the conditions of Sirius’s emotional link.

Subaru: “…are we going to have to defeat that whole crowd too?”

Beatrice: “If Subaru has the fighting ability to do that, then we can go for it, I suppose. —Betty’s Shamak can also lend a hand in stripping their consciousness away, in fact.”

Although a cruel means, that had indeed been Subaru's initial plan.

He could avoid putting himself through unnecessary worry. Subaru needed to avoid the expansion of such a disastrous situation. Now, to act on Beatrice's proposal—

Emilia: "Ah!"

Subaru: "Emilia!?"

Subaru attention was diverted to Emilia's pained cry.

He turned and saw her lying on the slate ground of the square, with Sirius, who was brandishing her flaming wrists, looking down at her.

Sirius: "Growing! Growing! Love culminates! That quantity is power! There is love for all! Everyone! Human beings love each other, and with that union! They can share thoughts, they can share wishes, and, be it joy or sadness, they can talk to each other and share their feelings! In that case, this is the inevitable result! The half-witch isn't included in the bond of Love and should just disappear like a crushed insect!"

Emilia, who had held the initial advantage, had gradually lost her footing until the two were about even.

As time dragged on, had Sirius's strength increased, or had Emilia's strength decreased? Whatever the case, this was the situation now. Emilia looked at Sirius with regret.

Emilia: "Something's off. What you're saying is right, but… it somehow feels wrong too. Why?"

Sirius: "Because you go against the truth! Because you dirty half-being cannot understand Love as long as you live, you will not know Love when you die! The existence of a half-witch is in and of itself is evil! Even your birth, even the meeting of your father and mother are wrong! The union of trash and insects birthed an unholy dirty combination of the two that needs to end its existence here!"

Emilia: "——hk!"

At the end of that unbearable tirade, Emilia's eyes changed.

Kind and gentle as she was, Emilia couldn't face such harsh words, which demeaned not only her existence, but even her parents' meeting.

Biting her lip, Emilia pushed against the slate ground, leaping to her feet. Her enraged gaze trained on Sirius, a silvery shimmer gathered in her hand.

Emilia: "——"

Her sword slashed through Sirius's coat, splitting it wide open.

Emilia, in her rage, would stop for nothing as she took another swing at Sirius, her sword of ice reaching

the thin body in front of her —

Emilia: “— Eh?”

???: “Mmphm!”

— Subaru saw the chained girl and froze.

A blonde, curly haired girl, bound in the same manner that Lusbel had been, blood pouring from her mouth, sobbed. Her small body was firmly bound to Sirius’s.

Tina — the name flashed through Subaru’s memory.

Sirius: “—The anger in you is scary.”

Subaru who had noticed the girl, and Emilia, who saw the girl's tears, were overtaken by rage. And at that moment, Sirius gave her most ferocious smile yet as a wave of heat blew Emilia’s body away with alarming momentum.

The explosion whistled through the air as Emilia was knocked backwards. She flew across the stone, tumbling until coming to a stop at the very center of the square.

Emilia: “Gah, ugh…”

Emilia moaned as she writhed in pain. Sirius gazed at Emilia as she lifted her burning arms. Then, she clapped her hands.

Sirius: “An insect shouldn’t give me such a sweet passion. It’s incredibly disgusting.”

Emilia: “——”

Sirius: “Well, thank you. I'm sorry.”

With her wrists held over her head, Sirius’s fierce flame roared once again.

Even steel would melt with just a touch of that flame. If it touched her directly, then not even a shadow of Emilia would be left behind. She’d be completely burned from the world.

If he didn’t act right now, he wouldn’t be able to save her. And not saving Emilia was unacceptable. Subaru clearly understood all this, and yet,

Subaru: “Move already, feet!”

Tina: “Mmph!”

Subaru’s feet were trembling with something like fear, leaving him unable to walk.

Subaru's inaction had begun the moment he'd rested eyes on the terrified girl bound to Sirius. Beatrice, on his back, was similarly unable to move.

Maybe feelings could be shared with spirits. But now wasn't the time to ponder that.

Subaru: "Emilia…"

His throat vibrated but he couldn't even call the name of the girl who he loved so deeply. Emilia certainly couldn't have heard him.

Emilia's thoughts as she lay on the stone floor, unable to move, watching the imminent catastrophe unfold before her very eyes.

— Even those would be scorched by an unforgiving fire, leaving them forever a mystery.

A terrifying heat baked the slate ground, and, as the heat wave became the impact, the world was dyed a brilliant gold.

Faced with this fantastical scene, Subaru's knees shook, and he collapsed on the spot.

Beatrice: "Suba... ru…"

Beatrice, still clinging to his back, called to Subaru in a stuttering voice.

Subaru couldn't respond. His line of sight remained fixed on the ground beneath him, as he refused to face reality, swallowed by an overwhelming dread.

Right now, if he looked up, he would lose to fear.

No, the heart he'd long lost to fear would shatter and break.

If he had to see Emilia turn to ash, if he had to see Emilia vanish from the world, then—

Beatrice: "Su-Subaru. Subaru!"

Even so, Beatrice continued desperately calling Subaru's name.

His head was knocked several times, but Subaru could only embrace his horrified and timid heart, shaking his heads slowly.

He couldn't. Even if that madwoman were standing right in front of him, Subaru would—

???: "—I caught up."

However, the moment he heard that sound, Subaru's heart shook off that fear. Rather than fear the sight in front of him, he feared being left in the dark.

Raising his head, he looked to the direction of the sound — the place where Emilia had been incinerated.

There, a man stood.

Smoke rose from the charred rocks, which still crackled with heat. In the midst of that destruction, the man assumed a leisurely pose. There, in his arms—

Subaru: “Emi... lia?”

In the man's arms, there rested a girl who should have disappeared in flame. Although she had passed out from exhaustion, she was physically unhurt.

Emilia had lost her consciousness from the accumulation of her wounds, exhaustion, and fear, but she was peacefully resting, safe and sound.

Subaru: “You…”

The character who had suddenly appeared and saved Emilia's life.

His horrified heart was denying him a celebration of Emilia’s safety, Subaru involuntarily voiced his wavering thoughts with a similarly trembling voice.

The man who heard and turned around. Then, he spoke.

???: “I came to meet her, so it's great that I was able to catch up.”

Subaru: “To… meet? What’s that supposed to…”

???: “Isn’t it a matter of course that I come to meet a woman who I intend to take as a my bride?”

At that abrupt utterance, Subaru fell speechless.

At Subaru’s stiff lack of breath, the man, a white-haired youth, laughed lightly.

Regulus: “I am the Witch Cult’s Sin Archbishop of Greed. —Regulus Corneas.”

It was not intended to boast, but rather speak for granted facts.

Regulus: “As promised — I’m here to take her as my 79th wife.”

Arc 5 - Chapter 25, "Leo's Theatre"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-25-leos-theatre/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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An enigmatic, white-haired youth suddenly entered the barren, chaotic battlefield that had been ripped asunder by ice and fire.

His white hair was neither too long nor too short, without any distinct style. His figure was also neither too muscular nor too slim; he had a medium build which gave the impression that he was on the verge of floating away and being swallowed up by the masses.

But,

Subaru: “Archbishop… of Greed…?!”

The mediocre young man’s self-introduction left quite an impact on Subaru. As long as Subaru’s ears hadn’t committed a fatal mistake, then that young man was in fact a Sin Archbishop of the Witch Cult.

That statement certainly wasn’t a lie.

If that wasn’t the case, then how else could he have been unscathed from Sirius’s final attack?

—Such an anomaly was impossible.

Regulus: “Even so, it’s great that I caught up. After all, my bride nearly turned to ash. Even I, who rarely express any particular expectations, do hope that there’s someone who can help maintain my bride's humanity. More than that being a matter of merit, I think that it’s a matter of course. After all, I cannot commit a perversion of sexuality like devoting my love to ashes.”

Like this, bringing with him a fear that refused to dissipate, weaving such words about Emilia, the young archbishop who called himself Regulus stood before the quivering Subaru.

Although he spoke smoothly and fluently, the contents of his discourse were empty, as if he were just repeating the same joke over and over.

Emilia, who was forced to listen to that joke, didn’t stir. She seemed to have completely lost consciousness, her slender form only lying prone in his arms.

Regulus raised a finger to the white hair on his eyebrows.

Regulus: “Although it’s gratifying to see nothing wrong, it seems regrettable that I can’t reveal my heroism to my bride today. I think that a heroic rescue in the midst of a dead end crisis brings two people people’s hearts to a very important place. Well, after all, the combination of the two is already an established fact and the only question is of the timing. Isn’t it great?”

Subaru: “You, what have you been saying…?”

Regulus: “Hmm?”

Regulus, who had been speaking his self-righteous truth, discovered Subaru and frowned upon him. He then gave a very tired sounding breath.

Regulus: “Don’t you understand basic concepts like politeness? The first thing I did was give a self introduction. To ask why you're going to introduce yourself, that's because it's the most important thing to start as a relationship. No matter what kind of relationship, isn’t it necessary to start with an acquaintanceship where we both know each other? So, just because I'm someone who cares about such things, I often think that no matter to whom, I will be as friendly as possible. I’m not saying that there isn’t a chance that the other party is shy. Even if you think you want to become well-connected, when you start by introducing yourself, something in you always cannot help but hesitate. Out of consideration for those types of people, I try to introduce myself as much as possible and act in order to create a space where they feel comfortable. Of course, I don’t expect this grace to be immediately obvious. However, I do have hopes that after some time, they will be able to detect the meaning of an introductions. Or, rather, that they will become aware of it. Or is it natural to talk to someone you meet for the first time without introducing yourself? If that’s the case, then there’s a slight difference between my common sense and culture. In that case, although both parties feel a sense of obligation, it becomes necessary to refuse the other side in advance so as to prevent a misunderstanding. Isn’t that so different from what I said before, taking being gentle with each other for granted? In fact, saying so feels impolite. And that’s a loss of etiquette, and the other party is left with a lesser value. A false assessment of each other’s value imposes on others. This is a violation of the rights of others. From any rational perspective, this is an infringement of my rights.”

Subaru: “Oh. Ohh…? S-Sorry... my name is Natsuki Subaru.”

A frenzied look rose in Regulus’s eyes as he prattled on, serving as a warning siren to Subaru. Acting on that fear, Subaru trembled as he gave his name.

Then, hearing Subaru’s introduction, Regulus squinted his widened eyes.

Regulus: “…Yes, that's fine. Because giving respect invites respect. Although the conditions for achieving a world that creates both is taken for granted, You don’t have to seek the happiness of others. As long as you pursue your happiness, others will also correspondingly find happiness. Don’t get caught up in your desires, just accept your truths and feel satisfied with your everyday needs. That is the peaceful way of life.”

It would perhaps be worth questioning whether or not his smooth speech was serious. But his bright eyes proved that his words neither joking nor ironic; rather, they were his genuine beliefs.

Taking his words out of context would perhaps make them seem like Sirius’s.

In fact, Regulus’s demeanor and words held the same superficiality and distortion as those of Sirius.

Regulus: “After all, is it really so hard to find the proper mood to converse in? Why is it impossible to do this as a matter of course for mankind? Why is it impossible to consciously, unconsciously, indifferently, continue to cause subtle harm to others in the days when such things are done? Subtle injuries hurt, don’t they? On top of that, if anything serious works its way in, it might grow into a life-threatening disease. The body and the soul are one. I hate those who misunderstand life to the extent that they unconsciously threaten others. Don’t their minds seem warped?”

Subaru: “……”

Regulus: “Obviously, they’re flawed as a human beings, and it isn’t okay for that behavior to remain unconscious. It is, of course, wrong to impose a burden on those who are discriminated against. Most people have common sense, but why can’t they consciously realize that the world is slowly turning on? Even without realizing that they’re trampling upon the hidden hearts of others, if they don’t become conscious of their twisted, flawed mistakes, then don’t their feet just keep trampling and trampling?

As if unhappy with Subaru’s silence, Regulus repeatedly pressed for an answer.

Regulus’s speech was gradually becoming faster and faster, clearly conveying an increase in excitement. Even so, Subaru still could not respond.

At the thought of giving a response, his heart flinched.

Subaru: “All that said, don’t you know…”

Sirius: “Thanks for the lesson. —BURN, SCORCH AND DISAPPEAR!!” A cascade of fire poured down from behind Regulus.

Sirius had waved her arms to summon a flame which mercilessly consumed her fellow archbishop. Subaru, witnessing this atrocity, found himself once again unable to move.

Beatrice: “Subaru…”

Subaru: “I... know. But, it’s okay.”

Beatrice, also trembling in fear, gripped Subaru’s shoulders until they hurt. She too worried about Emilia, who had been caught in the flame.

It was impossible for Subaru not to fear the violence that had involved Emilia. Even so, he held a steadfast belief. That was,

Regulus: “—I say, to interrupt someone else’s conversation like that, how awful are you at reading the mood? If you want to say something, speak up, raise your hand. Do you think I have the presence of mind to just wait for you to speak up?”

Regulus twisted his wrist, and the vortex of flame vanished.

The heat waves dissipated as if dismissed by magic, while Regulus, standing at the center of the vortex, remained untouched. Naturally, Emilia, resting in his arms was still in the same state.

Even engulfed by the flames of that intensity, not a single drop of sweat surfaced on his face.

Regulus: “You and I share the title of Archbishop. Since I know that that your head is messed up, if you’d only made a little mistake, I could have turned a gentle blind eye. Fortunately, there was no harm done. Only…”

Turning away, Regulus lowered his voice and glared at Sirius, who bore that gaze as she closed her coat, once again hiding the girl bound to her from the surroundings, gritting her teeth all the while.

Regulus: “You were planning to burn this girl along with me. I would be a little reluctant to say that I will forgive that kind of behavior. Ah, it’d be better to say that it would be impossible. Since ancient times, no matter what the story or the morality of the characters, if one’s loved ones are hurt, then their anger is inevitable. Because that is a right that everyone has, I am well within my rights to take revenge.”

Sirius: “Anger! Hah, did you get angry!? Don’t make me laugh! A superficial and insignificant man like you can’t speak so lightly about anger! Anger is mine! It’s what I got from him, and it’s more important to me than anything else. To…”

Regulus: “Ohh, I see. Are you still clinging to the idiot who kept on risking death? How annoying, how disgusting. That’s neither constructive nor rational. Death is the end. This is a matter of course, isn’t it? Unwilling to admit even that and clinging to just memories… You really are flawed. If someone who you love dies, find the next one. Rather than yelling about love, love, love, exercise the rights you’ve been granted. Disrupting that natural cycle, ah, you really are hopeless scum.”

Sirius: “You, who laughed at that person's death, TO SPEAK SO ARROGANTLY!!”

Sirius, who had been relentlessly demeaned, flew into a rage.

The stone flooring cracked at the mercy of the madwoman’s stomp as she directed her twin flames forward, which flew toward Regulus at an alarming rate. A burning, tearing sound accompanied the weapon on its lethal journey.

The chain hit Regulus’s flesh, striking his cheek to one side. However, neither Sirius’s fury nor the chain's attacks had been calmed by that single blow.

Left to right, top to bottom, front to back, Sirius’s copper chains beat relentlessly at Regulus's body. On top of that, the chains, flying at incredibly high speeds, projected waves of heat as well.

Sirius: “Disappear, disappear, disappear, disappear, disappear! TURN TO ASH ALONG WITH THAT HATEFUL HALF-WITCH!!”

The fence of flame closed at the center, trapping Regulus in that raging inferno.

The temperature of that storm was high enough to melt the floor tiles where Regulus stood, and the ground beneath him either evaporated or sunk to form depressions.

Witnessing the burning result, Sirius’s breaths grew wild.

Sharing her wrath, the crowd of wild-blooded people around her bled from their eyes and noses, making strange sounds as they gathered together.

Regulus: “I say, how many times do I need to tell you the same thing?”

Regulus stepped forward on the red stone slab as if nothing had happened.

Whether it was his white hair, his clothes, or Emilia's arms, nothing held a trace of scratches. Only his expression had changed into one of childish dissatisfaction.

Regulus: “I've thought about it. No matter how many times the same thing is said, some people can’t understand. They don’t care enough give enough effort to understand what is said. Is that contempt? So, whether carving what they’ve learned in their hearts as commandments, or doing careful self-examinations, or remembering it was food for thought for tomorrow, they don’t do any of that. They forget, and it’s cleansed away. Saying the same thing over and over again is not only blasphemy, but also contempt which gives negative impacts to both parties. Both their own value and the value of the other party are fundamentally degraded. That’s how it is. It’s a form of violence that disregards words and actions. Then I thought of it.”

Sirius: “You damn insect…!”

Regulus: “The Witch Cult’s doctrine goes like this, ‘If one cheek is hit, present the other cheek and ask

your opponent why they fight as they do’. This shows a valuable lesson of mutual understanding. Ah, but I’ve thought of this too. It’s also true that someone whose cheek has been beaten should fight back. —That’s especially necessary against those who don’t know pain.”

Only listening to the content of that speech would make it seem very stern. But Regulus was a distorted existence.

Regulus: “—”

Regulus, who stepped out from the dark, wore a grim smile.

That smile was certainly no friendly gesture; rather, it was closer to the licking of a tongue as a predator surveyed his prey.

It was still unknown how Regulus had defended against Sirius’s flame and chain. Perhaps his power was purely defensive; perhaps the Authority of Greed granted no means of attack.

Therefore, it is clear that the behavior of Regulus should not be conclusive evidence of fatal consequences.

— But, if the battle dragged on, Sirius would die.

And there was no guarantee that Regulus was a holder of purely defensive abilities.

If that young man pulled anything, there was no doubt that Sirius will die. If that is the case, there is no problem at all. In fact, having the number of archbishops reduced due to infighting would be worthy of celebration.

However, although gratifying, Sirius’s death would involve most of the people surrounding her. Of course, this included Subaru, as well as all the people trapped in the Sirius’s wrath, and certainly Lusbel and Tina, who prayed for one another’s safety and sacrificed themselves.

Subaru: “——”

Even now, fear was spreading all over the Subaru’s body.

His slack knees trembled so much that even breathing became an abnormal act. But, even in this case.

Beatrice: “Subaru.”

In his ear, a weak, unreliable voice echoed.

Although the owner obviously could not hide her trembling fear, her warm voice still spoke up from behind him. Rely on me — it was conveying a message something like that.

Subaru clenched his teeth and staggered to his feet.

He refused to be unable to do anything and delegate everything to the slight weight of the child on his back. Having said that, he wouldn't be able to do anything at all without her strength.

Therefore, Subaru refused to struggle alone, but also refused to throw everything to one person. If Subaru had been alone then he would have remained on his knees.

The reason why Subaru could stand was because he wasn't alone. The other people engulfed by the madness were different. Only Subaru had someone close by, only Subaru wasn't by himself.

Tightly clinging to that real feeling, Subaru fought his feat.

Subaru: "Beatrice."

Beatrice: "I know, in fact."

With only a single call, Beatrice could fully understand what he needed.

Confirmation with each other was unnecessary. Each of them doing their utmost to accomplish each of their respective responsibilities — as long they did that, they should arrive at their desired outcome.

Whether it be Sirius or Regulus, the cultists had completely forgotten about Subaru.

They could only see each other and intended to kill one another. The best result would be Sirius burning Regulus to ash, but that would be impossible.

Therefore, Subaru needed to stop Regulus's rampage.

Subaru had to attract Regulus's attention to himself and take measures against creating a large number of victims.

And, above all,

Subaru: "Stop touching my Emilia...!"

An inexhaustible love pushes the fear from Subaru and lights his heart. If he didn't first address his dishonest heart then he'd never be able to fight Regulus.

At the moment, Regulus's back was facing Subaru, and his attention was being completely diverted by Sirius, which was a great convenience for Subaru.

Beatrice: "—Shamak!"

As Subaru forced his trembling legs to move, Beatrice began chanting a spell from behind him.

Her powerful spell, Shamak, covered Regulus's body in a black haze as it began to sever him from the world, beautifully hindering his pace. Right before Regulus was engulfed, Subaru took a combat position

and fiercely whisked his whip forward.

He was aiming at Regulus's neck.

His whip followed through as it attempted to ensnare Regulus. Surely with this much commotion even the arrogant Regulus would have to attention to Subaru. Perhaps at the point where Beatrice had draped the curtain there was even a possibility that Regulus would fall victim without realizing what had happened.

Subaru: "There's no response!"

Beatrice: "He's coming!!"

Beatrice's warning had come after a heavy sense of anxiety had already hit Subaru. His whip passed through thin air and the missing presence of its target was painfully obvious.

The next moment, a white-haired youth kicked off of the ground toward Subaru, lunging from the black haze.

Regulus: "This has been messy from the very beginning. You've been stirring up my smooth life with your magic. Could you evaporate off somewhere?"

Beatrice: "Mi.... No, Murak!"

Regulus held Emilia with his right hand as his empty left hand suddenly swiped at Subaru. Beatrice immediately gave up performing an attack in favor of casting a gravity altering spell on Subaru.

Subaru immediately affirmed Beatrice's judgment and leapt upward to avoid Regulus's reaching fingertips. Murak is a type of shadow magic with the effect of freeing a physical object from the tethers of gravity. Subaru's flesh was now lighter than a feather. He flew upward, leaving Regulus behind.

Regulus: "Why do you want to avoid it?"

Subaru: "Why wouldn't I avoid it, it's scary!"

Subaru cast his whip at Regulus again, who had looked overhead at Subaru. Rather than aim for any particular direction, Subaru only struck, hitting Regulus's head. His white hair floated outward from the impact and the head that should have been lacerated by the whip was uninjured. The same held true for his windswept hair.

Regulus: "What if my bride had been injured? Don't you think that's it's a matter of course that girls should be treated gently, and that it's not something that needs to be taught? Don't you even understand this?"

Subaru: "Don't be stupid! The person I want to treat the most gently in this world is that girl. What's with the, 'bride this and bride that', that you've been talking about…"

Regulus: “It’s been decided. It’s destiny. —After all, I made a promise in my dreams.”

One hand bracing himself against the wall, Subaru was dumbfounded by Regulus’s smiling reply. Something felt awry but Regulus clearly did not care.

Regulus: “She will connect with me. That’s fate, you know. I feel generally satisfied with myself, and I don’t want anything at all. And although I don’t particularly desire anything, I’m not so narrow-minded that I wouldn’t accept what’s given to be. Especially what fate’s given to me. Although most people do not expect this, anything within I can reach, I want to guard. That would be myself and the people who are important to me.”

Subaru: “——”

Regulus: “I will protect her. I’ll welcome her as my bride and love her as she’ll love me, and together we’ll enjoy a stable life. Therefore, for the sake of that, I won’t refrain from exerting the power that I’ve been given.”

Subaru: “Then, what… then what about her own will? Obviously, one of the parties hasn’t consented yet, so getting engaged like this is rash.”

Regulus’s stern statement had just confirmed his convictions.

On one hand, this was a straightforward, righteous, and harmless way of thinking. On the other, it was ridiculous to a deadly extent.

It was difficult to explain why it was deadly but it was something that was clear from the very beginning. Because Regulus had fallen into a frenzy, everything had gone off track.

Subaru’s voice trembled but not just with fear. To his question, Regulus smiled and continued as though discussing a disposable topic.

Regulus: “Are you worried about me? If that’s the case, thank you. However, there isn’t any problem. Fate is inevitable… in particular, in love or friendship, a person's words can not be established. If fate told me that she would be my bride, then I am fated to be her groom, this is all something that’s already been decided.”

Beatrice: “…something is completely wrong with him, in fact.”

Toward Regulus and his flawed theory, Beatrice leaks a subconscious murmur of disgust.

Subaru held the same opinion. Regulus used pretty, smooth words to cover up the underlying madness in his beliefs. Subaru didn’t even want to know the extent of trouble that those sentiments would bring.

Subaru: “I’ve had enough. It’s impossible for us to understand each other. It’s disgusting to admit that such a horrible person is a rival for love.”

Subaru removed his hand from the wall and allowed himself to float back to the earth. Looking at the silent Subaru, Regulus nodded as if he'd grasped the main idea.

Regulus: "I see. I understand. You know, I'm sorry to say, but… the fate of a lover can't be shared. I find a bride who admires others to be quite unattractive."

Subaru: "Shut it! Emilia-tan is my bride. I won't give her to someone like you."

Regulus: "Ohh, this is Emilia. A lovely name. Very suitable for love birds to softly call, very suitable for this lovable child indeed."

Subaru: "You don't even know her name… yet you say you want her as a bride? What a joke! What made you…?"

Regulus: "Her face."

Subaru was choked speechless with anger. Misunderstanding his silence, Regulus tilted his head.

Regulus: "A cute face. That's all love and whatnot is, right?"

Subaru: "Go to hell."

Beatrice: "Drop dead, I suppose."

Agreeing with Subaru's assertion, Beatrice also denied Regulus his overly casual love.

Pedaling toward the ground, Subaru's weightless body was still under the effects of Murak. As Subaru shortened the distance between them as he rode the wind, Regulus lifted his gaze, as if shocked.

At this time, Regulus could not understand the implications of a close-combat battle.

Subaru himself understood. Rather than being unintelligent, Regulus didn't share the familiarity with battle that Sirius did. That wasn't to say that he was unprepared; rather, he needed no weapon.

Therefore, getting close to Regulus would be nigh suicidal. Even so, Subaru had a pressing reason to enter close combat with Regulus.

— Because this was the only way he could use his ace.

Regulus: "Why did you come here? I don't really understand. Although it's not necessary, I do hope that you can tell me. I don't lack thoughtfulness, after all. I want to understand even withering opponents."

Subaru: "Thanks for enlightenment — Beako!"

Beatrice: "Ready, in fact!"

Regulus approached Subaru with his left hand extended.

Each of those fingers was likely a fatal weapon that would end Subaru's life. Before that could happen, Subaru took a breath and shouted.

This was one of the fruits of the efforts that Subaru and Beatrice had accumulated over the course of the past year,

Subaru: "— E · M · M!!"

Regulus: "…what?"

The high-pitched chant induced Subaru's damaged gate to absorb Beatrice's mana to cast an exclusive magic of which no one else had yet developed.

They had launched the magic of absolute defense, E MM, one of three original spells devised by Beatrice and Subaru.

Subaru's body would be wrapped in an invisible magical field which would allow him to Sidestep from this plane of existence, nullifying any attack on him, be it physical or magical.

Regulus's fingertips didn't bring any harm to Subaru when they reached him. Upon witnessing this incident, for the first time, Regulus revealed an expression of stiff shock.

Subaru aimed at his face and fiercely released his left fist.

Subaru: "Yah!"

Regulus: "—hk"

The side of Regulus's face was struck.

Subaru had struck him with a hard blow, but not the slightest mark had been made when Regulus's head was pushed back. The damage had been completely invalidated. This was what Subaru had indeed expected; an eternal and constant guardian of Regulus's flesh.

Beatrice: "Not ready yet, I suppose!"

Before Regulus could counterattack, Beatrice shouted that the conditions for the next move had not yet been reached.

In this close proximity, Subaru needed to avoid Regulus's attacks. Being on the defense would make each action incredibly difficult. In that case, Subaru needed to give up part of his soul.

Regulus: "Don't worry…"

Subaru: “Invisible · Providence!”

As Regulus suffered a blow, his words were cut off.

That was because of he’d been sent flying. Subaru looked over the scene as he coughed blood, roughly wiping at the corners of his mouth with his sleeve.

Only Subaru’s eyes could see his Invisible Providence.

Subaru could clearly see a black third hand protruding from his chest, coursing with a dreadful power.

His entire body creaked, his soul weakened, and something venomous flowed through his body, materializing as black blood in his throat.

After paying the price for the ability, Subaru was able to summon a full-out attack. That blow, which consumed so much from Subaru, probably wouldn’t match up to a kick from Garfiel.

Even so, that invisible attack should have a corresponding effect to the effort needed to cast it.

Beatrice: “Subaru, are you okay, in fact?”

Subaru: “Cough… somehow. And as for that guy, he’s strong, but his attacks are kinda flat. Among all those I've faced so far, it's about the same as Larkins.”

Spitting out the remainder of the blood clogging his throat, Subaru pointed out the low energy of Regulus's combat.

Regulus had revealed that he was an inexperienced layman who was at most on Subaru’s level. As long as Subaru kept his concentration of words, those murderous fingertips could maybe be continually avoided.

Beatrice: “——”

Subaru’s shoulder was knocked. That was Beatrice's silent report.

Because of its potent effect, their original spells had short durations. In addition, their spells had daily limits, and overuse would result in loss of potency.

Beatrice: “Although the effects of EMM have ended, in this case, even without magic, Subaru has a chance. So, if you rush in…”

Subaru: “Victory could be waiting. I see the light of hope.”

Regulus: “There’s no such thing. I apologize for the misunderstanding. I dallied for longer than I should have, being that you’re not so interesting. But that’s not the issue here. It’s not good that we’re having a disagreement. This is a violation of rights. Since I've been hit twice since we started, if I don’t land an

attack, that would be unfair, right?”

Regulus landed from midair, looking at the determined Subaru.

His expression had lost its original calmness and was reaching outrage.

Subaru: “Wha!?”

Regulus: “…what are you planning?”

The ground between Subaru and Regulus suddenly ignited.

Subaru was pushed backward by the wave of heat which bathed him, while Regulus bore the hot air as it blew past his face.

Obviously, the two turned to the culprit for this — Sirius.

So far, for whatever reason, the madwoman had not involved herself in the fight between Subaru and Regulus. Although the intent behind her inaction was unknown, Subaru would have preferred for her to have remained silent. Her actions resulted in a very abrupt change.

He had no means to combat Sirius’s flames, and strongly preferred Regulus, who could only engage in close combat. He also had yet to find a solution to defeat her.

Subaru gulped as the situation deteriorated.

In actuality, his circumstances were far worse than what Subaru had imagined.

Sirius: “— I’ve found you.”

Subaru: “—?”

Standing unsightly, Sirius stares at the two men staring at her — no, at only Subaru.

The madwoman had completely forgotten her desire to killed Regulus, merely staring with single-minded obsession at Subaru. Her gaze was filled with madness, Subaru’s throat suddenly caught.

Then she lifted her previously lifeless, drowsy hands and pressed them to her face.

Sirius: “I’ve found you, found you, found you, found you, found you. Ah, ah, ahahah! Aaaah! Yes, it’s really you! I'm sorry, I didn’t notice at first. I’m sorry, I’m so sorry. This is great. It really is. Sure enough, you came back for me!?”

Subaru: “What……?”

Sirius: “Darling, where have you been!? No matter where I looked, I couldn’t find you, even after I’d

torn your spares open, I still couldn't find you anywhere. Even though I'd always always always always always always always always always been looking… And you noticed how I'd been searching, and you came back!"

Her high-pitched sonorous voice overflowed with an obvious enthusiasm.

Keeping her hands on her cheeks, she wriggled her body and gave a serious of pleased sounds. What kind of state was this? This odd gesture was truly unspeakable.

However, if pressed for an answer, her actions seemed similar to the behavior of someone who'd been searching for a lover for a long time. A woman who'd been consumed by blind love.

Sirius: "Because my ideal was reached! Because I want to be one with you — you finally noticed the wish that I'd been praying for! Because my Love finally reached you!"

Subaru: "——"

Sirius: "I've always been waiting for only you… my dear, dear Petelgeuse Romanee-Conti!"

Speaking with a mad smile, Sirius Romanee-Conti called the name of her bereaved lover as she cast a tender, affectionate look at Subaru.

Arc 5 - Chapter 26, "Spear of Love"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-26-spear-of-love/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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- [Art Source]

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— The already dire situation had deteriorated drastically, resulting in the worst of awful conditions.

Subaru trembled under Sirius’s mesmerized gaze and her shuddering, glowing breaths.

The madwoman gave no regard to the heat scorching her bandaged face, her attention focused on watching Subaru — no, not just watching, but staring.

Subaru: “Dear… Petelgeuse?”

That was the name of a madman which Subaru had never wanted to hear again. When Sirius Romanee-Conti had been crying out for her lover, Subaru would be lying if he said that this particular theory hadn’t crossed his mind.

Even so, he was reluctant to seriously consider it, as doing so would combine the existence of the lunatic Petelgeuse and the madwoman Sirius.

He didn’t want to think of a union, the worst possible couple, with Romanee-Conti.

Subaru: “A couple where both lovers are Sin Archbishops is ridiculously disastrous… although it can’t be helped that he’d choose a bride like that…”

Really, the Witch Cult didn’t have a single normal member.

The self-righteous Petelgeuse, Sirius who imposed her love without permission, and Regulus who treated love as superficial fate — they were all scum.

Subaru: “Like how your names are bit similar. Do they all end in an ‘S’ sound?”

Subaru buried the rapid churning of his mind under trivial, pointless thoughts.

Right now, Subaru felt as if he’d found something very awry, although he could quite put his finger on what it was. Try as he might, he couldn’t find it.

Sirius: “Please don’t be so silent, Petelgeuse. You’re such a mean-spirited person. See, you’re already, already, already giving me that usual cold attitude… it makes me really anxious!”

Sirius, unaware of the cause of Subaru’s brooding silence, took her own interpretation of it as she kept her hands on her face and her waist twisting back and forth. The nightmarish scene spread as the crowd around Sirius took up her strange, delusional expression of affection.

Regulus: “… Really, I can’t deal with you anymore. Although his trick just now probably that gave you that kind of idea, it’s still really rather tragic. The correct connection of fate should place you together no matter what kind of obstacles are faced. Like with me and my brides. However, a separation by life and death before results can blossom is not only sad, but very unsightly.”

Sirius: “Yes, thank you very much. I’m very sorry. Now, excuse me, but I'm busy. You know, right? Mutual understanding is important. Mutual concessions are also important. You have completed your purpose, so could you leave as soon as possible? After all, I also have my own private affairs.”

Regulus: “Indeed, my purpose of finding my bride has been fulfilled.”

Sirius’s madness had given way to rationality, and Regulus overlooked that implication as he looked at Emilia, still in his arms. Then he turned toward Subaru.

Regulus: “But the one who wants to kill me and my bride, and who has been annoying since the very beginning been, has yet to allow me proper vengeance in and infringement of my rights. I dislike taking a violent initiative, but in this case, it would only be a just revenge. Yes, this is an act of righteousness. Although I could endure this and leave, I would be doing legitimacy a disfavor. That is to say, leaving would be a loss of justice. I shouldn’t set that precedent.”

Subaru: “Don’t give me that superious tone. Obviously, you don’t like me so you want to kill me. Don’t justify that with some garbage doctrine.”

Regulus: “Actually being talked back to is quite a surprise. Being spoken to as if I were mistaken is even

more of a surprise. You, are you the type of people who disagrees with their opponents? In that case, the only thing I can say is that you're small and superficial. I think that this kind of person, who can't listen to the words of others with sincerity, will one day earn their just deserts, what do you think?"

Subaru: "Do you have the right to say this?"

Regulus's eyes widened as if incredibly taken aback.

Perhaps he was sincere, convinced that his speech was justified. No, he was absolutely convinced. If not, he couldn't be a leading subordinate in that abnormal cult.

Logical conversations were only an illusion. Although they spoke the human tongue, they were creatures belonging to an alien ecosystem.

Forgetting that would lead to being swallowed up by their honeyed words.

Regulus: "Sirius. You seem to have excluded him from your sphere of power. What happened?"

Instead of facing the silent Subaru, Regulus directed the conversation to Sirius.

Frowning at his speech, Subaru discovered that the fear which had been gripping his heart had vanished.

The fact that Beatrice was still slightly trembling on his shoulders proved that they hadn't left the range of the sphere of influence.

In other words, only Subaru had been excluded. And the reason for that was,

Sirius: "Isn't that obvious? Since I know that he's that person, if I continue to share my feelings, they might accidentally transmit to him."

Regulus: "Don't give me that shy look, it's really creepy. Having proclaimed your love, love, love, there's no point in pretending to innocent. I really don't understand you."

Sirius: "Don't you think that allowing those inexplicable feelings that can't be expressed with words to be felt in such a manner is tasteless? Until the end of the end, until the very moment I become one with him, I'll seal that feeling inside me. I've already decided so. Yes, for the sake of Love!"

Regulus: "Because of that dishonesty, your important feelings will never be able to reach him, you know? You, Sirius Romanee-Conti, can only miss him with wholehearted continuous thoughts. Don't you think that using someone else's family name is rather disgusting? I suppose that, in a sense, it's like Petelgeuse's legacy. Well, he's already dead, so it doesn't matter anymore."

Sirius: "I'm in love with that person!"

Hearing Regulus's amazed speech, Sirius exploded.

The madwoman grasped at her hair in a frenzy, spittle flying from her mouth as she screamed at Regulus.

Sirius: “After all, whenever I gazed at him, he always met my eyes! When I touched him, he didn’t scold me! When I spoke to him, he gave me his attention! When I inhaled his breath, he never told me off! I was allowed to sleep with him! I could freely borrow his things! He allowed me the honor of burning the half-witch! He gave me my name! He smiled for me! Only for me! Only for me, onlyformeonlyformeonlyforme!”

Her breathing grew wild as she sobbed tears of unrequited love.

She made herself clear.

Sirius’s existence was one of dark, twisted, pure love.

Regulus: “Ah, oops. —Dealing with such strong subjective convictions is tricky.”

Shrugging, Regulus spoke as if seeking agreement from Subaru.

Subaru bit back a “do you have the right to say that” to keep Regulus from lashing out. He needed to temper the balance between the two foolish extremists near him.

Facing the two cultists, Subaru saw no light of hope to break the deadlock. Rather, the situation had worsened due to Sirius’s interference.

Even if Subaru had broken away from the shared fear, there would be no marked improvement in his combat power. Obviously, Beatrice would be his main advantage, but she was trapped in an unfavorable condition, her sharp judgement dulled by terror.

At least, only facing Regulus would help.

Subaru: “…Hey, Sirius.”

Sirius: “Yes, what's the matter, my dear?”

Sirius candidly responded his call.

Although Subaru astonished at the unexpectedly serious response,

Subaru: “I have a little bit private business with Regulus here, so could you wait patiently for a while? Please.”

Sirius: “Do you want me to wait?”

Making use of Sirius’s misunderstanding could grant Subaru a chance at victory.

Sirius appeared to have assumed Subaru was Petelgeuse due to his Invisible Providence, which resembled

the Authority of Sloth's Unseen Hand. Although this was a dark path, Subaru would have to tread it.

Petelgeuse had been a spirit. If he were still alive, it was entirely possible that he would have possessed Subaru as his next host.

Although, the problem would be that Subaru hadn't indicated that he'd recognized Sirius up until now, but Sirius, in her present state of mind, hadn't seemed to notice the issue.

With that in mind, Subaru hoped to break that deadlock. The result,

Sirius: "I'm sorry, I cannot do that. Please let me refuse even if it is very important to you."

Sirius ruthlessly rejected his plea.

Seeing Subaru's disappointed gaze, Sirius bowed her head.

Sirius: "Of course, I originally wanted to comply. But the diligent you have surely already decided that while I wait, you'll slip far away from my extended fingers. I know you. After all, we've been together for so long. You'll try your utmost and overstrain yourself alone to reach your desired results… and..."

In all honesty, Subaru couldn't help but feel a heartfelt admiration for her love.

Even so, Sirus's regard of Petelgeuse's hard working nature was a rather blind perspective. After all, the Witch Cult existed to do nothing but harm.

Sirius: "Finally, finally we were able to meet again. It's been a year, a whole year, since I've been at your side. In this century, this is the longest we've been apart! And even after a year of not seeing me… you ask me to leave? I don't want to. I can't. In your period of absence of the period I always wanted wanted wanted wanted wanted wanted wanted to become one with you!"

Subaru: "——"

Sirius: "On top of that, you still want me to wait!? And now you have a spirit who I've never seen before! Where did you find her!? What exactly is appealing about woman like that!? She's tiny, her face is arrogant, and she has neither the chest nor the bottom of a woman! Is it because she's a spirit!? Because you're a spirit, your woman has to be a spirit too? The time we spent together loses to such a flimsy reason? I'll burn you."

The direction of her speech became perverse, and became weird, and a crazed shimmer of unbridled frenzy rose in her gaze again. The crowd also left courting affection for anger, blood streaming red from their eyes and noses.

Sirius: "And, is the reason you need to deal with Regulus the half-witch in his arms? That filthy half witch! That silver haired half witch! Why are you so partial to her!? Stop immediately, shouldn't you have understood that long ago? That despicable, loathsome, hateful, abhorrent garbage witch…! If you revive her, I'll burn her before your very eyes!"

Subaru: “You’re… so increasingly incomprehensible, you…”

The madwoman gave a bloodthirsty shriek, revealing her animosity toward both Emilia and the Witch of Envy.

Wasn’t the goal of the Witch Cult the Witch of Envy’s resurrection? Subaru couldn’t understand Sirius’s utter loathing for her, then.

Rather, Sirius had absolutely no resonance with the Petelgeuse she longed for.

Although he’d originally thought that they couldn’t have been companions, they turned out to be nothing but enemies.

Subaru: “——”

The impasse between the three resurfaced. Regulus planned to kill Subaru and Sirius.

Sirius would defend against Regulus and the nonexistent Petelgeuse within Subaru.

Subaru wanted to rescue Emilia from Regulus and to free Tina from Sirius, and, if possible, kill the two archbishops.

Obviously. However, the situation Subaru was in was far too harsh.

Searching for such a solution that Subaru didn’t have the ability to attain, his forehead began to bead with sweat.

Return by Death, followed by Sirius’s appearance and Regulus’s debut. After that, a melee battle between and with the archbishops. This loop had been the longest yet.

During that period of time, although he’d retrieved useful intelligence, nothing but awful things had happened.

Subaru: “… Beako.”

Beatrice: “You can try either one, in fact.”

From his back came the timid voice of Subaru’s support.

Subaru, who held authority over what would happen next, made his decision. And at that time.

Regulus: “—Oh.”

Sirius: “—hk”

Simultaneously, both Regulus and Sirius both, changed their attitude.

They each put their hands into their coats, and, from their, retrieved their books.

Subaru: “That is…”

A familiar book with a heavy black binding.

At this proximity, there was no way that Subaru could have been mistaken. That was what the Witch Cult obeyed above all else, the Gospel.

Regulus & Sirius: “——”

Ignoring Subaru, who’d raised his guard again, the two archbishops opened their gospels and surveyed its writ.

Then, although the their timing had been identical, their expressions gave stark contrast to each other.

Regulus: “I assume the content is the same for both of us, is that true, Sirius?”

Sirius: “Shut up, Regulus. Why… why now? When finally, finally I found him again…”

Regulus wore a light smile, and Sirius, who gritted her teeth and spoke in a voice full of remorse. Even if the predator and the madwoman held opposing feelings, their wills were unified.

The two looked to Subaru.

Regulus: “Although I’m sorry, it’s time now. My free time with you has ended. You should thank the Gospel… well, that's not right. That doesn’t make sense. After all, what’s the use in being thankful to paper? So, rather, you should be grateful to me, who follows the Gospel faithfully.”

Subaru: “Thank you for your faith… but what was that about time? What are you talking about!?”

Regulus: “It’s just as you heard. We were given free time before we need to do what must be done. I took that meaningful time to retrieve my bride.”

Sirius: “I feel incomplete… In front of that person, I shouldn’t be subjected to such treatment. It’s too cruel. I’m being washed away by sadness, don’t you know?

Regulus spoke with composure, while Sirius forcibly expressed her sorrow. The crowd collapsed, and Beatrice bit back her tears.

However, Subaru and Regulus both remained completely unaffected.

Regulus: “Sorry, but your small, superficial love doesn’t touch my complete self at all. At most, it makes me feel a little dirty.”

In a contemptuous voice, Regulus, with Emilia still in his arms, turned his back to Subaru.

Really, he looked as if he were just planning to let them go. If Regulus left by himself, that was fine. But,

Subaru: “Stop, you bastard! Don’t just run off! Let her go! Otherwise, I’ll…”

Regulus: “I considered that.”

Subaru: “——!?”

Regulus stopped and only turned his head to smile.

Under that smile, Subaru felt as though a blade brushed his spine, and he swallowed, his entire body stiff.

It was impossible to prevent Regulus's next move.

Regulus: “I think that if my bride finds one of her attendants gone, she’ll be lonely, and if I don’t invite enough people, she’ll be rather fickle. — So I won’t kill you.”

Regulus tapped the ground gently with his toes.

Although it was a gesture of comfort, as if adjusting his shoes, his foot dug neatly into the stone slab as if it were a shovel driving into soft ground.

The wreckage of the slate flew toward Subaru.

Bullets of soil seemed to defy gravity. Some of them brushed the outside of Subaru’s right foot

— and, in the next moment, Subaru’s foot vanished.

Subaru: “—Eh?”

A beast’s claw had torn clear through his foot. On his right foot, the white of bone, pink of flesh, and yellow of marrow were cleanly exposed in a twisted cross section. His veins had all be severed, blossoming with blood.

Before he could comprehend what had just happened, the pain struck.

Subaru: “—hk!? Gah, ahk! aaaaAAHH!?”

The world became pure white, as if his head were being punctuated by countless sharp needles.

A scream lodged in his throat, Subaru was unable to support his own weight as he tumbled to the ground. His outstretched fingers desperately held his right leg. The wound was so large that the palm of his right hand couldn’t cover it.

Beatrice: “Subaru! ? Subaru! Subaru, wait, I suppose! Right now!”

Beatrice fell to the ground with the discovery of the Subaru's severe injury, and panicked as she began a chant of healing magic. Regulus nodded in satisfaction at the scene.

Regulus: "This is adequate retaliation for your reckless behavior up until just now, so I'll let it go. Although I did consider the possibility of you doing it again, I think I still want to look forward to your future. This pain is sure to stop you if you considering hurting another person again. Don't thank me. Just save someone else next time."

Subaru: "aaaAA—hk! Kah, gah, can't, kuu, gah!"

Pain, agony, suffering, hurthurthurthurthurthurthurthurt—!

A haze of agony. Molars being ground to dust from gnashing. A flashing world. The absence of an up and down. Was he sleeping? Or was he alive? Or maybe he was dead?

Confusion. Cluelessness. Noideanoideanoidea. Even so, there was something he needed to know.

Subaru: "E-Emili...a! Wa, gah—hk, t—hk"

Beatrice: "Subaru, you can't afford to mess around! If you have to vomit, turn to the side. If you don't, your throat will…"

Enduring pain and madness, Subaru moved his head. His heart beat like an alarm bell, and he began to choke up what felt like his organs.

The petite Beatrice, while desperately supporting Subaru's body, did her best to cast healing magic. However, someone was laughing at her.

Beatrice: "You can't be serious, in fact."

Sirius: "I'm sorry. However, this obviously isn't a joke. Isn't that obvious?"

Behind Beatrice, in abhorrent whispers, Sirius replied in a dark tone.

Around Sirius, a crowd of people rolled as they screamed in pain.

All of them, with their hands on their right leg wound, desperately sought salvation. Like Subaru, their right feet had been torn off by a beast.

Sirius: "My beloved Petelgeuse would say that feeling pain is living, and that those feelings allows Love to be exercised. I know what better than anyone. However, I believe there is a better way of representing that form of Love until then. Thank you. That representation would be becoming one. After all, Love is a prayer for becoming one! Seeing the same sights, feeling the same emotions, living the same life, ending with the same death, that is Love!"

Opening her hands, her hands hit each other in a burst of clapping.

Sirius gave harsh puffs of air as she fixed her intense, envious gaze on Beatrice.

Sirius: “No matter who, everyone should experience the same feelings as him. However, only you and that dirty half-witch will be denied that experience. Who would grant you such an honor?”

Beatrice: “There’s no other woman out there who would be driven as mad with jealousy as you. But it doesn’t matter, since Betty has long been Subaru’s closest confidante. Betty is Subaru’s.”

Beatrice refused to flinch under Sirius’s cruel words.

Madwoman and spirit glared at each other, until Sirius turned away, breaking the interaction.

Sirius: “Now, I can only entrust him to you. After all, I have to prioritize the Gospel’s instructions. Yes, there is no other way. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. You know I want nothing but to return to you as soon as possible.”

At this moment, Sirius still acted mad in love with Subaru. The madwoman left the bloodstained square.

Quite unexpectedly, Beatrice did not give chase. She understood that refusing to allow her to escape would merely result in more sacrifices.

Beatrice: “—Subaru.”

With fluttering eyes, yellow bubbles burst from Subaru’s mouth.

Beatrice pressed her palm against his wound, attempting to stop the flow of blood. The wound was too deadly, any slip in concentration would lead to Subaru’s death.

For Beatrice, saving Subaru was, naturally, her greatest priority. Although, there was another priority Beatrice had to follow.

Subaru: “If you don’t treat the other injured people…”

However, the number of wounded people rolling around the square was over thirty.

They had all suffered the same injury as Subaru, and in a cruel twist, the healing being performed on Subaru hadn’t reached them. She would need to heal every injury individually.

That was the burden Beatrice needed to take up. But, even if she exhausted her store of mana, she wouldn’t be able to bear it.

Beatrice: “—Subaru, compared to…”

Desperately trying to heal Subaru’s injury, determined to keep a strong facade, Beatrice spoke with a hoarse voice.

A stream of tears flowed down her white cheeks. Beatrice: “I’m sorry. I’m sorry…”

Beatrice voiced a string of constant apologies.

Even though she knew her voice could not reach Subaru, rendered unconscious by pain. Even if she knew that she could solve nothing.

Beatrice: “I’m sorry, Emilia.”

Sirius had created so many victims and left the plaza. Regulus had taken Emilia with his overwhelming power.

— The two Sin Archbishops strode into the city of Pristella.

Arc 5 - Chapter 27, "Noise"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-27-noise/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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A piercing sound.

Abrupt, vibrating, heavy, empty, distant, nearby.

The flow of his blood dulled, as if his blood vessels were infected by an inflow of sludge, his organs were sluggish, as if filled with clay, and oxygen didn’t reach his brain, leaving his thoughts foggy and unreliable.

The vibration was in his nearby vicinity, the sound shaking the membrane of his skull, traveling through his bones to his hands and feet.

The darkness he’d become used to faded for a sudden white light, which his eyes were unable to accept. In that white light, forms and shapes moved about, as if children had cast paint everywhere in a room of white.

The heavy sound faded, and, as his eyes moved under their lids, his body had entirely burned out. Accompanied by nausea and sluggishness, Subaru slowly opened his eyes.

Everything became distant as he entered a calm world, and, after tens of seconds, his eyes were restored to their original state, as darkened rooms and dirty ceilings opened. He felt the breaths of many bodies moving around and keeping busy in his surroundings. People moving around in order to keep the surroundings busy, and their bodies.

???: “Hey, bro, you’re awake!”

Ears ringing with tinnitus, Subaru, attacked by a sudden sound with an unnecessary amount of strength, focused on it.

???: “Cat-eared young lady, over here! Everyone else, keep working! Sorry, but keep working! We’re fighting against time!”

???: “Really nyow, you’re annoying. People need quiet here, so quickly get back to work.”

With a bow of his head, the large beastman apologized for his loud voice as he was approached by an angry young woman, no, young man.

Wearing a revealing dress, a bloodstained Ferris looked at Subaru with a sigh of relief.

Ferris: “Now that you’ve woken up, do you understand the situation… actually, can you speak right now?”

Subaru: “… Ah, Ferris?”

Ferris: “Yep, it’s everyone’s favorite Ferri-chan. You’re Natsuki Subaru, and we’re at a field hospital right nyow since you were heavily injured, got it?”

Ferris quickly explained the situation to a hoarse Subaru. Reluctantly, his brain digested his speech word by word.

Looking around, Subaru identified his surroundings. At last, he noticed that he was lying on a simple bed made of pieces of cloth.

Then, as Ferris said, this looked like a field hospital.

Everyone, people lay writhing in pain, awaiting treatment like Subaru’s.

The taste of blood, a miserable, whispered cry. Just healing magic couldn’t keep up, and needles and sutures were introduced to wounds.

Subaru: “What… exactly is happening?”

Ferris: “Looks chaotic, doesn’t it? Slowly, try to remember what happened before you fainted. If you recall that, you’ll find the answer.”

Ferris's words weren't gentle, but that wasn't a matter of his mood. Rather, he had no energy to spare for gentleness. His sleeves were rolled up, and his white skin and face were stained with blood.

Imagining the volume of work that Ferris, a first-rate healer, would need to take on in the face of this tragedy wasn't difficult. And, the cause of this tragedy was—

Subaru: "The Witch Cult…"

Ferris: "Really, those guys are the worst. My understanding of them was too naive… I never expected them to pull something like this. Of course, nyo one else was expecting this either."

Remorsefully biting his lips. Ferris lowered his chin at Subaru.

The regret in Ferris was clear. Although Subaru understood that, there were other uncertainties.

Subaru: "E-Emilia!? Where is Emilia? Is she here?"

Ferris: "……"

Subaru: "That bastard, Greed… the archbishop took Emilia. Then, I…"

He quiver, coming to understand the cause of his restlessness.

In Ferris's lowered gaze and silence, Subaru found a clear answer. At least, Emilia wasn't here.

Then if his impression before passing out was right, she'd been taken by Regulus.

Subaru: "And Beatrice? The little girl who was with me? She has an arrogant, lovable face, and curly hair… Beatrice?"

Emilia had more than likely been abducted by Regulus.

Judging from Regulus's attitude, the likelihood that he would hurt Emilia, although uncertain, should be low. Although he couldn't be forgiven, that was the case.

But what had happened to Beatrice? Sirius and Regulus had both been present, and Sirius had held a strong hostility toward Beatrice.

Since Subaru had been safely carried into the field hospital, they escaped from Sirius. So who had protected Subaru?

Subaru: "Hey, please. Tell me. Beatrice…"

Ferris: "——"

Not finding an answer to his unease, Subaru desperately sought an answer from Ferris, who closed his

eyes. The giant beastman standing next to him, Ricardo, the head of the [Iron Fang], looked to the side.

Subaru followed his gaze.

Subaru: “Beatrice.”

Lying a ways from the people receiving treatment was a lone maiden in a dress.

Seeing her sleeping in a makeshift bed like his own. Subaru went to lift the towel covering his stomach and run to her.

However, halfway to his feet, severe pain crippled him. On top of that, his right foot stopped obeying him, and the system of his body broke down.

His head was heavy with fatigue, and his right foot couldn’t understand why it was unable to move.

Hurrying to take a look, the horror of his own foot left Subaru speechless.

Subaru: “Oh…”

Ferris: “Subaru-kyun would have lost a foot without Beatrice’s healing. You’ll have to thank that child later.”

Subaru’s right foot was missing about half of its flesh, and was obviously a different size from his left foot. It was also wrapped in several layers of thick bandages, and a board had been fixed to his heel. All those had caused him to lose his balance.

He couldn’t help but brush it with his fingers, and, in that moment, a bolt of realization struck him.

Subaru: “I remember…!”

Regulus’s last blow before he’d left.

He’d taken Emilia, said some nonsense, and kicked the ground up as easily as he could kick sand, and the soil had struck Subaru’s food.

At that moment, Subaru’s right foot had been wounded as if it had been mauled by a wild animal’s claws. And that had resulted in the present state of Subaru’s right foot.

Ricardo: “When I stumbled upon the scene, your foot was only connected by a few tendons. A crying little miss had been desperately healing it until we got you help.”

Ferris: “After that, Subaru was carried here and treated by Ferri-chan. Although Ferri-chan’s treatment can’t guarantee that your foot will be the same as before, nyow the bones and nerves are linked, and the flesh is regenerating, so don’t do anything to upset it.”

Crossing his wrists, Ferris made an X, prepared to deal with Subaru's reluctance, however, Subaru obeyed in silence, his attention more focused on Beatrice's bed.

As Ferris sighed in relief, a large hand supported Subaru's shoulder, allowing him to slowly make his way to Beatrice.

Ricardo: "As for getting you to that little miss, I can handle that."

Subaru: "Thanks, sorry about this."

Ricardo: "No worries."

Ricardo moved Subaru's entire bed near Beatrice's. From there, Subaru leaned forward to take a better look at her. The little girl was sleeping so quietly that Subaru couldn't even hear her breathing.

Even though she was a spirit, Beatrice slept like a human. Unlike Puck, she couldn't dematerialize, so this was how she reduced the burden of materialization on her mana.

For this reason, seeing Beatrice's sleeping face was hardly uncommon for Subaru. Only, this was the first time he'd seen her sleeping so quietly.

Subaru: "She's, just sleeping… right? Still, I'm worried…"

Ferris: "Asleep isn't the right word. Right now, she's lost her function as a spirit… A state of suspended animation might be closer."

Subaru: "Suspended animation? Why…!?"

Touching Beatrice's forehead, he was surprised to find how low her temperature was. Brushing her eyelashes and her face yielded no reaction, just as Ferris had reported. In response to the look on Subaru's face, Ricardo squatted down.

Ricardo: "According to the cat-eared lady, this happened as the result of mana overuse, which indeed seems to be the case. I found the square you were in completely by accident, bro. Everyone there had almost the same injury, which the little miss was taking care of on her own."

Subaru: "——"

Ricardo spoke with a sigh, leaving Subaru silent for a while.

The same wound as Subaru — that was the result of the a bond transmitting the injury Subaru had gotten from Regulus Subaru attacking the feet of Regulus. Sirius certainly had complicated matters. The madwoman seemed to have left the scene, and Beatrice's fight had begun there.

She'd given equally thorough treatment to Subaru and everyone else who was wounded.

Of course, Subaru was a greedy man who asked for too much, and the child who accompanied that Subaru also refused to give up anyone.

So Beatrice had squeezed every last drop of her mana dry to save all those people, at this heavy price.

Subaru: “Beatrice is fine, right…? She just needs a little rest…”

Ferris: “… To be honest, I’m nyot too optimistic. Ferri-chan is a first rate healer, but doesn’t know much about spirits. And this child isn’t an ordinary spirit either. So I don’t really knyow any real solutions.”

Subaru: “There… there has to be a way! If Beatrice can’t be saved, I…”

It had only been a year.

He had freed her from the archive in order to bring her happiness, and her life couldn’t end here.

Happiness, happiness, happiness, no one deserves happiness more than this child. than anyone should be happy child is not it.

Ricardo: “If she needs magic to be brought back, can’t she take some from another source? If bro is her contractor, than she should be able to get some from him, right?”

Ferris: “… Obviously, Subaru would easily be the source, but that idiot fractured his gate, so she can’t use his mana.”

Subaru: “Right, bocca fruits. With bocca fruits, I can restore my own mana, and from there I can give some to Beatrice…!”

Ferris: “Idiot!”

Ferris snapped angrily as he glared at the desperate Subaru.

Subaru was surprised at that unexpectedly sharp reprimand, and Ferris immediately put on a fiddling, shy demeanor.

Ferris: “How many times have I said this? That’s really dangerous for Subaru-kyun’s body. In fact, it would be like poison. If you did that, we’d just end up with two casualties… so you can’t.”

Subaru: “……”

Ferris’s strict words were tinged with sadness. Reading that sincere thought, Subaru closed his mouth and swallowed his reckless judgments.

Ferris was an expert in healing, so he had of course considered a myriad of ways to help Beatrice.

Subaru’s sudden thought must have already been considered.

Ferris: “I can understand Subaru’s worry about Beatrice-chan. And although I understand, there’s nyothing we can do for her right nyow. There are many other things that we have to worry about than just that child…”

Subaru: “Beatrice. . . Right, there's Emilia too…”

Ferris’s words brought Subaru back to reality.

He turned his attention to the field hospital — and found that something was off. There were people with wounded right feet, the same injury as Subaru, but there were also plenty of people with different injuries.

Subaru: “How’s the situation? … No, what else has happened? What’s with all the injuries?”

Ricardo: “The Witch Cult is here like you said, bro.”

Subaru: “But it can’t just be them, right? I only saw two archbishops. This level of harm can’t be enacted by just two people. In other words, they’ve brought the fodder cultists too.”

The two archbishops were ridiculously powerful.

So Subaru had simply assumed that they would be the only cultists present — but it was only natural that, as Petelgeuse did, they had brought underlings to the city as well.

That was the only explanation for such damage.

Subaru: “The two archbishops and the cultists under them, are they attacking the city right now?”

Ferris: “On this matter, there are a variety of…”

Ferris’s voice was bitter as he began to answer Subaru’s conclusion.

However, before she could confirm or deny it, an unexpected interruption came. That was,

???: “Yahoo, yahoo, yahoo!”

The space rang with the sound of a high pitched voice.

The voice’s relaxed tone contrasted sharply with the somber atmosphere, as if someone had accidentally tuned a TV channel of an entertainment program, during a serious conversation.

Subaru: “Wh-what?”

Hearing the sound, Subaru looked around wildly, and, unable to find the owner, he immediately realized its the source.

Subaru’s immediate impression of the sudden voice was that it sounded like it had come from a

loudspeaker or radio, a thought that mirrored one he'd had this morning.

Subaru: "The city's radio broadcast magic?"

???: "Hello, all you meat creatures! No matter how many times you've heard it, doesn't my beauty and my lovely voice excite you? Gahahahaha!"

As if verifying Subaru's idea, the voice appeared again, amplified by a magic speaker.

That voice rang with a childlike cruelty, like a girl who'd spurned etiquette and trampled on conventional manners of speech.

Her sharp laughter seemed able to pierce right into your mind, causing an aversion both mental and physical.

Subaru: "What, a stupid voice, this is…"

Ferris: "Hush, Subaru, quiet."

Ferris straightened his ear with one finger and put another over her mouth.

A serious Ferris seemed to be completely absorbed, and Ricardo wore a vigilant expression. The bedridden injured all clapped their hands over their ears.

This didn't seem to be the first time they'd heard it.

???: "Alright, you meat creatures enthralled by a beautiful girl's enticing voice, I have news for you: we're all tired, so we're going home now. Just kidding! The true tossing and turning of day and night starts now! Gahahahaha!"

A harsh, harsh voice, like a mirror next to the ear being scratched with sharp claws, filled with sadistic glee. What, what, what was this voice, what was this woman?

Forehead dripping with cold sweat, Subaru was well aware of his body's abnormal condition. As Subaru's mind turned, his body had been captured.

???: "Setting aside my funny, laugh-inducing joke, let's continue with the news. As I said just now, the city has been occupied by us. You're all caged birds… no, you're all insects in a cage for insects."

Subaru: "——!?"

???: "Insects are just bugs, and the owner of that cage gets to decide just what to do with you. Wings and head, prepare to have them removed… Kahahaha, how ugly, how awful! What a merciless life. You should be thankful for being left in my tender care. Gahahahaha!"

A repeated, malicious laugh.

One which belonged to a presence which despised others and found vicious delight in ravaging their joy.

Subaru knew this kind of presence better than anybody.

???: “Wait, wait, you idiots can’t understand the real meaning of my precious words. Poor incompetent fools, only thinking about slabs of meat in their free time. My gentle, loving self will make this easier to understand. I’ll tell you with my spit which you masochists love.”

Subaru: “——”

???: “Insects in a cage can’t do anything about their owner’s mood. The most you can do to please us is to lie fearfully in your cage. When we’re in a bad mood, you can only tremble in fear as we tear your wings or legs off. When I bring you honey, I’ll be like your mother, gently stroking you heads. There~fore~, kahahahahaha!”

In the face of that constant viciousness, Subaru imitated Ferris and listened silently. A breath, a word, muddy feelings in his chest stifled, Subaru sealed his will with iron. And then, he noticed. He noticed it.

What, was that?

???: “Later, we’ll have more to ask of you scum. You’ll wear desperately ugly expressions, cry that you don’twanttodiedon’twantodiedon’twanttodie and think of ways to emerge from the crowd and give us answers. In that case, my moving kindness might have me consider setting down the cage in my hand. Gah— isn’t that really easy to understand! Gahahaha!”

With excitement, the speaker clapped, stomping her feet from her seat.

Her speech, her attitude, her voice, Subaru found them all unbearably irritating— but that wasn’t the problem at hand.

From the beginning, he could hear that sound.

He had thought that it had come from being in the same room as that magic device. Faintly accompanying that woman’s voice was a sound that Subaru had certainly caught.

However, he was unsure of what exactly that sound was.

What was still worse was that he had almost, but not quite, reached the answer. Unknowing, unaware, unwitting.

A noisy heartbeat, the noisy flow of his blood. Reject and understand, reject and understand.

— A very faint buzzing sound, like the flapping of a myriad of wings.

He was very close, infinitely near the right solution. Although close, he wasn’t quite there. A plume of flapping feathers, that was the noise that seemed to be mixed into the broadcast.

Many magical phenomena were unclear to Subaru. So perhaps this was just his imagination. But Subaru's common sense felt that something was off.

That sense of violation and that plume of feathers stuck in Subaru's mind.

???: "And, the end. My precious words end here. Metamorphosing meat creatures and insects should work their hardest. Like I said before… we've taken control of the four towers that operate the waterways. I think it's best to not try anything weird? A drowned man's dead face is unbearable ugly! Gahahahaha—"

That cruel high-pitched laughter was interrupted as the sound faded.

That sound of wings was gone as well. Subaru could finally disengage his body, and he immediately flew over to Ferris and Ricardo.

Subaru: "What did you think of the broadcast just now?"

Ferris: "What I think of it… Our limbs were mercilessly taken, and we've been reduced to just a head, that's how Ferri-chan sees this."

A bitter Ferris bit his fingers and replied to a frowning Subaru.

Various places had become stages, for the purpose of being seized by the enemy.

Subaru: "So just now, that was the Witch Cult…"

Ferris: "The first broadcast came when Subaru-kyun was sleeping. In it, the broadcaster introduced herself…"

Ferris paused, looking unsure of whether or not he should continue. Subaru, ignorant of the reason for his hesitation, tilted his head.

In the Witch Cult, the common practice among archbishops was to first announce their sin. After that came their name.

The Sin Archbishop of Lust, the third archbishop that Subaru hadn't imagined would be present. Her name was,

Ferris: "Although this is disgusting, and Ferri-chan doesn't believe it in the slightest, this is the name that was given."

Ferris said so, rendering the credibility of the testimony he was about to repeat very low.

Ferris: "Capella Emerada Lugunica. —Although it couldn't be, it's a nyame of royalty."

Arc 5 - Chapter 28, "A Meeting Covered in Wounds"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-28-a-meeting-covered-in-wounds/

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Subaru: “Wait, let’s calm down. First, can we sort through what we know?”

Ferris’s words had pushed the limit of what Subaru could handle right now.

Ferris and Ricardo nodded at Subaru’s raised hand as they considered the new information that had been broadcasted.

Subaru: “Moving anywhere… will be pretty difficult with so many injured.”

Ferris: “Well, the most severe wounds have already been stabilized, and there shouldn’t be any more people showing up, but still.”

With a sense of professionalism, Ferris gave his diagnosis. Subaru took a moment to examine the conditions of the field hospital.

Minimal lighting, and a ground of cold stone making ground. From the unique feel of its air, Subaru judged the place to be underground — almost like the parking lot of a large department store.

Subaru: “Are we still in Pristella?”

Ferris: “It’s one of Pristella’s shelters. The broadcast this morning mentioned it, remember? In Pristella, if an issue with the waterways ever occurred, the water damage would be troublesome, so there are shelters all over the city. This is one of the shelters on First Street.”

Ricardo: “The square where I found bro is close to here. After a rough start, we managed to bring bro and the other refugees to safety!”

Following Ferris, Ricardo gave his proclamation as he pounded loudly on his thick breastplate. Ferris glared intently at Ricardo, who took several moments to stop.

Ferris: “It’s lucky that Ferri-chan was also here, with so many people wounded. This dog-faced mister wouldn’t have been able to handle any of the treatment.”

Ricardo: “Yep! Now I don’t need to have any regrets! Hahaha!”

Ricardo’s usual attitude and his laugh were refreshing, even if they were out of place for this somber hospital. If one person kept a positive attitude, everyone could maintain hope.

Ferris: “So, what happened to Subaru-kyun?”

Subaru: “Ah, right. There were two archbishops in the square, Greed and Wrath. The one who destroyed my foot was Greed, who abducted Emilia… however, the one who caused the injury on everyone else was Wrath.”

Ferris: “How did that happen?”

Subaru: “The authority of Wrath is… It’s a little difficult to explain, but if anyone is injured, she has the power to transmit the injury to other people.”

He chose his words carefully, attempting to give a simple explanation of her power. Ricardo had his head tilted, and Ferris’s complexion changed as he realized the implications of her ability.

He looked to the wounded and looked at the strap of the right foot.

Ferris: “So… that’s the reason why Subaru-kyun and everyone else had such a similar injury. I had a bad feeling already, but…”

Subaru: “Ah…”

Absurd emotions often accompanied a distorted character. However, with Sirius, this absurdity was also physiological in nature.

Subaru had still more to say.

Subaru: “And Greed’s also very troublesome.”

Ferris: “Ah~... Ferri-chan’s already tired as is, I don’t have the energy to hear about more troublesome things.”

Subaru: “Sorry, I don’t think that’s possible. —That damned Greed, he can invalidate any attack. Whether being bathed in fire, hit by a whip, or directly punched, all damage is null.”

The unconscious Emilia, in Regulus's arms, was defenseless. Even bathed in Sirius’s flames, Regulus had flawlessly defended both himself and Emilia. That had resulted in a display of his unmanageable power.

This would prove to be an incredibly tiresome situation.

Ferris: “A guy who can pass on injuries, and a guy who’s invincible… Ah, you have to be kidding me.”

Subaru: “That other archbishop… Petelgeuse’s Unseen Hand was quite powerful, but this guy’s on a completely different level.”

That said, Petelgeuse’s ability had ended up not being effective on Subaru. Considering that ineffectiveness, Subaru had thought of him as a simple lunatic rather than a Sin Archbishop.

Thus, this would be his first formal battle with the Witch Cult.

Subaru: “And the archbishop who just introduced herself, Lust... her abilities are probably just as troublesome.”

Ferris: “Worst of all… There are probably five archbishops here.”

Subaru: “Five…!?”

Ferris uttered a hypothesis which was terrifying beyond Subaru’s wildest imagination. What had happened, to give him such an idea?

Ferris sighed and straightened his finger at the subdued Subaru.

Ferris: “Listen. Think of the broadcast, of what Lust said. This city has four water gates, right?”

Subaru: “Ah, right, they’d seized them, which means that they could be planning to sink the city… so, that’s a very dangerous situation….”

Ferris: “And there’s the possibility of an archbishop occupying each… Already, there are three archbishops gathered in one place, which is completely unprecedented. So the worst of worst situation comes to mind… there are even more archbishops here.”

Subaru: “Four… tch.”

Speaking the number out loud, Subaru finally understood what Ferris wanted to say.

There were four water gates, north, south, east, and west, which ran the city of Pristella. Occupying all of them implied,

Subaru: “So it could be that each tower has an archbishop guarding it? In that case, that should make four archbishops…”

Ferris: “Subaru-kyun, consider what just happened. —The broadcast just now used a magic which only exists in the City Hall. The enemy must also occupy the central hub of the city, meaning that they’ve captured five strongholds.”

Subaru: “—hk”

That even more hopeless speculation left Subaru breathless.

Like Ferris said, the City Hall must have been taken to give that broadcast. In addition to Lust, who occupied it, there must be two other archbishops.

The only fathomable explanation for that would be a coordinated attack from the Witch Cult.

Subaru: “Aside from the square I was in, has there been any other commotion? Have there been any other attacks?”

Ferris: “——”

If this were an offense by the Witch Cult, it would be difficult to imagine that they would only target a single location. Subaru could only pray that his worst fears of Casualties wouldn’t become a reality.

Absentmindedly, Ferris cast his gaze downward, falling silent. Ricardo gave a cough, a set of sharp teeth visible on the beastman’s large face.

Ricardo: “Honestly, the only situation we know is our own. We don’t even know where the other shelters are, so it’s in our best interest to stay here.”

Subaru: “Why? Shouldn’t we look for our allies so that we can collaborate? Aren’t you worried about them… that’s right!”

As he spoke, Ricardo gestured with his hands, and Subaru hurriedly looked up at Ferris.

In this shelter of wounded people, it was odd that Ferris and Ricardo were the only people Subaru knew. Especially when Ferris when here.

Subaru: “Where are Crusch-san and Wilhelm-san? It’s unusual for you three to be separated. Are they in another shelter?”

Ferris: "…You're asking a difficult question, Subaru-kyun. The only ones you know here are Ferri-chan and the mister, and as you can see—"

Ferris replied with a sense of unease, and Subaru felt a deep anxiety rise within himself. Then, a gentle voice relieved that intense atmosphere.

Suddenly hearing that voice, Subaru looked up and around, unable to locate its owner.

???: "I'm sorry. I seem to have been worrying you, Ferris-chan. It's good to see you, Subaru-sama."

Ferris: "Crusch-sama is such a meanie."

Subaru: "Wha? Huh?"

Ferris, who was conversing with his invisible master, reached into his dress. Subaru watched with round eyes as he pulled out a familiar object.

Subaru: "Wait, this is…"

Ferris: "That's right. It's loot from a year ago. We used them too, remember?" Ferris replied, revealing a hand mirror in his grip.

At first glance, the mirror lacked any defining characteristic, but rather than show a reflection, its face reflected a green-haired beauty with a gentle face — without a doubt, that was Crusch.

The magic device known as a Conversation Mirror was more or less this world's version of a cell phone, which lets it owners speak through paired mirrors. A year ago, they had played a role in the battle with the Witch Cult, and they had been brought to this city as well.

Crusch, opposite the mirror, frowned slightly before the silent Subaru.

Crusch: "Ferris. Subaru-sama seems a little troubled. Did you hide this from him? "

Ferris: "Syorry about that. But, but, I didn't think our next call would be so soon, so I didn't think it was that important to tell him yet."

Subaru: "W-Wait. Give me a moment. Thanks to the Conversation Mirrors, you're in contact with Crusch, who's at another shelter, is that right?"

Crusch: "Indeed."

As master and knight talked, Subaru took a moment to sort through his confusion. The Conversation Mirror explained Ferris's calmness about his missing master.

Tentatively, to confirm Crusch's safety with his own eyes, Subaru took the mirror from Ferris.

Subaru: “Thank goodness... is difficult to say right now with what’s happening, but we’re lucky that we could get in touch. Crusch-san, are you hurt at all?”

Crusch: “No, thanks for your concern. Fortunately, I managed to find a shelter in time, without suffering any injury. I heard that Subaru-sama received a serious wound and had to be carried in. How are you doing?”

Subaru: “I can’t say anything like, ‘I’m completely fine’, but it’s good enough. I’ll do something. I’ll move as soon as the wound is bandaged… Ferris, don’t look at me like that.”

As Subaru announced his intent, he felt Ferris’s harsh glare stabbing into him. However, although he was being ungrateful, Subaru couldn’t sit by and do nothing. Breaking the deadlock they were in was of the utmost urgency.

He couldn’t lie around obediently, waiting for conditions to deteriorate.

Subaru: “We’ll talk about this later… Crusch-san, how’s the situation in your shelter? Did anyone else make it there?”

Crusch: “Yes. There are several others with me…”

Julius: “I’m also here, Subaru. Fortunately, everyone who was in the hotel made it here.”

From somewhere behind Crusch, an elegant voice joined the conversation.

The moment he heard it, Subaru froze briefly before giving a sharp shake of his head. He didn’t want to be a fool who didn’t realize how encouraging that voice was.

Subaru: “Your presence there is kinda reassuring, Julius.”

Julius: “I heard you ended up being carried into your shelter, unconscious. Since you’ve climbed back up with your usual liveliness, it seems that my worries were baseless… Is it true that Emilia- sama was abducted?”

Subaru: “…It’s true. Sorry. I’m so useless.”

Julius: “You were facing two archbishops. I’m not so awful a man as to blame you for a lack of strength. Anastasia-sama and Crusch-sama are both here, as well as a few members of the Iron Fang. Ah, two of Felt-sama’s followers are here too.”

He quickly confirmed Emilia’s status, without holding Subaru accountable.

Although the kindness from the other side of the mirror was touching, it amplified Subaru’s feelings of guilt. While listening to his words, Subaru confirmed the presence of a wounded man in the refuge.

Subaru: “Right, you should tell Felt’s guys that their friend is here. He’s wounded, but alive.”

Julius: “I see, that’s good to hear. I’ll be sure to pass it on. They’re trying to act brave, but they’re obviously worried. —Well then, Subaru.”

After Ton and Kan had been informed of Larkins’s safety, Julius lowered his voice, changing the atmosphere of their conversation.

Julius: “What do we do?”

Subaru: “…I haven’t a clue why you’re asking me that.”

Julius: “As Sloth had shown, you seem to have a knack for dealing with the Witch Cult. Maybe you could pull something unexpected and solve this dilemma?”

Subaru: “What kind of nonsense is that? Sorry to disappoint, but I’m not some kind of Witch Cult expert.”

Julius: “That's regrettable. Now, about Emilia-sama. There is no doubt that your heart is the most anxious. What do you want to do?”

Subaru’s reply obviously hadn’t answered Julius’s expectations, but he wasn’t discouraged. He understood that thinking of Subaru as some miraculous archbishop slayer would be too much to look for.

Rather, the latter half of his sentence held his true question.

Subaru: “…Emilia was taken by Greed. He only spouts his own selfish beliefs and doesn’t accept any disagreements. I don’t want to leave Emilia with him for even a second.”

Julius: “That is to say, to rescue Emilia from Greed is your responsibility.”

Subaru: “Of course… did you just say responsibility?”

Julius spoke in a subdued tone as he showed Subaru an open palm, with five fingers outstretched.

Julius: “Listen, Subaru. Ferris should have clarified that there are likely five archbishops at each of Pristella’s key sites. Taking into account the status of each enemy, the division of the battle is a very important issue.”

Subaru: “… No matter from where, they can sink the Watergate City.”

Julius: “That’s right. The condition for defeating the archbishops is to attack each of those places at the same time. In the meantime, we have to reestablish contact with our forces, who are scattered across the city… you understand our situation, right?”

Although unable to get in touch with comrades in various places, Julius had put forth a plan of coordinated attack. Originally, the magic of the city was responsible for maintaining contact with those places.

However, when the city hall had fallen, everyone had been separated and had sought refuge in different shelters. In order to judge the state of the others shelters, action needed to be taken.

Ferris: “By the way, Wil-jii confirmed that there’s a mob wandering the city. They seem to have lost their senses and are acting like cultists.”

Subaru: “…That would be that bastard Sirius’s authority… Damn, this is looking more and more desperate by the second.”

Hearing Ferris’s annoying piece of information, Subaru scratched his face in agitation as more bad news came to light. At the very least, there must be a way of getting in touch with all the existing combat forces—

Subaru: “I don’t know where Otto and Garfiel are, and Emilia’s been kidnapped by Greed. What a mess…”

Julius: “Joshua and Deputy Chief of the Iron Fang are both missing, as are Wilhelm-sama, Felt-sama, and Reinhard. Priscilla-sama, too…”

Subaru: “I don’t know where Al and that garbage man are, but Priscilla should have been in the city park before the commotion started. I don’t know what happened to her after that… damn it, Liliana should be with her too.”

Priscilla wasn’t normal in any sense of the word, and Liliana was also honestly very strange. Subaru didn’t want either of them to be hurt.

Taking into account Priscilla’s proclaimed luck and that Songstress’s character, Subaru could only hope that they would be fine.

Patrasche had also been in the Water Plumage Pavilion. She was smart enough to avoid attention, so worrying about her would be needless.

Constant sources of worry plagued Subaru, and he felt that launching five simultaneous attacks was outside of the realm of possibility.

No matter how it was said, it would be impossible. There weren’t enough combatants to attack five locations, not to mention that they would be facing archbishops. The only thing most people could bring to such a fight was hope.

Subaru: “… Wait. Why do we have to go after all give places at the same time?”

Julius: “What do you mean? It’s as we’ve already said. The Witch Cult can do tremendous damage from anywhere they occupy. Seizing one place would leave them with the rest…”

Subaru: “It’s not like that though, right? I understand that we need to seize all four towers eventually. But why at the same time?”

Julius: “Once they discover that they’ve been sabotaged in one location, it’s a matter of course that the other archbishops would commence with their plans, no? That must be why they launched such a coordinated attack.”

Julius gave a clear response to Subaru’s doubts.

While listening to his words, Subaru pondered their accuracy. Of course, Julius’s logic was clear and sound. But the opponents they faced weren’t normal ones.

In that square, Regulus and Sirius had fought lethally.

Regulus hadn’t been serious, and so he hadn’t done much harm, but Sirius had definitely been intending to kill him. Regulus should have been able to defeat her in minutes.

Those guys, could they really have worked together to capture the city?

Subaru: “… Do they have any real sense of cooperation. Of course, they said that they’d collaborated to seize the watergates, but can they keep in organized contact every step of the way? That’s what I’m thinking.”

Julius: “On what basis?”

Subaru: “In the square I was at, two of the archbishops were trying to kill each other. They only stopped because they were given new instructions from the Gospel. If they hadn’t, one would probably have killed the other.”

Julius: “So they can’t coordinate properly…?”

Julius still appeared faintly uncertain at Subaru’s reply. Subaru understood his concern, however.

Subaru: “Is there anyone with access to the outside?”

Julius: “A couple members of the Iron Fang are scouting with an eye on the towers… what are you thinking?”

Subaru: “Although this could just be conjecture, isn’t the simplest way of communication just casting magic signals in the air? In such a complex city, verbal communications is troublesome. At the very least, it would take a long time without a Conversation Mirror.”

Julius: “The likelihood that the Witch Cult brought any such mirrors is low. My spirits would doubtlessly have detected them already. —Right, that’s it.”

They reached the same conclusions simultaneously. Subaru spoke first with an “ah”.

Subaru: “So they routinely make easily understood communications. If some type of commotion doesn’t arise, or they fail to notice it, they don’t act. And so, that reduces our need to disperse our combat

forces.”

Julius: “… The only problem with this proposal is that one place is different from all the others.”

Subaru: “—The City Hall. The building that can inform the other towers of the attack. So we’d have to start with that one.”

The initial concentration of combat would be focused on the city’s central office. They would have to go there and defeat the Archbishop of Lust with their current force, and destroy the other towers one by one afterward.

Even then, it would be a test of speed, but the risk would be much lower than that of attacking all five locations at once. Subaru thought so, believed so.

Julius: “——”

On the other side of the mirror, Julius fell into a thoughtful silence.

Subaru’s proposal was based on the poor relationship between Regulus and Sirius, optimistically assuming that The Witch Cult was a Mess of Messes.

Of course, if the gospel had given a command like Kill Everyone in Pristella, that hope would be fundamentally subverted.

If he’d known this was going to happen, he should have attempted to ask for the content of the Gospel back then—

???: “—My deepest apologies for being late, can everyone hear me?”

In the middle of a heavy silence, another voice suddenly joined the conversation.

The weather-beaten, aged voice which Subaru so looked up to was more reliable than anything else in the present situation.

The face of a white-haired old man was reflected in the Conversation Mirror.

Subaru: “Wilhelm-san! You’re okay!”

Ferris: “Wil-jii! Thank goodness. You didn’t get in touch, it made people worry!”

Ferris also heard a familiar voice. At their welcome, Wilhelm opened his eyes and nodded.

Wilhelm: “My apologies, I was caught up in some trouble and couldn’t find a calm place. Now, finally, some citizens and I have arrived at a shelter. Subaru-dono and Ferris, seeing your safety gives me peace. And Crusch-sama?”

Crusch: “I'm fine. Wilhelm, I’m so glad you’re safe.”

Wilhelm: “Don’t worry about me… it was due to my powerlessness that I wasn’t at your side in this situation. Please allow me to trouble you to wait quietly. I will find you.”

Subaru: “Amazing, this feeling of relief isn’t normal…”

As Crusch and Wilhelm spoke through the mirror, Subaru, finding that the dialogue between master and subordinate held an overwhelming sense of security, sighed with admiration for Wilhelm.

Then, happy for his safety, Subaru ruminated his conversation with Julius as he attempted to organize a summary for Wilhelm.

However,

???: “There are several things to be said, but this is the most urgent.”

At that moment, Wilhelm vanished from the mirror, replaced by a beastman; a kitten wearing a monocle.

This was the Deputy Chief of the Iron Fang, Tivey, who seemed to have joined forces with Wilhelm. His expression was unusually anxious.

Ricardo: “Hey! If it isn’t Tivey! Your safety is better than than anything else.”

Tivey: “You too, Chief… but, we’re not fine right now. Is my sister with you right now?”

Ricardo: “Mimi? I haven’t seen her, did something happen?”

At Tivey’s feeble voice, Ricardo squinted into the mirror, where someone had replaced Tivey.

Hetaro: “Chief! Sister! Sister was…!”

Ricardo: “Hetaro? Why are you in such a panic?”

The one who had flown into view was Tivey’s identical brother, Hetaro. Flying out with tears is, and Tibi (looks) like the brother of Darkarot. He was usually a mellow youth, but, right now, his face was distorted with grief.

Tears filled his round eyes, and his voice shook as he gazed into the mirror.

Hetaro: “O-Our Divine Protection of Trisection activated, from my sister! H-Her wound was so serious, and sister, she… hk!”

Tivey: “Brother, calm down… It’s like he said. When sister was wounded, the wound also reached me and brother, so…”

Ricardo: “—Understood. Wait there, I’ll find Mimi immediately. Don’t cry, just wait.”

In a voice lower than Subaru had ever heard from him, Ricardo spoke into the mirror.

In that smooth sound, Subaru felt a pressure unlike any he’d felt before, and he stepped back, trembling.

The beastman’s eyes were full of anger, and his open mouth revealed a row of sharp canine teeth. He drew his blade, his large muscles tense.

He almost appeared to be searching for the missing girl in that very moment.

Anastasia: “—Wait, Ricardo. I can’t allow such an arbitrary action.”

The voice which stopped Ricardo from charging out came from another mirror. Ricardo turned back to face Anastasia, who’d claimed the mirror.

He frowned, lifting his blade at his employer.

Ricardo: “Don’t stop me, lady. I don’t want to kid with you right now.”

Anastasia: “Surely, Ricardo, our long bond would have you realize that I’m not kidding around. Don’t make me say it again. Right now, unauthorized actions cannot be allowed. Even for Mimi’s sake.”

Ricardo: “ARE YOU ASKING ME TO ABANDON MIMI !!?”

Opening his mouth, the rage expelled from Ricardo’s mouth shook the air of the shelter.

That intensity was no laughing matter. Subaru stumbled several steps backward, away from the beast who emanated rage. Ricardo fixed his gaze on Anastasia.

Through the mirror, she met it unflinchingly.

Anastasia: “You should understand, Ricardo. We’ve entered unforeseen circumstances. You are my most important weapon. I cannot let you leave without permission.”

Ricardo: “You dare say this? Who do you think you’re talking to, Ana-bo… tch!”

Anastasia: “You, of course. Don’t you forget, dog monster.”

The two spoke names only old acquaintances would recognize. His skin tingling with electricity, Subaru searched for a place to interject.

He wanted to support Ricardo. But he could also understand Anastasia’s sound opinion.

And he was an outside. Anastasia, someone who wasn’t, who held a close relationship with them, chose to prioritize the safety of the city over Mimi.

Subaru realized that there was nothing for him to interrupt. Ricardo, too, should understand.

Subaru: “——”

In this way, time trickled on.

If Ricardo forced his exit, the injured Subaru and non-combatants couldn’t stop him. Anastasia, who looked coolly into his eyes from across the magic mirror — only she could do anything.

However, Ricardo suddenly turned his head away from the mirror's gaze.

Subaru: “Wait, Ricardo!”

Anastasia: “—Stop, don’t rush to make a conclusion.”

Seeing Ricardo's movement, Anastasia spoke. Ricardo gave a silent response. He turned back and sniffed at the entrance to the shelter.

Ricardo: “Something’s close by. What is this… the scent of blood?”

Subaru: “The scent of blood…?”

Among so many wounds, he seemed to be able to detect a fresh scent.

Alert, Ricardo held his blade to the entrance of the shelter. Subaru and Ferris swallowed, watching Ricardo’s judgment.

????: “—hk!”

Heavy footsteps cast a shadow over the refuge of the shelter.

In that moment, the patients in the shelter, intimidated by the insolence of the intruder, held their collective breath. It was none other that Subaru who broke that silence.

Standing there was a familiar short, blond figure.

Subaru: “Garfiel!?”

A sweaty, panting Garfiel.

Suddenly noticing Subaru, he ran over with a strange wobble in his step. Then, Subaru noticed. Why Garfiel’s movements were so shaky.

Garfiel: “——”

Everyone was lost for words as Garfiel reached Subaru. There, he bowed his head and sank to his knees,

kneeling.

Garfiel: “Sorry, captain… hk! My amazin’ self, is... worthless…! Incompetent… hk!”

After saying so, Garfiel raised a pained cry.

Lying in his bloodied arms was the figure of a dying Mimi.

Arc 5 - Chapter 29, "Gorgeous Tiger"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-29-gorgeous-tiger/

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—Half a day before Garfiel had rushed into the shelter,

Mimi: “And then~ Hetaro was on the verge of tears, so Mimi had no choice but to hold his hand. And then Tivey looked lonely, so Mimi had no choice~ So I ended up holding both of their hands~!”

Garfiel: “…ah, ‘s that so?”

Mimi: “Yep, that’s right~. And then, after that~, Missy looked really~ happy!”

Even given that uninterested response, the petite girl walking beside him smiled, not discouraged in the least.

The naive girl had orange hair and round eyes. Garfiel had no idea why she had entangled herself with someone from a hostile faction — this beastman, Mimi.

She had been like this since coming to the city of Pristella. No, looking back, she’d been clinging to Garfiel ever since she’d gone to the Roswaal Mansion as a messenger.

Initially, he had suspected that Mimi had been trying to get a read on Emilia’s strongest retainer, but that hypothesis had been long since dismissed due to Mimi’s behavior. Now, Garfiel had no clue why she’d attached herself to him.

The ‘why’ was impossible to deduce, and Garfiel could only tilt his head curiously to the side.

—Now, they were walking along Pristella’s streets together in the dusk.

Neither had invited the other; rather, Mimi had just followed Garfiel as he’d skulked away from the hotel.

Although he’d hoped to be alone to mediate on his thoughts, Garfiel was too embarrassed to give that excuse to shake her off. Overwhelmed by Mimi’s eagerness, he’d fallen into this trite conversation, while trying to sort though his feelings.

Mimi: “Gar~f, your expression is weird~. What happened? Was it something~ fun?”

Garfiel: “If somethin’ fun’n happen’, wouldn’t my amazin’ self look happy? My amazin’ self don’t wanna talk ‘bout it, and there’s no obligation t’talk ‘bout it.”

Mimi: “If you keep talking about complicated stuff like obligations, you’ll end up like Joshua, yeah? Mimi thinks it’s better to relax and enjoy stuff! It’s better when Garfiel throws his head back~ laughing like an idiot~.”

Garfiel: “You sayin’ I look like’n idiot?”

Mimi’s exaggerated words really were too exaggerated, and Garfiel bared his teeth open eyes wide open. She gave an “ahh~!” and dashed away. She stopped a little ways away, giggling as she waited for him to catch up, seemingly having forgotten their previous interaction. Garfiel found it incredulous that she’d accuse him of being the one who laughed like an idiot.

An hour or so ago, before dinner, Garfiel had challenged the Sword Saint Reinhard to a battle.

The strongest in the kingdom — or, as some would say, the strongest in the world, was today’s Sword Saint.

Before their actual meeting, Garfiel had heard of his power from Subaru.

Reinhard was a friend, a benefactor, and, in a somewhat complex way, a rival to Subaru. Encountering him in this unexpected place came as a surprise.

Through their conversations, Subaru revealed that he’d more or less successfully resolved his embarrassment from before. Since that grievance had dissipated, Garfiel felt no particular obligation to sugarcoat anymore.

The title of Strongest held a very special meaning to Garfiel.

To be the strongest. To see becoming the strongest as a goal. To strive to become the strongest. Garfiel believed that as soon as man was born, his first cry would place that as his lofty goal.

Everyone, no matter who, had once longed and dreamed to be the Strongest as they walked the

long road known as Life. Everyone would eventually forget that distant dream. Everyone except Garfiel.

That dream had taken root in his heart, and had been a source of so much of his persistence along the way. To Garfiel, the title of Strongest was a combination of his goal, something he had been granted since birth, and indispensable condition allowing him to guard everything he wanted protect.

Therefore, in front of the man who stood at the apex of strength, Garfiel did not repress his restless teeth and claws.

He had gone to Subaru, and received permission to challenge Reinhard.

The Sword Saint seemed a far cry from the strongest; he gave off the impression of being a gentle, kind man who had no martial prowess.

However, Garfiel knew that the most powerful people were able to hide their own power. Setting aside his own tendency to act up, most strong people didn’t look strong as they went through their daily activities. Roswaal and Subaru were like that.

He judged Reinhard to be in the same field as them.

— The contest took place in a gravel-covered hotel courtyard.

Refusing Garfiel's proposal to leave the hotel for the city's fields for fear of the damage to their surroundings, Reinhard had settled for a fight located at a hotel, adding the conditions of Don’t Damage the Courtyard.

That could only be said to be humiliating. Even if he were the strongest man, he was underestimating Garfiel. Immediately wanting to force him to regret that demeaning arrogance, Garfiel had dragged him outside.

The confrontation took place in the courtyard, where Subaru had issued a command marking the start of the match. Garfiel had bared his teeth, thinking only of casting the metal on his wrists at the crimson hero.

Garfiel: “——”

That thought vanished almost instantaneously.

The man before him could move faster than one might blink.

Until that very moment, his gentle atmosphere hadn’t fallen away. Now, it dissipated to reveal a sharp blade and finely honed flame.

An ordinary person wouldn’t be able to feel how his natural state was razor sharp, as if he were a sword himself.

To a certain extent, if a person knew little about martial arts, that feeling would manifest as a sense of

oppression which crushed their lungs.

But that wasn’t Garfiel.

Garfiel at least held the strength worthy of the Sword Saint.

Noticing that natural body and even trembling under the pressure to his organs, Garfiel howled away his hesitation as he flew at Reinhard.

Their match wasn’t meant to be lethal, and they had agreed to cause no serious injuries— forgetting that agreement, he had aimed at Reinhard’s throat with his sharp claws, striving for a decisive blow.

In that moment, before his blow could land, elegantly his body was caught in midair, and Garfiel truly understood the disparity in their strength.

Garfiel: “—I lost.”

After that, despite launching offensive attacks from various angles, Reinhard had still casually evaded all of Garfiel’s tactics.

On top of that, Reinhard had avoided them all without even taking a step away from where he’d first stood.

In other words, Garfiel had exhausted all his strength against only Reinhard’s upper body.

Having a sudden, heavy blow drill into him, tossing him into the air, Garfiel had declared his own defeat.

The Sword Saint hadn’t even drawn a sword, his area of expertise. He’d defeated Garfiel with only his bare fists.

What exactly Reinhard and Subaru had said after that, Garfiel couldn’t quite recall.

To be so ingracious or foolhardy as to not accept his loss wasn’t an impression that Garfiel had wanted to give. He’d left the hotel with only a few words.

He was unable to sort through his feelings as they were swept into a whirlpool.

Strangled by his the unanswerable emotions, Garfiel had sought an answer alone as he walked the Watergate City— which had led him up to here.

Mimi: “Gar~f! Gar~f! Look! Take a look~! The sunset’s completely reflected in the water! It’s super~ red! This is awesome~! Amazing! So beautiful~!”

The noisy girl led Garfiel around, pulling on his sleeve, yanking on his hair, settling on his shoulders, and he’d been left with no choice but to follow her.

Thanks to her, he'd accomplished leaving the hotel, but was left with no time alone.

Garfiel: "Oi, from th'very start, y've been so noisy. Can'y settle down a bit, midget?"

Mimi: "Ahhh... nope~!"

Garfiel: "An immediate answer?!"

She grabbed Garfiel's wrists, running and spinning. Wrists gripped with an unexpectedly strong traction, Garfiel spun in circles with her.

The idea of extracting his wrist and fleeing at the speed of light had crossed his mind, but he didn't know if Mimi's beastman blood would provide her with a means to catch up. Mimi could be able to easily catching up with Garfiel's escape.

He had to take into consideration how conspicuous he'd look.

Before leaving for Pristella, both Frederica and Ram reminded him repeatedly that troubling Emilia or Subaru because of his own quirkiness would set a bad example. The only one he could trouble was Otto, who was like an older brother used to cleaning up messes.

Garfiel: "Haha."

Mimi: "Oh~ oh~, what's wrong, Gar~f? Is there something voxing… vicing… vixing you?"

Garfiel: "Ya mean somethin' vexin'?"

Mimi: "Yep, vixing! What happened~? Talk about it~, talk about it~!"

He was unable to speak candidly to Mimi and she hit him repeatedly in the side with an, "oi, ooiii". Considering her petite, oddly sturdy form, Garfiel shook himself out of his daze.

He leaned into the waterway, appreciating the view.

Garfiel: "Ah… 's really is a movin' scene."

Mimi: "Right? This is awesome ~! Amazing!"

Although Mimi should only be listened to half the time, the reflection of the setting sun in the water was indeed a bright, inspiring scene. The glittering water was stained with white and yellow light, and the sky was covered in an orange sunset.

Having become aware of it, Garfiel sat on the edge of the waterway, watching the sluggish coming and going of sailboats.

Mimi: "Hmm~ hmm~ hmm~"

Taking a seat beside him, Mimi shook her feet happily as she hummed a tune through her nose. Although her character was one which couldn't be silenced, right now, she was behaving rather well. Grabbing Garfiel's half-clothed shoulders, she bobbed her head up and down.

Taking a sideways glance at her happy face, he discovered that the color of Mimi's hair matched the orange shade of the sunset exactly. He subconsciously reached out a hand to brush her head, and Mimi seemed to be pleased, leaning into his touch.

Mimi: "Fluffy? Fluffy? Mimi~'s head is often touched by Missy too! She pets it and calls it something like a Healing Idol."

Garfiel: "Ah, really's kinda comfertable. That Healing Idol, or whatever, t'Captain sometimes says stuff like th... 'r somethin'."

Mimi: "Gar~f, do you still feel annoyed?"

Garfiel: "'S 'bout somethin' else now!"

Mimi: "Huh?"

As Mimi tilted her head, her face the very picture of innocence, Garfiel laughed inadvertently.

Relief began to blossom in his chest, washing away the feeling he was someone cheap. A sense of humiliation was replaced by determination.

Garfiel: "…bein the strongest so sudden 's'not possible. My amazin' self is still on th'journey there."

Mimi: "Ohh, so you're climbing the ladder to bein the bestest~!"

Garfiel: "Hey, y'understand pretty well. Yeah, 's the proper way t'becoming' the strongest." Mimi raised her first, and Garfiel touched his fingers to the white scar on his forehead in reply.

Although her chattiness was annoying, she had also cheered him up. If he was alone, he would probably still be moping morosely. Mimi's company had turned out to be quite helpful.

Garfiel: "Oi, midget, while we're here, how 'bout we go to a stall n'grab a bite? It'll be my amazin' self's treat."

Mimi: "Gar~f, look!"

Garfiel: "Ah?"

With that invitation, Garfiel got to his feet, patting down his bottom.

Mimi was still seated by the waterway, and her cry caught Garfiel's attention as he followed her gaze. Then, he narrowed his eyes.

On the other side of the waterway, the ropes of a sailboat had come undone, leaving the boat stranded as it began to drift down the waterway. It was empty, but the problem didn't lie there.

Mimi: "Hey, kids!"

Mimi gave a loud warning cry in that direction— where five children playing in another boat were careening toward the drifting boat.

The children didn't notice the approach of the other boat. If they collided, their boat could end up being overturned, throwing the children into the waterway.

At Mimi's shout, other people around the waterway had taken notice. One of the boat owners flew toward the children in a panic, but he wouldn't make it in time.

Hearing the shrill voices of the spectators, the children finally noticed their situation and panicked as the saw the sudden approach of the empty boat.

Then—

Garfiel: "Yo, kids. Thank the midget cat nee-chan who noticed you."

Mimi: "Gar~f!"

He'd suddenly leapt onto the boat, keeping an astonishing balance as he landed. To the children, the silent Garfiel could only be considered a miracle from heaven.

With a crooked smile and a fiercy laugh, the children stiffened, intimidated by the scary blond stranger. As their panic died down, Garfiel scooped the five children into his arms, making another leap.

They landed on a sidewalk near the waterway as the boats collided violently, capsizing the boat that had been carrying the children.

Garfiel, by cleverly having kept hold of the the ropes connecting the boats, prevented a chain reaction of collisions that would have sank a series of boats.

Restraining the movement of the overturned boat prevented the detached boat from drifting further downstream and minimized the area of effect.

Garfiel: "ight, th'should do it!"

After anchoring the ropes firmly, Garfiel ended his struggle, with an uproar of cheers and applause from the witnesses.

One of the shipowners, who should have been monitoring the condition of the boat, bowed his head to convey his gratitude, which Garfiel waved off, scratching his head and looking shy.

Then,

Kid: “O-Onii-chan. Thank you very much.”

Garfiel: “Ohh?”

The rescued children gathered and poured grateful words upon Garfiel.

They had lost the timid expressions they’d worn on the boat, merely gazing at Garfiel with glittering expressions. As Garfiel met their gazes, their hyperactive clapping hands began to move even faster.

Faced with that, Garfiel felt his mood lighted as he rubbed his nose.

Garfiel: “‘S no need for anythin’ like that. Happen’d by chance… ah, ya by chance. My amazin’ self was guided here by a wind ‘f fate. ‘s the City of Water, surrounded by waterways… if anyone ended up sheddin’ tears, there’d be a flood, yeah?”

The applause began to calm as Garfiel gave his complacent response.

The cheers had also become intermittent. However, unlike the spectators, the children gave dramatic reactions.

Kids: “Wow, amazing!” “So cool~!”

“For tears, regardless of danger!”

“Never flinching! Never doubting! Never hesitating!”

Garfiel nodded with satisfaction at the excited children. Then, with an eager gaze, one of them voiced a question.

Kid: “Big brother, what’s your name?”

Garfiel: “It ain’t not worth mentionin’. However, ‘f pressed for it… my amazin’ self’s a tiger. Ya, a gorgeous tiger. GORGEOUS TIGER!!”

Kids: “Gorgeous! TIGER!!”

Garfiel stuck a pose, leaning back with his hands stretched obliquely to the sky. Eyes shining, the children gave hushed whispers of excitement as they imitated him.

As Garfiel shared his heart with the children surrounding him, Mimi rushed over, her eyes shining as well.

Mimi: “— Gar~f, so cool~!”

She ran over to joined the ranks of the children crowding around Garfiel.

The delighted laughter of the children, Mimi, and Garfiel rang through the twilit waterways.

—The applause and cheers had long since dissipated, leaving only the solitary shipowner regarding them with a smile.

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Garfiel bounced with energy as he shared snacks with the children at a stall.

Garfiel: “Them, my amazin’ self said, ‘Now, I won’t let ya take even one more step forward, y’inferior scum! ‘S the Captain’s territory, and y’ve already been trapped here!’ Hah!”

Mimi: “Amazing~! So cool~!”

Kid: “Woah! That’s so cool~!”

As Pristella was infiltrated by the glow of sunset, Garfiel shared stories of the past year with Mimi and the kids.

What he’d just described was one of the most impressive events that had happened, the Soil Spider Hunt.

A nearby village had an outbreak of a witchbeast known as Soil Spiders, and somehow Subaru, Garfiel, and Otto had been caught up in the crusade against them, in a perfect combination of Otto and Subaru’s scheming and Garfiel’s strength.

One of the rescued children happily listened to Garfiel’s recollections. He was a child with blond hair, only around six or seven years old age.

He had lovely features and a cute smiling face that would surely one day attract lovelorn sighs from women. But right now, he was just a child admiring Garfiel’s way of living.

After buying the children snacks, Garfiel had taken it upon himself to escort the children safely to their homes, one by one. Four of the five have returned home unharmed, which meant that this boy was the last one.

Garfiel: “With just a small group, ya went out pretty far t’play. Ain’t that dangerous?” As they undertook the considerate journey to the child’s house, Garfiel frowned.

The children’s adventure had taken them to the intersection of First and Second Street, near where the Muse Headquarters was located. As they walked, Garfiel couldn’t help thinking they’d wandered too far.

In fact, they’d come all the way from Third Street. Without any detours, the journey would take nearly a full hour to complete.

The child grinned in response.

Kid: “Occasionally, the Songstress goes to the park on First Street. We were looking for her!”

Garfiel: “Uh… ‘s that so? Captain said her singin’s pretty powerful, too, but my amazin’ self's kinda suspicious.”

Rubbing his nose, Garfiel found it difficult to agree with the child’s reply.

Garfiel had only met the Songstress Liliana once, at the Muse Headquarters. Even that brief interaction was enough to have left a significant degree of impact on him. Liliana was, beyond a doubt, a girl with a strong personality. However, that ‘strength’ was rather incompatible with the impression of a pure, honest bard.

Mimi: “Gar~f, have you never heard the Songstress’s singing? It~ really is~ very powerful!”

Garfiel: “Have you, midget?”

Mimi: “Yep~! I didn’t fall asleep until the end~! Mimi’s so strong~! Praise Mimi~!”

Garfiel obediently stroked Mimi on the head. She gave a “success~!” and happily dashed away, before turning back around expectantly.

Mimi: “So, did you hear her sing?”

Kid: “Nope, we missed her. However, since we’d gone all the way to that faraway street…”

Garfiel: “‘S that why y’were playin’ in the river? Well, ‘s good that my amazin’ self was there.”

Kid: “Gorgeous Tiger!”

Garfiel: “Ha!”

As the boy stretched his hand toward the sky, Garfiel mimicked his motion. That was a reference to Gorgeous Tiger.

They posed together energetically, but the child soon dropped his wrist with a tired sigh. Garfiel tilted his head to one side.

Garfiel: “Why’d’ya look so down? Don’t sigh, yer happiness will run away, y’know.”

Kid: “Well, that… when I get home, my sister will be mad.”

Garfiel: “What?”

As the boy revealed his fear of his sister in a cry, Garfiel overreacted by grabbing his shoulders anxiously.

Garfiel: “Ah, sorry. But, why’s she goin’ to be so angry?”

Kid: “…Because, I snuck out.”

Garfiel: “Ah…”

This boy seemed to have neglected to inform his sister that he would be out with friends today. As a result, his family was probably frustrated and worried sick.

That feeling was not unfamiliar to Garfiel. As a brother, the presence of a sister, would, no matter for how long, continue to exist as a terrifying barrier.

Even after ten years of separation, after he’d grown up, the fear of losing to his sister had increased rather than decreased.

Garfiel: “Got it. Leave ‘t up t’my amazin’ self.”

Kid: “…Huh?”

Garfiel patted his chest proudly as the little boy revealed his shock.

As if trying to ease his downcast, Garfiel laughed, showing his sharp teeth.

Garfiel: “The scariness of an older sister ‘s somethin’ my amazin’ self’s familiar with. ‘F yer scary sister comes rushin’ at ya, my amazin’ self’ll protect ya.”

Kid: “Big brother!”

The emotional child hugged Garfiel tightly. Mimi joined the hug, grabbing Garfiel from behind.

In this way, being held front and back by the little ones, Garfiel renewed his determination and struggled with them as they continued their journey.

The sunset really was approaching, and they wouldn’t make it back by dinner time, but today wasn’t a bad day.

No matter how he looked at it, he wouldn’t be able to calmly dine in the same hall as Reinhard. However, after a night of cooling down, he’d probably be able to manage it.

That was thanks to the children who admired the Gorgeous Tigers, as well as Mimi’s inscrutably infectious cheerful attitude.

???: “—Fred!”

A deafeningly high-pitched voice suddenly attacked Garfiel’s ears.

He lifted his head in surprise, and caught sight of the sprinting figure of a girl. She had long, elegant blonde hair, and was glaring intently at the boy with Garfiel.

The boy looked in her direction and opened his mouth. Then,

Fred: “Sister…”

Sister: “You, just how worried are you going to make us before you’re satisfied!?”

The girl leapt forward to deliver a flexible kick to her brother, whose body gently bounced back.

Garfiel, who’d witnessed that action, was frozen by shock and too slow to respond to the beautiful girl, who’d landed neatly.

During that time, she fixed Garfiel with a sharp gaze and dug into his foot with her heel.

Sister: “You suspicious person, what do you want with my Fred?”

Garfiel: “Gah… first ‘f all, move your foot, midget.”

As he faced the maelstrom of her attack and angry words, Garfiel replied in a steady voice. Seeing that her preemptive attacks hadn’t caused any harm, the girl retreated backward with a timid expression.

Although she’d thought that Garfiel would be angry, Garfiel hadn’t reached a state of anger yet. Rather, he was still surprised.

He had never imagined that there would actually be a sister who indiscriminately delivered fierce kicks to her younger brother.

Incidentally, the young boy who had been kicked had had his impact softened. With a “hey~!”, Mimi had flown toward him, hugging him and landing gently.

Now, they had gotten to their feet, brushing each other off.

Seeing that through the corner of his eye, Garfiel issued a sigh. And at his reaction,

Sister: “What’s, with that attitude… If you have something to say, just say it, and don’t do anything to me or Fred… I, I’m terrifying when I get mad…”

Garfiel: “First of all, ‘s misunderstandin’ here. Also, don’t fly toward yer brother like that. Y’might accidentally cause a heavy, injury, got ‘t?”

Sister: “Hah…”

Squatting down, Garfiel spoke quietly to the girl.

The boy's sister was also young — only around ten years old, the age of precocious puberty where she'd try a little too much. Her initial sharpness had faded, and her expression morphed into one of tearfulness at Garfiel's calm and steady response.

What she said was surely a bluff, but she'd gathered her courage to go up against Garfiel. In a sense, her courage had rendered her even more afraid, in an unfortunate turn of events.

Fred: "Uwa, Gorgeous Tiger… Please don't get too angry with my sister."

Then, unable to bear seeing his trembling sister, the boy patted his body clean of dust and stood at her back, pleading with Garfiel. His sister's expression revealed that her self-esteem was hurt over his pleas on her behalf, but she still had the dignity to try to protect her brother from Garfiel. Although he didn't know what had happened at first, they didn't seem to have a bad relationship.

Garfiel: "So my amazin' self looks like a bad guy. 'S kinda displeasing t'hear."

Mimi: "A bad guy! Being a bad guy isn't good~, Gar~f, be Gorgeous Tiger instead!"

Mimi leapt up and gave Garfiel's head a poke. Although it didn't hurt, it was a rather puzzling blow.

The pointless confrontation between siblings and Garfiel then continued. Just as he wondered how long this would last,

???: "Sister, Fred, where are you two?"

The voice that broke the stalemate came from someone else.

Hearing that gentle voice, the siblings caught each other's gaze. Garfiel watched as the two ran in its direction.

Sister and brother arrived at the corner of the road, where a woman had appeared. They flew toward her without hesitation.

That blonde woman was more than likely their mother.

Fred: "Mom!"

Sister: "Mom, that suspicious person, something about gorgeous, and Fred…"

The elder sister held onto her mother, sobbing, and the little brother defended Garfiel's innocence. After listening to the children's rambles, the person in question smiled.

Garfiel: "——"

She stepped forward, her children still clinging to her, revealing her face.

Mimi: “Gar~f?”

Garfiel froze, and Mimi turned around, surveying him.

However, Garfiel was unable to respond to Mimi’s concern. His heart, chaotic with waves of confusion, had no such energy to spare.

After all, the person who stood there was,

???: “Well, my children seem to have been taken care of, my apologies. If possible, could you tell me what happened?”

She spoke in soothing, gentle tones which held not even the slightest sign of malice or suspicion.

With a few strides, she’d arrived in front of him. Even as Garfiel trembled and shivered at her presence, she tilted her head, as if confused.

That expression, that attitude, that voice, they all seized Garfiel with abject shock.

Garfiel: “—Mom?”

A hoarse murmur escaped his throat.

Arc 5 - Chapter 3, "Each Gives Perspective"

by admin - Wednesday, November 28, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/28/arc-5-chapter-3-each-gives-perspective/

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Emilia: ?It wasn't fair to Otto-kun that we decided so much on our own.?

After speaking with Joshua and returning to her room, Emilia speaks as she offers Subaru a seat. Subaru seats himself there and chuckles,

Subaru: ?Leaving Otto's panic aside as a legend for future generations, I basically always support your ideas, Emilia-tan. But if I'm gonna mention something to be worried about, it'd have to be the fact that they're ready and waiting for us.?

Emilia: ?I don't think Anastasia would take risks anyway, if she's sending messengers. Mimi-chan may've been there, but Joshua-kun still took control when I tried to take control.?

Subaru: ?She recognizes you as an opponent if she's sending her Knight's family as her messenger. I

always wondered why in Sengoku dramas, when they send important people as messengers, they don't just kill them. But turns out there's all this background stuff. Didn't think I'd be learning that by experience.?

It's a question of trust between the parties and the people. If the people learn that the rulers acted unjustly, it harms the ruler's standing. And each faction faces too many enemies to be acting disgracefully. Otherwise, since a group faces more clandestine enemies the larger it grows, it's simple logic to be careful when challenging influential people.

—The meeting with Joshua Juukulius is over, and night has fallen upon the new Roswaal Mansion.

Since it would be awful to send them back on the same day they arrived, they offered to let Joshua and Mimi stay the night, and accepted the invitation to Pristella City. Joshua had been rather imposing when discussing the topic, but everyone saw his relief peeking through when their side accepted the invitation. His monocle was likely just a decoration to garner a certain impression from others, the earnest young lad.

Subaru: ?He's way more likeable than his brother.?

Emilia: ?You are always so insincere about Julius. Do you still have a grudge from that time in the palace??

Emilia catches Subaru's mutter, and amusedly pokes fun at him. Just thinking about the affair used to make his face redden in shame, and his stomach burn with indignation. But how about now that some time has passed?

Subaru: ?It's still too vivid for me to laugh and smile about it. I was young back then. And I have reflected on my actions. Wish he'd do the same.?

Emilia: ?But I heard you both apologized and made up. It's so uncool to give shallow apologies and keep simmering on the inside.?

Subaru: ?Mnngh... But I'm only human!?

Emilia looks at him reproachfully, but Subaru remains stubborn. Subaru looks away. Emilia frowns at him for a moment, but ultimately can't hold back her grin.

Emilia: ?Fine. Subaru, you are just so stubborn. But you're not allowed to fight with Julius if we see him in Pristella. You're a knight now, and knights mustn't misuse their power.?

Subaru: ?Yeah yeah you've bested me my Liege.?

Subaru covers up his blushing with some jokes and rubs at his upper lip. He gazes absently around Emilia's room, before seeming to remember something,

Subaru: ?Oh yeah, Emilia-tan. I don't really know much about Pristella, is it known for anything??

Emilia: ?Hmp, you need to study more, Subaru. Pristella is one of the five main cities of Lugnica, on the Tigracy River that marks the border with Kararagi. It's famous for being built right on a huge lake, with canals flowing through the city.?

Subaru: ?Ok so leaving aside that that's all second-hand information, it's a floating city. Well you have Venice, so may as well be possible here too.?

Venice springs to mind when it comes to aquatic cities. The town is surrounded by water on all sides, with lakes winding nonchalantly through the stone cityscape. It's one of those romantic places that everyone visits at least once, and Subaru regards it as a picturesque spot too. And so that's the impression he gets of Pristella.

Emilia: ?No, Subaru. Pristella isn't a floating city, it's a Watergate City.?

Subaru: ?Watergate??

Emilia: ?Yes. It's in the middle of a lake, so the city floods when it rains. They built huge walls around the city to stop that, and there's gates to regulate the water levels. The gates are sooo amazing and famous that they don't call it the Floating City, they call it the Watergate City.?

Emilia's explanation flips Subaru's pretty water town into an enclosed watery jail. The concept is all so beautiful, and then they ruin it with these giant walls. Subaru tilts his head, wondering why they built this whole mechanism.

Emilia: ?I think there's lots of theories behind the city's construction. Like, they were testing the limits of their technology, or trying to conquer the floods without relying on magic or the Dragon, or trying to trap a powerful, evil witchbeast.?

Subaru: ?None of them sound sensible but they all somehow feel possible which is how you know humans did it.?

The average person wouldn't come up with the idea, but the geniuses of humanity are fundamentally liberated from the reins of common sense. And sometimes their ideas get realised. Either way.

Subaru: ?But we still don't know what they're planning. ...Doubt they're just being nice and directing us to what we're looking for.?

Emilia: ?Are you sure? Have you ever considered trusting in people more, instead of being so suspicious??

Subaru: ?Sorry, but all the candidates have their faults. And I don't trust what they're plotting for a second.?

Crusch herself is trustworthy, but Subaru doesn't know whether she'll stay a demure lady, and he has to keep wary of Felis. That problem is solved if Wilhelm reins Felis in, but the Sword Demon puts Subaru on edge too. Knowing their circumstances, it's difficult to trust them when they're left to their own

devices.

Subaru has no idea what Anastasia is thinking, or what drives her. He cannot divine her motives for sending this invitation. Julius may be the knightliest of knights, but Anastasia is ultimately in control. And the business lives of the members of Iron Fang are unrelated to who they are as people. Subaru can't dislike them.

Reinhard and Rom from the Felt Faction may merit trust. But Felt's thoughts are unclear to Subaru. So long as she's willing to participate in the Selection, Subaru must brace for the tricky, devious girl to be scheming something. If she seriously deploys Reinhard, and he becomes their enemy, their chances of beating him in combat are a dream within a dream.

The Priscilla Faction is hardest to read. Subaru cannot trust either of them. Al might also be from Japan, but he is surprisingly loyal to Priscilla. So he will not stand up for Subaru, while Priscilla's capriciousness is already terrifying. She could randomly visit to decapitate him with a smile on her face. That's her breed of absurdity.

Even though a year has passed, no candidates know the motives of the others. Subaru needs to probe deeper if he wants to know more than what he learned at the Palace. Which is one reason for accepting this invitation.

Subaru: ?Honestly I am terrified of being in Anastasia's debt. How did she figure out you were looking for a colourless spellstone anyway??

Emilia: ?Puck showed himself in the Palace, so I didn't want anyone to know he's limited. I was trying to be sooo careful... but you just can't stop people from saying things.?

Subaru: ?That's what happens. So even if we get the spellstone, it just means things are back to status quo from the other factions' perspectives. The benefits are in establishing the debt.?

That said, Puck's return will enhance Emilia's already significant combat strength. But no amount of combat power alone will secure Emilia's win in the Selection. It would just make their defeat of the Sizeable Hare more convincing, if anything.

—The defeat of the Sizeable Hare in Sanctuary.

This second achievement of the Emilia Faction, unrelated to the defeat of Sloth of the Witch Cult, is unfortunately not recognized by the public. There were no witnesses to the Hare's defeat, and it is impossible to retrieve any corpses as proof.

They threw the thing into another dimension never to return. It's the truth, but not believable. The Al Shamac spell that Beatrice used is forgotten in this era, and she lacks the mana to demonstrate the technique again.

So while they reported the Hare's defeat to the Capital, it has yet to be deemed as a legitimate achievement. And if they go into detail, they will have to describe Sanctuary in detail too, and thus reveal

that Roswaal kept a hidden village in his territory. Ultimately they had to stop pressing the issue.

They were told that their claims would gain credibility if the Hare remains unseen for the next decade, but by that point it's too late to be a useful achievement. Though it doesn't bother Emilia too much, since it all happened extremely suddenly.

Subaru: ?But it's still annoying. Seriously how much pain did those fucking rabbits put me through...?

Emilia: ?But we really did beat the Sizeable Hare, even if they don't believe us. That scary witchbeast won't hurt anyone else any more. Isn't that enough??

Subaru: ?Emilia-tan you are way too positive and kind...?

When you do something righteous, it ought to be acknowledged. Emilia speaks magnanimously, making Subaru recognize how pathetic he is. How nice would it be if he could think the way Emilia does? He will never achieve it. It just irritates him not to get recognition he deserves.

Emilia sees Subaru sulking, and her mouth relaxes into a smile. Subaru hasn't noticed that Emilia sometimes gazes at him with this tender look in her eye. Or that her expression during these moments lacks the maternal spark of a mother watching over a child, and is instead something indescribably complex.

Emilia: ?And people already know that you've achieved things, Subaru. It's formally recognized that you fought the White Whale and defeated Sloth.?

Subaru: ?For those... it really feels like I only got the scraps. People were doing a lot more than me for the White Whale, and I just happened to snag the perfect moment at the end. And I didn't have that goal in mind for Sloth.?

All he was thinking during the Petelgeuse fight was to protect Emilia. Or, no, that's not quite accurate. What Subaru felt back then was both desire to protect Emilia, and hatred for Petelgeuse personally. It's not a question of which is legitimate. Both are, and both desires are Subaru's own. It makes him uncomfortable that a fight which was basically a personal grudge is deemed as being for the sake of the world at large.

Emilia: ?But that's the same for the Sizeable Hare. You defeated two of the witchbeasts that had been tormenting the world for four hundred years in such a short timespan... I know I'm not one to say this, but it's like you're doing sooo much more than you should.?

Subaru: ?Yeah. And there I am involved in both. Honestly, I think what I've done's excessive. Let's just hope the last one doesn't show up.?

Emilia: ?—Yes.?

Subaru trusts in the power of words and prays to never encounter the Blacksnake. But Emilia's response is rather wooden. It's almost as if she has some personal thoughts on the Blacksnake.

Emilia: ?So anyway, about Pristella.?

But before he can address the shift in her attitude, she changes the topic. Obviously she doesn't want to talk about it. And, having grown somewhat wiser, Subaru decides not to force an explanation out of her. Though sometimes he forgets to pay attention to things like that and acts exactly how he used to.

Emilia: ?We know we're going, but do we really want to go with the same people? I kind of wanted to talk with Roswaal about it, too.?

Subaru: ?I think we're fine. You're going, so naturally your Knight, that is me, and my partner Beako will be coming too. But being serious, we bring Garf for combat and Otto too since he's so insistent to go. I'd really like for Petra or Frederica to come too so all your needs are addressed, but...?

Emilia: ?It's too bad. Roswaal's busy with the Meeting of the Western Lords. We've known forever that Petra needs to join him for her maid training. Though she's sooo angry about it.?

Subaru: ?Because she completely hates Roswaal after the Sanctuary thing. Roswaal enjoys it, which keeps Ram quiet, but

Petra is maturing justly and brilliantly as a maid, but her core is still dangerously childish. Her harshness on her master Roswaal is particularly striking, and she conceivably would wring the water from her washcloth into his tea. But since Subaru is on Petra's side, he's ready to overlook it even should he hypothetically witness it.

Only time will mend broken trust. But it seems that a year was not enough for Petra to start listening to Roswaal.

Subaru: ?Which means Frederica should go with them as a restraint and a model of proper etiquette, which leaves Ram in the mansion. Hold on this is dicey.?

Emilia: ?Really? Anne will be going to the meeting too, so Clind-san will be there. I'm sure he'll be friendly with Petra, so maybe Frederica doesn't need to go.?

Subaru: ?Clind-san... I don't really get him.?

Subaru thinks back on the powerful butler of the Milord Mansion, where the group stayed while their mansion was being prepared. He works with such incredible refinement that the eye can't catch it. It's a mess of a compliment, but it's what describes him.

Subaru's training in parkour also began with Clind, who taught him the basics. He coached Subaru, who cannot exceed the physical limits of the ordinary man, when he was trying to figure out how to move without disregarding his boundaries. Anne-Rose and Clind have visited the new mansion multiple times to hang out. Subaru had Clind watch him practice his parkour, but then Clind defeated Garfiel's obstacle course without breaking a sweat and without ruffling his clothes. He's inhuman.

Subaru: ?But leaving aside who's staying in the mansion, we shouldn't worry about it. And anyway I

should be the one more concerned about being careful. Goes for you too, Emilia-tan.?

Emilia: ?Mm. I do feel bad about agreeing without discussing it. I'll have to apologize to Otto-kun.?

Subaru: ?He doesn't care about his dignity, but he does hold onto things for ages. I'll tell him that I told you off so hard you cried.?

Emilia: ?Heehee, thank you.?

Subaru fires an uppercut into the air, and Emilia smiles. She puts her hand to her chest and touches the blue crystal pendant hanging there. Even now, the Great Spirit Puck sleeps in that crystal.

Never mind his true power, this gem isn't even strong enough for him to communicate. If he even twitches, the jewel will break and he will be unleashed—or so Emilia and Beatrice say. Once he is free, Puck will inadvertently bring great destruction on the environment, eventually run out of mana, and disappear back to where he came.

Emilia is constantly supplying the crystal with mana so that this doesn't happen, and preserving Puck. Now they just need to make a good crystal from colourless spellstone and they should be able to restore him. Anastasia is saying she has seen spellstones that can withstand this wear.

Emilia: ?Once I can talk with Puck again... there are so many things I want to ask him. So—?

Emilia closes her eyes, saying nothing more. Her long eyelashes quiver, and Subaru quietly scratches his head. He can only vaguely figure what Emilia is thinking.

Subaru: ?You better get back here, cat spirit. I got a mountain of complaints for you.?

And, as her knight should, he agrees with her alongside his insults.

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Otto: ?You know! I'm saying this with everyone's best interests in mind!?

Otto Suwen slams his glass to the table, clearly in a bad mood. After his conversation with Emilia and dinner, Subaru decided to see Otto before his nightly routine, and has been listening to him drunkenly complain for the past while.

Garfiel: ?'S been like this th'whole time. My amazin' ears're sick'a it.?

Says Garfiel in exasperation, sitting beside Subaru as he listens to Otto complain. He sticks his pinky in his ear and scratches his head, his sharp fangs clicking as he laps at his glass of milk.

Subaru is insisting that they not give alcohol to minors like him. Frederica and Ram agree, and he is trying to establish twenty as the drinking age in Roswaal Mansion. Also one time naughty Otto encouraged Garfiel to take a sip of alcohol and it turns out he can't hold his liquor at all. Now just seeing

a bottle of the stuff is enough to make him grimace.

Subaru isn't going to break the laws from the old world, so the only drinkers in the mansion are Roswaal, Otto, Ram, and Frederica. Which means that the only drinker in the room is Otto.

Subaru: ?Don't sulk. Emilia's sorry about deciding everything on her own. She knows she should've discussed it. Don't think it would've changed anything though.?

Otto: ?But there is more to things than their outcome. The process is important. You often get conversations where the conclusion is apparent from the very beginning, but the course you follow to get there is essential. Especially when we're unguardedly accepting their offer… you mustn't play into the opponent's hands!?

Subaru attempts to smooth things over, but Otto snaps at him. He's completely correct so Subaru can't rebut him, but,

Subaru: ?What the hell, you sound like an actual internal affairs guy. After how hard you resisted it in the beginning? Guess you weren't so reluctant about it after all.?

Garfiel: ?We're juss acceptin' a damn invitation, it ain't that complicated, Otto.?

Otto: ?It's almost invigorating how little you two have changed!?

Subaru and Garfiel dig into Otto in concert and high-five. The three friends are around the same age, and often hang out together. It is beautiful how naturally their conversations fall into this exact pattern.

Who cares about what Otto thinks. He makes a wonderful internal affairs minister. He was well-educated as a merchant's son, learned the ways of the world as a travelling merchant, and he's both smart and calculating. This has to be a better fate for him than somehow getting swindled into slavery. Though, he still tilts his head, wondering how this even happened to him as he chips through mountains of paperwork. Guy's stubborn.

Since he's seen Roswaal's confidential paperwork, is accustomed to his post as Emilia's helper, and is neck-deep in managing the territory of Margrave Mathers, he has no hope of escape.

Otto: ?What is that, that pitying look. It's like you're gazing at a chicken seconds before strangling it.?

Subaru: ?It's more like I'm gazing at a battery hen that only gets to live for its eggs.?

Otto: ?Even worse!?

Garfiel: ?Yer be quiet now. 'N stop teasin' him so much, Captain. Rules're t'keep it t'ten Ottos a day.?

Otto: ?How much is that!? How much is ten Ottos a day!??

Yells Otto, his face red, but neither Subaru or Garfiel respond. This is what it's like when he's drunk. He's

working a stressful job, so they give him his drinking time, but it might actually just encourage even more stress.

Subaru: ?Otto vents best by yelling anyway.?

Otto: ?Clearly not!?

Garfiel: ?Yeah yeah now quiet down 'n pour yerself another drink. Anyway, Captain, got somethin' I wanna check with ya.?

Subaru: ?Oh? Don't get that often. Go ahead.?

Otto grumbles as he refills his glass and quietly sips at it. Garfiel glances away from him, his mouth white with milk.

Garfiel: ?'S 'bout what the enemy's doin', obviously. The candidates ain't never got any scuffles goin' before, 'n now she's up in our face lookin' fer a fight. She gotta be up t'somethin', yeh??

Subaru: ?You mean, you think she just challenged us to a duel??

Garfiel: ?'Course I goddamn do. 'S what she's thinkin'. Forget that weedy Joshua prick, you see the cat kid who was with 'im??

—The cat kid is the same age as you. The comment is too tasteless for Subaru to actually say it. But what's his problem with Mimi? Far as Subaru could tell she was acting the same as usual, just reaching for her tea and biscuits. And she did the same thing through dinner too.

Garfiel: ?That girl's damn tough. N' she was starin' at my 'mazin' self, not juss durin' the talk, but all through fuckin' dinner. She musta figured out 'm th'strongest guy in the place.?

Subaru: ?Are you sure...? No, I mean, Mimi is strong, and she is kind of a battle junkie, but...?

She doesn't seem marginally smart enough to have ulterior motives. Subaru can only see her as transparent, or actually just airheaded.

Garfiel: ?Either way, sh's keepin' n' eye on my amazin' self while she's here. Best we make sure you and Emilia-sama ain't caught on yer own while we're over there, Captain. Otto's one thing, but we ain't ever recoverin' if we lose you.?

Otto: ?You do realise that this fief will be an absolute mess if I'm gone!? I wish that you would take that into consideration sometimes!?

Garfiel isn't trying to belittle Otto as he urges caution. It's just that he needs to make the comparison if he's going to get his point across to Subaru. Though he doesn't pass up the opportunity to play with Otto.

Subaru: ?Yeah, I'm definitely relying on you for that. Don't want to draw it out so this'll be short but, I'm

counting on you, Garfiel.?

Garfiel: ?Yeah, make sure ya do. Count on The Strongest of Shields, aka The Legendary Guardian, Garfiel Tinzel!?

Garfiel proudly points at himself with his thumb. Subaru nods at him. He takes a sip from his own glass of milk, regretting how awesome Garfiel's titles are. He'll probably get even more titles once his might and valour resound all through the Kingdom. Will Subaru's imagination be strong enough to provide for Garfiel then?

Subaru: ?I wonder if I'll ever have a stroke of genius like Invisible Providence again... only Fortune herself knows when she'll smile upon me.?

Garfiel: ?Yer mullin' over somethin' again. You ain't gotta trouble yerself. Y'get things done when it matters. I got faith in that.?

Emilia's the same, but the trust in Garfiel's gaze is incredibly convincing. It instantly makes Subaru feel that he must match up to it. He's trying not to mistake the self-improvement needed to meet that trust with blind, headless sprinting.

Subaru: ?If we've got Garfiel then we don't have to worry about our combat strength. Emilia-tan's a pretty strong fighter on her own too, and I'm decent enough with Beako. The problem here's Otto... are you seriously coming with us??

Otto: ?Of course I am! I don't want to know what insane arrangement you and Emilia-sama will land yourselves in if I don't go!?

It's also electrifying how little they trust Subaru when it comes to negotiations. Emilia is as honest and pure as she appears, and while Subaru is devious he's also inexperienced. So naturally they look like sitting ducks to Otto.

Otto: ?Also, Pristella is the birthplace of Hoshin of the Wastes, the founder of Kararagi. It has contact with Kararagi since it's on the border, making it a highly significant place for merchants. I find myself duty-stricken to visit it too.?

Subaru: ?I thought you washed your hands of being a merchant ages ago. The hell are you doing.?

Otto: ?You are mistaken if you think that I will resign myself to being an Internal Affairs Minister forever! My ultimate goal is still to be a successful merchant with his own shop! This is a necessary road to get there, a necessary road on the path to my goal!?

Garfiel: ?Possible that th'road leads ter yer death.?

That stuff about trapping him here is honestly pretty shallow, and if he yearns to go and can help them as Internal Affairs Minister, it makes sense that Otto should join them. Everyone in the mansion knows, for all their banter, that they can't function without Otto. And Otto knows it, too, which is why he can't leave.

Subaru: ?Or you could just be a masochist but we'll disregard that.?

Otto: ?Did you just agree at me in an incredibly impolite way or am I only imagining it!??

Subaru: ?It's not important. Anastasia's going to be there, and we don't know what terms she'll hit us with. We're counting on you. You're on bureaucracy, Garfiel's on military. And I'm there to make things fun.?

Otto: ?Do more!?

Subaru could try his absolute best, but he will never be stronger than Garfiel. He could study his

absolute best, but he wouldn't have time to eclipse Otto as a bureaucrat.

Subaru: ?Just gotta do what I can do. One of those positive steps to self-improvement that I've mulled over with Beako.?

Garfiel: ?Yer gonna be fine if Emilia-sama 'n Beatrice're with ya. Meanin' my amazin' self gotta cover for Otto. Watch yer back for me, yeh??

Otto: ?Why does it feel like I'm the greatest burden here... I can't say that I agree with it.?

Subaru gets serious, and Garfiel accepts his post of babysitter. Otto grumbles and takes another sip of his liquor. The night grows darker, the mood pleasant.

Subaru: ?Now, we're gonna be busy tomorrow, so I'm calling it about here. What about you, Garfiel??

Garfiel: ?I'll stay'n drink some more with Otto. Gettin' pretty close t'beatin' him at Shatranj. Might pull it off now that he's drunk.?

Garfiel disregards Subaru and grabs a game board and pieces from the back of the room. The game is called Shatranj, with rules similar to Shogi or Chess. Subaru finds himself impressed that every world has these games. Otto is apparently quite good at them, and though Garfiel has been trying his hardest, he has suffered losses upon losses. Also Subaru is outrageously good at Othello, but struggles at Shogi and Chess.

Subaru: ?Don't stay up too late. It'll stunt your growth.?

Garfiel: ?Yer said that before n' so that's what I been doin' but yer sure this fuckin' works? Don't feel I grew at all this year.?

Subaru: ?Frederica absorbed some of the growth so your case is complicated.?

Garfiel: ?Fuck you Sis!?

Roars Garfiel, baring his fangs as he slams the Shatranj board on the table. Then he hunches over and starts meticulously arranging the tiny pieces. While watching Garfiel go at it, Subaru waves to a red-faced

Otto.

Subaru: ?Don't you get too drunk either. If you wind up hungover and useless, Petra will think even less of you.?

Otto: ?I feel like she's been rather harsh with me lately, but perhaps it's just me. Could you have a word with her??

Subaru: ?You mean tell her to try harder??

Otto: ?I was clearly asking you to tell her to be nicer to me!?

Subaru answers with a bitter smile, telling Otto that it's impossible, and leaves the two to play Shatranj as he exits the room. The crystalights in the hallway tell Subaru that it's almost past midnight. Usually he would be in bed by this hour, but,

Subaru: ?Wound up running late today.?

With that excuse, Subaru ignores the staircase to his room on the third floor of the eastern wing, and heads for the women's bedrooms in the western wing. Where,

Subaru: ?—Mind if I come in??

Subaru always knocks on the door. He knows that no one will reply. So does he say it because he has hope? Or perhaps he confirms that there is no reply, so that he doesn't forget.

—So that he doesn't forget the inferno, always blazing in his chest?

Subaru: ?—?

Subaru opens the door. A pitch dark room welcomes him. It's a simple room. Its layout is identical to the countless other guest rooms in the mansion, but it plainly lacks in furniture. Just a bed in the middle of the room, windows, their curtains, a small table, and a vase with flowers. Subaru knows that no one will complain, but he still dislikes the austerity.

Call it sentimental, but he wishes that the place had some human warmth. Perhaps the day will never come where he manages to disregard that wish as weakness.

Emilia: <If you could rationalize things that way, I don't think we ever would've found common ground to our arguments. I like you sooo much just the way you are.>

Beatrice: <It is a vice to want beyond your means, in fact. Subaru, you are reckless on your own, I suppose. ...But you're not alone any more, so I'll manage something for you even if you're being greedy, in fact.>

Subaru: ?They're coddling me. And Emilia-tan is tantalizing me with those provocative statements.?

Subaru wishes she would be more careful about saying 'I like you' or 'you're so cool'.
He has told her how he feels, but Emilia is too immature for it. Their relationship still has yet to go anywhere romantic. But even supposing it did suddenly go somewhere romantic, Subaru is not mentally ready for it either. Give him two more years, no three—or even more if it's possible. That's the kind of loser he is.

Subaru: ?God it's so rude of me to go on about Emilia or Beatrice while I'm here. Petra'd beat me up if she heard this.?

Petra might have the best grasp of romance and its subtleties out of anyone in the mansion. Somehow everyone is terrible at relationships. Roswaal leads the charge with his toxic obsession, with the others all having their foibles too. Garfiel's feelings for Ram are still a middle school crush, though Subaru has no place to talk. Ram's ideas about extreme loyalty dictating love are perplexing, and Frederica's love life is a complete unknown. Otto sometimes mentions while drunk things about being raked through the mud for philandering, but the consensus is that these claims are lies and pretense. It's a disgrace to these adults that a thirteen year old girl is beating them.

Subaru: ?So how does that stand. I don't think that tendency will change much, even after you wake up. Either because I'm a loser, or because you respect me.?

Subaru pulls a chair over and seats himself beside the bed. Moonlight slips in through the crack in the curtains, illuminating her face as she sleeps.

The light of the moon spills over her pale face, pink lips. She is a sleeping beauty with short blue hair, her curvy body garbed in thin negligee, her chest rising and falling in time with her breathing.
—She has slept for over a year now.

Subaru: ?Got lots of things to tell you today. Since some guests showed up uninvited, and with this crazy offer. I started my day with my usual—?

Subaru speaks calmly to her as she sleeps. He uses his same comedic phrasing as always, but his tone is incredibly gentle. He speaks as though lulling a child to sleep as he cheerily tells her about his day.

She doesn't respond. Even so. These trysts unfold every night. Tonight is rife with things to discuss. Until the moon sits low in the sky, the tale goes on between Subaru and the Sleeping Beauty.

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Arc 5 - Chapter 30 - "Tiger and Cat Under the Moon"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-30-tiger-and-cat-under-the-moon/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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- Art Source

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??: “I'm so sorry, I wasn’t expecting guests, so I haven’t cleaned.”

Mimi: “Hmm~! We don’t mind~! It looks clean~! Very clean~! Mimi’s room looks a lot more chaotic~!”

???: “Ah, ah, that’s no good.”

The woman casually stroked Mimi, who lay on the sofa, kicking her legs and looking very comfortable.

Immersed in this scene, Garfiel looked silently at the woman. Her long blonde hair flowed to her waist, her skin was the white of snow, her slim body retained a woman’s softness, and her soft face displayed a pair of clear, calm emerald green eyes.

She looked to be as young as 25, but Garfiel knew that she should be over 35.

No matter what, this didn’t match up to Garfiel’s expectations, which was precisely the source of his confusion,

???: “Mr. Gorgeous Tiger, does tea not match your tastes? I'm sorry, I didn’t even think to ask what you’d like to drink…”

The woman, who claimed to be Reala Thompson, frowned at the silent Garfiel, who was shaken back into awareness by her voice. He looked down at his untouched black tea and hurriedly picked the cup up.

Garfiel: “No, no, my amazin’ self was jus’ bein’ a bit silly… the spaciousness’f this room’s unusual, ‘s all.”

Reala: “Is that so? My family’s very big, and so is our house, but that makes it hard to clean. It looks like I was careless again.”

Reala accepted Garfiel’s hurried excuse without a trace of doubt, her charming voice light and soft. The large courtyard of her house and the exquisite workmanship reflected her statement. Her smile, her sweet tone, everything about her struck Garfiel with nostalgia.

However, Reala spoke not a word of Garfiel’s gaze. This detail alone gripped Garfiel’s heart with pain.

The woman who claimed to be Reala Thompson looked exactly like Reshia Tinsel, Garfiel’s mother, who was imprinted clearly in his mind.

Of course, Garfiel's separation from his mother had happened shortly after his birth, and his memories of his mother were scant.

Even so, Garfiel knew every detail of her face, after seeing her in that detestable cemetery where the Trial had been hosted. There, he witnessed his separation from his mother.

Her face, her voice, her love, Garfiel knew them all from the Trial.

And that Trial had shown him the her unfortunate death shortly after her departure. So, to Garfiel, seeing his mother again is an impossible dream.

If so, now, the woman in front of him should also be impossible.

Reala: “Mimi-san, your ears look so soft. Would it be possible for me to touch them?”

Mimi: “Please go ahead~!”

Reala happily reached out, stroking Mimi’s ears with a look of contentment.

Mimi’s smile was one only a little girl could wear. They were an odd pair, a tiny beastman and a suspicious demi-human, but they had been invited in without a second thought. This woman had simply no sense of wariness.

Such attitudes were, to Garfiel, all associated with motherliness.

His mother Reshia had been quite the unfortunate woman. Her parents had lost everything to debt, and had sold her to a group of slave traders, who had been ambushed by demi-human bandits. They had made Reala their concubine.

Somewhere along the way, she'd become pregnant with Frederica, and the bandits had put her up for sale. She'd been taken by another band of thieves and had spent a long time with them.

Frederica had grown up in that thieves regiment. Although she rarely spoke of such times, she considered Reala's departure something to be thankful for, indicating that it had been a rather poor environment.

Suffering misfortune after misfortune, she had fortunately been rescued by the curious Roswaal.

Roswaal had made her a proposal; he would take them to Sanctuary, where they would be given safety and shelter. In Sanctuary, Lewes had become their guardian.

Life's treatment toward her could only be summed up as 'cruel'.

However, his mother's personality was unknown to those who only heard the stories. Those who really knew his mother would never give her life such an unfortunate evaluation.

Lewes: "Ah, Reshia. That child was always inexplicably, abnormally optimistic, and looked toward the future. Despite suffering through painful days where she could very well have died, she would always say, 'Maybe something nice will happen tomorrow. Even if today is hard, tomorrow could be better'. Like a little child, she always looked forward to the little happy things in life."

Frederica: "Our honored mother… she may look like a foolish woman who threw things away too easily, and, to be honest, I believe that she never really grasped lessons on how to best survive… but she was incredibly kind. She's my favorite person. With all my heart, I'm glad to be her daughter."

Roswaal: "Is this about your mother, Reshia-san? Riiiiight, although I never had too many chaaaaances to chat with her face to face, she was incomprehensible. Or maybe it's better to say incredible? She was muuuuch more sensitive of happiness than most people. She was always cheerful, finding happiness in eeeeven the worst of situations. Yeeeep, that's not something I dislliiiiike."

Lewes, Frederica, and even Roswaal all spoke fondly of her.

Within Sanctuary, anyone who'd known his mother said the same thing. She was someone who was always relaxed and happy.

If that hadn't been the case, she wouldn't have foolishly left to look for Garfiel's father, who had more than likely encountered misfortune.

And then she had immediately suffered another misfortune and died, and where was her happiness?

— He had never found the answer to where her happiness had ended up.

Garfiel: “If I don't find it, it's better to give up.”

Nails dug into the palm of his hand as he had clenched his fist.

He should have given up. But he’d never understood that. It had taken a long time, but he’d finally grown to accept it.

This was plainly the case, but why, now, had she appeared again? With her, as always, carefree, and cheerful attitude.

Garfiel: “——”

In order to keep her from noticing, he’d resigned himself to secretly observing her expressions and behaviors.

Nothing felt unnatural. His mother’s behavior of treating him as a stranger was completely natural, and the more Garfiel watched, the more fascinated she became.

Was this her answer?

She had a new life. Unaware of Garfiel, she led her happy life.

I don’t care to know about your affairs, was that his mother’s answer to—

Fred: “Moooom.”

Sister: “Mom, I’m hungry.”

Garfiel had been silent as Mimi and Reala played around. The brother and sister joined them in the living room after going to their rooms to change.

The sister cast a stern look at the Garfiel, and then immediately huddled close to her mother.

Sister: “Mom, tell the guests to go home, and then we can eat.”

Reala: “Sister, what are you talking about? Mr. Gorgeous and Mimi took care of Fred when he nearly drowned.”

Sister: “About that, couldn’t it be that Gorgeous was the one who did it? So he could come to our house and take advantage of our generosity. Maybe he wants money.”

Reala: “Hey now, that’s going too far. But you’re right, we have to thank him for Fred… should we give him money?”

Sister: “Mom!?”

The sister, who had realized that her words were about to become the reason for her family’s bankruptcy, flew into a panic. On the other hand, Reala, who failed to grasp the reason for her daughter’s rant, glanced around in confusion.

That smiling interaction between parent and child made breathing harder than walking barefoot on thorns. Draining his tea in one gulp, Garfiel set his cup down with a clang.

Garfiel: “Since my amazin’ self don’t seem t’be welcome here, we’ll be leavin’.”

Mimi: “Haauhh? Why~?”

Garfiel: “Ain’t no particular why.”

Although Garfiel wanted to leave, Mimi continued to resist. However, as if he hadn’t heard her, Garfiel picked her up. As he stood to go, Reala looked distraught, while her daughter cast a smirk at him.

Well, Garfiel would respect her feelings — and, with that thought,

Fred: “Don’t go, Gorgeous Tiger…”

Seizing the hem of Garfiel pants, the little brother blocked his way.

For a second, for reasons unknown to him, Garfiel hesitated to shake off his little hands. But,

Sister: “Fred, honestly, you’re…”

As Fred advocated for a suspicious criminal to stay, his sister placed her hands on her waist in anger. Reala clapped her hands, capturing everyone’s attention.

Reala: “Everyone, look, it’s not good to not get along. You’re pushing our guests to leave, Fred seems to want them to stay, so don’t force them to do anything, Sister.”

Sister: “But, mom…”

Reala: “But nothing. Mr. Gorgeous and Mimi, stay for a while, won’t you? I’d be delighted to share dinner with you, and tonight’s meal is my favorite dish.”

Fred: “Moooom, you call everything your best dish…”

Reala: “Mhm, shouldn’t that be obvious? Mom always tries her best on every dish for you.”

Although her ability wasn’t quite there, she made every effort to do her best. Everyone present wore a panicked expression, Garfiel moreso than anyone else.

This harmonious atmosphere. It cut deeply into Garfiel's heart.

Reala's words cast upon him a unique sense of happiness and helplessness. Accepting her invitation would be the worst possible thing that Garfiel could do.

Garfiel: "Sorry 'bout yer invitation, but a few 'f my companions're waitin' for me. They'll be worried if we're late, so we should be headin' out soon."

Reala: "……"

Suppressing the the pain in his chest, Garfiel prayed that voice wouldn't tremble.

At his answer, the sister's face became stiff, and Reala frowned with her eyes closed. And,

Reala: "I understand, there is no point in forcing you to stay if it bothers you."

Garfiel: "—hk"

This was what had hurt Garfiel the most today.

Losing to Reinhard in that duel, the initial impact of seeing Reala, were, compared to how he was feeling now, trivial indeed.

Unconsciously, Garfiel placed a hand close to his chest, as if needing to confirm whether or not his body had been torn. And to that Garfiel,

Mimi: "Garfiel, let's go."

Mimi, who had until just refused to leave, gently taken Garfiel's hand in hers and began leading him away. Facing her concern, Garfiel obeyed silently.

So, with their hands on the living room on the door handle, ready to leaving,

???: "I'm home! Oh, do we have guests?"

The figure on the other side of the door was a gentleman sporting a magnificent beard.

He appeared to be a man of detailed workmanship, and gave off an energetic atmosphere. From his tone to face, he seemed to be a man of accomplishments.

At the man's appearance, the children scrambled to their feet with joy. Then, that man would be—

Dad: "Hmm… I haven't seen this stranger's face before."

Fred: "Dad, this is Gorgeous Tiger."

Sister: “He’s a suspicious scoundrel.”

Dad: “What?”

Faced with his son and daughter’s sharply contrasting attitudes, the father tilted his head in distress. He turned to Reala, who stood quietly in the living room.

Under the man’s loving gaze, Reala started to give a calm response.

Garfiel had hit his limit.

Garfiel: “It ain’t a big deal, we were goin’ anyway.”

Leaving that sentence, Garfiel grabbed Mimi and hurriedly pushed his way of out the room, scrambling toward the front door as if running away.

Fred: “Gorgeous Tiger!”

From behind, a sad voice called to Garfiel. However, Garfiel had no response to that call.

Who was Gorgeous, who was Tiger? He was Garfiel, not Gorgeous Tiger. A tiger was a strong, powerful creature who couldn’t be shaken by anything. Where was that tiger now?

A real tiger, wouldn’t be so affected by such things—!

Mimi: “Garfiel! My hand, it hurts!”

Garfiel: “——”

Too focused on his thoughts, Garfiel didn’t notice that cry of pain.

He didn’t notice until Mimi had broken free of his vice grip, extracting her hand from his nails, which had been digging into her. Her small hand was now swollen and blue.

Garfiel: “S-sorry… my amazin’ self…”

Mimi: “Gar~f, you were weird at that house too. My hand really~ hurts.”

Mimi mumbled quietly, and Garfiel smacked his forehead with his hand.

They fell into a discordant silence as the Watergate City’s moist air caressed their faces. The sun had fallen from the sky, and the city had been shrouded in magical light.

The sunshine on the water's surface was replaced by light from the magical lamps, but he was in no mood to enjoy that scene mysterious and quiet beauty,

???: “Hey, you two, over there!”

Someone approached Garfiel and Mimi with gasping breaths.

Looking up, the magic light revealed the man from before, who had shed his coat. Finally arriving in front of the two, he put his hands on his knees, panting violently.

Dad: “Ah, I finally caught up… this won’t do… I used to be more energetic, but thanks to work, I’m completely out of shape now…”

Garfiel: “Do ya need anythin’ from us?”

Garfiel had clearly indicated that he wasn’t interested in the man’s words.

The existence of this man, although not to the degree of Reala’s children, also distressed Garfiel. His voice was full of harshness, but the man paid no mind to it, placing his hand on his head embarrassedly.

Dad: “No, I heard from my wife that you two were benefactors of my son. It’d be completely unjustifiable if I never gave you anything in return.”

Garfiel: “… ‘s not such a big deal, ‘f y’talk all exaggeratedly like that, my amazin’ self’ll be embarrassed.”

Garek: “Everything involving my kid, no matter what, is incredibly important, not to mention saving him from danger. Really, if you need anything at all… Ah, I'm really sorry, my name is Garek, Garek Thompson. Despite how I look, I’m Pristella’s Metropolitan Director, so if there’s anything I can do to help you…”

Garfiel: “Really, we’re…”

A man who knew what was going on— Garfiel, who had wanted to leave as soon as possible, suddenly paused. If he knew Reala, really knew her, then,

Garfiel: “My amazin’ self’s got only one question… would it be okay for ya t’answer?”

Garek: “Of course. No matter what, I’ll do my best to answer.”

Garek responded to Garfiel with a smile of only benevolence.

The same was true of Reala too, and their son Fred. This entire family was too kind for their own good. Only their daughter had any sense of suspicion.

Thinking of this, Garfiel was very cautious in his choice of words,

Garfiel: “Your wife, Reala… what’s her real name?”

Garek: “——”

As soon as Garfiel posed his question, the atmosphere shifted.

Garek pondered Garfiel’s question silently for a few moments, before replying in a level voice,

Garek: “What do you mean?”

Garfiel: “I mean the literal meanin’. No matter what, Reid plays a straight game, right? Playin’ with words don’t fit my style. Tell me, your wife, s’her name Reshia stead’of Reala?”

Garek: “—gu”

He responded awkwardly to Garfiel’s direct question, taking a moment to swallow before replying.

Garek: “You… you, my wife… Do you know anything about my wife?”

Garfiel: “My amazin’ self also wants to know about her.”

Garek: “——”

Garfiel responded sincerely to Garek’s trembling voice.

At those words, Garek fell into a silence, as if he were thinking. Waiting for his reply, Garfiel took Mimi’s good hand into his own.

Glancing up at him, she smiled as she usually did.

Garek: “… it seems that I should tell you the full story.”

As Garfiel looked at Mimi’s smile, Garek spoke with a sigh.

His voice was weighed with fatigue and powerlessness. Garfiel frowned, wondering and waiting for his next sentence.

Then,

Garek: “My wife, Reala… has no memories from before out meeting, 15 years ago.”

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Garek and Reala had met before he’d become a city director, when he had been a normal merchant rooted in Pristella.

On the way back from negotiations, Garek, who had been driving a dragon carriage, had found his path blocked by a collapsed cliff.

Having encountered such distress in having to repay a loan, and having met such an unfortunate accident on the road, Garek couldn't but be angry.

— Then, he found a woman who'd been buried alive. A miracle. There was no other explanation.

Refusing to go the long way, Garek had been desperately wondering if he could still follow his original route.

Around that time, the heavy rain had finally stopped, and Garek's full field of vision had been returned to him.

Shortly after the cliff had collapsed, Garek had come by, leaving the time that the woman had been buried fairly short.

As a result of the various coincidences overlapping, Garek had found and rescued the woman, who was still breathing.

She'd been covered in mud, and he'd found no luggage near her. Taking the unconscious woman to his dragon carriage, Garek immediately rushed to a nearby town, where she'd been taken to the hospital, and awaited her rehabilitation.

Garek: "At the time, her condition was incredibly unstable. She was running a high fever, and had various injuries and fractures from the landslide, and her heart even stopped at one point during the treatment."

Both the Healing Institute and Garek had been struggling to help her, optimistically praying for her recovery. Why had Garek wanted so desperately wanted to save her? There had indeed been a reason, yet unknown to him, which explained his actions.

He thanked everyone's efforts from the bottom of his heart.

Garek: "Hard work paid off, and although she was still heavily wounded, she'd finally woke up. It took a week… I stayed in the city, waiting for her."

The failure of negotiations had made the future of Garek's company dark indeed.

In that situation, wasting time equated wasting money. Garek didn't understand why he had been restraining himself from his travels.

Then, after a week, the woman had woken up.

After her awakening, she spoke to the crowd gathered around her with a trembling, faint voice.

Garek: "Who am I?", "Were her first words."

The woman had forgotten her name. No, not just the name. She'd forgotten everything.

Who was she, and where was she supposed to be? What had happened before that cliff had collapsed?”

She could not remember her family members, and had no choice but to stay.

All she had were the clothes she’d worn during the accident. From an emblem stitched onto them, the only discernible letters of her name were ‘Re’.

Garek: “Influenced by the name of a blossoming flower, I decided to call her Reala. Then, I planned to take care of her until her wounds had healed.”

Her wounds healed little by little, and the day of her discharge wasn’t far off.

Reala, even having nowhere to go, remained a cheerful woman. She treated the sadness of the accident as though it had never happened, and gave everyone she came in contact with infectious smiles.

In her situation, it would be impossible not to feel uneasy.

The loss of one’s own memories was almost equivalent to their own disappearance. But she could still smile because she felt it necessary to do so.

Or maybe she was concerned for the people around her.

But the most important reason was that she didn’t see herself as unfortunate.

Garek: “The nervousness from confessing to her is still fresh in my memory. That’s probably the most anxious I’ve ever been in my life, even more so than when I proposed marriage to her.”

So, accepting Garek’s proposal, Reala went with him to Pristella.

There reason he refused to abandon her, that he had waited so long for her to wake up, was incredibly simple.

Garek had fallen in love with her at the very beginning, at the moment when he’d dragged her from the cliff his dragon carriage, cleaning the mud from her face.

Garek: “My business, which had been unlucky until I took in Reala, improved quickly. The people around me said that that was all thanks to my talent, but really, it was all thanks to Reala. I was blessed with her, so now I can be a businessman like this, so I can be a better father.”

Garfiel: “——”

Garek: “I love my wife, and our children are both very cute. I used to care about her past, but, at this moment, no matter who she was before, I consider my wife my most important person.”

Garek finished speaking of their first encounter and concluded thus with embarrassment. Garfiel, who has been silent from beginning to end, listening intently, looked up at the sky. In the darkness, stars were

scattered everywhere.

The glorious full moon and stars were probably contemptuous of his current thoughts.

Garek: “I'm very sorry to ask this of you, but I can’t help but do so.”

Garfiel: “——”

"What is the relationship between you... and my wife, Lira?" This — how cruel this was.

His line of sight fell from the sky to Garek.

Garek’s gentle eyes held a firm determination as he gazed at Garfiel. He was empathetic, and wouldn’t be so insensitive as to misunderstand what Garfiel would say.

And so Garfiel knew exactly which answer would be correct.

Garfiel: “——”

Opening and closing his mouth.

Breathing, exhaling, inhaling, breathing evenly.

A fast heartbeat. Dizziness. A burst of pain in his head, the need to retch.

The swirl of yet unformed emotions in his tight chest were on the verge of collapse.

—Mimi gripped his hand tightly.

Garfiel: “My amazin’ self, has…”

Garek: “——”

Garfiel: “Nothin’… to do with your wife.”

There. He’d said it, said it out loud.

With that sentence, the vortex swirling in Gafiel’s heart swiftly vanished.

He was left with only a sense of loss suffocation. Garek, who stood in front of him, lowered his head as if he’d made a mistake and didn’t want to look Garfiel in the face, speaking with a trembling voice.

Garek: “Sorry, I’m so sorry…”

With a look of unnatural pain, he bowed.

However, Garfiel didn’t want to see Garek’s reaction.

He had already had enough. He wanted to leave, wanted to stop being hurt.

What had gone wrong? Whose fault is it? Was it his own fault, or was it Garek’s fault? Who should he blame? Who should he attack, who should he strike, who should he send flying?

What could he go to end the pain in his heart, to make it vanish, disappear?

???: "Honey, this is great, Mr. Gorgeous and Mimi are still here.”

Garfiel “——!?”

Those words echoed with immense volume.

Grief and turmoil raised the intense noise as if it could kill. To Garfiel, it felt sharper than a knife.

Garek: “Reala, why…?”

Reala: “You left in such a hurry, but I didn’t want you to leave empty-handed, so…”

Reala blinked and strode past the shocked Garek.

Then, she approached the stunned, stiff Garfiel, stretching out her hand.

Reala: “This is the dessert that I made, a souffle. Although it’s not a very expensive gift, I’m still proud of it. I hope you’ll accept it.”

Garfiel: “…m.”

Her smile held not a trace of malice. Stubbornly, Garfiel refused to speak.

His exchange with Garek had opened old wounds, preventing him from being able to speak to Reala. Anyone who understood this would also understand how to act.

And yet,

Mimi: “Oh! A dessert, that’s so much fun! Amazing, I’ll share it with Missy!”

Reala handed the container to a smiling, indifferent Mimi. There was a limit to how much someone could neglect to notice the atmosphere.

Garek looked shocked, and Garfiel was speechless. However, Reala only gave a joyful laugh at Mimi’s reaction.

Reala: “I'm so glad you like it, and please go share it with the one called Missy."

Mimi: “Okay, got it~! Unter… understood~!”

After saluting with the hand which hadn’t been squeezed by Garfiel, Mimi took the container in her arms and clapped Garfiel on the back.

She applied enough power that he couldn’t help but cough, and Mimi smiled.

Mimi: “Well, this time, we’re really leaving! Gorgeous Tiger and Gorgeous Mimi will see you later~!”

Reala: “Alright, safe travels, and take care not to fall in the water, Mr. Gorgeous.” Mimi took Garfiel’s hand, and Reala waved as they left.

Smiling, Mimi turned back and waved energetically. Only the two men were left with pained expressions in this smiling farewell.

Garfiel: “……”

Like this, Garfiel was led along the waterways by Mimi.

Mimi and Garfiel didn’t speak until far after Reala had vanished from view.

Garfiel: “Hey, midget…”

Mimi: “Over~ here~!”

Garfiel: “——!?”

Garfiel had wanted to call Mimi, but was suddenly interrupted.

Mimi, still holding Garfiel’s hand, briskly leapt onto the three story stone building, ascending with the use of footholds.

Garfiel was pulled along, of course, forced to take the same pace as her. With a few leaps, the two had reached the top of the building.

Mimi: “Mimi~ feels so good~!”

Garfiel: “So Good’, my foot! What were y’pullin’, jus’ now…”

As Mimi called out her comfort while she bathed in the breeze, Garfiel went on to complain. However, he saw that Mimi’s smile had disappeared as she watched him.

He saw himself reflected in her round eyes, and Garfiel didn’t understand the unease brewing in his heart.

Mimi’s expression fell at Garfiel’s silence.

Mimi: “Garf, do you want to cry?”

Garfiel: “Huh? What’re y’sayin’, why would my amazin’ self be cryin’?”

Mimi: “I know that Garf is strong, but you shouldn’t put on that brave act. Since Reala is Garf's mother, right~?”

Garfiel: “——”

At Mimi’s unexpected question, Garfiel held his breath.

She’d accurately grasp the flow of the things. If she’d known Garfiel’s past, then that conclusion would be easy to make. However, Mimi knew nothing about Garfiel’s family. Her ability for discerning the truth was really rather impressive.

That she had straightforwardly brought the subject up shook Garfiel, and he hesitated.

Garfiel: “Why… would ya… think that…?”

Mimi: “Garf and Reala smell super~ similar, and her children also smelled a bit like Garf, so I was wondering if that was the case.”

Her assumption wasn’t based on reasoning, it was based on something innate, and thus she could see the truth for what it was.

If Mimi had inferred her conclusion from Garfiel’s words, he could have made attempts to hide his past, but Garfiel couldn’t refute something like this.

His legs giving way, Garfiel looked up at the stars in a daze.

The stars and moon both were unchanged, looking down at Garfiel with the same gaze.

Mimi: “So, is that right? Is Reala Garf’s mother?”

Garfiel: “… My amazin’ self doesn’t know. ‘S that woman still my amazin’ self’s mother?”

At Mimi’s words, Garfiel covered his face with a hand.

He didn’t know how true that was. Reala was unmistakably Reshia.

Just as Garek said, as Reala herself had acted until now, Reala had completely forgotten that she was Reshia.

Forgetting everything, Reala had found a new start, raising her children, living happily.

Garfiel: “Ah, come to think ‘f it, that’d make those two kids my amazin’ self’s lil’ brother n’ sister.”

Although he had only just realized it, his half-siblings had a similar relationship with himself and Frederica. In other words, those siblings were his own lovely younger siblings. It had been a relationship he'd longing for ever since he'd been little.

— Wouldn't it be nice if he could enjoy that relationship without the circumstances surrounding it?

Garfiel: "Even'f my amazin' self tells her 'bout my heritage, nothin'd change…"

Reala had forgotten her time as Reshia.

Even if Garfiel told her everything, her fifteen years as Reala would still remain unchanged.

Only, Reala would then carry an unnecessary fifteen years of guilt, feeling as if she'd lost Reala. Garek could only witness his wife's depression, and their children would only watch their mother's pain without understanding it.

Doing so would only be for Garfiel's own sake.

Having Reala accept that she used to be Reshia would serve no one but Garfiel.

Fredrica and Lewes both had no idea that Reshia had survived. If Garfiel said nothing, the two of them would never know.

Reala's family also weren't bothered by her past. If they learned of it, those happy times would most likely be lost rather than preserved.

If Garfiel hid everything and let go, this could all be successfully resolved.

Garfiel: "Why is my amazin' self…"

Didn't he even have the courage to bury this deep in his consciousness, to bury this within himself?

Tiger, where are you? Show me the right path.

If he could bear everything, take on everything alone, where would he find that strength?

Tell me, tiger... tiger. A true tiger was the strongest existence that would not be lost to anyone.

Garfiel: "——"

Holding his head, biting down on his overflowing, lamenting the feelings swirling back and forth mixing together, losing them and finding them.

Mimi: "It's okay…"

In the next moment, he noticed that his head was being gently stroked.

Garfiel: “——”

Mimi grabbed the collapsed Garfiel from behind in a hug.

Resting her chin on his head, her small palm stroked Garfiel's head. That tender touch on his back, moving back and forth, gradually eased the pain and agitation in his mind.

Garfiel: “What, what’re y’doin’, this is…”

Mimi: “Hmm, if Garf needs to cry~, I think there’s a specific place where boys are allowed to cry! Although I forgot where, I remember Missy telling me about it~!”

For a moment, she seemed to be giving an answer, but her train of thought drifted away.

In order not to keep his heart from shaking, in order to keep his voice from shivering, Garfiel chose his words carefully.

Like this, holding Garfiel, Mimi giggled.

Mimi: "Well, although I’ve forgotten~, is it the feeling of a woman's chest? Is it like that? That's it! It's alright for a man to cry on an interested woman's chest~!”

Garfiel: “…who’d be interested in a midget like you.”

The one Garfiel was interested in was a woman who was never kind when he wanted her to be, but kind when he least expected, after which she would beat him with her fists, a woman who was incredibly difficult to deal with.

The girl in front of him didn’t resemble her at all. However, Mimi was still smiling.

Mimi: “That’s fine! Even if Garfiel’s not interested, Mimi’s already fascinated! I saw~ and became interested in Garfiel! So! Mimi’s chest~! It's okay to cry there~!”

Garfiel: “—Ah…”

What a foolish notion.

What was this. Some kind of language game? It was only a child's excuse, loaded with nothing but assertiveness.

There was obviously nothing, so stop kidding around. Tiger... tiger, where are you?

Right now, come back to my heart. Howl your deep, ferocious roar, beat this slouched back, force me to wake up, do something to my feelings

Otherwise, otherwise... otherwise, it would be too late.

Garfiel: “Mother…”

Enough, enough, stop talking.

Crying with a weak voice, don’t make such a weak of voice.

He was a tiger, the most powerful, the strongest, stronger than anyone. The Strongest of Shields. However,

Garfiel: “Mother… mother… mama… mama!”

Mimi: “Good boy.”

Garfiel: “Why! Why’d ya forget me!? Seein’ ya after all this time! Even callin’ you mom!”

Mimi: “It’s alright, Garfiel’s good boy, a good boy!”

Garfiel: “Mama… mama… mama…!”

Tiger, tiger... where are you?

What did he resemble now? Stars, moon, sky, tell me. What did he resemble now?

If he couldn’t be a roaring tiger, then, right now, he merely resembled —

Arc 5 - Chapter 31, "The Cost of a Mistake"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-31-the-cost-of-a-mistake/

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http://ncode.syosetu.com/N2267BE/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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Mimi: “I got it~!”

Garfiel: “You’re a nuisance, stop sayin’ that!”

The next morning, Garfiel, looking to be in a rather poor state, walked the streets with Mimi.

Giggling, Mimi touched the chest of her robe, which were stained with Garfiel’s tears and saliva. The stench had reached the point of causing Garfiel’s nose pain.

To Mimi, who had the same sharp sense of smell, that stench must have been unbearable, but when Garfiel had advised her to wash it, she’d replied,

Mimi: “Mmm, it’s fine! After returning to the hotel, I can get a chance of clothes~. Missy’ll be really mad that I didn’t go back last night. Hetaro and Tivey too~!”

Garfiel: “… sorry.”

Mimi: “Mimi isn’t worried about it~! Mimi’ll only say that Garf’s a good, good boy when Garf sobs and cries!”

At Garfiel's soft apology, Mimi only gaze an innocent smile. Last night, Garfiel had shared a second farewell with his mother.

After being hit by a series of wounds, he had shamefully ended up crying into Mimi's chest on rooftop.

And, even more embarrassingly, the sobbing had drained him so much that he'd fallen asleep. The next morning, a loud noise in the city had woken him up on Mimi's lap.

When the owner of the rooftop had found them, he'd finally managed to maintain his composure, and Mimi had worn her usual attitude.

Excuses were hard to find, so they'd slunk off of his rooftop, embarrassed.

Mimi: "Do you feel better?"

Garfiel: "It's, you could say, 's somethin' like that."

Mimi: "It's like that, right?"

Garfiel: "… yeah, like that."

Unable to voice his true gratitude, Garfiel frowned, but Mimi completely ignored his failure, leaving Garfiel with no clue what to say.

He recalled last night, when Mimi blurted out that she was interested in him. Involuntarily, his eyes chased Mimi's figure.

Before, he'd thought that Mimi was just tagging along with him, feeling companionship with him due to their shared non-human heritage, but she'd unexpectedly been following him with romantic intent.

And, even having given her confession, she acted the same as she always had.

He did the same with Ram, but, when the situation was reversed, he felt thrown off. That weakness was just another shameful part of Garfiel.

Mimi: "Well, what should we do this morning? Go to you mother and see her?"

His thoughts having been sidetracked, Garfiel jumped both at the suddenness of Mimi's words and their actual content.

Garfiel: "Wait, wait, why would we go see her?"

Mimi: "Because Reala is Garf's mother, shouldn't she know that as well."

Garfiel: "This midget really can't read between the lines…"

Aside from using instinct to spot the most important part of their relationship, Mimi is was unaware of the subtleties involved. He was in a difficult position, unable to answer questions about whether or not they were family. Garfiel immediately realized that it was useless to try to explain, and then gave up. And realized that that was another problem.

Garfiel: "'S fine… there's no need t' let her know that my amazin' self's her son."

Mimi: "Is that really okay?"

Garfiel: "It is. My amazin' self will leave it up to my sister…"

He would probably inform his rational sister.

After the initial shock and confusion passed, she would certainly come to the same conclusion as Garfiel, even faster than he had.

Only, even if their conclusion weren't the same, she still had the right to know that their mother was still alive. But would it be right to have her bear the pain as he did?

Garfiel: "Only by taking a moment can we make a decision."

Mimi: "So it's like that~. That's really hard~, Mimi~, just thinks that moms should be gotten along with~."

Garfiel: "Stuff 'bout moms… d'ya understand it?"

Mimi that unexpected, so Garfiel's ear shuddered and asked. Mimi is nodded with an imposing attitude of "yep~".

Mimi: "Mimi, Hetaro, and Tivey never knew Mom and Dad. They probably thought "triplets~, raising a super big family is too hard~" so they left us somewhere~. Then, we were picked up by the Chief, so he's family, and Missy is family too!"

Garfiel: " … so… y'really do have a big family."

Without knowing the reason, he suddenly felt that the atmosphere had relaxed as he stroked Mimi's head.

At that moment,

Mimi: "—waah!"

Mim quickly leapt away from his hand.

Garfiel stared at her reddened face, as she spun around with a whirring sound while rubbing it.

Mimi: "Ever since yesterday, getting too close to Garf feels weird."

Garfiel: “Right, sorry… d’ya want my amazin’ self t’leave?”

Mimi: “I don’t want that either~, something not too close and not to far feels the best~.”

She scrambled away with small steps, stopping in a place outside of his reach.

Garfiel frowned, confused, as Mimi gave her usual “hehe~” laugh. Just now, his own face seemed to tingle with a little redness.

Mimi: “Hey, let’s eat the souffle!”

Garfiel: “Y-yeah, sure…”

As if in a hurry to change the topic, Mimi withdrew the dessert box from her pocket. That was what Reala had given Mimi last night, before they’d parted ways.

Momentarily, a numb of pain flowed through his chest as Mimi held the snacks toward him, the aroma wafting gently to his nose.

The dessert was a little like bread, with sweet condiment added to the dough, stuffed with cream and bean paste.

There were two large, round souffles in the box, one each for Mimi and Garfiel, which would serve as their breakfast.

Mimi: “Yay! It's sweet~! Delicious! Super delicious, super delicious~!”

Garfiel: “Ah, ‘s delicious!”

Garfiel voiced his agreement to Mimi’s loud applause.

The dessert was slightly sweet, but not overwhelmingly sugary, and the dough fluffy and soft. If freshly baked, it would have been even more delicious. This was a mother’s expert cooking.

In that case, Garfiel could have had more chances to taste it.

Mimi: “Gar~f?”

Garfiel: “This really isn’t like my amazin’ self, yeah?”

At Mimi’s concern, Garfiel shoved those wishful thoughts away.

He returned his thoughts to his friends, who were waiting for him. Like Mimi, Garfiel stayed out without permission.

Because of that, he would certainly be severely reproached—

???: “—Hello, hello? Is this okay? Can everyone hear? Meat creatures who can hear, good for you! Meat creatures who can’t, go fester and die, that’d be a huge help. Gahahahaha—”

Garfiel: “What?”
Mimi: “Hmm~?”

Just having taken a short step forward, a voice suddenly assaulted their eardrums.

The two glanced at each other and looked up to the sky at the same time, where the voice seemed to be booming from.

Garfiel: “That voice sounds like…”

???: “Well, well, well, was there any idiot who died from shock at that moment? If not, well, it doesn’t really matter, but if there’s anyone who dares to ignore this lovely lady, then, my mood will be ruined!”

Ignoring the Garfiel, the voice kept speaking at that annoying volume.

The others walking on the morning streets all looked up at the sky, dumbfounded. A shockingly loud voice — that conclusion would be wrong.

Garfiel, whose sense of hearing was different from a regular human’s could tell that this voice wasn’t a loud one coming from one source; rather, it permeated the entire city, spreading the way an echo would.

However, knowing that didn’t answer any questions.

???: “You boring creatures do nothing but ruin my mood. There's no value here at all. —You’re all just garbagegarbagegarbage! Clear your disgusting minds of your ugly thoughts, and immediately find a ditch of waste to stick you head into and down in! Please go die soon, please, I beg you! Gahahaha!”

— The owner of this voice had the most vile of souls.

Garfiel: “What kind ‘f joke ‘s this? Stop fuckin’ around!”

Mimi: “Garf… I keep feeling like this is super, super uncomfortable…”

As Garfiel cursed in irritation, Mimi showed an uneasy expression. At her, Garfiel traced the scar on his forehead, gritting his teeth.

That expression didn’t suit her. That expression, he didn’t want to see it from her.

???: “Well, well, then, since the bit dull rotten meat creatures can’t figure it out, I’ll explain it. I have control of the radio— meaning, meaning, meaning—!”

Garfiel: “Get on with it, what's the meanin’?”

???: “That——— I, no, we have control of the City Hall. Ah, by the way, is there a control tower at the end of the city? That’s also ours now!”

Garfiel: “Control tower… what did Otto-nii?”

Sound the other side of the true purpose of the owner, Garfiel felt the threat, holding his breath.

Before and after arriving at the city, he’d hard about Pristella’s structure from Otto. Pristella’s ever functioning watergate could the trap any enemy in the city if they were lured within.

And, in charge of that gate’s operation, control towers located in each corner of the city, were controlled by this host, who possessed the most vile character possible. The entire city’s population had been taken hostage.

Reaching the same conclusion as Garfiel, panic and anxiety began to spread though the civilians. Everyone shouted at the same time, and the city rang with toxic laughter.

???: “Kahahahaha—! By now! At this moment! Only now are you realizing that you’re all going to be decimated! It’s shocking how brainless you all are! It’s too much for me! Ah, garbagegarbagegarbage! Gahahaha—”

Garfiel: “——”

???: “Oh, this won’t do. Any longer without giving my name, you’re all going to start trying to escape reality? Why don’t you allow this gentle and kindness lady’s mercy give you a plain and easy answer?”

In the panicked city, Garfiel held Mimi’s hand tightly. Then listen carefully to what the voice is saying.

Capella: “I am the Witch Cult’s Sin Archbishop of Lust—”

Garfiel: “Witch Cult—!”

Capella: “Capella Emerada Lugunica! Gahahaha! Respect me! Worship me! Then cry and beg and die tragically like worms! You rotten slabs of meat! Kahahahaha—!”

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Upon hearing the broadcast, Garfiel had been forced to make a series of choices.

Although the broadcast of the self-proclaimed archbishop induced panic, the actions of the citizens of Pristella were very orderly. Even in that turmoil, they kept emergency procedures in mind and fled into the shelters scattered around Pristella.

Passerbys had attempted to lead Garfiel and Mimi into a shelter. However, they had refused to take their lead and instead chose to go elsewhere.

That had led Garfiel to another choice.

Then, the result of that choice—

Reala: “Ah, Mr. Gorgeous!”

Garfiel: “——”

In another shelter, Reala had run toward Garfiel upon seeing him, relieved to find an acquaintance.

Garfiel endured the pain in his heard an allowed her to approach.

- And the result of that choice,

From the very moment Garfiel had refused to be led to a nearby shelter, this choice was imminent.

Where should he be? With Emilia and Subaru, or with the mother whose safety he’d gone out of his way to confirm?

Rationally, Garfiel knew he should have immediately returned to Emilia.

Even so, he’d made the excuse to himself that since this shelter was relatively close by, he could afford to check on her safety.

Reala: “It's great that Mimi-san is fine as well. That broadcast had me worried.”

Mimi: “Ah, nothing’s happened to us~! The souffle was delicious, thanks~ for the treats~!”

Reala: “Ah, that’s good, I’m glad it was to your taste.”

Mimi hadn’t objected to any of Garfiel’s choices, and had followed along faithfully.

Of course, she wanted to return to Anastasia and her brothers. To her, Reala’s safety was someone else’s business, and she had no real obligation to go and check.

Garfiel: “——”

While listening to his own excuse, Garfiel, having finally confirmed Reala’s safety, was free to leave. He needed to immediately return to Emilia’s side and defend her with vigor and strength.

When the Witch Cult appeared, Garfiel would protect Emilia and fight in her name. That was his agreement with Subaru, which he would absolutely not violate.

Even if he couldn’t protect himself as a tiger, he couldn’t forget himself as a man.

Garfiel: “It looks like everythin’s good, so my amazin’ self will…”

Reala: “Wait… Mr. Gorgeous, have you…”

As Garfiel prepared to leave, Reala’s unusually timid attitude frightened him.

Reala: “Have you seen my children yet? They left early this morning… and they’re not in this shelter…”

Garfiel: “——!?”

Hurriedly looking up, Garfiel scanned his surroundings, unable to see their figures anywhere here.

Reala: “Even my husband… no, nevermind, I said something superfluous…”

Garfiel: “What is it? My amazin’ self’ll be bothered if y’ try to hide anythin’ now.”

Reala: “— The broadcast came from the City Hall, where my husband works… so today, when something happened there…”

Garfiel: “——”

The City Hall was a tall building in the center of the city.

Garfiel had heard that it was is in charge of the functions of the city, and the archbishop had announced that they’d seized it.

That was where Garek probably was.

Garfiel: “Haah…”

This news came far to abruptly, and Garfiel’s heart quickened with the rhythm of an alarm.

The missing siblings, and Garek, who was in the middle of the most dangerous location. Confirming Reala’s safety had led him to learn of the circumstances of her family.

Garfiel: “Captain, Emilia-sama…”

Their faces, as well as Otto’s and Beatrice’s flashed through Garfiel’s mind. He had to return and become their strength.

But, as if immediately chasing that same idea, that faces of the siblings and Garek also flashed through in mind.

Reala: “I'm sorry to have disturbed you, Mr. Gorgeous. Please forget what I said.”

Garfiel: “……”

Reala: “Just now, I was a little bit too frightened. My children and husband are well aware of the city’s

emergency procedures.”

Reala showed them a smile of strength, but her hands were clasped, as if in prayer.

There was no doubt that her gesture was reluctant, and she was only desperately putting on an act to keep Garfiel from worrying.

Garfiel: “——”

Silence, silence, silence.

Unspeaking, gritting his teeth, Garfiel’s mind raced. Mimi faced him, also silent, waiting for his decision. Unspeaking, she only held his hand.

Garfiel: “… Don’t worry, leave your children and husband t’ us.”

Reala: “—Mr. Gorgeous!?”

That unexpected answer left Reala speechless with surprise. Nodding to her, Garfiel looked down at Mimi.

Garfiel: “’S my issue, so you should go back.”

Mimi: “Hi-ya!”

Garfiel: “Ow!”

At being told to return, Mimi brought her foot down on Garfiel’s, who cried out loudly in pain. Mimi took the moment to stand tall.

Mimi: “Garf said something so handsome, so how could Mimi not match him~? I’m definitely~ going with you~!”

Garfiel: “Midget… no, ‘s fine. Sorry.”

Mimi: “At this point, you should be offering your grititude!”

Garfiel: “—Thank you.”

Mimi: “You're welcome!”

With a sweet giggle, Mimi drew Garfiel into a laugh as well.

Then, turning back to the stunned Reala, Garfiel spoke.

Garfiel: “My amazin’s self’s goin’ lookin’ for your family, so stay here, with everyone else, and wait

for us.”

Reala: “But, but… why would you do that for me?”

Garfiel: “——”

Why was he doing this?

Reala’s wavering gaze questioned Garfiel. Garfiel grinned at her.

Garfiel: “Because my amazin’ self’s a golden tiger! Gorgeous! Tiger!”

Mimi: “Then Mimi, is also Gorgeous Mimi~!”

Shouting their stupid lines, their levity shocked the people gathered here.

At Reala’s shock, Garfiel and Mimi put on a rose, then, with a valiant spin, the two rushed from the shelter.

Mimi: “Garfiel, what do we do?”

Garfiel: “Use the smell to pursue them. Those two and Garek, y’ still remember their smell clearly, right?”

The problem was that this is was very large city, and the flow of water was everywhere.

To accurately find their scents, the environmental conditions needed to be right. In this populated city, a powerful sense of smell could only do so much. In spite of this, the two’s animal senses served them well.

Once they’d seen Reala off safely, they found the scents of the siblings.

During this period, the evacuation of the city’s citizens had proceeded smoothly. The city, unpleasantly enough, appeared to be a ghost city. In most cases like this, looting would have been expected, but the absence of that kind of immoral behavior was most likely due to the notoriety of the Witch Cult’s name.

Mimi: “Hmm, is it this one? Gar~f, I smell them!”

Garfiel: “… right, and th’ direction is…”

Garfiel tracked them and roughly predicted their location. They seemed to have traced yesterday’s route from Third Street to First Street.

A thought flashed through his mind.

Garfiel: “Those two went to th’ park to see that Songstress…”

Fred had said yesterday that he'd left too late and failed to catch her. Having learned his lesson, he'd left early this morning, determined not to miss her again.

This time, his sister must have accompanied him.

Garfiel: "In that case, if we go to First Street…"

If they went there, they could find them fairly quickly.

Garfiel brightened slightly, thinking that the situation had turned in his favor. —And then he smelled it.

Garfiel: "——"

Mimi: "Is this their father…?"

Mimi noticed what Garfiel had.

That was, a split in the middle from the siblings. Garek had headed to the City Hall in the middle of the city.

The moment of choice descended again on Garfiel.

If he went to First Street, he could find the siblings. If they had been at the Songstress's performance, they would certainly have found safety.

However, the City Hall was a difference case.

As time passed, the people in the City Hall, where the Witch Cult had made their attack, were in increasing great danger.

However, Garek was in a place where, at any second, the possibility of his death would increase.

Mimi: "Gar~f…. what do we do?"

Garfiel: "——"

A choice once again approached Garfiel.

He could choose to confirm the survival of the siblings, who were on the way to reuniting with Subaru. In that case, he would be turning a blind eye to Garek in the City Hall.

How could Garfiel's relationship to Garek be described?

Unlike Reala, and the children born from her, there was no direct relationship between them. If blood was used as a basis for rescue, his obligation to save Garek will cease to exist.

However, what would become of Reala, if she lost him?

She'd spend years mourning with her children, all because Garfiel gave up on the City Hall. That family would shed endless tears.

Garfiel: "… Th' City Hall's where the archbishops is, right?"

Mimi: "Yep~!"

Garfiel: "That control tower's very dangerous, but 'f we can just get the the archbishop and kill her, then…"

Mimi: "Everyone will be saved~? Awesome~! Too awesome~!" Bouncing on the spot, Mimi applauded Garfiel's comments.

However, she immediately stopped jumping on the spot,

Mimi: "Although, it's not a big problem, but~ I feel kind of oneasy…"

Garfiel: "Uneasy?"

Mimi: "It's very dangerous. That kind of feeling. It's not clear, but it's that feeling." What she meant was that she had no basis for saying so.

At her timid attitude, Garfiel felt thrown off.

Up until them, Mimi had been constantly supporting him from behind, agreeing to his every decision.

Garfiel: "How shameless… expectin' others t' jus' do nothin' but support me."

Mimi: "Garfiel, what can I do?"

Garfiel: "'It'd be dumb t' ignore your unease, and the captain'n the others're goin' t' give me hell for it, but…"

Emilia's strongest force could not run away in fear.

And no matter how much he struggled, in order to save the city, they would need to face the City Hall eventually.

Garfiel: "First 'f all, we have t' confirm the situation of the City Hall. Like 'f there's a sentry posted there, or whether or not th' inside is safe."

Mimi: "Is that called an investigation? Oooh! I see~, we're going scouting!~"

Although Mimi was still a little tense, she agreed eagerly.

Seeing her draw the wand that she loved to use from her robe, Garfiel also drew his twin shields from his waist and attached them to his wrists.

As his arms were covered in silver armor, he declared himself ready.

Garfiel: “Let’s go.”

Mimi: “Alright~!”

With that response to Garfiel’s brief words, the two headed toward the City Hall.

According to information from Subaru, the Sin Archbishop of Sloth had several minions fighting alongside him. Although they couldn’t match up the the archbishops, those of them who were experienced in combat were capable of posing a threat.

On the road, alert of any guards who may have been assigned there, the two traveled cautiously and carefully.

Garfiel: “What… ‘s odd, what’s goin’ on?”

However, the they couldn’t see even a single cultist.

Even if they had been hiding, they couldn’t have been able to cheat Garfiel and Mimi’s noses. In that case,

Garfiel: “‘S like they think they don’t need a guard!”

Mimi: “……”

When he remembered the voice from the broadcast, the force of Garfiel’s anger became unbearable.

They had never thought that anyone would attack them. Without a sign of alertness, they assumed that their control of the building was absolute, and that they had already achieved their victory.

That arrogance, he wanted to tear apart with his claws and crunch on with his fangs.

Mimi: “Hmmm?”

As Garfiel gnashed his teeth, Mimi gave a soft murmur.

Seeming subdued, she rubbed his back, looking disturbed, her nose twitching constantly.

Garfiel: “What is it?”

Mimi: “I don’t know~ but I think that something’s wrong. Garf, something’s off.”

Garfiel: “Don’t kid around!”

Seizing the hem of Garfiel’s pants, Mimi suddenly spoke discouraging words. Garfiel snapped at Mimi, who wanted to retreat after coming all the way here.

The Witch Cult had neglected to even post an outpost. Retreating just because the atmosphere seemed off wasn’t something that they could do.

If they left right now, the possibility of Reala’s family suffering a tragedy could only increase.

Garfiel: “You can stay here ‘f you don’t want to go. My amazin’ self’ll be fine, I’ll crush ther archbishop’s easily!”

Mimi: “Garf!”

Shaking off the fingers on his pants, Garfiel leapt from their hiding place.

From the square along the waterway, he planned to immediately jump to the City Hall’s building.

The distance is narrowing. There atmosphere remained stagnant. Their arrogance was real, what a joke.

Nothing happened. Ten steps left. Nine steps. Eight steps. Seven steps. He scaled a wall, finding a easier route to the building. Six steps. Five steps—

Mimi: “Garf—!”

Garfiel: “——!?”

Suddenly changing his direction, Garfiel redirected his energy to his legs, leaping not forward, but sideways.

Then, the a sharp light glinted off of the edge of a quiet blade flashed by his gaze. That destructive energy was completely silent.

The stone steps cut obliquely, as if they were cut, did not find themselves left behind. Floating, chopped white smoke.

Garfiel: “——”

If it weren’t for Mimi’s warning cry, he would have died just now.

A beautiful and exquisite slash barely missed Garfiel’s head. If that artistic cut had hit, Garfiel’s head would have been pinned up for display in the square.

Cold sweat.

At that moment, Garfiel landed and turned, and saw it.

Woman: “——”

Giant: “——”

Before his eyes, two figures suddenly appeared.

One of them was a giant man, leisurely holding a large sword in each hand. The other was slender, delicate woman, holding a long sword in her grip.

Both were wearing black headdresses, and Garfiel was unable to determine confirm their appearance.

Garfiel: “… ‘s not a nice greetin’, y’know?”

Scratching the back of his neck, which was covered in cold sweat from shock, Garfiel spoke, trying to divert their attention from determining his own combat strength.

However, neither responded to Garfiel’s words.

Mimi: “Garfiel, these two…”

Making a large circle around them, Mimi went to Garfiel's side.

Garfiel didn’t dare to even look at Mimi, instead keeping his eye on the two figures.

Garfiel: “Yeah, they’re strong.”

Mimi’s voice spasmed nervously, and Garfiel answered by placing his hand on her shoulders, supporting her.

The two they were facing seemed to be dreary, ominous ghosts.

The preternatural levels of danger the two exuded were impossible to accurately measure. This unfamiliar stimulation pricking at Garfiel’s skin robbed his mouth of saliva, and he felt and urgent thirst.

Obviously, the enemy’s strength far eclipsed humanity’s.

They were clearly superior to that murder machine who Garfiel had once fought.

Garfiel: “Only two people…?”

No other shadows lurked around.

The only guards were the two before him. They’d cloaked their existence from Garfiel up until now, so any other potential presences wouldn’t exist. Those with strength had already chosen to stop hiding it.

In other words, the two in front of them were the barriers that they needed break through in order to recapture the city hall.

At the moment when Garfiel understood this,

Garfiel: “Heh, interesting…!”

Mimi: “Garf?”

Garfiel: “‘F we win, we can break through this field…!”

His heart stirred with vigor as he refused to let fear dominate his heart, touching his chest with a shield as he spoke in a sharp voice. Even as his head began cooling, sparks of excitement still bounced within him.

However, grasping Garfiel's trousers, Mimi shouted,

Mimi: “No, no! Garf, no! These two people, we can’t! They’re super~ strong! Only Mimi and Garfiel absolutely can’t win! We can’t!”

Garfiel: “—Whether or not we win, I --- . Would not win or not, I will not try to see how I know. I absolutely would not agree with that. Moreover,"

Mimi discouraged, then the content of the feeling is to stimulate the fear of Garfiel cowardice. Garfiel pouted his mouth, his jaw full of anger toward the hostile two.

Garfiel: “Even if we run away with tails tucked between our legs, they’ll catch up to us.”

Mimi: “Then, then, once! We’ll hit them once, dodge, and then run away. If it’s just us, we have to leave! Without the Chief of Julios—!” (she pronounces “Julius” wrong)

Garfiel: “——”

At Mimi’s frantic words, Garfiel bit his lip and pondered.

Indeed, Garfiel also understood that Mimi was correct. They couldn’t match up to the two of them.

Facing that kind of enemy, one on one, was undeniably suicidal.

As there was no other way, was withdrawing the right course of action?

The two figures in front of them were the overwhelmingly strong barrier. With overwhelming power blocking the front, but also had to cross the barrier.

Garfiel, being defeated by Reinhard, was far from the strongest he could be.

With consciousness that must become the shield of the most important, you must walk the strongest road

to the necessary journey that you can claim to be the golden tiger.

And then, though not the same as the form of hope, the mothers and their new families met. If he withdrew here, Garek would—

Mimi: "——"

Again grabbing the hem of Garfiel's trousers, dominated by tumultuous thoughts, was Mimi, who held his with an uneasy expression. Garfiel recalled their gentle night, where she'd been his kind guardian.

Just then, his stubborn feelings began to gradually melt away.

Garfiel: "… Alright, we'll do just as you said. After an attack, we'll break away, and find others to come help us. —'S that okay?"

Mimi: "Yeah! Yeah! That's it— let's do it~!"

Faced with Garfiel's unflappable courage, Mimi gasped with delight.

Having unified their views, they turned to face the defensive figures before them, who had remained silent.

Their brief quarrel had provided a perfect opportunity to launch an offensive. Had they held back because of honor? Compassion? Caution?

Garfiel: "—Let's go!"

Mimi: "Hah!"

—If they were merely cautious, it was time to crush them.

Not needing a signal, Garfiel and Mimi leapt into the fray in tandem. Garfiel flew toward the woman, and Mimi attacked the giant.

As Garfiel approached her at bullet-like speed, the woman gently shifted her upper body, and, in the next moment, was swinging her blade downward at an alarming speed.

The beautiful flash of her sword split the air with a sharpness that fascinated Garfiel and caused him to momentarily lose himself.

Garfiel: "—kah!"

However, he wasn't so foolish as to lose himself and allow the blade to reach him.

It bounced into the shield on his right wrist, and he took the opportunity to kick at her. She swiftly avoided his blow and attacked again, but her lithe, terrifying form was blocked by his other shield.

With the neck as the goal of the cut-off, Garfiel shield with his left hand. Immediately after, he kicked her, he light body flying away easily.

Garfiel: “Haah!”

Looking at the form of the woman who he’d easily beaten backwards, Garfiel felt a sense of exhilaration.

When he glanced back he saw the giant I look back, I see the giants who act there, play a role of adaptability, and attack the attack magic blow that slickly passes through the big sword — it is just about to be out of the square.

Mimi seemed to have successfully escaped.

The giant didn’t have the speed to match Mimi as she ran, and this woman didn’t have the ability to fight Garfiel. In that case,

Garfiel: “If we can win one—!”

If he could take her out, launching another attack later would be easier. Defeating the woman would make the giant much easier to shred.

Garfiel leaped forward toward the collapsed woman, her sword colliding with his left wrist.

He brought his right shield upon her slender, frail form. She couldn’t have the same regeneration ability as Elsa.

Garfiel: “Got ya!”

He’d be able to take out the woman.

At the moment when Garfiel confirmed this and raised his voice, Death came from behind.

— The giant, who should have been a ways away, approached Garfiel, bringing with him the stench of [death]. Garfiel instinctively reacted like a loaded spring.

Immediately interrupting his attack, he brought his left wrist back to his back, leaping away from the spot.

However, another attack from his back smashed Garfiel's left wrist he was sent to the ground with a cry.

Garfiel: “Ahhh?” “——”

Garfiel, who was swallowed up by the shock, groaned violently for an unimaginable blow.

Bouncing up from the ground, his body, caught in midair, once again faced an outrageous attack. With the help of his twin shields, he mounted a defense against the impact — but he was sent flying by the momentum.

Targeting Garfiel, who was gliding through the air, trajectory parallel to the ground, the giant and the woman dove forward in pursuit at the same time.

“____”

“____”

Garfiel: “Haahh, ahhh!”

Garfiel was sandwiched between the two parallel attacks.

He met the sword swinging at him from the front with a shield, and used the other to block a giant sword at his back. With a forceful kick to the ground, he barely ducked escaped their cage of attacks. A sword once again emerged from the fray, which he met with both shields, sparks dancing along their surfaces, followed by a swing sweeping from top to bottom…

Garfiel: “Hah!”

His bones and sternum cracked, and the power of the blow left Garfiel’s vision blood red. Although he’d bore the brunt of that sword, its blunt blade had barely spared Garfiel’s life.

A cry of agony followed the blood spilling from his mouth as his body flew into a tower, barely avoiding the danger of being shattered to pieces. However, the two difficult enemies wouldn’t allow his survival.

“____”

Wordlessly, they cut at Garfiel.

Although the intensity of this strike couldn’t be compared with that of the previous one, the sharpness of the woman's sword as she called upon a power that should have been outside her scope was beautiful as it tangled with the breath of death. Even at this length, that calm, elegant blade would split him clean in half.

“____”

Also wordless, the giant’s battling style was brutal and crude.

However, that kind of brutality wasn’t one that was impulsive and left to chance, it was the brutality of someone who could harness and optimize their destructive power. Most people would barely be able to hold one of his sword, but he easily swing two of them, each in one of his giant arms.

Garfiel: “Ah, ah, hah, ah, haaah!”

A violent whirlwind of steel sliced through the air, flowing like running water.

Although their styles were different, the effectiveness of their dynamic was commensurate with their

overwhelming skill, and they attacked side by side, leaving the escaping Garfiel only able to desperately play the defense.

Desperately bouncing backwards on the stone steps, dodging a heavy swing, feeling a sharp wind whistle over his head broken under the wind, rely on the instinct to withstand attacks with his shields, dodging, bouncing, defending.

—But, if they kept at it, sooner or later, he would be beheaded.

“____”

“____”

The two figures pressed Garfiel, giving his nary a chance to breathe. Without that, he couldn’t do anything about the shortage of oxygen in his brain, couldn’t see any ray of hope. His every effort was directed toward avoiding a fatal injury.

When he’d exhausted himself, his attention would surely fail to keep up. And his distracted self would suffer a fatal blow.

Masterful combat, masterful swings.

Tenacious as Garfiel’s life way, they could easily and simply steal it away. The more time passed, the more escape routes closed to him.

Decision. A decision was pressing.

The only way out of this dilemma was to reveal his true fangs. In that moment, Garfiel found the only advantage he could possibly hold.

And that thought briefly revived him. He sought a breathing opportunity.

Garfiel: “—What…”

The woman’s blades made deadly cuts. He brought both wrists forward to capture her, shifting his body the minimum distance to avoid the full impact of the giant’s full attack.

As expected, the giant's hit cracked Garfiel's left shoulder, and the knee of his right leg was shattered. But, in exchange for a breath of fresh air, that damage was nothing.

Garfiel: “Kah, haah…”

“____”

“____”

With a raging roar, he released the heat boiling in his body.

The same feeling of boiling blood expanded to his field of vision, which became nothing but pure white, a cracking sound echoing from beneath his face as his bones shifted. His teeth elongated into fangs, and he exercised his arms as his muscles expanded rapidly, his body becoming covered with golden hair.

Only his upper body changed, leaving him in a half-beast state.

The smell of blood chased his rationality away momentarily, but, in this state, his thoughts weren't completely animalistic. Seeing the person in front of them beastify, it was impossible for any hostile party to remain calm.

"____"

Facing the two speechless figures, Garfiel growled, reveling in the idea of shattering their eardrums, confirming that his nails had grown into thick, double-edged weapons. As the enemies' footsteps froze, he decided to open holes in their bodies.

His front paw descended toward the woman — until the form of giant man squeezed in front of her.

No matter. Even those thick muscles were nothing worth mentioning. They were but paper shields under his claws. And shielding was just what the giant intended to do — he held out his outstretched, the blade of his large sword facing down, making a gesture of neither defending nor attacking, but choosing to protect the woman.

Cute. But it was over.

— His paws would tear through the giant's body, followed by the slender form of the woman…

Garfiel: "——!?"

The process that had already been set in motion, but had been paused in the first motion.

Garfiel's tiger paw hit the giant, but failed to tear through him. That was because he'd caught Garfiel's paw in his own hands.

He'd uncover the front part of his robe to reveal his six arms.

With its strong arm of Garfil suppressed, gripping big sword will Garfiel's claws sharply blocked the tip, this violent attack from the front down.

—This was the [Eight Arm] defensive movement.

"____"

Too stunned to react, Garfiel hesitated.

He couldn’t believed that the giant could stand up to his crushing blow.

That was also to say, in that moment, Garfiel had left himself exposed and completely unprepared.

“____”

From behind the giant's back, the woman swung behind unprepared half-beast and launched herself at him.

Garfiel's back, covered by tiger’s fur, was a sitting target for that woman waving her long sword. As the tip of the sword approached, Garfiel felt the invisible breath of [death] on his neck.

However, his paws captured by the giant’s hands, all he could do was wait for [death]—

Mimi: “Hold on a second!”

Garfiel: “——”

Garfiel would have been split diagonally in half, had the woman's cut not been stopped by an unfolding blue magic barrier.

Her strike bounced into the barrier, which disappeared as she landed back on the ground. The orange-haired kitten had saved Garfiel in the nick of time.

Mimi: “Garfiel, we promised that we’d flee immediately!”

For the first time, something like reproach colored Mimi’s voice.

In his half beast status, hearing the voice coming from behind, Garfiel’s rationality flew back into his head as he started to recognize his own stupidity.

Ignoring anxieties, being far too careless, having been too dismissive to his opponent, he’d landed himself in a dangerous situation. From that dead end, Mimi had rescued him.

Garfiel swallowed as he appreciated the strength of Mimi’s barrier.

The violence in the woman’s blade didn’t match her appearance, and Mimi’s defensive capabilities were really quite capable. Garfiel was incredibly fortunate that she was there.

Garfiel: “Hah, ah, ah, hahhh!”

Woman: “——”

Resting assured that he would be safe, Garfiel broke free of the giant’s grip. Kicking at the body and spotting his blow bring blocked by an arm, Garfiel picked Mimi up by the waist and disengaged from the battle.

In this way, he would flee from here with Mimi. Following their original plan, they'd pick the fight back up with reinforcements.

Woman: "——"

Before they could move, the woman had quickly caught up. But once again, Mimi launched a barrier, this one larger than the previous one. The woman was again knocked back, and Garfiel gathered all his energy into his legs, preparing to escape.

— A breath. The figure of the woman stopped and gently cast a hand in front of the barrier. With a leap, she approached.

Garfiel: "What's—!"

Mimi: "——"

Garfiel: "Eh?"

A small sound accompanied a gentle impact.

Prepare to ask what had happened, Garfiel's stopped mid jump. As the stone steps flew past from under him, he saw a red line soar through the sky.

Blood. That's what is was.

Garfiel: "Midget…?"

The consciousness of maintaining his semi-beast form was interrupted, and Garfiel's rapidly changed back to human form. The sensation of losing his tiger fur was buried under a wave of chills.

In his arms was an exhausted, drained. He turned his gaze down. Looking up at the his flying figure was a woman whose blade whipped through the air.

More than half of that sword was coated with red, viscous blood.

A warm liquid dripped onto Garfiel's lower abdomen. Seeing Mimi's death grip on that wand she loved to use, even as she was rendered immobile from exhaustion, snapped Garfiel back into awareness.

Garfiel: "——"

Landing, jumping again. Continuing to leap to the nearby buildings, bearing the weight at his side as he fled. Fortunately, their adversaries didn't follow suit.

Were they uninterested in anything other than guarding the square, or was this a show of humanity? No matter, what should he do now? After four lengthy leaps away the square, Garfiel collapsed on a building, where he checked Mimi's condition.

Mimi's eyes closed, a large amount of blood spilling from the wound in her chest.

Garfiel yanked her clothes open to check on her wounds. He cautiously concluded that this wasn't yet a fatal injury. Of course, that didn't allow for any optimism. She was in need on immediate healing magic. He needed to calm himself.

Garfiel: "——"

Placing his hand on her wound, Garfiel willed all of the mana in his body into Mimi.

Garfiel was one of the few who could use healing magic in Sanctuary. He'd always felt that it was slightly useless, but, in the event of any emergency, he hoped to be able to do something. Therefore, Garfiel had poured all of his magical efforts into learning how to heal, and he had a rough but complete grasp on each field of healing.

As long as the injury wasn't fatal, he was fairly confident that he could do something.

Mimi's wounds needed all of his effort to heal. Sweat beaded his forehead as he mustered up his mana, directing it to suppress the overflow of blood and mend the cut skin, muscle, injured internal organs, desperately willing them to be fixed, giving her mana continuously.

Continuously. Continuously.

—The wound wouldn't close.

Garfiel: "What… what…?"

Who was whispering in that soft voice?

Someone who could, in this situation, make that kind of soft sound deserved nothing but Garfiel's wrath. He glanced around wildly, looking for the source. There was no one there. Finally, he realized. That voice was his own. aware of it. The voice is just my own.

So that soft voice had been him? Had be made that sound? Such a sound was, was, was—

Garfiel: "Close, close, close, healhealheal…!"

Exhausted, he ordered all of the magic in his body into her treatment. The wave of healing magic flowed into her, filling her with a gentle current of mana.

In spite of this, the wound refused to close.

Garfiel: "—'S a lie, right?"

Unable to accept the reality facing him, Garfiel again muttered with a weak voice.

Immediately afterward, he hit himself in the face and bit down hard on his lip to keep himself grounded. Now was not the time to make such a soft voice. What could he do, what could he do?

What could he do, what could he do, what could he do, what could he do? He had no idea. But he couldn't give up here. This girl needed to be saved. Because hadn't she let Garfiel shed tears before her?

Such a child, who had been hurt trying to save him, could not die like this.

Garfiel: "——"

Gritting his teeth, Garfiel began to run. One of his hands rested on the girl's wound, trying again to staunch her bleeding with his ineffective magic.

The smell of blood, the smell of [death]. In these deserted streets, any thoughts about what might have happened were completely absent from Garfiel's mind.

Someone, anyone! Save this kid! Someone, anyone, bring a miracle! Tell me what to do! If there's anything I can do… what can be done to save her!?

Garfiel: "——"

Garfiel strengthened his sense of smell.

The smell of water, blood, high feelings, charred meat. In the midst of those foul scents, Garfiel found a very familiar smell brushing past, and immediately following it, running, running, continually, endlessly, running.

He flew into a shelter, seeing figures covered with bloodstains everywhere, and issued a sad sigh. But he wasn't free to care at the moment. Opening his eyes, he searched for that figure.

Searching, searching, searching…

Subaru: "Garfiel!?"

He found him.

In that deep, dark, cold underground facilities, he found the one who he had been desperately searching out.

Natsuki Subaru.

To Garfiel, that existence was miraculous, and, in any worst case possible, he was a ray of light, the last thing Garfiel could rely on.

Staggering pace. Head shaking.

Due to the weight of in hands and his choking lungs, Garfiel swayed back and forth.

As he approached, Subaru glanced around him, before becoming aware of the unconscious Mimi in his arms.

Under Subaru's gaze, Garfiel bowed his head, holding Mimi out, blindly cursing his own stupidity.

Garfiel: "Sorry, captain…! I'm so worthless…! Incompetent…!"

He'd been unable to protect that family, his vow to become a shield for their mission hadn't been achieved, his challenge to the hostile forces had been met with no results, and, in the end, this gentle girl was on the brink of death.

Subaru: "Garfiel, what happened… no, it's not the time for that. Ferris!"

Ferris: "I know! Hurry up, give that child to me!"

Reaching out, Mimi was taken from his arms, and placed in a bed near Subaru. Garfiel took a moment to try to sort through his thoughts.

In the next moment, a volatile healing energy overflowed, permeating the space. Garfiel simply couldn't compare. If Garfiel's healing prowess was likened to a drop of rain, Ferris would be a waterfall.

Witnessing the magic that could resurrect even a lost life, healing, Garfiel looked as if she had been drawn out of her soul, her face staring at her treatment.

Subaru gently placed a hand on Garfiel's slackened shoulder. With a glance, he could see that Subaru had endured an appalling injury to his foot.

Subaru: "Although I can't say that this went well, you did a great job bringing her to Ferris. Thanks to you, this child can be saved."

Garfiel: "Thanks to me…?"

What was Subaru saying?

Thanks to Garfiel, Mimi had saved? Ridiculous! Mimi was hurt so severely, at it was all Garfiel's fault.

Mimi's life should never have been in danger in that first place. That had all happened because of Garfiel's poor judgement.

Emptiness and twisted thinking, unsolvable thoughts of guilt, and self-conscious stupidity. The world would never forgive Garfiel's foolishness.

He had made a mistake, and he would need to pay the price. And still, the worst results were happening.

Subaru: “Ferris, what happened…?”

Feeling a change, Subaru’s expression grew worried.

Subaru dragged himself over the the bed, questioning the man who was casting his potent healing spells.

In that terrifying torrent of magic, the healer shook his head.

Ferris: “Why…? The wounds, they won’t heal…! If it goes on like this, I don’t know if I can save her!”

His anguished cry echoed across the room, and Garfiel turned his face toward the sky. But he was underground, and so the sky had nothing to tell Garfiel.

— The price of his mistake could be nothing but a repatriation by blood.

Arc 5 - Chapter 32, "The City Hall Raider's Conference"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-32-the-city-hall-raiders-conference/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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Ferris: “Ah, really! Healing magic has no effect, so we can only use such a primitive treatment!”

Ferris, with blood staining his cheeks, clenched his teeth in irritation, waving a hand around.

Lying in front of him, blood still flowing from her chest, was Mimi’s unconscious form.

Wholeheartedly wanting to stop the bleeding, he’d been forced to bind her wound with a magic cloth and several layers of bandages.

This was something typically used for hand and foot injuries, but it could also be applied to the chest to maintain a wound’s closure and prevent bleeding. Only, Mimi’s chest wound was just above her heart.

The amount of time she had left could only depend upon her own vitality.

Subaru leaned against the wall, watching desperate treatment as he fretted about Garfiel. Looking down, he saw that instead of looking at Mimi, Garfiel had plunged his bloody hands into his short blond hair and looked down, a far cry from his usual optimistic self.

The blood covering his body was not only Mimi's. It was plain to see that he had his own severe wounds. Blood stained the corners of his mouth, and the amount of blood still pouring his shoulders was particularly heart-wrenching. His trousers were torn near his knees, where flesh was missing and white bone could be glimpsed.

Subaru: "Garfiel. Mimi can be entrusted to Ferris, for the time being. You also need treatment for your wounds. Can you administer healing spells yourself?"

Garfiel: "…ah, yeah."

Nodding, Garfiel slowly pressed his palms to his wounds began to deliver the healing mana into his own body. As he watched the slowly healing wounds, Subaru looked down at the conversation mirror in his hand.

Reflected in the surface of the mirror was a silent old swordsman, his wrinkled face bearing a complex expression.

In the depths of his own heart, what kind of confusion had risen? Undoubtedly, Wilhelm must have reached the same conclusion as Subaru.

Subaru: "The wound can't be closed, which is to say…"

Wilhelm: "In all likelihood, that's because of the Divine Protection of the Shinigami."

Finishing Subaru's words, Wilhelm came to the expected conclusion.

The terrible curse of incurable healing of a wounds was given by the death god's blessing. That Mimi's wound couldn't be healed by magic was probably due to such a blessing.

Then, in Subaru's mind, only one person could conceivably have done this.

Of course, while it couldn't be asserted that no other person could possibly have the same divine protection,

Subaru: "Wilhelm-san. Although this isn't a happy thought… your wrist injury, how is it?"

Wilhelm: "——"

Wilhelm briefly closed his eyes, then removed his coat and presented his left hand to Subaru.

The bandage wrapped tightly against it bore no bloodstains. Then there was no bleeding— so his attacker couldn't be near.

Wilhelm: "Even assuming that the injury was given by someone who had the same protection as my wife, as long as my wounds have not opened, her life cannot be near. Although that should be a matter of course."

Subaru: “Wilhelm-san…”

Was he frustrated, or was he relieved? Subaru did not know.

Wilhelm had lost his wife a full fifteen years ago. Even one year ago, he’d certainly not doubted her death.

Regardless of the hopelessness of any situation, looking at a favored result with unconditional hope and choosing to believe in any modest hope was a weakness of humanity. However, even if Wilhelm succumbed to that weakness, Subaru found no shame in it whatsoever.

Therefore, at this moment, Subaru found no words he could say to Wilhelm who but of course desired neither casual comfort nor encouragement.

Behind Subaru, a change in the situation had occurred. That was,

Ricardo: “Bro. Sorry, to take your time while you’re treating a wound.”

Saying so, Ricardo sat on the ground.

Near Ferris, desperately conducting his treatment, the beastman sat in front of the bloody Garfiel, eyeing him sharply.

To meet that gaze, Garfiel slowly raised his head.

Ricardo: “I don’t know what happened. But I know that if bro hadn’t brought her here, Mimi wouldn’t have made it. So,”

Garfiel: “——”

Ricardo: “Really, thank you very much. I’m deeply grateful.”

With two fists on the ground, Ricardo kneeled and bowed his head.

As Ricardo’s forehead hit the ground, thanking Garfiel for bringing his family here, Garfiel appeared shocked.

Mimi’s status was still not optimistic. It was understandable that Garfiel held some guilt for not being able to successfully defend Mimi. But that was by no means Garfiel’s fault. What good would it do to blame him?

Ricardo had, of course, hoped for Mimi’s safe return, and, having her back in that state, he couldn’t have been calm.

Even so, in Subaru view, Ricardo's vaulted posture was completely sincere.

At the same time, he held an unforgiving anger at those who left Mimi in that state. Therefore,

Subaru: “Garfiel. Although it must be troubling for you, tell me exactly what happened. Even you’re in such a state, which is unimaginable. Not to mention…”

As he asked Garfiel to explain the situation, an idea took root in Subaru’s mind.

It was earlier, as he sorted through their information with Julius and Wilhelm, contemplating the siege of Pristella, the idea had briefly crossed his mind.

Seizing the five control towers, the Witch Cult had turned the entire city as their hostage.

Each location must have been occupied by a mighty force. Assuming that was right— they were most likely guarded by Wrath, Greed, Lust. Then, the likelihood of Gluttony’s presence was also high.

——That Gluttony was precisely Subaru’s target.

Greed, who had Emilia, and Wrath, who regarded Subaru as Petelgeuse. Lust, whose ugly nature he’d heard earlier, and Gluttony, the target he’d been hunting.

Although the situation was indeed the worst of the worst, at the same time, there had never been an opportunity better than now.

Being entrapped in a spider web was precisely the right time to exterminate all the spiders.

Subaru: “Anyway, we have attack these guys eventually. After all, if we don’t, we’ll never be able to return safe and sound.”

Subaru: “——”

Garfiel stared at him in surprise.

Subaru nodded with encouragement, urging him to speak.

Garfiel: “…After hearin’ that broadcast, my amazin’ self and th’midget went t’the center ‘f the city. Both ‘f us hated that broadcaster’s annoyin’ voice.”

Ricardo: “We were also discussing a way we were gonna do that. Looks like you got the first chance.”

Garfiel: “On th’way t’tha City Hall, th’were no sentries, n’no appearance ‘f anythin gettin’ our way. So my amazin’ self headed straight toward the City Hall, where…”

Garfiel’s words stopped, as he clenched his teeth, his fists trembling.

This was not fear, but anger. However, Subaru believed that that anger was directed not at his opponent, but at Garfiel himself.

Issuing a fiery, angry breath, Garfiel continued.

Garfiel: “Two enemies appeared. One of ‘em was’n huge man th’lugged around two giant swords. Th’other was a thin woman’n had a slender sword. No matter what, ‘f they was serious about it, they’d match me one on one. No... they’d most likely be stronger than my amazin’ self.”

Subaru: “Even stronger than you…was one of them the broadcaster?”

Garfiel: “…most likely not.”

Subaru almost wondered whether or not there was a problem with his ears.

Garfiel was not only the strongest in Emilia’ faction, who was meant to face the Witch Cult if the need ever arose, he also sat at the peaks of strength in their combined forced.

That Garfiel had just judged two people to be individually stronger than himself. And, if his assumption was right, those people were only common cultists.

Garfiel: “Those two didn’t give off th’same malice as th’broadcast. Even though my amazin’ self left openin’s while I escaped, we still got away… they seem t’of some kind ‘f swordsman’s etiquette or whatever.”

Garfiel regarded his opponents with something like awe.

Unlike his usual lively self, he seemed to be in a sluggish state, clearly still affected by Mimi’s state.

Ricardo, who had been listening to Garfiel, slapped his knees with dull sound and stood. Then he grabbed Garfiel's shoulder,

Ricardo: “Strong or not strong, I can already clearly tell. What I want to know is, who left bro in such a state? Who did that the Mimi? Who should I seek revenge on? Tell me that.”

Garfiel: “… My amazin’ self’s wounds are mostly from th’guy, while the woman was a distraction. However, because‘f that woman, Mimi…”

Wilhelm: “—that woman, could you please leave her to me?”

Ricardo was ignited by the vengeance for Mimi, and Garfiel swore that same goal, with shame. The one who had interjected was Wilhelm, who had been listening silently through the mirror.

To him, too, this was by no means something he could leave alone. But it was cruel to the two who didn’t know about Wilhelm’s reasons.

Ricardo: “Why? This has nothing to do with you, Wilhelm-san. Even you shouldn’t take my right to have revenge on those that harmed my dear family.”

Wilhelm: “I… can’t say for certain without having confirmation. However, if what I suspect is true, than that woman is a very important one to me. I must insist.”

Ricardo: “That's… if you anger me, I won’t be able to spare you.”

Although Ricardo snarled in agitation, Wilhelm also stubbornly refused.

Precisely because he understood the situation of both sides, Subaru couldn’t determine who was right. Therefore, it wasn’t Subaru who drew an end to that quarrel, but,

Crusch: “—Wilhelm. And Ricardo-sama. Now, as companions, this is not for strife. Not when so many civilian lives are exposed to danger.”

Wilhelm: “Crusch-sama…”

With a cool voice, filled with fortitude, Crusch scolded the two.

At the reproof of his master, Wilhelm bowed and scratched his head in shame. In the meantime, considering options that would avoid internal strife,

Anastasia: “Okay, okay. Let's make a decision.”

Clapping gently, Anastasia took the mirror and pointed at Subaru. Laughing at the timid Subaru, Anastasia fiddled with her fox scarf,

Anastasia: “First of all, I want to bring up the raid on the City Hall proposed by Natsuki-kun and supported by Crusch-san’s faction. After all, if we attack any of the control towers, that City Hall’ll give everything away for us. And even if it isn’t retaken, the situation of the waterways could be improved a little bit, yeah? Although that might just be a bit of my wishful thinking.”

Subaru: “No, I’m thinking the same thing. Moreover, if the other side launches an attack first, it’ll cut our choices down. If we want to act, the sooner the better.”

Anastasia: “…what’s this, you’ve become reliable in this past year, haven’t you? In any case, it’s just as Natsuki-kun’s said. Thanks to the conversation mirror, our groups can collaborate, and, fortunately, about 70% of our total combat power can be dispatched immediately. It’d be reasonable to say that an attack on the City Hall would fare well, yeah?”

Subaru glanced at Garfiel and Ricardo.

In order to conquer the City Hall in one fell swoop, it would become necessary to split their combat forces.

A raid on the City Hall would entail, in their current situation, deploying forces from the closest shelter, Garfiel and Ricardo. Then, from other the shelter, Julius and Wilhelm would come.

Members of the Iron Fang, as well with both Ton and Kan, and the numerous adventurers who were staying in the city. Adding them to their ranks would improve their combat effectiveness.

Subaru: “Honestly, if Reinhard were here, everything would be fine… could we get Ton and Kan to summon him?”

Julius: “It’s strange that we haven’t located him, is that what you’re thinking?”

Julius, in response to Subaru’s attempt to maximize their combat power, shifted his gaze toward him.

Julius: “Before entering the shelter, the two seemed to have fired magic into the sky as a signal. However, Reinhard, who should have appeared instantly, didn’t appear. And, this isn’t a pleasant thought, but…”

Subaru: “But what? Really, are you still hesitating at this point?”

Julius: “Then, I welcome you to feel the same trepidation that I do. —Felt-sama’s followers were separated from her and Reinhard a little bit before all this happened. It seems that they were last seen speaking to a red-haired man.”

Subaru: “Red-haired man… that couldn’t be that damn bastard, could it?”

Julius: “I can neither confirm nor deny this.”

Subaru gritted his teeth indignantly while listening Julius’s elegant answer.

Felt and Reinhard had met, if Subaru’s speculation were right, Reinhard’s father, Heinkel. What would the two have to say to that man?

And now, why weren’t they taking action?

Subaru: “However, he showed up at Sirius’s speech in that previous loop… What's the difference? Is it because of the broadcast? Has he taken action already?”

Which one after the last is what conditions are different, and Subaru can not clearly know the difference.

In any case, knowing that they couldn’t count on Reinhard to show up was a cause for alarm. Subaru’s shoulders dropped in contemplation. Meanwhile, Ferris had returned.

His feminine costumes were black blood stained, and full of sweaty faces,

Ferris: “Huu. That took quite a while.”

Ricardo: “So, how’s Mimi’s condition? Is she fine? Did you save her?”

As Ferris wiped his forehead of sweat, Ricardo questioned breathlessly. And Garfiel, from behind him, also cast him a panicked gaze without standing up.

However, at their sincere eyes, Ferris shook his head ruthlessly.

Ferris: “I can’t say that I’ve saved her, but the wound isn’t getting worse. That’s all thanks to her brothers right nyow. By strengthening their link, she’s barely managing to hold on.”

Ricardo: “That’s their Divine Protection of Triplets, right? In that case, what’ll happen to the brothers?”

Ferris: “Their blessing is mean to have three children share the burden of fatigue and injury. Their link strengthening allows the brothers to share the injuries of their seriously injured sister. In that case, although her life can be prolonged…”

Tivey: “—When sister's life is exhausted, we’ll die too, right?”

From the mirror, a pained voice echoed forth.

Ricardo frowned and took the conversation mirror, which reflected Hetaro and Tivey, sitting side by side. The two brothers were also clutching their chests in pain.

Ricardo: “You guys are idiots. Really, just a group of hopeless idiots.”

Hetaro: “…However, when I think that this is sister’s pain, knowing that we’re feeling the same pain together makes me a little happier.”

Tivey: “I’m not as strong as my brother. So, Chief. I believe that you’ll be able to do something for us soon. Because if I die, I'll become a ghost and haunt you.”

Being assigned to aid the injury suffered by their sister, the two brothers experienced the same serious injury.

Seeing Hetaro and Tivey lying side by side in their shelter, Ricardo gave a deep breath sigh and took his machete in hand.

Then,

Ricardo: “…in other words, we have to move quickly, then. If we don’t there’s no point.”

Ricardo whispered in a deep voice that emanated his passionate feelings.

Anastasia: “Send the Iron Fang out and have them secure the road until you reach the City Hall. Then have our best break into the building itself, and try to seize it in one fell swoops. The enemies are the huge man and slender woman. Following them should probably be lust.”

Subaru: “The elites here are Garfiel and Ricardo. Then Wilhelm-san and Julius.”

Crusch: “—I’m going too.”

Those words came from Crusch, who had tied her hair into a ponytail.

She stood with sword in hand, having shed her dress for armor suited for battle.

Subaru: “Crusch-san, by saying you’ll go, you mean that you can fight?”

Crusch: “Although I’m not as strong as I was before, I’ve had Wilhelm as a teacher. In addition, I can use the Wind to augment my strikes. I don’t intend to be a burden.”

Crusch’s power, before losing her memory, was enough that her individual presence had made a difference in the battle of the White Whale. However, the strength of the current amnesiac Crusch was unknown to Subaru.

Honestly speaking, Subaru had thought that her newfound femininity had led to a seeming loss in her adaptability to the struggle.

Wilhelm: “Crusch-sama’s talent with with the sword has not declined. That, I can guarantee.”

Wilhelm’s words wiped away the last of Subaru’s discomfort. The old swordsman nodded, gazing through the mirror at his master’s side.

Wilhelm: “However, please be careful. I implore you, please place your safety first.”

Crusch: “It’s the obligation of the nobility to bear burden of and shed blood for the people. If innocent people weep, then I will shield them under my wing. I will fight, Wilhelm.”

Wilhelm: “…honestly. But, it’s because of this that I offer you my sword.”

Crusch spoke resolutely toward Wilhelm’s allegiance. Ferris raised his hand as he watched, face full of admiration.

Ferris: “Yes! Yes! Ferri-chan too! If Crusch-sama will fight, then please let Ferri-chan accompany you! Please!”

Crusch: “Ferris traveled between shelters to cast healing spells on those in need. I’m very proud of your contributions. But don’t mistake which battlefield you should be fighting on.”

Ferris: “Gah…”

Silenced in that manner, Ferris bowed his head, searching for any retaliation. Unable to find one, he raised a white flag with a tearful expression.

Ferris: “Wil-jii. Definitely do a good job protecting Crusch-sama, okay? Absolutely absolutely.”

Wilhelm: “Mmm, I understand. Even if my own life is in danger, even if it burns out — I will do so.”

That was Wilhelm's answer to that trust, full of tragic determination.

Ricardo waved his sword gently, and Garfiel finished his own treatment and stood with his back leaning against the wall.

Through the mirror, Wilhelm stood with sword at his waist, and Julius wore his knight's uniform leisurely.

This was the dawn of the decisive battle — which would also include Natsuki Subaru.

Subaru: "Gah, ugh, ahh…!"

Ferris: "S-Su-Subaru-kyun! What are you doing!?"

Biting his molars to endure the pain in his right leg, Subaru finally climbed to his feet.

Ferris, flushed in fury, slapped Subaru upside the head, glaring at his foot, which was still missing skin and muscle.

Subaru: "Ferris, that hurt!"

Ferris: "Of course it did! I've obviously said that you absolutely need rest, so what possessed you to try to get up? Do you want your feet to rot off?"

Subaru: "Even if it's torn off, there are still things that I have to do. Ferris, you should understand my feelings. Do you think I can really stay here obediently and wait for results?"

Ferris: "…Muu."

Ferris raised a hand to his mouth as Subaru pressed on.

Sending his companions to a place where survival was unlikely, then waiting for results. Subaru could never endure such a thing. If, by running around, he could come up with some clever idea and help someone, how could he lie here?

Subaru: "You can fight like this. Well, I must fight too. Beatrice protected me, and Emilia's in danger from Greed. In this state, you want me to retreat?"

Ferris: "…is that to say that you won't regret losing your foot?"

Subaru: "Of course I'm bound to regret it. But I'd regret not fighting more."

Ferris: "Heh… then, Subaru-kyun also wants to play a cool role."

With an exhausted expression, Ferris held a hand to his forehead. After that, he pressed his hand to the wound on Subaru's leg.

Ferris: “What I’ll be doing now is giving you a bit of solace!”

Subaru: “Solace is… ah, wait a minute, Ferris-san. The injury kinda hurts, so rubbing back and forth like that is going to really hurt…?”

His hands on the wound, Ferris ravaged Subaru’s leg — was what should have happened, but, instead, a brilliant line shone from the injury, ending the pain which had been piercing through it like a sharp blade.

Subaru, shocked at the effects of that magic, looked Ferris in the face. Then,

Ferris: “You look murderous!?”

Subaru: “No, no! Although, if you have such convenient magic, don’t be so reluctant to give it to sooner! This is great, I can move!”

As Ferris’s sharp tongue bit into him Subaru jumped lightly with his right leg. While enjoying the joy of his new freedom of motion, he began to dance in place. Pain was no longer a problem.

His palm hit the wound with a smack as he celebrated the amazing change. Then, Subaru looked down, feeling something sticky and wet. His hands were covered in red, and his foot’s wound had ruptured.

Subaru: “Hey, hey, hey!? Didn’t you heal it!?”

Ferris: “I nyever said I healed it. I just asked if you’d regret it if you lost your leg. Ferri-chan removed the pain from touch. As long as you’re careful, you can keep your leg if you limit your running around.”

Subaru’s bleeding legs shook as Ferris re-bandaged the wound and cast fresh spells. The blood stopped; however, Subaru felt even more uncomfortable, realizing that he could feel nothing from his leg.

It was similar to anesthesia, but he didn’t feel quite as sluggish. Aside from not being able to feel touch, his right leg’s actions were almost normal.

However, pain itself is a necessity to avoid destroying one’s own body. For the sake of convenience those sensations have been revoked, but,

Ferris: “Of course, I’m doing this reluctantly. When we meet back up, there will definitely be some residual effects. I want to see that they’ll be very slight, so be careful!”

Subaru: “…understood. You’ve been a great help, I’m grateful.”

Ferris: “…Subaru-kyun is absolutely, certainly planning to ignore Ferri-chan’s words.”

Ferris sighed as Subaru reexamined his leg while nodding.

Although he’d like to say something like “I’d never do such a thing”, if the situation arose, he couldn’t promise that he’d comply with Ferris.

Unable to make any promises, Subaru could only thank him once more before heading back toward Garfiel and Ricardo.

Subaru: “Right, I’m coming too. It’s useless to try to stop me. I don’t think I’ll be too much help in combat, but there must be something I can do…”

Ricardo: “Why would I stop you? You’d bring with you the strength of a hundred men. I’ll be counting on you.”

Subaru: “I can do things like… huh?”

Although he had been waiting for a rejection, he had been eagerly welcomed into the party. Subaru wondered what in the world was happening as the beastman opened his mouth.

Ricardo: “The White Whale, and Sloth. Both times, I saw your efforts for myself, bro. You’d be wrong if you think only Wilhelm sees your value. I also see someone worthy of praise.”

Subaru: “Really, truly?”

Inspired by Ricardo’s words, Subaru invited himself in without any problem.

Before leaving the shelter, Subaru approached Beatrice's bed and gently touched the forehead of that quietly sleeping girl.

Subaru: “Beatrice, I'll be going out. I messed up and left you like this, so now it’s my turn to work hard. I’ll take care of that cult and take back Emilia. You just stay here and rest well.”

Beatrice: “——”

Silence. Comforted by her peaceful breathing, Subaru stood up.

Meanwhile, Garfiel and Ricardo spoke to Mimi, who looked miserable as she lay unconscious. Although she also gave no response, the two men showed an opposite expression, a strong determination that they would pour into conquering yet unknown territory.

Subaru: “We’ll leave the shelter and join up at the large waterway leading to the City Hall. —So, cheer up, alright?”

Before their departure, everyone exchanged glances, determination fueled by their respective oaths, fierce momentum propelling them onward.

The war to regain Pristella would commence with a central attack on the City Hall. The two swordsmen in their may, and the Sin Archbishop of Lust.

Inscribing those targets in their minds, the soldiers marched toward the battlefield.

Arc 5 - Chapter 33, "Stratagem on the City Hall"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-33-stratagem-on-the-city-hall/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

- Credit to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

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— The silent Pristella’s siege had, up until now, seemed to be naught but a fanciful story. Walking atop of the stone slab, Subaru glimpsed the flowing waterway.

The water running within was clear and pollution-free. Even now, it flowed on in its constant, well established path. The mechanism which split the flow between left and right was still alive and well. As long as the floodgates resumed, anyone could believe that the peril the city was under was little more than a nightmare.

Garfiel: “Captain, y’can’t drag ya feet, y’know.”

Subaru: “I know, I know. The danger levels that the City Hall Raiders face increases by 10% every second.”

Ricardo: “In that case, we’re doomed after the eleventh second aren’t we? Well, that’s probably true, actually.”

Garfiel, who had taken the lead, narrowed his eyes as Ricardo’s voice rang out through the air. However, the beastman’s expression wasn’t in the least discouraged.

Carrying his sharp machete, he strode forward with vigorous steps, but not even his cavalier attitude was enough to relieve Garfiel’s tension and guilt.

Ricardo looked no different from usual, while Garfiel had clearly discarded his usual demeanor.

Even so, three people who Ricardo considered family were hurt, and he couldn't be in a calm state of mind right now. This had been made clear back in the shelter.

On the other hand, Garfiel's self-confidence and recklessness had vanished and what remained was a cautious and more timid attitude, a change that emitted an ominous message.

Subaru: "…well, I can't say that I'm any better off, either."

It wasn't only those two who couldn't maintain their usual state of mind.

Subaru's own injured condition, Beatrice's unconsciousness, and, most importantly, Emilia's safety; all of those weighed heavily on his mind.

Even if he focused only on seeking a speedy revenge, experience had taught him that doing so would hasten a terrible result.

This was the philosophy of the group, the City Hall Raiders, who were striving for the best possible result.

Having encountered no cultists along the way, they successfully arrived at the rendezvous point. And there,

Wilhelm: "Subaru-dono!"

Subaru: "It's great to see you're all safe."

The forms of Wilhelm and Crusch drew near, as well as Julius, who elegantly stroked his hair.

Julius: "I'm sure you're worried out of your mind for Emilia-sama, are you sure it's okay for you to be here instead?"

Subaru: "In terms of overall priority, being here is more important, but I'm still anxious. But I don't know anything about Emilia's situation, and I can't do anything that might jeopardize her even further."

Julius: "I understand. Were Anastasia-sama placed in the same situation, I doubt I'd be able to remain calm."

After nodding in response to his concerned words, Subaru turned to Wilhelm.

The old swordsman exercised his arms with his eyes closed, warming up his body.

How turbulent his mind might have been at that moment... was beyond Subaru's understanding.

However, as if sensing Subaru's gaze, Wilhelm opened his eyes, and reached into his coat. He withdrew

a mirror and handed it to Subaru.

Wilhelm: “Subaru-dono, this is the conversation mirror. In the heat of battle, I doubt I’ll have any leeway to operate it, so I’ll leave it to you.”

Subaru: “Understood. Let’s move as planned.”

Placing the mirror carefully in his pocket, Subaru straightened his back.

He’d been entrusted with the responsibility of establishing conversation with the other two groups.

Subaru, who would be engaged in the least fighting, held one mirror, while the other was held by Ferris, who’d been traveling between shelters. The last one was held by Anastasia, who served as their source of intelligence.

Ideally, these three would be able to work together.

Crusch: “Then, to confirm again. We are moving to the battlefield identified by Garfiel-sama, where two demons are guarding the City Hall. One is a giant with two broadswords, and the other is a woman with a slender longsword, is that right?”

Garfiel: “Yep, ‘s right. Neither of them’re just common swordsmen. Even‘f they wasn’t fightin’ seriously, I’d prob’ end up sliced’n two by any one‘f ‘em.”

Going over all of their information once again, Crusch was the first to speak again. Nodding at Garfiel’s response, she turned back to Julius and Wilhelm.

Crusch: “The City Hall is occupied by Lust and those two. I imagine that others cultists will make an appearance there as well. Have either of you heard much about Lust?”

Julius: “My apologies. Even as a member of the knights, my knowledge is scant. Sloth and Greed are much more famous, but both of those have been encountered by Subaru.”

Halfway through speaking, Julius had turned to Subaru. Subaru nodded, saying,

Subaru: “Although, having seen Greed for myself, I don’t believe that the stories about him are untrue. But… that empire. He took out it’s strongest knight? That seems a little suspicious. He’s strong, but, in terms of combat prowess, even I could match him. Although, he can negate any attack…”

Ricardo: “And that wasn’t due to your own combat strength?”

Subaru: “Not this time. Although Wrath engulfed Greed with flames, it didn’t hurt him in the slightest. His clothing was untouched. He didn’t even break a sweat.”

Regulus's power could easily be called invincibility.

How convenient. If that were true, then the City Hall Raiders would eventually be forced to face the worst of enemies. Although he wanted to believe that such an unreasonable power couldn't exist.

Subaru: "Obviously, we'd been in trouble in Greed were here, but we shouldn't have to worry about that…"

Julius: "Reinhard would never be absent when innocent civilians are in such danger. I think perhaps that he is facing a problem that leaves him unable to move. Like us, he's possibly caught in an encounter with other cultists."

Only Julius seemed to understand what was passing through Subaru's mind at the moment.

Prior to the start of all this, Felt and Reinhard had come into contact with Heinkel. He could only hope that the obnoxious idea which had taken root in his mind when he'd heard about their meeting was wrong.

Subaru: "Other than that, there's something that I want to confirm. The name Lust gave,

Capella Emerada Lugunica. Why would she possibly call herself a Lugunica?"

Ricardo: "She had to be mocking us. Every member of the royal family is well known."

Crusch: "It still might not be misinformation. It seems too early to dismiss it as just a prank."

Ricardo and Crusch gave Subaru their differing opinions.

The Witch Cult being what it was, either possibility was worth considering. The poor character of this Lust could be clearly heard in her voice. A prank, as Ricardo had said, was likely indeed, but she could also prove to be an enigma.

However, in the face of those two proposals, Wilhelm raised a hand.

Wilhelm: "I do recall one thing."

Subaru: "What is it?"

Wilhelm: "Although I don't know of any Capella, I have heard a little about the reputation of Emerada Lugunica. That doesn't mean that there's any direct connection… but there was indeed someone named Emerada in the history of the royal family of Lugunica."

Subaru: "——!"

Surprised by this, Subaru's eyes grew wide as Wilhelm pondered with his hand to his chin.

Wilhelm: "Her name traces back to before the Demi-Human War, before I joined the army. So around 50 years ago. At the time, Emerada-sama was known as someone very beautiful and very clever."

Subaru: “And Lust called herself Emerada? For what reason?”

Wilhelm: “As for her intentions, I don’t know either. Only, I’ve heard that Emerada-sama passed away due to disease at a young age. But… a state funeral was never held in her honor.

Neglecting to hold a funeral for the death of a royal was practically unthinkable. Tilting his head, Wilhelm frowned as he attempted to explain.

Wilhelm: “Times were hard, was the reason that they gave. However, the real reason was that the people didn’t want one for her.”

Subaru: “The people didn’t…?”

Wilhelm: “Although Emerada was very beautiful and very intelligent, she was... extremely cruel, with an immeasurable amount of darkness within her. Therefore, even the royal family of Lugunica regarded her as... a heretic, a fact hidden from the public.”

With only an unconfirmed testimony, saying such dubious words about the kingdom he served had probably left a bitter taste on Wilhelm’s tongue. His words had began to waver in the second half of his explanation.

And everyone had seen for themselves Lust’s harsh nature.

Subaru: “So Lust gave Emerada’s name… but for what purpose…”

Wilhelm: “If they’re trying to slander the royal family of Lugunica, the name of Emerada won’t be too significant. Hardly anyone remembers her these days.”

The result of Wilhelm’s conclusion was a sigh of relief.

Unlike the likes of Subaru, Garfiel, and Ricardo, there were those who loyally served the kingdom; Crusch, Wilhelm, and Julius’s feelings were unfathomable.

Such ungrateful, vicious ridicule toward the royal family was certainly not permissible.

Subaru: “In spite of that… Capella...”

Julius: “Any thoughts on that name?”

Julius turned his attention sharply as he spoke, seeing Subaru, who showed a bitter expression.

Subaru: “Nothing, it’s just...”

After a brief pause, Subaru scratches his head as he continues.

Subaru: “It's not just Capella. Regulus, and Sirius too. And come to think of it, even Petelgeuse… but to

say that's this is meaningful is impossible."

Garfiel: "Cut th'crap Captain 'n tell us already. What's so special 'bout their names?"

Subaru: "It's strange, you know? It's just, you could kinda say that they have the same names as the stars of my hometown, or something like that."

Crusch: "Name of the stars, is it?"

Subaru: "Come to think of it, my name, Subaru, is as well. No, it doesn't matter. It's a stupid thought."

In response to Subaru, Crusch widened her eyes, looking deeply interested. Seeing that everyone else shared her reaction, Subaru scratched his head.

Subaru: "Don't give much strange looks, okay? My hometown named all the stars, and the archbishops just happened to share their names. I quite enjoy learning about the stars and their stories, so I know some extra details."

Crusch: "Really, that interest doesn't seem to be in accordance with you. Stars, huh."

Subaru: "My name, Subaru, also comes from the stars. That's why. Sorry if it's boring."

Feeling embarrassed, Subaru neglected to delve into the details.

However, Crusch rejected Subaru's attempts to end the conversation.

Crusch: "Please wait, Subaru-sama. Are their names really coincidentally the names of your stars?"

Subaru: "What do you mean?"

Crusch: "For example, could the names of the stars Subaru-sama knows be the roots of their names? From the reason of their founding to the activities they carry out, everything about the Witch Cult is shrouded in many layers of mystery.We can't easily discard something that they may share a connection with."

Subaru: "——"

Subaru, although surprised at Crusch's unexpected questioning, was still lost in his own thoughts. Really, Subaru had always believed that the star related names had been mere coincidence. Why?

This was, after all, a different world. There would be no one else here who shared the knowledge of Subaru's stars.

But could he say so for certain?

In this very place, Pristella, Subaru had bore witness to Japanese architecture. And deeply rooted in

Kararagi's culture, even reflected in the Kansai dialect, was Japanese influence, perhaps from Hoshin's own hand.

Perhaps the establishment of the Witch Cult's ideologies had some root in modern knowledge known to Subaru. The archbishops being named after stars wasn't necessarily unrelated.

Subaru: "Petelgeuse. Regulus. Sirius. Capella…"

Julius: "Correct. Subaru said those were the names of stars. Are there any stories or anecdotes behind them? Maybe there's a connection somewhere."

Subaru: "Thinking along those lines…"

He dug through the thinning memories from his original world, finally recalling what he knew of the stars.

He'd once deeply loved celestial illustrations. Knowing that the origin of his name existed in the stars, Subaru had greedily immersed in drawings of constellations and had engraved a number of stars into his mind.

And, associated with the name of those abominable sinners,

Subaru: "The underarm of Orion, or the hand of Orion…"

Crusch: "Eh?"

Hearing the word underarm in a place she never would have imagined, Crusch tilted her head to the side.

However, Subaru didn't register her reaction, gripping and shaking her slender shoulders, as he approached.

Subaru: "That's right! It's called the hand of Orion!"

Crusch: "Su-Subaru-sama? What… is this hand?"

Subaru: "Petelgeuse… the origin of his name is a star. His authority was the Unseen Hand, and that star's other name is the hand of Orion!"

It was almost laughably far-fetched.

But were they only related by chance? Were this merely an amusing coincidence of symbolism?

Not Petelgeuse, but a star named Betelgeuse— that was a familiar name to Subaru. The small mismatch had been the reason he hadn't yet noticed it.

Subaru: "Sirius is 'shining', and she can use fire magic, that's not subtle at all. At most it's a literal…

Regulus is the ‘little king’. Isn’t that exactly like that bastard’s self-centered values!? Then, Capella is…!”

Crusch: “Capella is…?”

Subaru: “Little goat! A goat! Capella’s a goat!”

Digging through his memory, Subaru searched for some meaning relationship between the mythos of the stars and the archbishops of sin.

A smirk emerged on Subaru’s face, as if he were saying “not bad, not bad”.

Instead, listening to Subaru's answer, Crusch kept her brow pressed down while holding his shoulder. Then she looked to the other four people, they are also a complex expression,

Julius: “Orion’s hand?”

Wilhelm: “Shining?”

Ricardo: “Small king?”

Garfiel: “The hell’s a ‘little goat’?”

Subaru: “—Ah?”

At the reaction of the four people who turned their heads to, Subaru finally realized that his discovery was far more useless than he’d thought.

Crusch: “Subaru-sama, I apologize. It seems my thoughts led us astray.”

Yes, even Crusch looked sorry.

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The correlation of the symbolism of the stars and the archbishops’ names had failed spectacularly.

However, they had no time to waste lamenting that failure before launching a lightning-fast operation.

As a result, they attacked after they shared and discussed their abilities and combat styles.

The members of the Iron Fang, who had accompanied Julius and Crusch, went forth as a scouting force, ensuring that the way to the City Hall was clear. The six of them would arrive safely.

Garfiel: “Ya, ‘s just like last time, nothin’s changed…”

Nose twitching, Garfiel confirmed the lack of any new enemy presences.

According to what he had said, after crossing the straight road ahead, he had been ambushed as he’d prepared to enter the City Hall. But neither Garfiel's nose nor Subaru's eyes found the silhouettes he had mentioned.

If they weren’t here, they could just directly take the City Hall and move on. Just as Subaru wanted to celebrate a lack of enemies,

Garfiel: “——”

Garfiel equipped his shields and Ricardo held his machete in a battle ready stance. Wilhelm, on the other hand, watched the plaza with the calmness of a tranquil lake.

For those three, this battle would likely turn out to be rather personal. In particular, Wilhelm surely had much he needed to confirm.

Julius: “This area is completely open. Although my quasi-spirits have been sent to patrol it, they found no path we could sneak along. It seems that our only option is to approach directly.”

Julius had sent his spirits to scout out their surroundings. The geography of this location was difficult to launch an attack on and likewise difficult to defend.

Subaru: “Can’t you send your spirits inside to scout? Just knowing how many enemies there are and the building’s general layout would make our job that much easier.”

Julius: “Apologies, but my friends are still unable to perform an order that complicated. And the enemy isn’t necessarily unable to detect the presence of spirits, so that would be difficult.”

Subaru: “That wouldn’t be your fault. Still, that’s a shame, it would have been really helpful.”

Not knowing the circumstances of the City Hall itself again increased the danger of a direct attack.

That said, waiting would only cause the situation to worsen. Although the Witch Cult had claimed they were willing to negotiate over their broadcast, that was, in reality, extremely unlikely.

Subaru: “Then, just as we planned. Although the enemy has combat effectiveness, we have strength in numbers. It’s basically three on one for each of us. We’ll handle this quickly, and then get rid of the guy who’s occupying this place!”

Julius: “Although that’s optimistic thinking, I look forward to our success.”

Julius gave a wry response to Subaru's speech, and the party took off.

Without needing a signal, they ran up the straight road, toward the plaza in front City Hall. Holding their breaths, they waited for their enemies to surface.

Garfiel ran in the lead, followed by Wilhelm and Julius. Ricardo followed them, and Crusch and Subaru held the rear.

His right leg felt, for all intents and purposes, fine. Although it was in a strange state of feeling no sensations, he could run without hindrance.

Garfiel: “—They’re here!”

Two figures fell upon Garfiel, who stood in the lead.

As the group watched the large blades and slender sword flutter in the air, a soldier among them courageously drew her own weapon. From the rear,

—The Hundred Man Strike was unleashed.

Crusch had drawn her sword, and, augmented with wind magic, unleashed a strike that cut toward the enemy.

Anything within her field of vision, even at great distance, could be struck by her. This was Crusch’s long range swordplay.

Her strikes had even made a dent in the White Whale’s magically enhanced defenses. The sound of steel on steel rang out, and the giant and woman whirled away.

Subaru: “Did you get them?”

Crusch: “No, they deflected it!”

Her well placed surprise attack had failed to make contact.

While swinging their bodies to the side, landing neatly on the stone, the two figures, dressed in black, drew their respective weapons in a well prepared defensive formation.

Two giant blades, and a single sharp sword. From top to bottom, they were indeed both clad in the despicable garb of the witch cult.

Appearing to have completely brushed off the impact of that blow, they tilted their bodies forward slightly, about to kick off from the ground.

However, before that,

Julius: “Although you defended against Crusch-sama’s blow, can you take this?”

Three different colors glowed from above, the light emitted by the spirits pouring down upon the cultists.

Julius's six quasi-spirits, working in groups of three, attacked the giant and woman. Another light of magic, which Subaru had never seen before, applied an appalling pressure to their enemies, forcing them to kneel.

Against the unbearable pressure of their enemies, Garfiel and Wilhelm rushed the woman, while Ricardo swung his blade over his head as he pounced toward the giant.

Garfiel: "Take this!"

Wilhelm: "Haah—!"

Ricardo: "It's over!"

In a flash of silver, emanating an overwhelming pressure, the Sword Demon took off.

Garfiel and Wilhem's inhuman strength struck downward, ready to split the enemy's defenses open.

If they could strike a kill at this interval—

Woman: "——"

The kneeling woman turned her sword in her grip and slashed at Garfiel and Wilhelm's legs. They immediately dodged but the woman followed with the same trajectory, twisting to stretch a leg around Garfiel's neck, moving him into the scope of Julius's magic.

Garfiel: "Wha—"

Swaddled in Garfiel's arms, the woman protected herself from any magical effects using Garfiel as a shield. Then, her knee shattered Garfiel's nose as she grabbed his left arm with her free hand and used him as a shield against Wilhelm.

At this profound display of skill, Garfiel cried out in pain, while Wilhelm cursed.

Breaking their stalemate, she kicked at the old swordsman, releasing Garfiel in the process.

Although her movements should have been constrained, her blow was powerful enough to send Wilhelm flying. Just as he regained his balance, she had already made another half turn on the spot, delivering a swift follow up kick.

Giant: "——"

Meanwhile, Ricardo's attack stopped short of the giant's head.

Still kneeling due to the magical effects cast by Julius, the giant had readily discarded the big swords he

had held in both hands. Then, he lifted his unguarded hands and brought them over his head.

Ricardo: “Idiot, you’re finished!”

As a result of his flawed judgment, his arms would be severed.

Even though Ricardo’s machete was blunt, it contained incredible momentum and power. The giant's thick arms were amputated by the impact of the blow and his upper arms flew through the air as red and and white bone spewed forth.

Giant: “——”

Ricardo stepped back and swept his machete up, aiming to bring it down upon the giant’s enormous head.

However, the giant simply retrieved his swords with his extra arms, deflecting the coming blow that should have been fatal.

Ricardo: “What!?”

The giant then raised his arms, allowing a curtain of blood to spray forth, dispelling magic that Julius had cast. Now freed of that magic, the giant was again capable of the agile action that betrayed his enormous form. Having chosen to forego his arms he was able to do away with an even more crippling weakness.

Ricardo, unable to withstand the heavy blades the followed, had his arm caught by a blow as he barely managed to retreat from far worse.

He groaned as the giant’s fist collided with his face, sending the beastman’s burly body flying backward.

Woman: “——”

Giant: “——”

Against the three opponents who were now on the defensive, the woman and giant raised their weapons, weapons of special kind, with clear intent to kill.

Finally having caught up with those other three,

Julius: “Fell Goa!”

Julius’s incantation ushered in a wind, which swirled with red flames sprouting from within.

The resulting tornado of flame swiftly met the approaching woman, chasing her away from Garfiel and catching her in its wake.

Then, with a sound almost like a prayer, the sound of a slash and the whistle of a whip cut through the air.

Crusch's blade of wind coupled with a strike of Subaru's whip struck the giant's body. His huge form finally having taken a beating, a wound marked his chest.

That injury was no serious matter for him. Even so, they had succeeded in stopping the giant's assault, and the the fallen Ricardo kicked up at the giant's jaw.

Ricardo: "Ha, you were asking for it!"

Subaru: "Is that the time to say this? Hurry back, Ricardo!"

Carried by the momentum of kick's release, Ricardo spun backward, retrieving his blade and wiping his face of blood, before retreating to join with Crusch and Subaru, ready to confront the giant again.

Seeing that the woman had been enclosed in a cage of wind and flame, Subaru's eyes involuntary widened.

Subaru: "What's that!? You, you can actually use such spectacular magic!?"

Julius: "It's merely a bluff. I'm not proficient enough to make it lethal yet."

Julius replied bitterly, the spectacle before their eyes confirming his words.

As the woman bathed in that tornado of flame, the sword in her hand flashed— and the heart of that wind was pierced by her slight movement. Unbalanced, the cage collapsed.

That woman's elegant, peerless swordplay. And the giant's own special physiology.

Subaru: "… you're kidding…"

The front of his black robe fell open, and the giant's many arms were revealed. He nonchalantly picked his severed arms up from the ground and pressed them against his stumps, as blood and flesh knit with a sickening sound.

A mere moment later, the giant's formerly missing arms were reattached, with only scant traces of the injury remaining. As if confirming that healing, he took his large blades in them again, proudly waving them around.

Both looked undefeatable.

Subaru: "By contrast, it's clear that our blitzkrieg failed."

Looking sideways, Julius and Wilhelm, protected by Julius's magic, were having their injuries treated by Garfiel.

The reality set in that Garfiel and Wilhelm, working together, had been soundly defeated. That sense of despair, could not easily be erased.

However, it would be a mistake to say that their situation was completely hopeless.

Subaru: “Although close combat is unreliable… long ranged attacks could still be effective.”

Whether it was the Julius’s magic, Crusch’s blade of wind, or even Subaru’s whip, they still had a chance.

The last one wouldn’t be all that helpful, even if it did work— that sentiment was there, but the other two attacks could certainly have a chance to turn the tide.

Subaru: “——”

At Subaru’s comment and expectant gaze, both Julius and Crusch nodded.

Garfiel and Wilhelm also understood the power of their opponents in close combat. From the start, Ricardo had not held any designs to face either of them alone.

The melee fighters would temper their enemies’ movement, and any gaps would be filled with magical attacks.

This was likely the best way to minimize injuries and achieve victory. The unity of the entire party would start the pace of the battle again. Then, at that moment,

???: “Chaotically, grudgingly, this conspiracy has arrived! What kind of garbage pieces of meat like you~ can, so foolishly, ugly, superficially dare to live? In the words of this elegant, patient lady— Kahahahaha!”

Abruptly piercing the battlefield was an inconspicuously sharp laugh.

However, upon hearing that voice, everyone understood that the appearance of the owner meant the situation had taken a turn for the worst. Subaru shuddered and shifted his gaze around, searching for that figure.

Where was she? Where was that laughter coming from?

???: “Where are you looking, you dull, dimwitted pieces of shit? It’s because of this foolishness~ that you can’t be saved. Come one, open your dog eyes wide, and think hard with your empty heads. Then maybe this gentle lady will show mercy to your filthy souls!”

Crusch: “——”

From next to Subaru, whose gaze swerved around, Crusch had drawn a hoarse breath.

Her amber eyes were fixed overhead. With a sinking feeling of understanding, Subaru followed her gaze expecting to see Lust at the end of it.

His the line of sight pointed to the roof of the City Hall.

Loud ridicule poured down upon them from there, as if the owner of that voice were looking down upon ants from a great distance.

In fact, that was more or less the situation. That was because,

Capella: “Gahhahahahaha! Really, that face! That stupid face! Did you save it just for me? If so, this kind lady would give you foolish apes praise! Or would you prefer saliva? You’d be very happy with my precious saliva? For you pieces of rubbish, it must be a coveted treasure, right~!”

Raucous laughter echoed through the air as Subaru glanced upward.

The giant and swordswoman didn’t have the slightest reaction as an ally joined them against their fellow opponents.

The Archbishop of Lust made a sudden appearance on the battlefield—

Capella: “Then, once more! This lovely lady is the Sin Archbishop of Lust—!”

— As the name of Lust was announced, a black dragon looked down upon them with a smile.

Capella: “I am Capella Emerada Lugunica-sama! Die! You rotten slabs of meat!”

Arc 5 - Chapter 34, "Chaotic Duel"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-34-chaotic-duel/

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—Standing on the rooftop of the City Hall, a black dragon flaunted its wings at Subaru’s group.

Opening its mouth to reveal rows of sharp teeth and a long, snaking red tongue, the black dragon narrowed its golden eyes, continue to issue a choking, sharp laugh.

That black dragon’s appearance was more or less exactly how Subaru pictured the dragon species.

It had the same aura of awe that earth dragons like Patrasche, but its hair and physique weren’t the same. If ground dragons averaged the size of a pterosaurs, this dragon was as large as an elephant.

With that physique, the black dragon couldn’t possibly be capable of flight. Perhaps its strong wings merely served as a bluff.

Yes, flight should be impossible.

Capella: “Being ravished by your heated gazes isn’t exciting at all, you meat creatures in heat! Ah~ this is awful, being seen by people like you who can only think of sexual gratification! So I won’t approach

you!”

Fanning its wings towards the ground, a gust of wind is cast. A red tongue flitting outward as if licking her lips, the black dragon, Capella, gave a twisted smile. That dragon’s expression was incredibly chilling.

Because of the language barrier, communication was heavily to interpretation. Patrasche was a good example.

Because Patrasche was so expressive, her stern attitude came of as quite likable. However, this dragon evoked nothing but disgust.

Subaru: “…I haven’t heard any mentions of this before, but can dragons speak?”

Julius: “Having lived for so long time, dragons are extremely intelligent and can understand human language. Lugunica’s patron dragon Volcanica, who tied a covenant with the kingdom, can of course communicate with mankind through language, but his expression isn’t terribly rich. I’ve never heard of any other dragons having that ability.”

Julius, from beside Subaru, gave a detailed answer to his question.

The Knight of Knights had his blade raised at shoulder height, eyes never leaving the black dragon. Of course, Subaru and the others were in the same state.

Standing in front of them were two swordsmen of outstanding strength, and the black dragon who had named herself the Archbishop of Lust.

Their original unease had compounded into a wall of tension.

Subaru: “At the least, we have a chance of dealing with the swordsmen…”

The woman, who wielding her blade with nary a flaw in posture, and the giant, who waved his swords around, as if refamiliarizing himself with Subaru’s group.

Although the extent of the swordswoman’s strength was still unknown, the giant had chosen to directly take Ricardo's attack. Needless to say, it was not because of any clumsiness, but because he had a strategy in mind. Long range attacks, their earlier plan, would still be incredibly effective.

However, there was one pressing problem without a solution.

Subaru: “Is there anyone here who’s fought a dragon…”

Wilhelm: “—Yes.”

Subaru: “Wilhelm-san, seriously?”

Although Subaru had thought his question hopeless, Wilhelm had responded with affirmation. The old swordsman turned to face the surprised Subaru.

Wilhelm: “Nearly 40 years ago, I was sent to subjugate an evil dragon named Valgren who appeared to Lugunica’s south. The incident caused much diplomatic tension because of its proximity to Vollachia.”

Subaru: “Setting the diplomatic ramifications aside, how was the experience of fighting a dragon?”

Wilhelm: “More than ten percent of our knights were sent to the battle, and, although the crusade succeeded, forty percent of those knights died. The crusade succeeded, but the result was considerable. It’s ability to fly, it’s endless stamina, were things that we should have taken into better consideration.”

Subaru: “It would seem that our situation is rather desperate…”

Seeing Subaru’s despair, Wilhelm continued,

Wilhelm: “Come to think of it...”

Wilhelm: “Compared to Valgren, this dragon is smaller in size. It should die upon beheading.”

Subaru: “And Valgren wouldn’t?”

Wilhelm: “Valgren had a total of three heads which all needed to be removed.”

Having finished speaking of that distant battle, Wilhelm tightened his grip on his sword. So beheading would certainly kill it. That was reassuring.

Seeing Wilhelm’s well-prepared stance, Subaru also took up a battle pose, whip in hand. Seeing their refusal to yield, Capella seemed rather surprised.

Capella: “My, my, my, you’re all so disgusting. You’re beaten and miserable, and, aside from my reinforcements, you’re facing a Sin Archbishop! You rotten creatures should hang your heads and channel the meekness of mice, and yet you’re acting all normal? Was putting you with all the other insects wrong? Gahahahaha!”

Garfiel: “Stop fuckin’ around! What can ya do ‘gainst our numbers? My amazin’ self’ll go up there ‘n crush ya!”

Capella: “Kahhahahaha, the barking of this rabid dog is hurting my sacred ears. Or, rather, I made a mistake. You’re not a rabid hound, you’re only a puny kitten! Meow~ meow~ meow~, don’t be angry just because that kitty you were with died!”

Garfiel: “W-Wha, —hk!?”

Faced with those cruel jabs, Garfiel shouted, but choked on his own response.

The dragon was clearly referring to Garfiel's earlier defeat, where he had almost been beaten to death. Someone, Capella, had been watching the fight.

And, what surprised Garfiel even more,

Garfiel: "Bastard, how'd ya know my amazin' self's a demi-human..."

Capella: "Hah? How do I know that? Don't think so highly of yourself, not even a single of one your hairs interests me. I could tell that you were a filthy half-breed the moment I saw you! Go die the way you lived, as a degenerate beast!"

Speaking unspeakably cruel curses, Capella turned toward the rest of their party, sniffing the air.

Capella: "What a stench! What a stench! You slabs of meat all smell rotten! Moldy, rotten, garbage meat! Preserved meats from the trash! Ah, disgusting!"

Capella, constantly giving her toxic comments, turned her gaze slightly — in Crusch's direction.

A sticky, feverish light entered her eyes as she pouted all her attention upon Crusch, who subconsciously hugged herself tightly. When Capella spoke again, her voice was almost pleasant.

Capella: "But mixed with all that refuse is quite a slab piece of meat! So attractive, perfectly in line with tastes! This meat smells like the finest of meat! What beauty! That body! That appeal! Ah, I reallyreallyreally want to break it with my own two hands!"

Crusch: "—That's, enough."

Capella: "Ahh?"

She'd become fascinated.

Her expression trancelike, the black dragon leaned toward Crusch, as if wanting to lick her from top to bottom.

At this moment, the pressure of anger interjected to interrupt each other.

Capella: "——"

Her attention still fixed on Crusch, the dragon looked up impatiently.

Julius, who had approached Crusch in her distracted state, looked rather like a conductor.

Julius: "Be burned by my sixfold light, Al Clarista!"

Julius's six spirits each gleamed with a different color as they fired a beam of light upward. When that iridescent light' reached Capella, it shone white, and she began to scream.

Capella: “—GAAAAAAH!!”

Julius: “This is the price of your chatter. If you had any real skill, you wouldn’t spout such nonsense.”

Obeying Julius’s command, his spirits continually fired their scorching lights.

With Cappella's piercing scream serving as background music, the two swordsmen who had been silent and still, suddenly kicked off the slate ground, flying towards Subaru’s group.

Wilhelm: “Stop there!”
Garfiel: “The hell!”

Here, Garfiel and Wilhelm both spoke up.

Wilhelm flew straight for the swordswoman, while Garfiel faced the giant’ twin blades with his own twin shields.

Woman: “——”

Wilhelm: “Don’t leave, show me your swordplay!”

As she began to retreat after meeting his first blow, Wilhelm cut her off with a sudden strike.

The old swordsman full breakthrough struck up and down with the violence of a storm. The length of her blade wasn’t conducive to quick action, which served her defense poorly as Wilhelm gave rapid strike after strike.

Even so, the woman also proved fearsome. She cleverly shied away from any swing that she was unable to parry, and smoothly, with practiced ease, regained her balance.

Each time her whirling sword stabbed forth it became more apparent that the female swordsman's body was born for the sword to which she used.

Wilhelm’s skill was enough for him to challenge the white whale, but, facing him, the woman’s skill was enough to press Wilhelm back.

Wilhelm: “G-Gooah!”

Woman: “——”

Issuing a roar, with momentum smooth as silk, Wilhelm's rotation of cuts and swings increased in speed.

Although his body itself was old, his technique was still incredibly honed. His swordplay was the pinnacle of swordsmanship, and most young swordsmen would never match up to him.

His blade a mere flash, he flew through the air, preparing to flatten the woman into the earth. Still silent,

the woman was prepared to withstand each blow, her resolve steeled.

Without words, without righteousness, the woman was like a doll whose only purpose was battle. Obedience had been carved into the body of this doll who only swung a blade.

The collisions of steel erupted through the air like a blast.

However, her sword must have been light, much lighter than Wilhelm's.

Each side's swordplay was clean and pure, and, aside from strikes on their respective targets, no unnecessary destruction happened.

The two flew into their solitary dance of swordplay.

Wilhelm: "Hah!"

Woman: "——"

The two waged their silent battle, their swords only being seen as flashes.

—This was the sacred realm of their duel, and intruders could not be tolerated. Not far away, another battle was being waged.

Garfiel: "Yah! Hah! Yah!"

Giant: "——"

Roaring, muscles flexing, Garfiel deflected the giant's blows.

Stuck with dizziness, he counterattacked, beating, roaring, visceral defeat, nausea, bones creaking.

Unlike the elegant duel taking place next to them, this battle was one marked by chaos.

Although the giant could be called a swordsman, his fighting style was different from what that would imply. It was irrational as a barbarian's or a beast's.

Garfiel: "Hah, kuu, ah!!"

Correspondingly, Garfiel also fought without a sense of etiquette.

Garfiel's fighting style was wild and animalistic. Due to Subaru's influence, he'd named it 'Garfiel's Flowing Battle'. This was an absurd violence that only Garfiel, who relied on instinct, could perform; it couldn't be imitated by anyone.

In fact, Garfiel's violent blows suited the barbaric giant before him.

This obviously savage duel was one of stamina; the opponent who tired first would lose. Therefore, success or failure was incredibly variable.

Giant: “——”

Those giant swords were so incredibly heavy that a direct blow would surely shatter Garfiel’s elbow, yet he needed to use his arms to deal with them.

Garfiel needed to decisively use his shields. Holding them obliquely, his arm blocks the massive sword, but he allows it to slide along the shield, thus parrying it away.

The giant’s unpredictable movements were no mere barbarism, but he used not the slightest trick, his strikes were shockingly direct and powerful.

This could not be achieved with talent alone; the giant had clearly practiced tens of millions of swings to earn his power.

Taking those swords head on, blocking them, would surely be impossible.

If there even a slight wrong move, the giant sword would cleave the silver shield in half, and Garfiel’s body would resemble that broken shield.

Garfiel: “Don’t… kid ‘round… no more!”

Garfiel had been doing everything possible to combat the pressure of the large swords.

As they slashed from above, as they swept from the sides, as they swung up from below, Garfiel parried all of them. Then, from a gap, his arm took a punch, forcing Garfiel to retreat.

The trouble was, in addition to two powerful hands waving large swords, the giant had another six arms.

Garfiel’s defense could be punctured with a third attack, and the giant had started using not two, but three arms to wield swords.

Garfiel had the advantage in speed, but that giant’s strength was far superior.

As his chin was struck, as he parried those massive swords, his knees were kicked, sending his face plummeting toward the ground. Four more blows followed this, but Garfiel caught himself as he fell, and finally managed to block an attack, planting his feet firmly on the ground.

Blood, broken bones, and bitter cries, those were what this savage battlefield was filled with. Watching the two passionate warriors, Subaru unable to interfere with that chaos.

Subaru: “——”

On one side Wilhelm’s quiet duel, and on the other was Garfiel’s chaotic war.

Subaru and Crusch held their breaths, unable to join the battlefield on either sides. This was not due to any inability; rather, they were too shocked by the fighting spirit from both sides to react.

However, unlike Subaru, who was submerged in awe,

Ricardo: “This is bad, we have to act soon.”

Ricardo, who had been surveying Julius's magic, took a step forward. Seeing Ricardo’s movement, Subaru issued a ‘right’ and also began to move, but,

Crusch: “Subaru-sama!”

Ricardo: “Get down!”

Feeling a sudden yank on his collar, Subaru found himself being dragged to the ground by Crusch. Ricardo stood in front of the two, shielding them, releasing a ferocious roar.

Ricardo: “WAAA, HAAAA—!!”

The fierce sound waves shook the atmosphere, creating an invisible force of destruction.

This roaring wave was the same as the one Mimi and her brothers had used against the White Whale. This was an incredibly powerful skill that had noticeably injured it, and Ricardo had just now unleashed it completely on his own.

Beaten back by the roar was a glowing black flame.

That dark flame had scattered in the face of that wave. The nature of the fire was even more frightening than its burning. Anything it touched crumbled to ash, which poured all over the square as it fell.

However, the real horror in those scattered residual flames was, in fact,

Subaru: “That fire… isn’t going out…?”

Black ash fell to the slate ground, still burning, without any sustenance. The flames continued to burn and they swelled and stretched and spread.

Any fire that had fallen on the surface of the water also continued to burn,

Like dripping oil into the water, the fire leapt higher, as if showing its superiority.

Ricardo: “Bro, how long are you planning to stay that way? Speaking of which, doesn’t this situation usually happen in reverse?”

Julius: “Subaru, no matter how you look at it, being protected by a woman is…”

Ricardo and Julius both offered discouraging words to Subaru, who was still recovering from the terror of scattered fire. From their point of view, Subaru lay on the ground, under Crusch, who was deflecting any damage from him.

Subaru: “Wah!”

Crusch: “It’s great that you’re unhurt. Please rest assured, I’ll refrain from saying anything about this to Ferris and Emilia.”

Subaru: “I feel even more ashamed for feeling relieved!”

Crusch pulled him to his feet, adding another point to Subaru’s shame score.

Patting himself off, Subaru looked up to the source of the black flame— of course, that was the black dragon, who sat wearing a frown.

He could sense nothing from her but a sense of disgust.

Capella: “Disgusting, disgusting, don’t look at me with such an excited gaze! Stop looking, don’t violate me with your dirty eyes! Kahahahaha! It’s like they say, you’re forbidden from stroking any dancers who perform for you, so stop ravishing this charming lady! Gahahaha!”

Subaru: “How…”

Despite being directly attacked by Julius’s magic, Capella acted as if nothing had happened.

However, that wasn’t to say that she hadn’t suffered any harm. In fact, she’d suffered considerable damage from his attack.

The dragon’s right wing had been burned until it was no more than a festering bloodied piece of flesh. Perhaps she’d wanted to use the wing to protect her body, but injury had been the price for her body’s safety.

The magic had burned through the dragon’s wing, reaching her body. Her abdomen had been scorched and melted, and her innards seemed to have been boiled. The right side of the dragon's face had been blown off, and her wagging tongue which enjoyed ridiculing others had been severed. Her eyes dangled freely, no longer resting in their sockets.

Half-dead wouldn’t cut it; this was nothing but a corpse.

Subaru audibly swallowed, Julius and Ricardo frowned, and Crusch couldn’t help but give a little girl’s gasp. But this wasn’t due to the dragon’s horrific state.

— Instead, it was due to that battered flesh regenerating.

Melted bones regrew, destroyed muscles lengthened, severed tissues sutured; Capella's destroyed body

regenerated at an alarming rate.

The impossible heat given off by her regeneration evaporated any remaining traces of blood.

Capella: “Now, having seen even my beautiful internal organs, are you satisfied? Are you a group of rotten garbage creatures who get turned on watching my metamorphosis? Gahahaha! Satisfied? Hey, were you so satisfied you started leaking?”

Subaru: “How… what happened?”

Capella: “Shouldn’t you be able to tell on sight? Did you actually have to ask? How foolish are you? But this compassionate lady shall answer you. As you can see, I’m obviously immortal!”

Immortal— this was the simplest, most absolute description of her power.

Subaru couldn’t help but gulp at Capella’s description of her own power. The thought that she was bluffing crossed his mind. Indeed, it would be comforting to think that she was bluffing.

Subaru: “It’s nothing but a quick regeneration ability…”

Capella: “Call it what you want. I’m not strong enough to call it invincible, so immortal it is.”

Subaru: “——”

Capella: “My my my, you’re unable to even talk anymore! You disgusting rotten eggs! You putrid filthy meat! Go die! Everyone except me should go die—wait! Wait! Wait!”

Capella interrupted her own foul words. She unfurled her healed wings and fluttered them, slowly bringing her bulky form toward the roof of the City Hall.

Thinking that she was preparing to swoop upon them, Subaru braced himself for her attack. However,

Capella: “Time’s up, I have to go make the next broadcast, so I’ll go back inside. Talking to you is just a waste of time, and I'm in a hurry! You all just stay here and die, along with that rather lovely piece of meat! Go rot in hell!”

Subaru: “H-Huh?”

Suddenly losing interest, Capella yawned and stroke leisurely into the hall, where Subaru lost sight of her.

He couldn’t help but consider whether or not that was meant to lure her enemies deeper in—

Julius: "She might be trying to lure us in, don’t you think... but we can’t let her make that broadcast.”

Subaru: “If we let her go, the city’s going to fall into a panic. Everyone will find out what we’re doing. We have to catch up with her!”

Some unknown hunch led him on.

Furthermore, with that size, how did Capella enter the inside of the City Hall? Although he didn't know how large the broadcast room was, it seemed that Capella would destroy the room with a single large movement. But he didn't have the time to consider this right now.

Ricardo: "Alright, I'll stay with those two to deal with the guys on the outside. Bro, you'll go inside with Jul-chan and Crusch-san."

Ricardo gave instructions to Subaru, who gave a questioning look at his decisive words.

Ricardo: "These swordsmen are a bit too much for you and Crusch-san, and I'm not suited for indoor action. Jul-chan can handle that pretty good. Don't ya think."

Julius: "A very apt judgment. To be honest, I'd be worried leaving only Wilhelm and Garfiel here, so I'll leave it up to you, Ricardo."

Ricardo: "Of course, I won't disappoint!"

Julius and Ricardo nodded to each other, leaving no room for doubt.

Being from the same faction, perhaps they could communicate their intent with only a glance. Subaru was unable to protest, so, scratching his head,

Subaru: "Garfiel! You're absolutely not allowed to lose! After you send that guy flying and we defeat Lust, we're going to go save Emilia, you hear me!?"

Garfiel: "Captain, I ain't got time t'deal with ya right now!"

Subaru spoke to Garfiel, who was still engaged in his chaotic war. Next to him, Crusch lifted a hand towards her mouth, aiming her voice in Wilhelm's direction.

Crusch: "Wilhelm, I'll leave it to you!"

Wilhelm: "No need to worry!"

Wilhelm gave a brief response to his master's brief words.

A true master and vassal only needed those brief words. Then, led by Julius, Subaru and Crusch made their move.

Leaving the central square, the three ran toward the interior of the City Hall. The two figures guarding the tower responded to this, forgoing their current opponents for Subaru's group.

Ricardo: "Standing in a line like this makes things easier for me, haa—!"

His ferocious laugh created destructive sound waves which swept up small scattered stones, and the giant and woman faltered slightly. Although the power of the roaring waves had begun to diminish, they were still effective in halting the two. Behind them, their opponents caught up, contempt in their eyes.

Wilhelm: “How discourteous, ignoring me when I have eyes for only you!”

Garfiel: “Don’t turn yer ass t’ yer opponent unless ya want it gone!”

“____”

Slashing and slicing, striking and stabbing, the chaotic duels in the square continued, fierce battles which allowed for no outside intervention.

Unable to hear the sounds of the battle any longer, Subaru rushed toward the entrance of the City Hall.

Subaru: “Where would the room be?”

Crusch: “I don’t know for certain, but I think it would be at the uppermost level, for the sound to reach as far as possible.”

Julius: “There may be ambushes along the way, be careful.”

Passing the main entrance, they arrived inside the City Hall.

A place that should have been crowded, with a lovely lady providing a reception service and bright lights coloring the scene, was now dimly lit, in a state of apparent turmoil.

Fortunately, there were no other cultists occupying this level, nor were there corpses strewn across the room, so—

Subaru: “Come on, let's go. There should be some kind of floor map telling us where the room is!”

Julius: “If we can, I’d also like to confirm the safety of the staff here, although that’s looking a bit hopeless…”

Subaru: “What’s…”

He checked the help desk and confirmed that no one was hiding there, then pointed to the stairs. Julius ascended the steps quietly, peering deep into the corridor, and gently shook his head.

Crusch followed him with a frown, and, upon tracing his gaze, her expression trembled.

Seeing her reaction, Subaru joined the two— and seeing what they had, held his breath. With dragging, pitter-pattering steps, a figure appeared.

Peeking around the stairs, a child wearing a devilish smile emerged. At first glance, he was only a kid.

A petite physique, a childlike face, evoking an image of youthfulness. However, this notion existed in appearance only.

His dark brown hair hung loose, and his body was wrapped with a single cloth, giving him a rather grim appearance.

With a devilish smile on his little face, his eyes looked as if they contained all the poisons in the world, with decaying glows and toxic liquids — they were, of course, not the eyes of human beings.

And, in the present circumstances, it was evident what was wrong with him.

Kid: “So happy, very happy, so very happy, so very very happy, because of this happiness, such happiness, incredibly happiness, such incredible happiness, such incredibly incredible happiness, deserves! A feast! Feast! It’s been a really suffering wait, with this empty stomach! So the first bite must be delicious to make up for it!”

Pleased, happy from the bottom of his heart, the barefoot boy marched as if dancing to a beat.

As he spoke, he revealed his teeth, which were the length of a canine’s. Seeing that image, that attitude, that exaggerated speech, Subaru’s mind began to boil.

If that wasn’t just his imagination, if this boiling rage did indeed exist, then this kid was—

Subaru: “If you're some naughty kid who slipped in here playing hide-and-seek, explain yourself quickly. If that’s really the case, we’ll let you go. But, if not, hurry up and name yourself.”

Speaking in a low voice, Subaru deliberately forced himself to remain calm.

And, as if deliberately provoking Subaru, the kid twisted his juvenile face in a mocking laugh.

Kid: “Are you really confronting us with that attitude? Is that attitude meant for us or someone else? Check it for yourself.”

Subaru: “That’s enough. I can see that you’re my enemy!”

Roy: “We are the Witch Cult’s Sin Archbishops of Gluttony, Roy Alphard.”

Subaru: “GLUTTONY— !!”

As soon as the child claimed to be Gluttony, Subaru struck with his whip.

Slashing through the air, his whip mercilessly cut toward his enemy's face. However,

Roy: “Well, it’s hardly uncommon to encounter those who want a bite of us.”

His teeth biting the end whip, Gluttony spoke brazenly.

Arc 5 - Chapter 35, "Ambushes and Surprises"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-35-ambushes-and-surprises/

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Subaru’s first merciless strike had been blocked by teeth.

Subaru: “——”

Biting the front end of the whip, dancing as if deliberately intending to infuriate, was Gluttony, Roy Alphard.

Alphard. Subaru was a little surprised at the name.

Subaru: “This bastard also shares the name of a star—hk!”

Crusch: “Subaru-sama, that topic is over! Allow me to engage him!”

As Subaru raised his arm for another brutal blow, Alphard drew his own weapon. At the same time, Crusch unleashed her Hundred Man Strike.

A frenzied blade of wind instantly swept through the first floor of the City Hall, bisecting chairs and the reception desk.

Of course, the cut should also have mercilessly cut Alphard, but—

Roy: “Wow, awesome! But although this one looks tough…”

Crusch: “—Eh!?”

The boy, as if seeing the invisible blade of wind, bent over backward to avoid it. Like a bridge, his head rested on the floor briefly, before he flipped backward.

That action had transformed him into a battle-ready pose.

Roy: “As an attack, that was a rather third-rate tactic. It doesn’t seem all that delicious!”

Finished, Alphard leapt up from the ground, his body flying forward like a bullet.

His mouth opened to expose rows of sharp teeth resembling a hounds. Coupled with his appearance, people would mistakenly think he was a straggly wild dog. Only, a wild dog’s danger level could never compare.

Crusch brought her sword up to meet him, attempting to behead him, but…

Roy: “Although your qualifications are good, they’re not enough! To us, you’re not even a beginner!”

Crusch: “—Ah!”

As he waved his right hand, Crusch’s sword bounced away with a sharp sound. At a closer look, swaddled in the cloth wrapped around Alphard’s wrists, were twin daggers.

He held a dagger in each hand, a weapon allowing his thin, small body to fight with speed and flexibility.

While parrying her sword, his left hand swept toward Crusch’s throat. Although she immediately shifted to avoid it, Alphard flipped through the air, around her shoulder, and kicked her aside.

Crusch: “Wha—!”

Subaru: “Crusch-san!”

Roy: “Don’t just stand there and watch when you’re the easiest target!”

Alphard stomped on the ground, flying at Subaru. In the dim lighting, the thin figure of Gluttony, wrapped in rags, disappeared in the darkness, Subaru lost sight of his figure—

Subaru: “Not good…”

Alphard: “In your Sloth, you couldn’t keep up.”

Subaru: “Wha!?”

Aiming at the flaw-filled Subaru, Alphard revealed another one of his flaws.

Once, feeling powerless, Subaru had sworn to himself that no matter the situation, he wouldn’t act impulsively and hastily.

Biting his lip, he grounded himself with the pain, allowing their most powerful party member an opportunity to strike.

And Julius’s quiet command cut through the air.

Alphard immediately managed to twist evasively, but his body was still cut down by the Knight of Knights.

Gluttony rolled onto the floor, entire body covered with blood.

Roy: “Ughya! Woah, surprising—”

Julius: “Then, how about another surprise. Watch as my buds bloom!”

As Julius spoke, his spirits began another set of attacks as Alphard bounced back to his feet and darted away.

At that moment, iridescence filled dim hall. An aurora blossomed forth from Julius’s back, diving toward Gluttony.

Roy: “Spirits!”

Julius: “I hope one such as you, who appreciates gourmet, will enjoy. No matter which bud, I am proud to enjoy the bloom of these child flowers.”

Roy: “Awful, they’re pretentious, we don’t like them!”

Seeing the world burning in the aurora, Alphard spoke as he escaped high. Julius's thin sword followed his back, pressing him one, and he attempted to escape with a sharp jerk.

Julius: “—Lolimancer!”

Subaru: “Don’t call me by that name! Juli!”

Julius: “Take Valkyrie with you to the top floor! Stop the broadcast!”

While choosing one another’s pseudonyms, Julius declared that he would hold off Alphard.

While supporting a wheezing Crusch, Subaru judged this as the most reasonable course of action, but he

couldn’t quite agree with it.

The mocking boy who was darting around was, after all, Gluttony.

This was the enemy who Subaru had pursued for more than a year. Saying that defeating him was one of Subaru’s top priorities would be no exaggeration.

Even though he was right there—

Crusch: “I-I understand. Juli-sama, I will pray for your blade to be swift and true.”

Crusch: “—hk”

However, before Subaru could protest, Crusch climbed to her feet and gave a response to Julius, her face full of unwillingness.

Crusch was another victim of Gluttony, having been robbed of her memory.

Of course, she had also wanted to seize this chance for the search of her memory. Even so, she assumed her own responsibility and entrusted the fight Gluttony to others.

Even aside those feelings, she was also well aware of her own lack of strength. Considering Subaru and Crusch’s abilities, this was the only way.

Roy: “So what's going to happen? How are we doing it? Are we all going together? Even the disappointing woman and scummy man can be served as appetizer. Then, Juli-sama, we’ll eat him, swallow him, nibble him, lick him, taste him, swallowed him, bite him, bite him into pieces, into pieces, and devour! Not bad!”

Julius: “Don’t say anything unnecessary. I didn’t become Juli in vain!”

While the auroras in the narrow space are gradually disappearing, Alphard is still a comfortable smile. Julius pursued the victory, the sword struck each other issued a steel sound.

At this moment, Julius and Subaru instantly glanced.

That line of sight is relative to Subaru, as if it means there is no need to go further—

Subaru: “Ah, dammit! Listen! Bastard, you absolutely can’t lose!”

Julius: “That’s my line. It doesn’t matter, I won’t, no, I absolutely can’t die here.”

Crusch: “Let’s go, Lolimancer-sama!”

Scratching his head, for time being, Subaru set aside his feelings and made movements to comply.

Although he should at least walk in front of Crusch, in truth, although it was shameful, she could react to any surprise attack much faster than he could.

Subaru chased behind the still wounded Crusch, and they both sprinted up the next flight of stairs. Before leaving, he took one last look and Julius and Alphard.

Julius seemed to have the advantage, but he couldn't let his guard down.

Julius: "Go!"

Subaru: "—Bastard!"

Aware of Subaru's gaze, Julius made him restless to the very end.

Although he was incredibly annoying, the idea of something happening to him was troublesome. Subaru turned to follow Crusch, bounding up the stairs in one breath.

Knowing that an ambush may have been awaiting them, they immediately took another flight of stairs, heading toward the topmost room.

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There were several important elements of an ambush.

First of all was the location. Ambushes were a tactic that had been put in place by an opponent waiting for opportunity to attack an enemy from a dominant location. That was the most essential element.

Secondly, the enemy needed to indeed appear at the set location. Finally setting the ambush but finding the key opponent missing would render it completely pointless.

Moreover, it was also necessary to speculate on the time when the enemy would arrive at the place of ambush. If there were a lack of concentration of ambushes en route, their effects could not be maximized.

So, assuming that Lust was setting an ambush, all three of these conditions had been fulfilled.

In any event, they needed to Break Into the Broadcast Room Within a Set Amount of Time. From their enemy's perspective, there was no prey that would be more enjoyable to hunt.

Subaru: "Therefore, we must first destroy this situation."

Crusch: "I understand this point… No, I've decide to believe in Subaru. I will say no more."

Having arrived at the topmost room, they found a staircase.

That is, a staircase to the rooftop, where the Subaru and Crusch would have to be prepared to defeat Capella's strategy.

Crusch, who was initially puzzled by Subaru proposal, seemed determined. This way of doing things was her invariable merit, both before and after losing her memory.

Crusch: “I honestly just want to see how the battle in the square is faring…”

Subaru: “But if we go check on them, then our actions will be meaningless.”

Even at this height they could hear the clashing of sword and Garfiel’s cursing. That fight was still ongoing, so no aid from that front could be expected.

Subaru: “Speaking of which…”

Looking around, Subaru examined the situation of the roof.

Claw marks had been left everywhere on the ground, traces of the black dragon walking around. The railings and fences that looked over the square were collapsed by the magic that Julius released.

Subaru thought of that terrible power, as he examined the room, confirming that they really were below the broadcast room.

Of course, Capella would be waiting there in ambush.

Crusch: “… ah.”

Subaru: “What happened? Please take a moment if you’re unprepared.”

Crusch: “I'm sorry, but just now, I noticed something.”

Subaru: “…?”

Crusch spoke rather weakly as Subaru busied himself with an iron fence. Subaru looked at her with surprise, and she looked back at him with a stiff expression.

Crusch: “I seem to have a certain fear of heights.”

Subaru: “An unexpected weakness… got it. Ready!”

Confirming that it has been fixed firmly, Subaru nodded toward Crusch, who returned a stiff one, and stepped meekly into Subaru’s arms.

Crusch: “—Please don’t let go.”

Subaru: “Crusch-san, there are many men who will misunderstand, so it’s be better if you don’t say those kinds of words often.”

Crusch: “——?”

Crusch turned her head with a wry smile. Then, with Crusch nestled in his arms, clinging to him, he swung loose from the building.

Of course, their bodies were drawn downward by gravity. As they fell, they reached the lowest point the whip wrapped around Subaru's wrist would allow them to.

Subaru: "—hk!"

At the same time, supporting the weight of the both of them, Subaru's shoulders were in enough pain to be in danger of breaking.

Twisting sideways, the two swung in an upward arc, reaching another outer wall of the City Hall. Seeing a window approaching, Subaru stretched out his feet and broke through it.

Crusch: "Gah—hk!"

Subaru: "Wha!?"

As the glass shattered, Subaru and Crusch rolled into the broadcast room. For a moment, Crusch seem to let loose a small cry, but Subaru pretended not to hear it as he released her from his arms.

Both climbed to their feet, immediately looked around, and found that…

Dragon: "——hk"

Staring blankly at the two who had just jumped in, with eyes wide open, was a black dragon sitting in a stiff posture.

The same massive body that they had seen on the roof was stuffed into the room. The black dragon had folded her wings, facing the door that one would normally enter from.

Presumably, she had originally intended to turn Subaru to ash the moment he tried to enter, but that strategy had been completely defeated.

Obstructed by her huge body, she was in a room that confined her movement greatly. Although the black dragon attempted to prepare herself to attack, moving her wings…

Subaru: "Crusch-san!"

Crusch: "Right!"

As if ridding herself of her fear of heights, Crusch nodded a response, before loosing her cut.

Her blade of wind sliced into the black dragon, damaging a wing and severing a frontal leg. The black dragon screamed loudly as dark blood began to spray.

Dragon: “AAAAAHHHHHHHH!!”

Subaru: “Watch out! Get down... oah!?”

Capella writhed in pain, her dragon wings sending the room into disarray as she flapped her wings wildly.

Although this room was rather larger than usual, its durability was not so strong that it could withstand the riots of an elephant-sized creature. In order to escape from this destruction, Subaru turned to run, but at that moment he found,

—At the foot of the black dragon, a chained young girl trembled.

Girl: “——!”

Subaru met eyes with that tearful girl.

Realizing that Lust had adopted a very effective hostage strategy, should the initial ambush fail, Subaru was filled with rage.

Focusing, Subaru instinctively chose to move forward rather than escape.

Thinking of a way to dodge the tail hanging over his head, he slid toward the little girl. Picking up the trembling petite body, he flicked his whip fiercely at the black dragon’s back. It didn’t seem to inflict too much damage, but it allowed Subaru to express his rage.

But Crusch’s strikes were not so powerless.

Dragon: “Wait! Wait! I'm not… hk!”

Crusch: “No need to answer! This is retribution for the disaster you’ve wrought upon the city!”

Crusch’s relentless blade moved as if it had a mind of its own.

With an almost disappointing fragility, Capella bore no defense to that force.

Crusch cut the remaining wing, and Capella gave a keening wail. Although this likely didn’t have much to do with Subaru, that huge body was shaken violently by a plethora of attacks, and she stumbled backwards to the opposite direction of the window Subaru had broken.

The black dragon’s wings didn’t regenerate this time.

Although she’d called her body immortal, if this was her speed of regeneration, then it could not be called a threat.

Crusch: “—It’s over!”

Dragon: “Wai—”

Not allowing her to finish, Crusch loosed several successive attacks on the black dragon's body, head, and wings. Her huge body hit the wall hard, smashing through the window frame and falling outside.

The falling black dragon would like to expand the wings, but one side of the dragon wing is chopped from the roots, the other side of the dragon wing is like being hooked fragmented, it is unable to support the state of flight.

Dragon: “——hk”

The black dragon, without a chance to regenerate, had no time to say anything, simply falling to the ground.

A few seconds later, Lust hit the ground with the sound of meat hitting a wall or a wet towel falling to the floor.

Crusch: “I'll go confirm the situation. Subaru-sama, can you take care of this child?”

Subaru: “R-Right, I got it.”

Watching the black debris falling from edge of the window, was the ever vigilant Crusch. With heartfelt trust in her, he also set down the girl he’d just recovered.

The girl was still in a state of fear, confusion in her quivering gaze as she looked at Subaru. This was inevitable. After that long, anyone would be afraid.

Subaru: “It's okay, the dragon just now has been killed by the superheroine big sister over there, though not easily… where’s everyone else?”

Girl: “Ah, eh…”

Subaru: “Although it is hard to believe, we’re one of our own, and came here in order to save you. We have to finish shortly, before the bad guy comes back. Can you help me?”

He bent his knees, keeping their lines of sight the same, and spoke with a steady tone.

This was the unconscious behavior he would use whenever speaking to someone younger. She seemed to calm down slightly, taking deep breaths as if steeling herself before replying.

Girl: “There's a room over there… everyone’s, in there.”

Subaru: “Is it locked? That room…”

The girl pointed to a little room inside the broadcast room.

Actually, this room wasn’t the broadcast room, right? Although the room was large, there was no broadcast equipment at all. Even if the radio was a magic device, Subaru could find anything that it could possibly be in this room. Then, the room that the girl was pointing to was most likely the real broadcast room.

As he turned his gaze over, Subaru hesitated. He wanted to inquire about the life or death of the people inside.

However, asking the girl such a thing was far too cruel and inconsiderate.

Subaru touched the still shaking girl's head, slowly making his way toward the room.

Girl: “——”

Heart trembling, Subaru felt sweat break out on his neck.

Even the chaotic battle seconds earlier hadn’t made him so nervous, but suddenly, his throat felt parched and try. This was the sense of a nasty premonition, a terror which preoccupied his mind.

Crusch: “Subaru-sama?”

Subaru: “Everything’s fine. I’m about to start looking around. What happened to Lust?”

Crusch: “…Everything’s fine here too… I don’t know why, but she’s staying where she is.

Crusch replied with that warning about Lust. After hearing that answer, Subaru took a deep breath and headed for the room, reaching out to brush the doorknob.

In the radio room, there was a possibility of other cultists hiding. That would be something Subaru needed to take into consideration.

But, for some reason, that kind of worry seemed superfluous. In fact, this idea is right. Because, in actuality, no cultists occupied that room. Occupying it, was—

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With speechless gazes, they looked at Subaru with amazement.

No, maybe he just want assumed they were looking. Subaru had no way of understanding how they observed the world, and he didn’t particularly want to know.

He simply felt dismay. His voice wouldn’t work. This situation could only be described as speechless. His thoughts froze, and he thought of nothing. However, there was something he finally did understand.

— The source of that irritating sound accompanying the broadcast he’d heard in the shelter.

Subaru: “—What, is this?”

In response to Subaru, That Voice spoke.

That Voice was one which welcomed Subaru, a fearsome sound, a defiant sound, a joyful sound, a meaningless sound—

The sound of numerous beating wings echoed throughout the room.

In the darkened room, countless blinking red compound eyes moved, as if watching Subaru.

The broadcast had sounded as if many many flies had been crammed into one room. And all the flies were the same size as people, this one, that one too, all of them.

“—AAAHH!!”

Subaru: “—Eh!?”

In a sea of blankness, Subaru registered a sudden pained cry.

Shocked into a sudden response, Subaru slammed the door, closing along with it the sound of a hundred beating wings. Looking back, he found…

???: “Gahahahaha! Stupid, stupid! You dregs, the meat in your heads simply isn’t enough. You actually tried to match me in a battle of the wits? Who put the sugar into your brain and melted your cerebrum~! Kahahahaha!”

Crusch was crushed under the heel of the girl who issued that sharp raucous laughter. There was no doubt that this was that familiar poisonous laughter,

Capella: “It’s me, Capella-chan! Gaahahahaha!”

As Capella winked and stuck out her tongue, Crusch vomited blood, the whites of her eyes barely showing.

Arc 5 - Chapter 36, "The Beginning and the Conclusion of Love"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-36-the-beginning-and-the-conclusion-of-love/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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Behind him was a room full of gigantic flies.

Subaru and Crusch had defeated the black dragon, and it now lay motionless on the ground outside. And yet, in front of Subaru was a laughing girl who repeatedly dug her foot into Crusch.

Sinister laughter, a sardonic tone. The person in front of him was undoubtedly Lust, Capella Emerada Lugunica.

— His entire body began to tingle.

Subaru: “What, what is this…?”

Capella: “Do you actually have to take time to think about it? You scum shouldn’t worry about such things— the best choice for you is to recognize the reality before you! You saw a beautiful maiden shaking with fear! But her true identity is an archbishop of the Witch Cult~!”

As Subaru’s mind raced, Capella danced around, sticking her mocking tongue out at Subaru. Crusch’s

eyes rolled back as she was relentlessly attacked.

Capella: “Didn’t you find it strange at all? Here, at the City Hall, why would there be a child meat? But your first reaction was doubtlessly ‘Ah, this kid is in danger, I have to save her…’ What a disappointingly stupid train of thought!”

Subaru: “S-Shut up, already. There’s plenty I’d like to say but first, move your damn foot.”

Capella: “Hmm? Are you so captivated by my beautiful legs that you’re dripping already~? Or are you thinking of this sow that’s licking my feet? Indeed, she has a lovely body~. Are you trying so hard that you can’t restrain yourself right now? Gahahahaha!”

Subaru: “——! This bitch! Bastard, we’re not just creatures for you to tread on!”

Capella wore a ecstatic expression and her heel ravaged Crusch again and again. In response to her atrocious actions and ridicule, Subaru’s veins boiled with rage.

His lower body tensed, ready to move forward. Capella, who had provoked Subaru, seemed to welcome an attack. However, Subaru was not so foolish as to blindly rush forward.

Even without her memory, Crusch was a fearsome warrior.

Her strength had been vouched for by Wilhelm. And yet, in the few seconds that she’d vanished from Subaru’s sight, she’d lost without any resistance.

Lust’s strength was undoubtedly far above Subaru’s.

Subaru needed to solve the situation without engaging her in combat.

Subaru: “——”

Crusch, whose very life was in danger, needed to be immediately recovered and taken to Julius and the others.

It was up to him to engineer an escape, abandoning their mission in the process. Although they had failed to stop the broadcast, that mission wasn’t worth their lives.

And they also hadn’t found the people who they should be rescuing, at least not on this floor.

His only conclusion was that their reserve of combat power wasn’t enough to retake the city in secrecy.

Therefore, Subaru could not hesitate.

Capella: “Huh?”

Subaru: “Haa!”

Capella exhaled, slightly surprised by Subaru's sudden action.

The target of Subaru's whip was not Capella, but a shelf on the side wall. He found a metal bust, large enough to be embraced by two arms, and wrapped in it his whip, deftly flicking his wrist and bringing it toward Capella.

Subaru now wielded a high-speed metal whirlwind.

His weapon now had the power to open a seam in the wall. Whether to block or evade, she would need to remove her foot from Crusch.

Subaru would take advantage of that moment to retrieve her.

Subaru: "Take that!"

Capella: "I will~. "

Subaru: "Huh?"

In contrast to the Subaru's frenzied cries, Capella responded with casual words.

The sound of a hard object encountering bones and flesh was accompanied by blood spurting forth from Capella's forehead, which had been torn almost completely apart. The inside of her scalp was visible, and blood strained her torn cheeks.

Subaru could no longer bear to look at what had originally been such a cute face.

Her left eye had been half-destroyed, and its light had vanished. This unexpected situation left Subaru's mind momentarily blank.

His action had been intended to create a distraction for his enemy, but he'd been caught off guard instead— and an archbishop certainly wouldn't let that moment go.

Capella: "Aren't you cute to think that I'd play right into the palms of your hands? Isn't this kind of helpless stupidity~ a problem for you? Gahahahaha!"

Capella's mocking slipped into Subaru frozen thoughts.

The girl turned to face the stiff Subaru, and, in the next moment, a gust of a black whirlwind hit him, abruptly sending him flying.

Subaru: "Gah!"

Smacked by a gigantic force, his right half took a heavy blow, and Subaru was knocked into a table, before rolling to the ground. His entire body was shook, he he dizzily climbed to his feet, bracing himself against the wall. What he saw next was,

Capella: “What's wrong? Are you so stunned by my beauty that you can’t even move?”

Subaru: “…what, just happened?”

Capella: “You actually have to ask? Just~ use your eyes for once~!”

Capella happily swayed her body, and Subaru couldn’t even articulate a cry of anguish.

He saw that what had just attacked him was a dragon’s tail, sprouting from behind the petite girl. That disconcerting appearance imprinted itself upon Subaru’s consciousness.

Subaru: “Could you be… a dragon?”

Capella: “Right~ your hopeless brain, which couldn’t realize the truth even upon impact! Even after this gentle lady has specifically given you so many hints, you can’t imagine it, you helpless scummy meat.”

Subaru: “——!”

Capella waved her tail lightly as Subaru took in her physiology. Her long tail gave a fierce sweep, and the ground cracked as Subaru barely threw himself aside in time. But…

Capella: “Isn’t your relief naive?”

Subaru: “Wah!?”

However, as he prepared to pull himself to his feet, Subaru hit by her huge left wrist. As he bounced away, he took another hit from the dragon tail awaiting him, and after a violent impact with the ceiling, was slashed by feathered wing, before finally coming to a rest on the ground.

Coughing violently as the impact sent him rolling across the floor, he witnessed the true face of the terror that had attacked him.

Where before there had only been a black tail, now there was a fist covered in animal hair. Then came that black tail from before, and finally, a pair of bird’s wings, long enough for the sharp feathers to slash across Subaru’s body. —And these all belonged to that young girl’s form.

Capella: “You should have just about~ figured the answer out, right?”

Alien, was the only word that came to mind.

A dragon's tail, a beast’s arm, the wings of a great bird, all on a human girl.

He couldn’t think of any other suitable words to describe her. A wordless description of this creature that shouldn’t exist could be given as a sense of physical aversion.

He could feel nothing but a sense of disgust toward the monster in front of him.

Subaru: “Variation, transformation…”

Capella: “I am the Sin Archbishop of Lust, Capella Emerada Lugúnica. All the love and respect in this world exists to be monopolized by myself alone. If someone loves me, no matter how abnormal their desire is, I’ll respond. In short, I am the ultimate embodiment of all kinds of virtue and beauty in the world. Any girl matching your preferences, I can become. Hey~ I'm a dutiful woman, aren’t I? Kahahahaha!”

While wantonly speaking nonsense, Capella turned to face Subaru and began to freely change her form.

She shifted from her abnormal shape back to the tiny girl, but her hands and feet and then immediately extended to become the adult body of a grown woman. Just as Subaru realized this, she changed into a simple village girl, but, in the next moment has become a maiden with a lewd smile.

Capella: “Now, how do you like me?”

Subaru: “——”

Speechless. He was unable to say anything. One glance, and he realized that this was the worst possible situation.

She was a desecration of human values. In this sense, her ability was obvious. The power of Lust was to desecrate and trample on various values so that she would be the only loved thing in the world.

And with just a look, he saw that the wound marring her face had been long healed, without a traces of the injury left behind. Her terrible ability to regenerate— or, in reality, her ability to transform, had long cured her old injuries.

In any case, he’d finally solved the mystery of how the dragon had become a girl. He’d originally thought she was like Petelgeuse, able to use the bodies of others, but, if that weren’t the case…

Subaru: “——what?”

If that weren’t the case, then what had happened with the dragon from earlier, and the flies in the broadcast room?

Capella: “Have you finally realized it?”

Subaru: “Wait… wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait a second.”

As if she’d read his innermost thoughts, Capella’s expression had changed, and she laughed mockingly.

She’d become a long haired lady, and even the sound of her laughter changed as well.

In this situation, where he was uncertain of even who he was speaking to, Subaru shook his head. This can’t be, it’s impossible, it could never be true.

However, were he right, everything up until now could be explained. Capella's Lust allowed her to change and transform her body.

And if this ability of hers were effective on objects other than her physical body…

Capella: “Has your waterlogged brain finally realized the identify of those disgusting flies~?”

Subaru: “They… they’re…”

Capella: “Hmm~ hmm~ hurry and give your answer, and I’ll hear you out. Gahahahahaha!”

Capella covered her mouth with her hand and laughed loudly.

Hating that attitude from the bottom of his heart, Subaru said in a trembling voice,

Subaru: “—They’re… the people in this building, who you’ve transformed.”

Capella: “Correct~, but you were pretty slow, so no prizes~. I won’t give you any appreciation. Ah, pointless scum, why do you exist? Anyway, I am totally unreadable ~”

Subaru: “Those are my lines!”

Capella didn’t look in the least guilty about this brutal atrocity.

Needless to say, she’d just stuffed those people into a dark room. When their red eyes had fixed themselves on Subaru, their wings, which weren’t capable of flight, had been flapping desperately, issued a loud buzzing flutter.

—They must have been asking for his help then.

Subaru: “There’s something wrong with your head! Why… how could you do such a thing! Why would you do it? Turning people into flies… why!?”

Capella: “It’s horrifying, right?”

Subaru: “It’s beyond twisted! You… you, you…”

Capella: “Maybe it’s just because I can’t help but create disgusting creatures~?”

Again, Subaru couldn’t find words to respond.

With harsh breaths and clench teeth, Subaru fixated on her with a fiery, intense gaze of hatred, as if trying to kill her with his sight.

She could play with the lives of others, even turning them into flies. Those atrocities were even worse than murder.

In these few hours, Subaru had successively encountered four archbishops who he'd never met before.

Wrathful Sirius was a madwoman who manipulated the emotions of others and craved a selfish love.

Greedy Regulus self-righteously and forcefully imposed his own values upon others.

Gluttonous Alphard stole memories and existences, a poison to humanity who could escape punishment.

And Lustful Capella was a monster who stripped away human dignity and identity. They were all hopeless, guilty of madness.

Capella: "——"

In contrast to the enraged Subaru, Capella had settled into a bored silence. In the next second, she took on a mocking tone.

As Subaru raged, Capella spoke.

Capella: "—Indeed, it's annoying and disgusting."

Facing Subaru's wrath, Capella gave a more pleasant smile.

She clapped her hands together, pointing to the room packed with flies.

Capella: "When you look at a room full of giant flies, you get a horrible sense of physical disgust, isn't that right? And of course, no matter who looks at those ugly creatures, they can't help but want to run."

Subaru: "What… does that…"

Capella: "No matter who, everyone feels disgusted with that ugliness. And those scum have become insects that I can't bear to look at. It's a matter of course that no one would love them."

Subaru: "So, what are you trying to say?"

Capella: "Human beings, however, are creatures that cannot live without loving or being loved. But when their loved ones become such creatures, no matter how much they want to, they just can't love them. In that case, they have to redirect love to others. No matter how reluctant they are, they just can't love anything dirty."

His mind went blank.

Tilting her head slightly, she spoke her monstrous words.

Listening to her clapping, Subaru was overtaken by a desire to escape.

Now, immediately, without hesitating for even a second, he want to disappear to a place without this

monster.

His body didn’t want those eyes on him, his ears didn’t want to hear that voice, his mind didn’t want to remember that presence, all in a sense of physical disgust.

Wasn’t she the embodiment of aversion?

Something which he was genuinely unable to stand, wasn’t that the definition of the horror that stood before him?

Capella: “So gentle and merciful, I really am the perfect woman. Since it was decided that I’d monopolize all the world's love and respect, then I absolutely can not slack on my duty. In order to be loved better, I’ll work hard to be loved, and change myself to suit your tastes. In order to capture your attention, I’ll take away everything you’re interested in everything but me. Loving anyone is okay, but you’ll choose me in the end. I’ll work hard to make that happen. I’ll improve improve better improve improve improve improve improve improve my own charm! And reduce reduce reduce reduce reduce reduce reduce reduce the charm of the meats who aren’t me! Anyone, no matter who, would fall for this world’s most beautiful and charming me!”

Subaru: “… just, kill me already!”

Capella: “Why? I’m a philanthropist, how could I be so brutal as to kill you? Even if you’re worthless scum, if there’s a chance that you’ll love me, even if there’s a tiny, slight chance~, for every single person, I’ll let them live even one more second if they’ll give me my due praise! Only those who can’t will be killed! Above all, Capella-sama is a commendable praiseworthy woman!”

Subaru: “—”

Subaru: “——”

Subaru: “————”

Subaru: “I see now.”

Capella: “Do you? Well, now that you understand, quickly give your appreciation to Capella-sama. Let yourself be melted by Capella-sama’s love and become my favorite piece of meat…”

Subaru: “Go to hell.”

He couldn’t think. But there was no need to think.

The enemy in front of his was truly the most vicious enemy. Everything other than that piece of knowledge was entirely unnecessary.

Subaru’s whip suddenly flew forward. The monster jerked backwards as her face was suddenly attacked, removing her dirty foot from Crusch. Taking advantage of that opening, Subaru immediately moved,

picking up Crusch.

Capella: “Witness— because you wanted that slab of meat, your fluids won’t stop leaking. Didn’t you deny it earlier? Didn’t you say so many beautiful words~? Don’t you like beautiful things? Don’t you like cute things? Don’t you like soft and comfortable things?”

Subaru: “——!”

Chasing Subaru, Capella spread her arms apart, reaching her wrist toward him.

One hand turned into a the head of a snake, while the other became the head of a lion— those distorted heads chased Subaru, showing their canines while crawling up and down the floor of the room.

Although his right foot had begun to bleed again, he still felt no pain. Feeling the body temperature and weight in his arms, making every effort to protect the woman he carried, Subaru focused every last bit of his athletic ability on dodging.

Capella: “Do you care so much for that scum? Then, for the rest of your short life, hold tightly and don’t let go! Those tempting eyes! Those sweet lips! That sweet meat meat meat! Because she’s stimulating, you’re clinging to desperately to her, unable to let go? Die! Die! Go die! Go die right now!”

Subaru: “Do not talk nonsense, bastard! I'm not that kind of person!”

Capella: “Quiet! Scum should just obediently stay put and emanate the stench of rubbish! Sows should obediently stay put and emanate the stench of an animal! You’ve never thought of it? Can you honestly say that you’ve never thought of it for even a second? Doesn’t that one second make it that kind of obscene relationship? What's the difference? What's the difference? Tell me what the difference is!”

The snakes and lions writhed as if resembling Capella’s excitement, wantonly twisting across the room.

The sound of teeth crunching a wooden desk, sending its legs flying, disassembling its body. That same force sought Subaru, trying again and again to reach him.

Caught in the center of that destructive storm, issued a pained cry, Subaru guarded Crusch’s body, desperately avoided the continuous attacks. Capella stood at the exit of the room. Even if he wanted to take the opportunity to escape, Capella's body expanded and contracted, changing back and forth between women, girl, and maiden, in an anomaly that looked to be taboo.

Capella: “Don’t you want to stroke her hair? Don’t you want to brush her lips? Don’t you want to hold her body? Those cheap thoughts are always justified with beautiful words, with love a shield! Love is beautiful, isn’t that just a self-righteous justification? Aren’t you using beautiful words to cover up your desires?!”

Subaru: “——you!”

Capella: “Admit your lust directly! Don’t try to hide it behind love! Or are you refusing to say it?

Refuting what's already been determined? —My love for her is because of her innermost feelings! Her nobility, her gentleness, her compassion, her temperance, her sky blue eyes. She's willing to live for others, she has the strength to endure injustice, her vulnerability that she shows only to me, I don't want to leave her alone. That reassuring voice, that loving gaze, those eyes that steal my moodiness away, the lips that call my name so gently, the warmth that grips both of my hands, the excitement in my heartbeat when we touch, that beautiful hair swaying in the wind. Because fate brought us together, because I believe that only she'd accept me, because she's always by my side when I'm sad, because she's taught me so many important lessons, because we've been together for all all all of this time, I want to see and feel the same things that she does from now to forever. Because we promised, I swore to never forget, and only I know her, and only in front of her can I be myself. Because I was so lonely, I always wanted someone to understand me. You told me that that initial thought is what leads one person to love another. You were the one who took away the flow of my tears, you were the one who emerged from the boundless sea of people to find me, you were the one hugged me tightly when I collapsed, you were one who scolded me for first time because I was naive, you were the one who told me the undisguised truth, you were the one who told me so much that I never knew before, you were the one who took me to see so many sights I'd never seen before, you were the one who took my hand, out of my birdcage in. No matter when, you support me, no matter what, you understand me. We're meant to be together, always, I can't live without you, you're my everything, you love me because I love you too, because your chest is so warm, because with you, all of the colors of the world shine so brilliantly, I can't feel happiness without you, I can't live without you. In this world so filled with lies, only this is truth."

With a still expression, Capella spit those words out as if they were curses.

As she spoke this long, touching confession, Capella's face was intertwined with beauty, adoration, obscenity. And with an even more complex and strange expression,

Capella: "—All of them all of them, aren't they just sweet nothings!"

Subaru: "——"

Capella: "Those are all words meant only to placate others, what's the harm in removing them? Do they have any sincerity? Any character? They're merely nauseating nonsense, how annoying! Acts! They're nothing but acts! In truth, you've only been attracted by the appearance of that meat! If you could really feel love with those who you speak affectionate words to and share affectionate touches and pillow talk with, see what happens when they become a fly! Could you love them? Are you not afraid of them? Are you not disgusted? No! You'd feel nothing but disgust oozing from your every pore! Well? Think about what you've said!"

Insane verbal abuse, a delusion of victimization, jealousy, hate, self-obsession.

Spit splashing across the room, Capella lost control of herself as she hysterically destroyed the room.

The snake's hiss, the lion's roar, Capella's cries, Subaru couldn't stand to listen to them any longer.

The noise became like storm, and the room began to collapse. No matter what he did, he couldn't see anything past the smoke.

How was his foot? Could he he still use it, injured and torn as it was? The only thing he was certain of was the heartbeat of the woman in his arms, which continued to infuse Subaru with determination.

But even such a fight would come to and end here.

Capella: “Hey, meat. I can see you!”

Subaru: “—Huh!?”

Breaking through the smoke, the lion's head suddenly rushed in.

Then the fangs snapped at Subaru’s right foot, and tore off a large chunk, blood spurting forth fiercely.

The injury had already directly exceeded the limit that Ferris could handle, and Subaru’s mind began to boil as he struggled through the pain of losing his right foot. He issued a violent cry of agony that his throat was unable to bear.

Of course, he couldn’t support his own body anymore.

As he collapsed, Crusch rolled onto the ground in front of him. And his blood began to overflow. This was no exaggeration. It appeared as if a bucket of blood had been suddenly overturned. It was clear that his life had entered a rapid decline.

Capella: “Ah, what a headache. It seems that I couldn’t help but get excited— how impolite of me. Kahahahaha!”

Subaru: “——”

Maintaining his position on the ground, Subaru stuck one convulsing hand to his wound.

Although the palm of the hand was blocking the wound, the momentum of the bleeding had not diminished. In fact, another feeling began to well up in Subaru’s body.

Soon, everything would end. This was the familiar feeling of Death, a feeling which gradually approached Subaru.

In just a few hours, he’d felt the pain of the loss of his right foot twice.

His face transcended paleness to take on a yellow pallor, and his breathing sped up and up as his eyes grew bloodshot.

Capella: “Oh my, my, aren't you about to die~? Watching the agony this piece of meat is in, is particularly distressing for my compassionate self who feels for others.”

Subaru: “…ah… ah…”

Capella: “The piece of meat that you’ve been protecting is also going to die soon. It’s such a shame that I indulged in my hobby a little bit… and decided to see if she’ll lose to my blood~.”

Capella squatted down, glancing at Subaru’s twisted, agonized face. Then the monster smiled and stretched a hand to the wound on his foot.

Capella: “I wonder what kind of ugly meat will you’ll become~?”

Subaru: “……”

As she spoke, Capella turned her other hand into a blade, cutting into the hand that had just been caressing Subaru’s wound. And, bit by bit, her blood flowed into Subaru. Red and black blended together, blood blend with each other, forming a rather indecent scene.

And,

Subaru: “——!? Hah, ah ah ah ah ah!?”

Capella: “Capella-sama’s blood is different from ubiquitous common blood. Mine is mixed with dragon's blood, which contains a great curse~ could you maybe last a bit longer than the other one?”

Capella hummed happily, but Subaru couldn’t form any kind of reply.

His entire being was half-dead, and even his pain had become sluggish. Just a second before he died, the blood that had plunged into his wound ravaged and eroded his body.

As if a foreign body with self-awareness had entered his body, a fear of a much higher degree than that a regional pain ravished Natsuki Subaru, as if attempting to completely rewrite his existence while merging with him.

Unable to understand, not allowed even the mercy of death.

And compared to Crusch? It was as the monster had said. She was suffering the same pain. If she had to endure such a pain, she’d be better off dead! Let us die! Let us die! Let me die! Let me die! Let me die!

Capella:“Gahahahaha! Well, then~ the invaders have been well taken care of. Well, it’s about time that I…”

After looking back and forth at the collapsed Subaru and Crusch, Capella stood, satisfied.

She reverted to the petite girl's form, her tail vanishing as she headed toward the broadcast room. As she turned, she paused.

Her gaze fell on the wall that had been destroyed when the decoy dragon had been attacked.

Capella: “My, my, they were pretty decent after all~.”

And, after having fallen from the building only a short while ago, the black dragon had again taken to the skies. Seeing its enemy, it gave a deafening roar, before breathing a mouthful of black flames.

— At that moment, black flames engulfed the city.

Arc 5 - Chapter 37, "Regroup"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-37-regroup/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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A distant, distant echo.

Unfamiliar voices. Or were they familiar voices?

Were they masculine? Feminine? Did they come from above or below? Everything about that was unknown.

???: “____”

An angry voice. And a sighing voice.

And also something like an accusing voice. And was that a crying voice?

Sound.

A waterfall of sound poured down, its rough waves an ensnaring whirlpool.

As if someone had been kind enough to answer a question deeply rooted in his heart. His turbid identity was swept away, lost to the tides.

Hands and feet, head, bottom, chest, back. Melting, mixing, blending together.

Even his own existence, incomprehensible as it was, was swallowed up by the waterfall of sound, flowing away as if lost forever.

All he knew was the black haze that swallowed the world he could perceive.

It was thus that he realized that the dark haze was disintegrating his body, allowing it no form of resistance, ushering in a steady end.

But an untieable knot was, at this very moment, resisting that erosion.

Even being dismantled, even being shriveled, even being denied, that knot refused to shrink back.

By no means had all of him succumbed to the haze in his body, by no means had all of him surrendered to that dark battlefield.

And finally, finally…

???: “____”

The first noise that flooded into his ears was someone's enraged roar.

While hearing that sharp voice, he opened his eyes to be greeted by a white ceiling. At the same time, he realized that he was lying spread eagled on a hard surface.

???: “—useless!”

His newly regained consciousness brought that angry cursing in with a clearly sound.

It seemed to encompass an outbreak of feelings, and was displayed with some specific action. He heard the distinct sound of a hand slapping against skin.

???: "Stop it! You should understand that the responsibility for that blame doesn’t lie with anyone here.”

???: “Shut up! I don’t want to hear those empty platitudes! An outsider shouldn’t interrupt!”

Accusatory voices and unquenchable anger.

From what he could hear, allies seemed to be arguing in a spacious room. He stretched out his left hand, trying to support himself with the wall as he got up.

But, halfway through, a nail encountered his skull, and his breathing suddenly stopped. His eyes felt as if they were sticks of combusting dynamite, and his field of vision was suddenly stained a vivid blood red.

As the impact of the pain ravaged him, he finally pulled his upper body upright, taking in the scene of the

quarrel.

—Three men and women quarreled in the middle of a room… or, rather, all three of them were men.

A tearful Ferris was hitting Wilhelm with his fists, while a desperate Julius tried to stop him. The sound that he had just heard was the voice of Ferris fanning to the cheek of Wilhelm. The red-faced old man had bowed his head in shame.

Wilhelm: “From the bottom of my heart, I apologize.”

Ferris: “At least give an excuse! Give me a reason that I can accept it! Just your apology is useless!”

Julius: “Ferris, you're creating a pointless commotion! Calm down! Can’t you see that Wilhelm-sama is incredibly remorseful?”

Ferris: “Remorse…!? What’s remorse going to do? Useless! Pointless! Everybody, everybody… why this hell is this…? Why couldn’t you all think to rescue Crusch-sama!?”

Ferris exploded toward Wilhelm and Julius with another fit of rage, but almost immediately sank to the floor, defeated and weak.

And as the crying Ferris issued a condemnation, the two men could say nothing. Ferris slammed his gloved hands on the ground contemptuously.

Ferris: “Am I supposed to be Blue? … I can’t even do anything right now… useless, useless, useless useless useless…”

Ferris sobbed as he continued to curse angrily.

This time, however, his anger was directed at himself.

That was another option he could take. After all, no one could interfere with the lament he’d directed toward himself.

Julius: “——”

Ferris’s sobs and Julius’s sighs intertwined. Wilhelm remained silent. The crushing atmosphere shrouded the room around them.

Garfiel: “Yo, Captain. Finally up?”

Garfiel appeared in the doorless doorway, spotting Subaru, who the other three had missed. Julius followed Garfiel’s gaze and noticed the awakened Subaru, wearing an expression of relief.

Julius: “Excellent. Ferris, Subaru’s finally awake.”

Ferris: “…right.”

At Julius’s call, Ferris swiped at his face with his sleeve as he stood. His disgraceful attitude

vanished as he examined Subaru’s body before firmly fixing his eyes on Subaru’s.

Ferris: “Well, you seem to be fine. Your mind is clear, right? Do you know your name and place of birth?”

Subaru: “I’m Natsuki Subaru, from Japan.”

Ferris: “A hometown I’ve never heard of… I was born in Crusch-sama’s territories.”

Ferris's expression revealed that he believed Subaru’s answer to be a pointless joke. He stood and immediately turned to leave. No one was willing to throw accusatory words at him, and so everyone watched in silence.

Only Wilhelm chased after Ferris. Before he left, the elderly man turned to give Subaru a ceremonious bow.

After the two left, the tense atmosphere in the room finally thinned.

But, at the same time, another oppressive feeling grew stronger and stronger.

Garfiel: “Captain, even if y’can get up, ya shouldn’t be forcin’ yerself t’do anythin’ right now.”

Subaru: “…those are my lines, you look like you’re in terrible shape.”

Leaning against the wall, Garfiel greeted Subaru, who responded to the haggard looking teenager with his own greeting.

His cheeks and blond hair were saturated with blood, and his clothing was torn in too many places to count. His pallor was just as awful as when he’d first carried Mimi to the shelter.

As he considered this, Subaru’s own sluggish thoughts finally caught up.

Subaru: “We’re alive, huh.”

Garfiel: “Right. My amazin’ self and Captain survived, so that’s all good ‘n well, but we can’t even celebrate it. Fuck!”

Affirming Subaru’s mutter, Garfiel grinded his teeth down bitterly.

As he watched Garfiel, Subaru once again confirmed his own survival — that is, he understood that Return by Death hadn’t triggered, and that he hadn’t witnessed the end of this struggle in the City Hall.

Of course, since he was still alive, he had to have been rescued, but…”

Subaru: “What's going on in the City Hall? How did I get here?”

Julius: “We’re still in the City Hall right now. The Witch Cult conceded it, and we took back our target. Looking just at that result, we could call the operation a success, but…”

Julius knelt next to Subaru as he began to answer his questions.

Upon closer inspection, the Knight of Knights looked awful. His hair was uncharacteristically messy, and his face and neck were covered with wounds. His knight’s uniform was also dirtied with blood, bringing no peace of mind.

But, most importantly, his normally graceful features were currently twisted with remorse and humiliation.

Julius: “First and foremost, it’s good to see you up again. If anything had happened to you, we would have lost our source of morale.”

Subaru: “… don’t say useless shit like that. What happened? The Witch Cult chose to abandon the building, exactly how did that come about?”

Julius: “As we’ve established, the Witch Cult abandoned the building, and we took back the City Hall. But the hostages that were turned into inhuman things, and the devils who caused all this managed to escape after everything they’d done. This can hardly be called a good result.”

Compared to the anxious Subaru, Julius stated the situation in mellow tones.

However, that stiff tone and those drooping eyes… it was obvious that Julius was explaining their circumstances with irrefutable indignation in his voice.

And, Subaru couldn’t ignore what he’d just been told.

Subaru: “Inhuman things, meaning…”

Julius: “You should have seen that unending, nightmarish sight when you were on the upper floor.”

Shaking his head, Julius affirmed that cruel reality.

Subaru vividly remembered the shiny red compound eyes and the sound of the wings desperately beating out a cry for help. His nausea was held in check by the knowledge that they’d been looking to him, another human, for aid.

His heart seemed to tighten with a pain that was neither truly sympathy nor fear.

The Witch Cult’s Sin Archbishop of Lust, Capella, was a truly despicable monster who trampled freely

on human dignity and values, all while spitting her brand of ridicule.

What that monster played with was neither the human spirit nor the human heart, but something even more sacred.

Julius: “The entire square, from the highest floor to the exterior premises. After our division of labor to gain time, the Witch Cult had too much of an upper hand.… They could have easily, little by little, killed us all. The reason why that didn’t happened was your keen judgment and the black dragon who fought his hardest.”

Subaru: “My… judgment?”

Julius: “The conversation mirror was activated before you made a move on the top floor, and, as a result, the status of the City Hall was successfully communicated to Anastasia and Ferris. The prompt arrival of our reinforcements, the Iron Fang and Ferris, was all due to your actions.”

Subaru: “Did you think those kinds of words would bring me comfort?”

Julius: “…that wasn’t my intent. I was merely stating the truth. Facts, as it were.”

Subaru was irritated by Julius's poised answer. However, Julius's cold reply was also evidence that he himself wasn’t calm either.

Confirming that neither’s mental state was great, Subaru took a deep breath.

Subaru: “One more thing about what you said just now, what happened to the black dragon?”

Julius: “This happened on the top floor, so I may not know any more than you do… but Lust’s power is transformation, right? And surprisingly enough, a man who had been turned into a black dragon made his way to the top of the building, even as he was on the verge of death, to battle with Lust. We were only able to save you thanks to him.”

The one who Julius was referring to was no doubt the dragon that Subaru and Crusch had so fiercely attacked.

Since Capella's power was variation and transformation, then that black dragon was more than likely one of the hostages in the City Hall. And Subaru had disregarded his call for help, abandoning that man.

And under such circumstances, with the fighting still ongoing,

Subaru: “The one who was turned into a black dragon, is he…”

Garfiel: “He can’t die.”

As Subaru fretted, Garfiel suddenly interrupted with a calm voice.

He wouldn’t meet Subaru’s gaze, instead staring directly up at the ceiling.

Garfiel: “My amazin’ self won’t let him die. It’s absolutely impossible for’em t’die here, from such a thing. He must be saved… otherwise…”

Julius: “He’s been like that. The dragon seems to be someone he knows. Although his scent has changed, Garfiel seemed to recognize him from his actions. In any case, his healing is now complete. He’s fine, although a little anxious, but some rest would help that.”

Subaru: “An acquaintance? Garfiel, is this someone you know from the city?”

Garfiel: “——”

Garfiel’s choice to remain silent came as a surprise to Subaru, who couldn’t catch his gaze.

In any case, he was grateful for the safety of their savior, the black dragon. But the others, the flies, they…

Julius: “The others can be loosely said to be okay, but at least their safety has been assured. Ferris has made his diagnoses, but…”

Subaru: “That is to say, even Ferris can’t fix them? Damnit!”

Unable to help hitting the floor with his hand, Subaru pondered the feelings of those who had lost their bodies.

Exactly how strong of a sense of loss would they be feeling? They’d been turned into something inhuman, a horror and cruelty that is different from the loss of life.

Loss of life simply meant the end of an identity and an existence.

But the loss of human form meant the loss of an identity… while existence had yet to come to an end.

Those who were tortured by that incurable curses were packed into the small office

Were they above him? Or below? Regretting that he couldn’t even remember how many were suffering that fate, Subaru could only think of other things that needed to be confirmed.

Since he knew he was still alive, the next question that emerged was a natural one.

Subaru: “Are you and Garfiel both uninjured?”

Julius: “As you can see, both Garfiel and myself were not significantly injured, and neither was Ricardo, although we can certainly say we were humiliated… but that’s an afterthought.”

Subaru: “——”

Even as he said so, Julius's teeth clenched down on his lip, his voice laced with shame. Seeing his anger, Subaru was consumed by his own sense of frustrated hatred.

Julius fought against the detestable Gluttony, Alphard.

In honesty, Subaru wanted nothing more than to destroy that one archbishop. But even supposing that Subaru had stayed to fight him, his escape would have been completely inevitable.

But he couldn't remain calm, knowing that his sworn enemy had escaped.

Subaru: "…sorry that I couldn't finish the task assigned to me."

Julius: "If you insist on saying so, I can't refute you… they achieved their broadcast, it seems."

Subaru: "Right, and that applies doubly for Lust. And… right, I'm sure they discussed some kind of requests or negotiations in their latest broadcast."

And, from Julius's expression, Subaru could tell that Lust's request hadn't been anything proper. Although he didn't want to hear it, blocking it out would be pointless. He'd have to learn it sooner or later. But, before that…

Subaru: "Broadcast aside… what happened to Crusch-san?"

Julius: "——"

Subaru: "She also went to the top floor with me… and she ended up in a worse position than me, suffering at the hands of Lust for much longer…"

An image of Crusch spitting up blood, with only the white of her eyes showing, flashed through Subaru's mind.

Her external injuries were severe, and the damage was appalling. Presumably, something life- threatening must have happened.

And Ferris's anguished cries. Although he didn't want to believe the worst, the most obvious conclusion was…

Subaru: "Ferris… said something unfortunate sounding, so…"

Julius: "It's certainly true that Crusch-sama is still alive, but…"

Subaru: "Don't phrase it with those implications!"

In that brief moment, Subaru felt a small light of hope in his chest. However, it vanished as soon as he saw Julius's expression.

That was an intolerable expression which expressed not the peace of mind at finally saving a life, but one which conveyed terror of a even worse fate.

Julius: “Ferris was overreacting slightly, but this situation is certainly an undesirable one.”

Subaru: “Undesirable… What the hell is going on? Crusch-san… if Ferris can’t do anything, why aren’t we putting our heads together and trying to help!?”

Julius: “Calm down! No matter how worked up you get, the situation won’t change. So calm down already.”

Julius snapped sharply at Subaru’s disgraceful outburst.

But his calmness would only serve to fuel the present Subaru’s rage.

Subaru: “Bastard, how the hell can you be so calm! We lost so soundly, to that lot! How can you not be angry!?”

Julius: “—Of course I’m also boiling with rage!”

Julius sharply swatted aside the arm that Subaru had stretch forward. Subaru fell silent as he saw Julius’s gaze waver while he roared.

Julius: “…Apologies for my unbecoming anger. It seems that I’m yet to be mature enough to control myself.”

Julius reached out a hand to Subaru, who had lost his balance after his arm had been forcefully blocked. Although he’d clearly understood Julius’s feelings, Subaru had deliberately attacked his attitude, and he felt ashamed as he heard Julius’s apology.

Subaru: “Crusch-san, she…”

Julius: “…was attacked by Lust, right? A foreign agent has contaminated her body and is currently wreaking havoc. Ferris’s reaction is almost appallingly overwhelming.”

As Julius spoke, Subaru recalled a clear image of Crusch’s incredible pain in the last moments of his memory.

That ultimate pain, where her body had been infiltrated by a monster, which siphoned away her own flesh, blood, bones and even soul. That pain was one which no one should ever bear.

But she had, and Subaru immediately placed this as the reason for Ferris’s attitude earlier.

Before and after Subaru’s awakening, Ferris seemed to blame Wilhelm. Presumably, he held the old swordsman accountable for being unable to protect their master on the battlefield.

In fact, he was only searching for someone to carry the blame. Both the accusing Ferris and the accused Wilhelm understood this.

So Wilhelm remained silent after Ferris had attacked him, which Ferris secretly cried over his own weakness.

The two men who had just left the room were with their suffering master now.

Thinking about that trio, the sense of failure in Subaru's heart only grew stronger and stronger. Julius interrupted Subaru's melancholy.

Julius: "—Subaru, there's something that I have to confirm."

Subaru: "What is it?"

Julius: "Although it's rather difficult for me to point this out… it seems that you haven't noticed yet."

Subaru felt a wave of doubt at Julius's careful euphemism. His eyes narrowed slightly as Julius raised a hand to his leg.

Unsure of what Julius was doing, he looked down carefully… to where Julius's hand traced a line from Subaru's thigh to his right foot.

Subaru also involuntarily followed with his eyes.

Subaru had inadvertently only recalled his memories of Crusch at the top floor of the City Hall, and had completely forgotten about his own injuries.

What had happened before he'd lost consciousness?

He'd unconsciously understood and accepted the presence of Return by Death — but that feeling of death hadn't come. He should have been relieved, but…

Subaru: "What? This is—!?"

His breath suddenly catching in his frozen throat, Subaru couldn't help but doubt his own eyes. His eyes were telling him that his right foot was still attached, but…

Where his foot had been detached was a seam of black, ugly, charred looking skin. And that darkened skin had spread throughout his right foot.

Julius: "It wasn't Ferris who fixed it, nor was it any type of healing magic. Your foot… the one which had been torn apart… fixed itself. And it doesn't even look as if it hurts."

Subaru: "——"

It was as Julius had said.

His ugly right foot felt neither pain nor a sense violation. His first instinct was to wonder if it only maintained the illusion of being connected, but he could freely bend his knees and move his toes.

Every wound on his foot had turned black, and the blackness ran visible in his blood vessels, stretching across the upper and lower parts of his right foot.

Julius: “Subaru, I'll have to confirm it with you again.”

Subaru: “……”

After seeing the dramatic changes in one's own feet, Subaru could not even speak. For Julius’s question, Subaru can only slowly lift his head, and then ...

Julius: “Is it really… completely fine?”

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The most terrifying thing about the reattachment of his right foot was… there was no obstacle preventing him from standing and walking as he pleased.

Garfiel: “Th’ nee-san named Ferris said that Captain’s foot was neither injured nor sick, so even ‘f my amazin’ self tried to use healin’ megic, nothin’ would happen. It wasn’t supposed to be somethin’ curable.”

Rolling up the leg of his pants, Subaru would see that his leg was laced with black blood vessels. The embroidered patterns appeared to be flexible to the touch. If he ignored the color, he could call the skin normal, but…

Julius: “Did you reattach it yourself? … That’s the only thing that would assure me right now.”

Needless to say, however, Subaru possessed no regenerative powers. This was the second time he’d lost that foot, and his own memory told him that the first time it had happened, his foot had shown no signs of repairing itself.

Of course, the proper line of thought to follow was to figure out what had caused this, but Subaru could think of only one thing.

Subaru: “Is it because that bitch Capella dripped blood onto my leg…?”

He’d descended into a realm of confusion after his foot had been taken off.

For that reason, his memories were blurred, and he couldn't conclude for certain that this was indeed the case. However, Subaru had no doubt that he'd seen Capella her cut into her own wrist and scatter drops of blood about.

At that time, she had also mentioned something incredibly concerning. Yes, it was…

Subaru: "Crusch-san… she suffered the same thing that I did."

Julius: "That being… having blood dripped into her wounds? It's an unpleasant act. Maybe it has some significance as a ritual… leaving behind an immediate impact? Or perhaps it's a curse, which doesn't operate under the laws of regular magic."

Subaru: "Curse… yes, curse sounds right. The curse of blood… no, it was something different… something like… dragon's blood? Right, it's the blood of the dragon. That's what she said!"

As Subaru gazed at a puzzled Julius, he sifted through his foggy memories, and couldn't help but clap his hands together at his success.

That bastard Capella had indeed mentioned, while torturing Subaru with her blood, that her own blood was mixed with dragon's blood.

That hadn't seemed to be a jest, a bluff, or a lie. And it provided several clues.

Julius: "Blood of the Dragon… does that mean that she received it from the royal family?"

Subaru: "I don't know of the details, but is there something that convenient really on hand?"

Julius: "It was one of the treasures granted by the contract with the dragon Volcanica, famous for being potent enough to even turn barren soils fertile again."

Subaru: "The almighty dragon's blood… I don't know how relevant it is, or what it implies."

Considering that Capella had called herself a Lugunica, this was an object of concern, especially, as Wilhelm had said, due to Emerada Lugunica being a real historical figure.

She couldn't really be of royalty, could she? But the dragon's blood being mixed with her blood stirred questions.

Julius: "Anyway, it's good news to know that it might be blood-related, Ferris might be able to help her with that information."

Subaru: "Ah, that's right. Let's hurry…"

Garfiel: "Wait, Captain. Don't go with him."

Finally, there was information that may lead to a turnaround.

Subaru wanted to rush to share that information, but Garfiel, arms crossed as he leaned on the wall, had poured a metaphorical bucket of ice cold water over his head. In response to Subaru's accusatory glare, Garfiel dropped his gaze.

Garfiel: "Captain hasn't seen it yet, 'n the fewer people see, th'better."

Subaru: "…what does that mean?"

Garfiel: "It means what ya think it means. That pretty nee-san won't like it'f ya see her."

Garfiel turned away from Subaru's probing gaze.

Growing increasingly uneasy, Subaru instead turned to Julius, who, like Garfiel, only shook his head.

Julius: "In fact, I'm afraid that Crusch-sama is very much hoping to avoid the gaze of others right now. Because she's a noble person, so she doesn't want anyone to see her in such a weakened state."

Subaru: "Is it… really just because she's weak right now?"

Julius: "——"

Julius says nothing.

He merely quietly turned his gaze from Subaru. And just that one small action answered everything.

Subaru: "…it's all my fault."

Julius: "Subaru, that's—"

Subaru: "It's all my fault! I… obviously, I should have known better than anyone else how underhanded they can be! I should have foreseen at least some of this!"

What was happening to Crusch? The more he tried to imagine, the more horrified he became.

And the intense self-reproach those thoughts brought to Subaru… those were a product of his anger at his own incompetence, as well as of their own anger, as well as courage and regret to go to challenge.

The Witch Cultists… Subaru knew of their awful natures, right down to his bone marrow.

And it wasn't just Petelgeuse. Before entering the City Hall, Subaru met Sirius and Regulus firsthand, in rapid succession. After those encounters, how could he have underestimated Capella?

Was it his arrogance in deciding to fight back even at a disadvantage? This had all happened because of his judgment.

Subaru: "A-All mine…"

???: “—That’s enough. Whether you’re cryin’ or complainin’ it’s really becomin’ quite bothersome, so would ya mind stoppin’?”

Subaru, bearing all the blame, was about to sink deeply into the sea of self-loathing.

At this moment, however, it was not a gentle voice who guided his from those dark thoughts, but a cold, apathetic one which was accompanied by a frigid gaze.

Subaru: “——”

His turned to the the entrance of the large room.

Standing there with her hands clasped together, under the gaze of everyone in the room, was a purple-haired businesswoman with a gentle face.

However, the lethal glare she fixed on Subaru was completely out of character for those gentle features.

Subaru: “Anastasia…”

Anastasia: “I don’t misunderstand disappointment after a defeat on the battlefield, but if all ya do is mope and complain, you’ll disturb those around you like a fool. Even if you do all that, the losses you’ve taken won’t return to ya.”

Anastasia’ reprimands were directed toward Subaru, who had been crushed by defeat.

For a second, Subaru was too stunned to understand. As he began to react, he found his mind swimming with rage, but,

Julius: “Anastasia-sama, please retract your statement. Subaru was the one who had the most direct contact with the sinners of the Witch Cult. Even if he’s moping or sighing…”

Anastasia: “How unlike ya, Julius. You can usually focus on the issue at hand, but right now you’re being so precocious… if you came here just to play with your friends, you might find that Joshua suits you a lil’ better.”

Julius: “……”

Julius, who had attempted to defend Subaru, withered under that frosty sight. Subaru’s white-hot rage cooled somewhat, but he still felt incredibly confused about Anastasia’s attitude.

Then, looking at the antagonized Subaru, Anastasia fiddled with the fox-fur scarf around her neck and spoke to the other two occupants of the room.

Anastasia: “…Hey, Julius, things with Crusch-san seem kinda busy right now, don’t they? Why don’t you see if you can go and help? And, blond child over there, would you mind accompanying him?”

Urging Julius and Garfiel from the room, Anastasia fixed her eyes on Subaru.

If two of the four people in the room left, a confrontation between only Subaru and Anastasia would happen.

Anastasia: “Don’t worry, I won’t do anythin’ untoward.”

Anastasia promised so with a decidedly uncute smile.

Julius bowed and left, and Garfiel trailed behind him, a cautious light in his eyes. Until the very end, he kept his concerned gaze trained on Subaru, before giving him a nod and leaving.

Anastasia: “Garfiel-kun seems to be quite the dutiful boy. Until the very end, his worried gaze was fixed on Natsuki-kun. He seems like he takes good care of people.”

Subaru: “…I’m sure you didn’t get me alone just to gossip.”

Anastasia began quietly chattering about Garfiel as he left. This had happened in a previous interaction, where she’d been intending to catch Subaru off of his guard.

Subaru turned to see Anastasia stroking her hair as she surveyed the half-destroyed room, before lifting a chair and seating herself.

Anastasia: “My, having a leisurely chat like this with Natsuki-kun really takes me back… all the way to the eve of the battle with the White Whale.”

Subaru: “Back then, we were scheming a plan for success. This time, nothing like that is in sight… Even though we recaptured the City Hall, the situation hasn’t improved at all…”

Anastasia: “Yes, nothing has changed. Everything’s gotten worse, and we have no optimal course of action to follow…”

Subaru realized that her carefree voice had, for a second, honed itself into the razor sharp blade of a knife.

He couldn’t help but straighten his back, while Anastasia glanced at his foot.

Anastasia: “Is there no problem with your feet? Last I heard, it had been shredded.”

Subaru: “Fortunately, I can run and jump just find, although this looks kind of gross.”

Anastasia: “Well, being able to run and jump right now is what matters most. After that, there’ll be a lot to do, but until then…”

Anastasia let the conversation drift lightly toward Subaru’s injury, before inhaling sharply.

Subaru realized that she was finally arriving at the point and frowned. She pointed her hand at the

ceiling— no, through it.

Anastasia: “Did ya ever end up hearin’ the third broadcast?”

Subaru: “No, I didn’t, what did they say? … it was probably some kind of request right?”

Anastasia: “Natsuki-kun missed two of the three broadcasts, how careless.”

Anastasia giggled softly, holding a hand to her mouth, and Subaru put on a unhappy pout. Even so, she kept her hand over her mouth, and narrowed her eyes.

Anastasia: ‘The demand that was given— it seems that only Natsuki-kun and I could understand it.”

Subaru: “Only me… and Anastasia-san?”

What exactly did that mean? Subaru’s mind swam with questions.

He’d never felt that they particularly held anything in common. After all, this was their first time engaging in such an interaction.

With such a shallow relationship, what exactly did they…

???: “— My my, Ana, there are times when your manner of speech is demoralizing. Sometimes it ends up only serving to annoy others, you know. Isn’t that exactly the case here?”

Subaru: “——!?”

The voice of a third person suddenly echoed in Subaru’s ears.

This voice belong to neither Subaru nor Anastasia. Instead, it felt lighter and more neutral.

Subaru toured the room with confused eyes, but there was not a single unknown figure in their surroundings. Julius and Garfiel had left, and showed no signs of reapproaching.

Where in the world had that voice come from?

Anastasia: “Ya say that, but don’t ya do the same thing I do? Look at poor Natsuki-kun. He’s in such a chaotic state of confusion right now.”

???: “Oh, that won’t do at all.”

Subaru: “That, who is…!?”

Anastasia spoke to the third voice as if all were natural.

Rather than relieving Subaru’s frenzy, he verged on hyperventilating as he demanded “what’s going

on?”

???: “You do seem quite frightened, my apologies.”

Subaru: “——”

His eyes fell upon it.

Suddenly, the owner of the other voice intruded loudly into this scene.

No, that third voice hadn’t intruded. It had been in this room since the very beginning. In fact, it had entered the room with Anastasia.

Echidna: “I’m Echidna. Well, I say that, but what I really am is an artificial spirit.”

Subaru: “Echi—!?”

“It” smiled deftly at Subaru, who was busy being swept away by shock.

Lips curling up on both sides, eyes narrowing slightly. That should… probably, be something like the imitation of a smile.

—Wrapped around Anastasia’s neck, her scarf of what appeared to be faux fox fur beamed. The witch whose name he couldn’t forget had just revealed herself to be a spirit.

Arc 5 - Chapter 38, "The Witch Cult's Proposals"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-38-the-witch-cults-proposals/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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As Subaru gazed at that thing—eyes wide in shock, he momentarily forgot how to breathe.

Echidna: “Although I had been anticipating this response, it’s still a little rather overwhelming. Although I look like this, I am, by gender, a woman… well, no I’m a spirit, so it’s difficult to determine whether or not I have a gender. Maybe I should just say that I identify as female?”

Snow white hair and sharp black eyes.

A neutral voice, and twisting, crafty words. Those characteristics brought to mind that black and white witch, whose personality was consistent with this fox’s.

Subaru: “What a… bad joke. You’re saying that you’re Echidna?”

His first encounter with the Witch of Greed had been before a Trial in Sanctuary’s tomb, when she’d lured him to one of her tea parties.

She’d enticed her guest with sweet words in an attempt to turn him into a puppet, dancing on her strings.

And, on top of that, she wanted to borrow him to seek all the answers that she herself could not witness. She could be said to be curiosity incarnate.

She was someone who Subaru had never imagined he would see again.

Subaru: “You… actually turned into a fox? Stop screwing around. And appearing right during this moment of crisis, what are you scheming this time?”

Anastasia: “Wait a moment, stop jumpin’ to conclusions and listen!”

Subaru had recovered slightly from his initial shock, ready to bring retribution upon this white fox in front of him who was claiming to be Echidna. However, at Anastasia’s reproach, he was cut off.

Subaru’s hostility toward the white fox also turned to Anastasia, who paraded around nonchalantly with that scarf around her neck.

Subaru: “Don’t screw with me! Don’t bullshit me! You're ... what's with her? ...was she decieved her? After all, she shouldn’t be out of the sanctuary."

Anastasia: “I don’t really know what you’re going on about, but it’s been about a decade since I first met Echidna… and since then, we’ve barely ever been separated. Isn’t that just a little mismatched with your story?”

Subaru: “A decade ago…?”

The thought of that witch having planned so long ago to wantonly flutter about in the world outside lit the fires of rage deep inside Subaru.

According to Echidna’s own testimony, she hadn’t originated from her dream castle. So, if from even before that point in time, she’d planned something like this…

Subaru: “You’re always like this… do you get a kick out of watching people flail around in the dark while you laugh at their ignorance?”

Echidna: “… My, my, it seems that I’m being detested through and through. Although I’m sure that this is all troublesome for you, it seems to be some kind of inexplicable misunderstanding.”

Anastasia: “Yep, it’s just as Echidna’s said.”

In contrast to the Subaru’s fierce anger, Anastasia and the white fox exchanged a calm, understanding glance.

The arctic fox who made Subaru frown shook her head in an unexpectedly human manner.

Echidna: “Although I have no clue whatsoever as to where your distrust of this other Echidna stems from, I would say that those issues don’t relate to me.”

Subaru: “What do you mean?”

Echidna: “It's simple indeed. I don’t know anything about any Echidna outside of myself, since I was born knowing nothing except my name, Echidna and my race, artificial spirit. Those are my only clues to my origin.”

Subaru: “—what?”

He’d been expecting some sort of explanation, but the arctic fox spoke silly words unsuited to what Subaru knew of Echidna. Or, rather, if she really was Echidna, than anything she said could very possibly be misleading words meant to trick Subaru.

Claiming to be both an an artificial spirit and Echidna, although this spirit said that she had no previous recollection of Subaru, he couldn’t just carelessly believe her.

Anastasia: “What is it? Natsuki-kun’s expression is full of nothing but suspicion.”

Subaru: “Of course, for me, who knows Echidna’s true nature, this reaction is only natural. You too should… right, my bad. Echidna’s saying she doesn’t remember anything, right?”

Anastasia: “It seems that you have absolutely no intention of believing in it… ah, in this situation, where we’re operating on a time limit, that really is a headache.”

As opposed to the vigilant Subaru, Anastasia spoke in her usual casual tone.

Echidna was working with her— just that alone was enough for Subaru to become wary of Anastasia. And although he respected both Julius and Ricardo, his degree of trust in them may need to be adjusted.

Subaru couldn’t allow himself to feel too much hope that the master and the subordinate did not hold the same opinion on this.

Subaru: “Why’d you tell me your name, if you don’t have any memories? Aside from trying to gain my trust? Was it supposed to convince me that you aren’t her?”

She’d given him her name and a little of her origin. Didn’t that prove that she was the Echidna Of The Tea Party? Which meant that she was not the Echidna In The Coffin, who Roswaal was seeking. There was no doubt that she was the one Subaru had met. In that case, there were a mountain of questions he wanted to demand from her.

That said, he understood that this was not the time for those questions. However, facing the impatient Subaru, Anastasia sighed tiredly.

Anastasia: “It seems things only got so rowdy because Natsuki-kun missed the broadcast.”

Subaru: “The broadcast from the Witch Cult? How is it related to this?”

Echidna: “—because one of their requests was Surrender Your Artificial Spirits. The white fox answered the question simply.

The content of that request left Subaru’s mind blank as he struggled to comprehend the ramifications.

The broadcast, the Witch Cult, the artificial spirits. That was to say—

Subaru: “Could it be that…”

Echidna: “Although it's something uncomfortable to believe, they want our artificial spirits… that is, they want that girl who accompanies you. So isn’t it only natural that we should approach you for a chat?”

Subaru: “How did you know that Beatrice is an artificial spirit?”

Echidna: “I noticed the moment I saw her, is all I can say. I’m not quite sure how. But I think that she, too, would be able to recognize me on sight. Maybe it’s some kind of spirit detection?”

With a more cautious attitude, the white foxed answered Subaru’s questions one by one.

At the very least, when Beatrice had encountered Anastasia for the first time at the hotel, she hadn’t mentioned anything about the white fox scarf. However, it was very possible that Beatrice had noticed something, but, unsure of how accurate her sense had been, hadn’t voiced her concerns out loud.

Why did she have to carry all those burdens alone? Subaru turned to ask her, and immediately felt a sharp pain, as if someone had stabbed him in the heart.

Echidna: “That the child by your side couldn’t detect me properly can’t be helped. I have many defects as a spirit, and I can’t tie a decent contract with anyone. I can’t even use combat magic smoothly. Although, to compensate for this, I’m confident in my ability to hide my presence, and this confidence is presently undiminished.”

Subaru: “Can’t form a contract… then, you and Anastasia…”

Anastasia: “This child and I don’t share the relationship of spirit and contractor. That relationship requires something completely different… That is to say, we’re accomplices.”

Echidna: “I want to witness this child’s future, so that’s why I’m following her around like this. Having been with her for a few years now, we’ve become something like conversation partners. From time to time, she even discusses her business matters with me.”

The arctic fox spoke with a fleeting grin, and Anastasia lightly scratched at her neck. Their relationship seemed harmonious, and Subaru presumed that they shared a certain degree of trust.

Subaru: “Why… would you disclose your internal affairs unrelated to the battle at hand…?”

Echidna: “Isn’t it natural that we’d disclose some of our own affairs if we want to gain your trust?

Furthermore, with the lives of the entire city's population hanging in balance… at this critical juncture, it falls to us to take action. It wouldn't do to fall into internal strife due to the cloaking of a small, relatively insignificant detail."

Anastasia: "I also really wanted to stop her, but… this child doesn't heed advice from others at all after havin' made up her mind, so… I'd like for you to at least hear her out, for the time being."

Echidna was unusually frank and genuine, and Anastasia's supplemental words were convincing. Belatedly, Subaru realized the reason for Anastasia's earlier coldness; she'd taken on that demeanor to create an environment where she could catch Subaru alone.

Along with that, in order to successfully persuade Subaru, she'd deliberately ushered Julius and Garfiel from the room.

Anastasia: "Of course, I won't comply with the Witch Cult's requests, but I will require Natsuki-kun to stand by my side in regard to the artificial spirit. Otherwise, even if we outwardly reject their proposals, not everyone will accept our stance so easily."

Subaru: "I have no intention whatsoever to listen to anything that bunch has to say, so I strongly agree… but that doesn't mean that all my doubts about that fox Echidna have been put to ease."

Anastasia: "You're so particular about names. Does the Echidna you know really have such a poor character, Natsuki-kun? If so, it's rather troublesome to see you treat my Echidna in such a way."

Subaru: "I'll apologize if it's someone else entirely, but her attitude and speech patterns are almost identical… and…"

Anastasia: "And?"

Subaru searched for the words to explain to the confused Anastasia.

The nature of the existence of artificial spirits was unclear to Subaru, but he did know that Beatrice and Puck were both made by the witch Echidna.

Of course, if the white fox were truly an artificial spirit, then she must also have come from Echidna's hands.

In search for an eternal life, Echidna had designed an artificial replica of herself.

Many of her words were of suspect trustworthiness. But if everything she'd said had been true, then the conclusion that Echidna had Become An Artificial Spirit was reasonable.

Casting away her flesh, freed from the notion of lifespan as a spirit— if she could extend her existence through this manner… this would certainly fit with that Witch of Greed who longed for omniscience.

So… the white fox was The Artificial Spirit Named Echidna, without doubt. However, her claim that she

had no memories— was that true or false?

Anastasia said they have been together for more than a decade. However, that alone was no reason to believe her. It would come as no surprise if she'd been plotting something for a decade.

If someone were to say that she'd been planning all that for this exact moment… Subaru wouldn't have a hard time believing them.

Anastasia: "Hey, hey, he seems to be starin' rather fiercely."

Echidna: "Such intense hatred makes me really curious about this other Echidna, but I suppose we should set that topic aside for now. Whether or not he believes us isn't relevant. By the way, Ana, shouldn't you tell him what's going on already?"

The arctic fox spoke with a defeated tone, accepting Subaru's suspicious grudge. And Anastasia, at her urging, shrugged and clapped her hands together, picking the conversation back up.

Anastasia: "Well, now that your doubts have been sorted out, the most pressin' matter is the Witch Cult. They made three other requests."

Subaru: "Three other… so, a total of four?"

Anastasia: "Yes, which is the total number of the remaining archbishops. Since most of their requests were rather mockin' in content… try not to be offended."

Mocking demands… once again, they had gone too far.

The Witch Cult had somehow defied Subaru's notion that his impression of them couldn't grow any worse.

Anastasia pet the tail of the arctic fox with her hands. Then, licking her lips, she said...

Anastasia: "The first requirement is The Surrender Of Our Artificial Spirits, from Gluttony."

Subaru: "Gluttony…"

Anastasia: "Although I have much to say on that, I'll save my commentary for later. Next is Wrath. —She wants the Book of Wisdom that was brought to this city."

Subaru: "——hk!?"

At yet another unexpected shock, Subaru involuntarily widened his eyes. And seeing that, Anastasia narrowed her lightly colored eyes.

Anastasia: "Seeing that reaction, I'd say that Natsuki-kun knows something about this?"

Subaru: "……"

Anastasia: "No worries, that's excellent. It's been troublin' me quite a bit. Echidna doesn't know anythin' and neither does Julius."

Subaru: "… that fox really said that she doesn't know anything? Even though it's the Book of Wisdom, huh."

Anastasia showed a slight smile. After all, before this, she'd been puzzling over something she had no clue how to find. But now, she'd found a glimmer of hope. Of course, that smile carried nary a hint of cuteness either.

Echidna: "No, I'm afraid I don't know anything… then, if you'll allow me to speculate… the Echidna you know is connected to this Book of Wisdom, correct?"

Subaru: "Yes, exactly right."

Echidna: "In that case, I'd have to ask even if I didn't want to know. What kind of person was your Echidna? Did she have some kind of connection to the Witch Cult?"

Although Subaru believed that she wasn't feigning ignorance, he felt that Anastasia and her white fox were speaking as though she were someone who shared an unusual relationship with one of their clients.

Of course, given their way of thinking, this was inevitable.

If you he were to believe what the arctic fox said, the name Echidna referred to her existence alone. Only Subaru knew that the artificial spirit's creator, Echidna. And, more importantly, this proved that only the name of the Witch of Envy had been recorded into history.

Subaru: "—Echidna… is the name of a witch from a long time ago. In addition to the Witch of Envy, other wicked witches existed, and she was one of those. Although she's long dead, her soul remained anchored here. Having met her before, I'm now very wary of her."

Anastasia: "Hey, Natsuki-kun, do ya have a fever? You're speakin' some rather outrageous words here."

Subaru: "There's nothing wrong with my head. Those witches are incomprehensible, twisted existences. They can even create artificial spirits, so just accept this much."

Echidna: "In that case… then this Echidna could be said to be my parent, huh."

Subaru's answer was sprinkled with implications, and the white fox drew meaning from words that surely sounded reckless. Although he wasn't particularly trying to hide anything, Subaru felt a twinge of regret at not being upfront with her.

Echidna: "At an unexpected time, discovering the secret behind my birth is one of the many joys of life. If you have a chance, be sure to tell me in more detail."

Subaru: "… although you're a spirit yourself, you're so obviously clueless about the existence of artificial spirits. Our Beatrice seems to know much more than… no, come to think of it, she's never mentioned anything about you to me. Where did you come from, and what were you meant to do?"

Echidna: "Regretfully, all that remains unknown to me, whether it be the circumstances of my birth or the purpose I was made to fulfill. —Yes, that's all a mystery to me. Right now, I'm merely following the path of this rather interesting child."

At Subaru's accusation, the arctic fox cast a meaningful sideways glance to Anastasia, who slowly moved her gaze to Subaru from the sidelines.

Anastasia: "I'm also quite curious about the connection between Echidna and the witch. And she… cannot be unrelated to this witch. So, let's return to the topic of the Book of Wisdom…"

Subaru: "The Book of Wisdom is the origin of the Witch Cult's gospel… that is, it's the full version. The Book of Wisdom uses the same principles of the Dragon Stone."

Anastasia: "The same as the Dragon Stone… then, their credibility would be incredibly high. Is it possible that the witch made the book herself?"

Subaru: "That's what she implied, but the two existing copies should have been burned. If more copies were ever made, then I don't know of them."

Echidna had given copies of her Book of Wisdom to Beatrice and Roswaal. And both of their copies had, for certain, been destroyed a year ago.

Beatrice's Book of Wisdom had crumbled to ash along with the Forbidden Archive. And Ram had burned Roswaal's Book of Wisdom, rejecting the future recorded within it.

Anastasia: "But that's just what you've heard from the witch Echidna. Would her words really reflect the truth of the situation?"

Subaru: "There is that…"

Although unhappy that Anastasia had simply denied his assertion, Subaru himself also understood that the credibility of that statement wasn't high. However, he didn't think that Echidna had lied about that.

Presumably, only Subaru, who had spoken to the witch face to face, would have such a feeling.

Subaru: "——"

Anastasia: "Not trusting the person, but trusting her words. What a troublesome person for Natsuki-kun."

Subaru: "I myself think so, too… I obviously didn't intend to trust her, but I trusted her words, how contradictory."

Echidna’s every action had been a cleverly scripted, meant to coax Subaru into becoming her puppet.

However, that didn’t mean that everything had been a lie. Did Subaru believe that because he wanted to? Or was he still under the sway of that witch?

Anastasia: “For the moment, regardless of your personal feelings, we can come up with three possibilities about this Book of Wisdom. The first is that the witch is lying, and other copies were made.”

Subaru: “And the second is that the Witch Cult doesn’t know that the Book of Wisdom no longer exists, and is just messing with us, but the third one is?”

Anastasia: “Unless she lied, then there’s only one way the Book of Wisdom could still exist. That is, one of the copies wasn’t destroyed completely, and there are remains left.”

Subaru: “—Wha…”

That the Book of Wisdom may have left remains was something that Subaru hadn’t considered at all.

Anastasia shook a finger at the dumbfounded Subaru.

Anastasia: “Although it's not something clear-cut, the book was made by a witch, wasn’t it? Couldn’t we say that it would probably be difficult to destroy, and maybe even capable of regenerating itself?”

Subaru: “Indeed, I really can’t say that that’s impossible… but the real question is, who would have found and kept a restored one?”

Anastasia: “If you didn’t see with your own eyes that the book was burnt, and it was last seen somewhere easily accessible… maybe I’m overthinking, and the second hypothesis is far more likely, but, in either case, we won’t accept their proposal.”

Anastasia faced Subaru with a dainty hand placed over her mouth, citing various possibilities.

Who could have access to the remains of a Book of Wisdom…? The one in the archive was certainly completely gone, along with the entire Forbidden Archive itself.

But what about Roswaal’s book? Although he’d heard that Ram had burned it with magic... but, in this case, it should have turned to ash, and been buried under Emilia’s snowstorm.

If any remains were left, there was certainly someone who could have picked it up, but…

Subaru: “If anyone had brought it here, it would be someone from my faction, and they would all have told me. Therefore, I’m confident that the Book of Wisdom isn’t in city.”

Anastasia: “In that case, it doesn’t matter. I don’t need to devote so much concern to a book I know nothing about.”

Confident— although he'd said so, his feelings were perhaps closer to wanting to believe.

However, Anastasia did not dwell on this point, nor did she intend to dig deeper into the details of the Book of Wisdom. Rather,

Anastasia: "Then, the next demands are from Greed and Lust. Plain and simple, there's absolutely nothing worth discussing about their words.

Subaru: "Those two... no. Gluttony and Wrath are no different. So, what's going on? What did they say?"

Capella of Lust was undoubtedly the worst of the bunch.

And before he'd even met Capella, Regulus had injured his right foot and kidnapped Emilia, so Subaru bore a number of negative emotions for him. He was unpredictable, which worried Subaru.

Anastasia: "Here's to hopin' you won't get too angry about it."

Subaru: "I'll do my best, but we'll see."

Subaru's response to Anastasia's uneasy opening remark was immediate. With an expression of 'if you put it that way', Anastasia sighed.

Anastasia: "Lust's proposal isn't the same as the others, and it seems to simply be a mockery… Send Twenty People Who Love Each Other To The Central Waterway. —They Absolutely Won't Be Harmed. Somethin' like that."

Subaru: "That lying bitch! The hell does she mean, they won't be harmed!? Did she forget that she's someone who turns people into flies and dragons for fun!?"

As always, Subaru grew furious when confronted with Capella's evil deeds.

Twenty people who loved each other— just thinking about what that monster sung of such ugly love would do to them was terrifying.

Anastasia: "From I could tell, that archbishop doesn't consider changing someone's form to be 'harm'. 'I won't hurt anyone~' is more along the lines of her exact words… I almost felt like I could see her speak. Well, next would be Greed's demand…"

Subaru: "……"

Subaru choose to remain silent, angrily waiting for Anastasia's next sentence.

However, seeing that attitude, Anastasia seemed to find it difficult to continue, hesitating for an almost exaggeratedly long time.

Then,

Echidna: “The request of the man calling himself Greed was, I want To Hold A Wedding With My Silver-haired Bride. So, In Anything Related To The Preparation Of The Wedding, Don’t You Dare Hinder Me!”

Anastasia: “Echidna…”

Echidna: “Ana seemed to have a hard time saying it, so I do hope it was alright for me to move things along.”

In the stead of the hesitant Anastasia, the white fox guarding her neck spoke.

However, the understanding between the two was currently completely irrelevant to Subaru.

—Hold a wedding with a silver haired bride.

And who would be the bride of Regulus of Greed? The question didn’t need any consideration at all.

Subaru: “—STOP FUCKING AROUND!! BASTARD!!”

Therefore, Subaru’s volcanic eruption of anger was entirely reasonable. Anastasia couldn’t help but frown, and the white fox’s hair stood up on end. That was how direct and pure Subaru’s rage was.

In his mind, the image of a white-haired man took form.

The ignorant, supernaturally powerful man, had captured Emilia, and insisted that her only value lay in her face.

But that powerful man was nothing more than sick in the the head. What nonsense was he spouting this time?

Subaru: “Beatrice! And The Book of Wisdom! And Emilia! They say they want them? Hah! The Witch Cult isn’t getting their hands on a single one of them! I’ll show them for messing around with that bullshit proposal!”

Anastasia: “…I anticipated that reaction, but hearing ya say it so crisply like that really is reassurin’.”

Seeing Subaru’s passionate appearance, Anastasia smiled along as well.

Not due to a happy mood, but because that same passion was rising in her as well,

Anastasia: “Our artificial spirits… well, I have no intention of turning Echidna over to them. In addition, I refuse to allow the Witch Cult to intimidate me. I brought Crusch-san and Emilia into this city, and the Witch Cult dared to have them suffer so… I won’t be able to face either of them again if I don’t get us out of this!”

Echidna: “Oh, Ana, you’re so militant.”

Anastasia: “That’s precisely because I know how to level the playing field so we can claim victory. We absolutely can’t escape right now. Because we’re sure to crush that Witch Cult and force them to pay reparations.”

Calculating misfortunes, reputation, victories and losses.

Her clever words glossed it over slightly, but Anastasia’s spirit showed not the slightest intent of retreating from the battle.

Unlike Julius, Garfiel, Wilhelm, or even Ferris, she could be accused of only being able to speak with recklessness due to her lack of personal experience with the horrors of that sinful cult.

However, Subaru did no such thing.

In this case, there was absolutely no need to say anything that would needlessly damage their morale. And even more importantly, her presence, as vengeful as it seemed, was undoubtedly trustworthy.

Anastasia: “Everyone has to agree with that sentiment, at least slightly. Having said that, they’re still a few steps ahead, but who could accept this end! We’ll look for excuses for failure when in some other world!”

Subaru: “——”

Anastasia: “As long as we’re still alive, there's still a chance. And we absolutely cannot give up our lives! That would be far too tragic.”

A gentle smile rose on Anastacia's face as she declared her will of steel.

The pressure emanating from her petite form could have anyone forget that she was no warrior, who was experienced with exposure to the presence of the battlefield… no, that was wrong. She was, in fact, a warrior of hundreds upon thousands of battles.

Having chosen wits as her battlefield, she was a battle-hardened warrior.

Anastasia: “Whether it’s Crusch-san, or the people who have lost their human form, if we can get our hands on Lust, she should be able to undo what she did. And Natsuki-kun, your beloved princess was stolen away. This isn’t a pill you can swallow, right?”

Subaru: “Like you need to ask! Emilia is my bride! I’ll get rid of that bastard Gluttony, and take Rem’s memory back! I’ll find that long-winded Sirius and knock her teeth out! And I’ll drag Capella here and force her to apologize and change everyone back before beating her senseless!”

Echidna: “My, Ana and Natsuki-san are both treating the impossible like it’s easy. But, truly, that’s the thing I find most encouraging about you.”

Subaru echoed Anastasia’s forceful declaration, and, seeing their spirits, the arctic fox nodded with

satisfaction.

The first and second battles had ended in failure.

But the next battle was ahead of them. No one would die, and they would let no one die. In the end, they would survive, victorious. That would be their triumph.

Anastasia: “Ricardo is standing guard, and Joshua is looking for other lost children. He should be back shortly. And then, again, we’ll hold a full-fledged strategy meeting.”

Subaru: “We also need to reconfirm the situation throughout the shelters and near the other towers.”

Anastasia: “That won’t slip my mind. Hey, it looks like my mind is finally restarting.”

Since they had decided to do what they needed to, their hearts would be steeled with determination. That was the natural way.

While nodding at Anastasia’s words, Subaru turned his gaze to the outside of the City Hall. From his vantage point, all he could see were the lofty water towers.

There was no way to distinguish between east, west, north and south.

So, each one could hold Emilia, Rem's memory, a sworn enemy, or a loathsome monster.

-In this city, the battle to save those precious loved ones, continues.

Arc 5 - Chapter 39, "Knightliness and the Tardy Man"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-39-knightliness-and-the-tardy-man/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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After reaffirming their determination, Subaru and Anastasia made their way downstairs, toward the reception hall.

They had been conversing on the the third out of five floors, which seemed to normally function as a conference room.

Anastasia: “Since the fifth floor was completely destroyed by the dragon, the fourth floor is technically the top floor now. All of [Lust]’s victims are restin’ there.”

Subaru: “… what happened to the magic radio when the fifth floor burned down?”

Anastasia: “No worries, it’s been dismantled and put in safekeeping. The magical instrument itself is just in the shape of a large metal box, so it’s easy ta move. It seems that the sound is gathered into the box itself and then amplified through the city.”

An antenna… or perhaps a loudspeaker?

Metal boxes or loudspeaker, whatever the case, the magic device had been recovered safely, along with the hostages. Those were perhaps the only pieces of good news Subaru had heard upon waking.

The magic radio would almost certainly prove useful later, and the knowledge the the hostages were safe gave an immense boost to morale.

Subaru: “Did you say that Capella’s victims are gathered on the fourth floor?”

Anastasia: “Even though they’re all flies or a dragon, their minds are still human, so they understand what we’re sayin’ and follow directions… although I can’t really say if that’s actually a good thing.”

Subaru: “……”

Subaru also couldn’t decide whether or not he should be glad the the transformed people had retained their human consciousness.

To be aware of being an entirely different creature, a worm, no less, must have come with a saddening, disorienting sense of loss.

However, even losing their flesh, they could still survive in another state. Was this also called a loss of self? This answer, presumably, could only be known by those who had experienced it.

Anastasia: “They can also move normally. Thankfully, there haven’t been any suicide attempts yet. Things happened too abruptly, and most people haven’t really had a chance ta react yet… In short, if we can fix everythin’ before the dust settles, things should turn out just fine.”

Subaru: “Suicide…?”

Anastasia: “Don’t ya think that it’s a concern?”

Subaru: “——”

That was a question Subaru couldn’t afford to answer rashly.

Compared to Subaru, Anastasia seems to be be taking the twisted situation fairly well.

Anastasia: “As long as there’s life, there’s hope, but without a will to live, that hope diminishes. Just havin’ a breathin’ body isn’t enough. It’s the will to live that we can’t afford to lose.”

Although he couldn’t see Anastasia’s face, he heard the conviction in her voice as she strode forward.

Subaru wholeheartedly agreed with her perseverance in regard to life and death. Living was necessary.

And as long as there was life, there was a chance to resist. To that end…

Julius: “Anastasia-sama.”

As Subaru and Anastasia made their way downstairs, the first to notice their reappearance was Julius, who called the name of his master.

Originally, Subaru had barely given the first floor's reception hall a passing glance. Even so, upon sight, the traces of a valiant struggle were obvious.

Overturned tables and chairs, walls scored with gouges and scorched with magic, omnipresent splatters of blood that had been hurriedly wiped away.

Although Julius had been so regretful of Gluttony's escape, he had evidently not wavered for a second during their battle.

Julius: "How was your discussion with Subaru?"

Anastasia: "It was lil' bit lengthy, but it came ta a smooth conclusion. Just like us, Natsuki-kun is very determined."

Anastasia nodded in response to Julius's inquiries. After a brief moment of lightheartedness, she cast her gaze in another direction.

Across from the stairs from which Subaru had descended, Ricardo's burly form appeared in front of the lobby's entrance. He recalled that Anastasia had mentioned that Ricardo was outside, looking for survivors.

Anastasia: "Ricardo, welcome back. How's the situation?"

Ricardo: "Miss, you look really spirited… it's generally poor, and is still worsening with time. Those bastards are experienced at creating trouble."

Ricardo frowned with an annoyed sigh at the results of his inspection.

While rubbing his beast head, he gestured a series of instructions to various members of the [Iron Fang]. A few of the left to stand guard, while others went to rest further down the hall.

Subaru: "The witch teaches those guys what's the trouble? No, I do not think it's any more troublesome than that ... is that anything else?"

Garfiel: "Th' broadcast, Captain. That scummy cult gave a discouragin' broadcast."

Garfiel, coming down of the stairs, answered Subaru's puzzled question.

As he crunched down with his fangs in frustration, Subaru prompted someone to elaborate.

Subaru: "The broadcast… of their requests? Did they say anything else?"

Julius: "It was nothing too exaggerated, they spread the news that they'd crushed the force trying to retake the City Hall. But the way that Archbishop of [Lust] phrased it was poisonous indeed."

Ricardo: "Thanks to her, the people in the many shelters I visited had almost no fighting spirit left to

regain their city with. It’s difficult to estimate how much they can recover.”

Julius closed his eyes, and Ricardo was wrinkled his nose.

After hearing their answer, Subaru immediately understood what the Witch Cult had wanted.

Earlier, before their successful takeover of the City Hall, Capella had made the broadcast with a list of demands.

The ordinary citizens, who had no capacity for combat, were completely discouraged by what they had thought to be a loss. And those who could fight would understand the harsher implications.

They would know that any attempt to retake the City Hall would have meant a full scale invasion, which made that supposed failure all the more disheartening.

In other words, Capella's broadcast was an attempt to defang any mounting resistance in the other shelters.

Ricardo: “Thanks to the records in the city hall, I found all the shelters in the city, and visited the nearby ones one by one, but…”

Ricardo spread his hands, confirming Subaru’s fears.

The problem resided in the hearts of the people. Rather than being a failure to motivate them on Ricardo’s part, the blame could only be placed on the Witch Cult, which was rancorous to the point of being impressive.

Anastasia: “Without determination, we won’t have courage. The next fight will be dangerous indeed…”

In contrast to Subaru’s fury, Anastasia was quietly contemplative.

Hearing her soft voice, Subaru raised his head. Anastasia turned to him with an “Isn’t that right?”.

Anastasia: “‘Even if we fight, we have no chance of winning.’ —Puttin’ this thought into everyone’s mind encourages them ta give up without a fight. What do ya think’ll happen?”

Subaru: “They’ll give up in anguished despair… is that the answer you want from me?”

Anastasia: “If they just wanna hug their knees and cry, that’d be almost childishly endearin’, don’t ya think? But that won’t be the case. They won’t have the option of fightin’, but their will ta live won’t vanish. So, what’s left?”

Subaru: “… So you’re saying that…”

Fundamentally, Subaru was pretty sure he understood what she was getting at.

However, the notion that the Witch Cult had deliberately attempted to create this situation brought with it an unspeakable amount of disgust.

As if to encourage the tremor growing within Subaru, Anastasia clapped her hands together. And said…

Anastasia: “The answer to their salvation has already been given, in the form of a request, no less. The most reasonable course of action in such a desperate situation is, of course, ta follow the request. So, the [Book of Wisdom] and the contractors of the [artificial spirits] won’t be safe, will they? And even the [couples who love each other] might become sacrifices.”

Subaru: “But not everyone would go to those extremes, right!?”

Anastasia: “Certainly not. There are some who would refuse to trade their survival for the lives of others, and would instead seek a way to flee the city. No matter what, there’ll be plenty of panic, and we won’t be able to get anything done in the confusion.”

Once the contagion of panic spread, with a single misstep, the already precarious situation would entirely collapse. It hurt to imagine the city in that state, where the Witch Cult had taken full control through fear. As if they were the puppet-masters, pulling strings as they willed.

Subaru: “So… could we somehow visit everyone and motivate them?”

Anastasia: “That’s not very realistic, is it?”

Subaru: “Then this situation becomes too damn pessimistic!”

Panic came naturally when everyone was uneasy.

And the only way to fight this inevitable panic was to provide hope.

Subaru: “‘We’re preparing on mounting a counteroffensive’ —Saying even that much would give the little bit of hope needed to stave off much of the panic, wouldn’t it?”

Anastasia: “I think that we should take the path of minimum sacrifice. Every resource we spend poorly gives the other side yet another advantage.”

Subaru: “Wait, wait, Anastasia-san. That doesn’t sound like what I have in mind.”

Anastasia’s remark stung, and Subaru couldn’t help but scowl, prompting a tired sigh from her.

Anastasia: “Natsuki-kun’s ideal of refusin’ to sacrifice anyone— although admirable, it’s not realistic in the slightest. Our forces have taken too much damage in the openin’ stages of the battle, and we won’t be able ta pull through without taking some losses. Isn’t that the obvious truth?”

Subaru: “The first two times… that was indeed the case. But this time, we can’t just take losses as they come… in fact, that’s exactly what we’re trying to avoid!”

Anastasia: “If we were about to launch one final, victorious strike, I’d agree with ya. But it’s not possible in our situation. Think of it like naval warfare. Of course we’ll help those brave soldiers who swim from their sunken ship to our still sturdy one… but it wouldn’t be reasonable for us ta try and rescue those who just give up and choose to drown.”

Subaru: “——! But even if we win, that’s—!”

Anastasia: “And if we lose, all of us drown! If you don’t care about winning or losing, then are you prepared die? Or do you want to live!? Natsuki-kun, your philosophy of taking no losses is really too naive!”

Anastasia’s building anger only served to fan the flames of Subaru’s own rage.

Raising a warning arm, Julius stopped Subaru from approaching. However, his careful gaze was trained not on Subaru, but on Anastasia, almost as if he were standing on Subaru’s side. He sighed lightly and closed his eyes.

Julius: “Anastasia-sama, I understand your feelings, but I must also agree with Subaru. Preventing Anastasia-sama’s worries is indeed impossible. But accepting the sacrifices of innocents certainly pains you as well. And damaging our morale… that is exactly the Witch Cult’s plan.”

Subaru: “J-Julius!”

Julius’s support of Subaru, even at the expense of defying his own master, tempered Subaru’s anger with surprise, and he even felt a surge of renewed confidence.

If Julius, paragon of righteousness, the renowned Knight of Knights, shared Subaru’s opinion, then Subaru himself couldn’t have been wrong.

However, Anastasia only turned to Julius, caressing her scarf.

Anastasia: “Do you think I enjoy talkin’ so loosely about takin’ losses? I don’t even know for a fact that the other shelters will fall to chaos! Ultimately, it’s just a possibility. Even so, there’s no way we can deal with every troublesome possibility one by one!”

Julius: “But…”

Anastasia: “Ya aren’t little kid anymore, so you understand, don’t ya? With how limited our resources are, the only way to handle the Witch Cut effectively is to put everything into offense. And even then, there’s only so much we can do. If we spread ourselves too thin, there’s no way we can maximize our scope of influence.”

Anastasia’s words must have sounded cold and relentless to Julius, who was biting his lip resentfully, like a scolded child. At the same time, they also addressed Subaru, who was the one who had originally proposed the idea.

Of course, Subaru understood Anastasia's perspective perfectly. The weight of even one life was such a heavy burden.

To save even one person was endlessly difficult. And the more people that needed to be saved, the more difficult it would become to save them all. Saving as many people as Subaru wanted to was nigh impossible.

Of course, even children could draw this conclusion.

The more apples a child's tiny, fragile hands wanted to hold, the more swiftly the child's strength would give out. And, eventually, the child would be left with nothing.

Anastasia: "In order to win, we need to compromise as adults, instead of railin' on like spoiled children. As a knight, shouldn't ya be able ta see the difference?"

Julius: "——"

Julius closed his eyes, as if affirming Anastasia's statement.

As he lowered his head, Subaru could see that his fists were clenched behind his back. Even so, it was clear that Julius was unwilling to object further.

However,

Subaru: "Giving up here means being unworthy of being called a knight."

Anastasia: "… Hey, Natsuki-kun, have ya been listening at all? Aren't ya acting just the way ya did in the capitol back then? Through whatever twists and turns, you've become a knight too, ya know."

Subaru: "Yes, I'm also a knight now. And because I'm a knight, I'll never give in!"

The more apples you held, the more likely they were to topple to the floor.

But Subaru and Julius were knights, and, rather than holding apples, they were holding something far more precious.

Rather than holding fruits that could be dropped without consequence, they held in their hands lives; lives which screamed and sobbed and mattered.

Subaru: "This is something that's mattered to me from the very beginning. I still act at the mercy of that ideal. The morals of this world haven't affected me that much yet!"

Anastasia: "You're sayin' somethin' mysterious again… But the fact of the matter is, during the battle against the White Whale, and the battle with the Witch Cult afterward… people died. As long as there's a struggle, casualties are inevitable. Natsuki-kun, having seen this with your own eyes, do ya really mean what ya say?"

Subaru: “Don’t underestimate those people, Anastasia. Their deaths were tragic, but they were soldiers who sacrificed themselves in battle. They understood what they were doing. These innocent people people who are about to be sacrificed, they don’t have that awareness. That’s the fundamental difference!”

He understood that this notion was unreasonable, and that it might be completely illogical.

However, this was what Subaru believed. That awareness was what mattered to him in a life or death situation.

Subaru: “The citizens of this city are just civilians. There was never any obligation for them to take up a soldier’s awareness. The Witch Cult arbitrarily forced them into a battlefield. Leaving them behind because of that is wrong.”

Anastasia: “Even if it’s wrong, they were arbitrarily drawn into a battlefield. Awareness is being forced upon them. They expect to be attacked, don’t they? And they have to fight for themselves, just as we do.”

Subaru: “But it’s neither fair nor reasonable for unprepared defenders to be attacked by prepared attackers. But that’s what knights are for. It’s their duty to protect those who aren’t prepared to protect themselves. That’s the knight I idealize. That’s the dashing knight I pretended to be, in front of those defenseless village kids.”

Having accepting the accolades of a knight, Subaru found himself able to live his dream. It was only natural that he’d think in this way.

These ideals came from the village children, who looked at him with admiration shining in their eyes whenever Subaru said something valiant and dashing. Subaru wanted to do his best for them.

Of course, it helped that Emilia, when she listened in, would look at his with those same bright, shining eyes.

Subaru: “As Emilia’s knight, I’ll fight for Emilia, but that doesn’t mean that no one but Emilia matters. Anastasia-san, as your knight, Julius fights, above all, for you. But he doesn’t stop there. That’s the nature of a knight; they’d stop at nothing to look more dashing and valiant.”

Anastasia: “——”

Subaru: “Julius especially. He could be on the verge of death and still be putting on that cool act of his, because this asshole is the [Knight of Knights]. In other words, he wants to look way cooler than anyone else.”

As Anastasia gaped at him, Subaru gestured toward Julius with his thumb, who promptly fell into an embarrassed, awkward silence.

A speechless Anastasia and a stunned Julius were so rarely seen that Subaru could help but grin.

Subaru: “Defeating the bad guys is a simple enough goal. But deciding to live with the guilt of making sacrifices is ridiculous. Everyone must be saved, every villain must be defeated. Even if you don’t succeed, you have to set out with that idea, right?”

Losing like that bore the same results as being resigned to loss from the beginning, but there was a vital difference in how that loss would affect you.

Of course, it would be easy to interpret that as selfishness, but…

???: “— To live for one’s own ego is the best way of living. I completely agree with you, bro.”

Subaru: “——!”

As Subaru elaborated upon his naïve ideals, a new voice inserted itself into the scene.

Everyone spun to face the entrance of the lobby. Having caught everyone’s attention, the man there looked back and forth, seeming unhappy.

???: “Hey, looking at me with such enthusiasm is a little off putting. I know that my seductiveness isn’t at its prime, so I don’t know how well I’d meet all your expectations.”

Subaru: “—— Al?”

Dressed in dark helmet, speaking with lighthearted jests and no trace of hostility; this man was one of Subaru’s acquaintances who had disappeared after leaving the hotel that morning— Al.

He glanced back and forth at the people crowding the room again.

Al: “Where are all the familiar faces? Weren’t there more this morning?”

Subaru: “They’re upstairs with Crusch-san. Why are you here?”

Al: “Well, when the commotion started, I decided to turn ass and find a place to hide for a bit. When things started settling down, I took a peek outside, and heard the broadcast about the City Hall. My first thought was that you were probably involved, and, if not, I’d at least be able to find someone who knows what’s happening.”

Although he spoke through the tinny filter of his helmet with his usual absurd optimism, everyone felt more than a little displeased at his answer.

After all, he was one of the few people who was capable of fighting, yet he chose to prioritize his own safety.

Al: “C’mon, don’t look at me like that. I feel a little bad, but can you really say missing that last fight completely my fault? Besides, I don’t think the results would have changed based on my presence alone.

Garfiel: “Hey, captain, ‘s this guy tryin’ t’ provoke us?”

Al’s casual demeanor had infuriated Garfiel from the very beginning.

Thinking back on it, Al and Garfiel had never actually met. When Priscilla had crashed the nice breakfast at the hotel, Garfiel had been absent.

From his point of view, Al was a strange and potentially dangerous man.

Subaru: “Wait, wait, Garfiel, this guy’s involved in the Royal Election. He’s Al, Priscilla’s knight, although he hasn’t officially met you yet. I don’t know if you know, but all five candidates are in the city right now.”

Al: “Technically I’m just the princess’s subordinate, and not actually a knight. I could be so excessively proper. Oh, by the way, I don’t mean anything rude about you, bro.”

Although Subaru had stopped Garfiel from overreacting, Al responded to his introduction with a note of irony. His attitude had Garfiel gnash his fangs together in rage again.

Anastasia: “Alright, enough, enough! Shush! You’re all being seriously too annoyin’.”

With a loud clap, she diffused the swiftly escalating tension.

Her round eyes fixed themselves on Al.

Anastasia: “Aren’t ya just like your master, appearin’ so suddenly and makin’ a mess or the atmosphere? How uncouth. Causin’ a fight’ll rub people the wrong way, so how about you drop it for now?”

Al: “Wow, you’re really honest. Unfortunately, this is just the way I am. Everyone says that I tick people off and disrupt their rhythms. Well, it works as a survival technique.”

Al stuck a finger into the gap between his head and his helmet, scratching his neck sheepishly. Anastasia turned to Subaru with a small sigh.

Anastasia: “Although things seem to have been complicated somewhat, my policy won’t change. If the path to victory requires sacrifices, then I’ll make them. If Natsuki-kun refuses ta take any losses, then work hard ta think of a plan. I’d also like ta avoid any sacrifices if at all possible.”

Subaru: “Then, you won’t stop me from visiting all the other shelters?”

Anastasia: “… If you can do it on your own time, then go for it. Anyway, we do need more combat power. If you find anyone at all who can fight, try to recruit them to our side.”

Although she still disagreed, Anastasia still withdrew her earlier rejection of Subaru’s idea. Convincing her to change her mind entirely would have been impossible; as such, Subaru would not complain about the leeway he’d been granted.

Anastasia: “Take the conversation mirror. For the time bein’, let’s set your time limit ta six hours. I’ll contact ya if we need ya back. Be careful, and try your best not ta mess anythin’ up.”

Subaru: “Time limit… right, I haven’t asked yet. What time is it?”

Julius: “It’s still the same day, at about midnight— we’ll set out nine hours from now.”

This time, Julius was the one to supply the information.

If they wanted to hold a conference at 6 o'clock, then Subaru only had around three hours to sway Anastasia to his side.

On top of that, before this time limit, he also needed to find a way to defeat Witch Cult and save the city… but no, even that wasn’t enough.

He also needed to rescue Emilia and retrieve Rem’s memories from [Gluttony], and to restore those who had been mutated by [Lust]. Only by achieving all of these goals could he say that they’d claimed a complete victory.

Subaru: “There is not much time left, do you have a map of where the shelters are?”

Anastasia: “Yup, we’ve got several. Here’s a map of where all Ricardo’s boys from the [Iron Fang] went, and where’re they’re goin’ now.”

She give him Ricardo’s map, showed the the [Iron Fang] had set out for the farthest shelters. Conveniently, this left the nearby shelters to Subaru, who had to travel by foot.

It was almost as if someone had set this situation up.

Julius: “Subaru, I’ll come with you.”

Subaru: “Julius? No, you shouldn’t. You’d be a huge help, but we’d be in trouble if we didn’t leave enough fighters in the City Hall.”

Ricardo was stationed to patrol outside, and Subaru intended to take Garfiel with him as well. Although Wilhelm was upstairs, giving him the responsibility of defending the entire City Hall would be too heavy a burden.

And even if that weren’t the case, the Crusch camp was currently ensconced in gloom. Upon hearing Subaru’s reply, Julius nodded, albeit reluctantly.

He seemed to be far less calm than usual, and his impulsiveness was a rare sight indeed. Subaru gave his shoulder a light pat, then tapped his chin and gestured to Garfiel.

Subaru: “Garfiel, come with me. We’ll go visit the other shelters and look for people who can fight. We have to find a way to end this prolonged restlessness.”

Garfiel: "… right, got it. Leave it t' my amazin' self."

Although Garfiel's response to Subaru's request came a beat late, he agreed in the end. With that, Subaru examined the map in his hand, looking for shelters near the City Hall.

His top priority was securing combat power —in that case, locating Reinhard would be his best course of action.

Al: "Maybe go to the shelter near the hotel first? I don't think the princess would have wandered far from there."

Subaru: "In that case, if we follow this path… wait a second."

Subaru halted, his finger still lingering on the map. As Al, who had inserted his own plans into Subaru's quite frankly, tilted his head inquisitively, Subaru asked,

Subaru: "You're… coming with me too?"

Al: "Yep. After all, going alone would be really troublesome, and not finding the princess would also be really troublesome. Since you already know so much, I'll probably have the best chance if I go with you. In a mess like this, not finding the princess would be kinda terrifying."

Subaru: "… What a picture perfect master-servant relationship."

Although the situation gave him kind of an odd feeling, that thankfully left Subaru with more company. Garfiel, on the other hand, pricked with explicit disgust when he heard that Al would accompany them. After all, at this critical juncture, he'd certainly keep one eye open around unfamiliar people.

Anyway, although Al was somewhat annoying, he did seem to genuinely want to find Priscilla.

Subaru: "Speaking of Priscilla, I last saw her in the park on First Street fifteen minutes before the attacks happened. If she didn't leave, she should be in a shelter near there."

Al: "Really? That's super helpful info, bro. Then let's start from there."

Delighted at this news, Al pounded Subaru back several times.

Then Subaru, with a pleased Al and an incensed Garfiel in tow, left the City Hall for the nearby shelters.

And, seeing them off was—

Echidna: "Ouch, you were totally treated like the bad guy there, weren't you?"

Anastasia: "Quiet, ya scarf fox. It's not like I haven't worked it out already. If Natsuki-kun can still speak with such conviction when he returns, then he's really bad at learnin'."

Anastasia spoke with a slightly helpless expression, and the scarf rustled slightly on her neck. And no one else noticed this short conversation.

Arc 5 - Chapter 4, "On The Road"

by admin - Wednesday, November 28, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/28/arc-5-chapter-4-on-the-road/

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http://ncode.syosetu.com/N2267BE/216

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

Credit for the first five chapters document belongs to Summary Anon, who left behind only the following contact information:

ankaa.burner@gmail.com https://mega.nz/#F!VNdzDYYK!nK9fNU3LeprlZSbRAnlsRg

Credit for the rest is to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

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It takes them three days before they set out for Pristella.

Roswaal: ?I respect Emilia-sama's decision, aaaaaaand there's nothing urgent for her to do here, sooooo I'm amenable to it. Though it iiiiiiiiis worrying that their intentions are uuuuuuunreadable.?

The Meeting of the Western Lords—a conference between Margrave Roswaal and the other lords under that banner—will be taking place in the mansion of the most neutral lord among them. The lords are generally compliant to Roswaal's beat, but some definitely do voice objection and unease about his support for Emilia.

Most of the lords are copacetic to Roswaal's policy of demihuman favouritism, or really, equality for demihumans, but half-elves are not commonly regarded as demihuman. Over the past year, they have succeeded in getting some lords to superficially support her through discussions and deals. This

conference is, in part, to establish a podium for her to speak with the lords who still stubbornly refuse her. Roswaal is leaving the mansion empty to set up that groundwork.

Emilia: ?I'm sorry. I honestly wanted to attend the meeting too, but...?

Roswaal: ?Iiiiiiiiit would backfire. The purpose of this meeting is so that you may speak with them later, meaning that it would be foul play to reveal you at this stage. ..Hooooooowever, if you could calm the confusion and silence the rebelling lords with some masterful piece of oration, that wooooooould be nice.?

Emilia: ?...I don't think I can manage that yet. Okay. I'll behave.?

Emilia purses her lips and casts her gaze down in frustration. Roswaal nods at her, satisfied. Subaru does want to object to Roswaal's somewhat sarcastic tone, but at least it means the guy is speaking with her more sincerely. It's infinitely better than last year, when Roswaal blatantly kept Emilia the Accessory away from the political issues—or so Emilia divulged to Subaru after he complained about it.

Roswaal makes a far more dependable supporter now that he's being proactive. But since his motives are questionable, it's only half as beneficial as it initially seems.

Subaru: ?Assuming that Petra's definitely going to the meeting... who's left in the mansion??

Roswaal: ?Anne-Rose and her associates wiiiiiiill be attending. I doubt there will be any issues if Clind-kun is present, coooooonsidering his favouritism for Petra. I was intending to leave Frederica here, since she gets along poorly with him... what about you, Ram??

Ram: ?I shall accompany you as you desire, Roswaal-sama.?

Subaru: ?You say 'as you desire' but it's totally your desires talking...?

Ram is still an advocate for Roswaal, but is less hesitant to insist upon her own desires now. Roswaal seems to be accepting it without thinking it strange. Their relationship of one-sided dependency looks to have changed. The dependant atmosphere around them is gone, and it feels like they actually understand each other now. Though it's unclear whether it's beneficial to have someone around who empathises with Roswaal.

Ram: ?What are you staring at. Say anything thoughtless and I'll mash your eyes to paste, Barusu.?

Subaru: ?Sister, in your mind, just how incessant am I exactly??
Ram: ?...?

Ram makes an extremely complicated expression. It's not because it's a tricky question. It's just the expression she makes whenever Subaru calls her 'Sister'. She doesn't dislike it, but it doesn't feel legitimate. Since she has yet to recover her memories of Rem, those years of being worshipped by her little sister are still lost to the void.

Roswaal: ?It would worry me were it only Emilia-sama and yourself leaving, buuuuuuut I'm sure that you'll be fine with Garfiel and Otto-kun accompanying you. Otto-kun will keep you from bumbling into any horrendously awful agreements, and Garfiel resolves the worst of problems by pulverising them while you flee.?

Emilia: ?But I think that'd cause sooo many problems too... I'll do my best to keep it from coming to that.?

Subaru: ?Leave pressuring them to me, Emilia-tan. I'll be right on them whether it's Anastasia-san or Julius. There's this chatty witch I know who's taught me all about people dodging important topics in conversation.?

Emilia: ?I'm not sure if that's something to brag about...?

Subaru shoots Emilia a thumbs up and grins, teeth sparkling. Naturally, Emilia knows that Subaru is joking around to relax her. They have build enough trust over the last year for that much understanding, at least.

Roswaal: ?Nooooooooooow, Beatrice. I can trust that yooooooooou'll look after them??

Beatrice: ?Of course, in fact. You can't rest easy about any of these people were Betty not with them, I suppose.?

Beatrice's pigtails bob as she puffs out her chest. Her adorable attitude puts a smile on everyone's face. Though she herself just looks displeased.

—Regardless, with this conversation over, they determine to leave for Pristella.

Joshua: ?Ask for the Seasylph Lodge once you arrive. That is where Anastasia-sama awaits you.?

Mimi: ?Don't keep her waiting!?

On that note, Anastasia's subordinates leave the Roswaal Manor. They leave for Pristella first to tell Anastasia that the invitation has been accepted.

Garfiel: ?Yeh, take care.?

Mimi: ?You take care too, Garf! I'm gonna be super on edge waiting, so you better come!?

Garfiel: ?Hell about you's on edge. But I get ya. These guys ain't got a hope without my amazin' self. We'll settle this there. Get yer neck ready fer th'rope.?

Mimi: ?Huh? Okay! I'll get it super ready!?

This cute little exchange between Mimi and Garfiel was particularly notable. Garfiel had been so wary of the two during their stay, but going by Mimi's attitude, feels like his fears were misplaced. Or rather, feels

like Mimi is extremely affectionate when making friends. She started calling him 'Garf' out of nowhere, so perhaps Anastasia's invitation really isn't hostile.

Joshua: ?You may have won Mimi over, but I... I myself shall not yield so easily.?

Says Joshua, trying to stay stoic while following his cheerful bodyguard. Mimi keeps a tight grip on his arm, yanking him down and forward as she bounds ahead. His expression is dead serious during all of this, which is kind of comical. But even Subaru has fostered enough kindness over this year to not inform him of the fact.

Emilia: ?Joshua-kun, will you be okay? You have such a lovely outfit, but the sleeve's seconds from coming off...?

Joshua: ?P-Please don't worry. There's no need for concern!?

While Subaru can understand the poor boy's feelings, the attending angel cannot. Emilia speaks with sincere concern for Joshua, who musn't raise his voice and instead tries to pry Mimi off, looking miserable. But Mimi is expectedly stronger than Joshua and his efforts come to nothing.

Joshua: ?My brother may call you his friend, but I believe he is being far too kind. Which is one of his virtues. I believe it my job as his younger brother to compensate for that, so you best not expect any mercy from the Juukulius family.?

Subaru: ?What, you already stopped with the 'I myself' thing??

Joshua: ?P-Please pay attention to what I'm saying! Trying to make a fool of me! Not a very pleasant man, are you!?

Subaru: ?I'm more worried about you and how you're forgetting your place as your master's servant. If you deride people in public, it'd probably wind up as a black mark on the Juukulius family.?

Joshua: ?—!?

Joshua's face pales, but Subaru isn't trying just to criticize him. And Subaru's at far higher risk for insulting people in public anyway. Not that Joshua would know that, and Natsuki Subaru being Natsuki Subaru has reason not to tell him.

Emilia: ?Subaru, stop bullying younger kids. I'm so sorry, Joshua-kun. Subaru's... he can be like that.?

Joshua: ?—. N-no... I was truly being impolite. I apologize.?

Subaru: ?Just 'I'? Ow! Ow, that hurts, Emilia-tan!?

Subaru immediately starts criticizing Joshua again, when Emilia grabs his ear and yanks it. Joshua sees tears rise in Subaru's eyes, and, satisfied, decides to leave the conversation there.

With a deep breath, Joshua files into his dragon carriage. But since ligers are pulling the vehicle rather than dragons it's really a dog carriage, which he files into. Perhaps dog races are a thing here?

Subaru: ?Might be worth it to introduce some forms of entertainment, like horse racing and stuff...?

Subaru's ideas that use his Unique Knowledge From The 21st Century never graduate from his imagination. But maybe he should more seriously consider utilizing his knowledge. First he needs to judge what the pros and cons of popularizing horse racing would be, and,

Emilia: ?What's up, Subaru. You look like you're thinking of something sooo devious.?

Subaru: ?Got a rare flood of ideas from my Unique Knowledge From The 21st Century. Like a burst of Subaruisms.?

Emilia: ?Oh, you thought of another new topping? I liked the mayonnaise, and I liked the tartar sauce too.?

Subaru: ?This time I'm thinking unique in a way that the populace would never conceive.?

Incidentally the Roswaal Mansion carries a stockpile of tartar sauce, just like it does mayonnaise. Basically everyone here likes it, but it doesn't entirely satisfy Subaru.
While all this chitchat is going on, Joshua and Mimi get ready to leave and their carriage begins to move. They aren't sitting on the coachman's seat to drive, Mimi just mounts one of the two ligers and controls their course directly. Her white robe flutters as she smiles cheerfully.

Mimi: ?Okay! See you two and Garf later!?

They pleasantly see Mimi off, and wave goodbye to a wary Joshua through the window too. Two days after seeing them off, Subaru and the others leave for Pristella.

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Otto: ?It will take us over ten days to get there, even if we hurry. We have no real need to hurry, either, so let's relax and take our time.?

Nobody has any objection to Otto's plan. He is the one most accustomed to traveling among them, and he probably holds the median value in their group for physical resilience. If they travel at a pace that puts no strain on him, then everyone should enjoy a safe journey.

Otto: ?Considering the carriage's load, we will have Frufoo and Patrasche-chan pull the carriage. And since we plan not to camp anywhere, we should be fine with only the bare minimum of emergency supplies.?

Garfiel: ?'S no good fer th'body t'just sit there in a carriage th'whole time, Otto.?

Otto: ?If that's what you think, you're always free to leave the carriage and run.?

Garfiel: ?Yup, that's what'll do.?

Emilia: ?That's what you'll do??

With this little scene where Garfiel and Otto's usual banter shocks Emilia, the journey to Pristella begins.

But, having said that, the journey itself proceeds without issue. They have some trouble when they cross borders into non-Mathers territory, or when passing through other lords' gates, but the issue is more or less resolved by flashing the Mathers family crest or showing Emilia's presence. This itself is liable to stir up trouble too, but they come across no one plotting anything nefarious because of this journey.

When wild dogs or witchbeasts appear on the road, foolishly trying to attack the carriage,

Garfiel: ?Perfect. Been wantin' t'smack some critters around.?

Garfiel violently tears through the group, scaring away the instigating animals. His perfect work as a bodyguard actually makes the poor witchbeasts sympathetic. But even terrifying Garfiel has to kill downtime by chewing on a knife he brought, giving him a trace of gap moe. Also it's always unnerving to see him chew the hard steel to bits.

Beatrice: ?Mm. This dragon isn't bad, in fact. I'll concede that much, I suppose.?

Says Beatrice, seated next to Subaru, who holds the reigns. Perhaps it's a surprise, but Otto isn't the only one tasked with driving. It took a year of trying, and a dragon that knows Subaru's idiosyncrasies, but he can drive a carriage now. Is one thing you could say, but this is Patrasche and Otto's dragon Frufoo. Though, the only other dragons that the Roswaal Mansion keeps are Rascal and Peter. Of course Subaru's familiar enough with them to name them.

Subaru: ?How about less condescension, and more helping me with the reigns? Patrasche is abounding in maternal spirit, I'm sure she'll be nice to you too, Beako.?

Beatrice: ?I'd rather not, in fact. Actually, that dragon is quite plainly glaring at me, I suppose. She doesn't consider me a friend, in fact. What are these horrendous lies about maternal spirit, I suppose.?

Subaru: ?Hey, there'll be no badmouthing Patrasche. I'll never let anyone insult Emilia-tan, Rem, you, or Patrasche.?

Beatrice: ?You include me in your list, but still won't let me, I suppose??

Subaru: ?When it's someone on the list, they're being naughty!?

Beatrice tries to escape, but it's impossible on the narrow driver's platform. Subaru grabs her by the scruff of the neck and draws her near, setting her on his lap as she struggles. He attempts to sentence her to tickle torture, when a strand of her hair brushes across his nose, making him sneeze dramatically—and the carriage swerves.

Otto: ?Natsuki-san! Don't let them do anything odd! If they exit the Windbreaker Blessing, we're all going to have a terrible time with the motion sickness!?

Subaru: ?Sorry! Beako was being so much fun that I just...?

Beatrice: ?Don't you try to make this Betty's fault, in fact! Subaru just went and... stop tickling me, I suppose! Sto–pffweheehee!?

Otto sighs at the two as they play. Emilia giggles,

Emilia: ?They really get along so well. Not too long ago, I never would've imagined that Subaru and Beatrice would be so close.?

Otto: ?Personally, I can't believe that they were ever apart. It's almost sickly how sweet Beatrice- chan is and how doting Natsuki-san is.?

Emilia smiles solemnly, looking something like a mother or older sister to Otto's eyes. But Otto isn't tasteless enough to point it out, or to encourage Subaru's antics.

Otto: ?We'll leave them to their merriment while we discuss something more important. That is, we will discuss the goals of Anastasia's faction, and how we will respond to them.?

Emilia: ?They're not trying to just put us in their debt.?

Otto: ?The first of the three years in the selection has passed, making this the final opportunity to establish definite groundwork. Once we establish our footing here, we will secure our support base at the Meeting of the Western Lords. If you ignore that the other factions had that issue resolved from the beginning, we should be about equal to them in our progress.?

Emilia: ?Where is Anastasia sitting right now??

Emilia has been estranged from the exact movements of the other factions for a while. Because they needed to train Emilia from scratch on how to be a politician, and let her acquire the skills she needs, rather than panic her with unneeded information. Roswaal and Otto, the internal affairs duo, understood that as her reasoning for focusing her attention elsewhere, and also understand that it ought to be safe to remove some of those restrictions on this journey.

So Otto nods to Emilia and begins mentally organizing the facts.

Otto: ?First we will discuss the support for the candidates as of the present. Initially, Duchess Crusch Karsten and Anastasia Hoshin were generally understood as the sure winner and the competition. The other three factions, including yours... if you'd allow me to be blunt, they're somewhat seen as space-fillers.?

Emilia: ?...Mm, I can't deny that. But from what you're saying...?

Otto: ?Exactly. Common opinion has changed over this last year. Because the other three factions, starting with yours, have made notable achievements.?

The most conspicuous achievements from the Emilia Faction, predictably, are the defeat of Sloth and the White Whale. Crusch's Faction was the one leading the offensive against the Whale, but Crusch herself has publicly stated the greatness of Sir Natsuki Subaru's contribution to the effort. Though the other factions were helping, Subaru headed the Sloth offensive. Both achievements instantly drew public attention to the previously-disregarded Emilia. Emilia also stands out negatively due to her heritage. For better or for worse, Emilia is widely acknowledged as the topic of much gossip and rumour.

The other unknown candidates, Felt and Priscilla, have also been given similar benefits.

Priscilla Barielle has done remarkable work. After inheriting land from her deceased husband, Leip Barielle, she used Lugnica's unfortunate position as a nation bordering the long-hostile Vollachian Empire to her advantage, and instantly made allies of the neighbouring territories in the confusion. Almost like magic, she pacified Vollachia and made allies of the lords. Then she revitalized lands that had been ruined by war. In this short time frame, she has definitely shown good prospects. She also has her overwhelming attitude and her looks going for her. Southern Lugnica grows more and more supportive of her by the day.

Meanwhile, Felt has Reinhard Van Astrea and the territories of the Astrea family: relative to the other candidates, she is stuck in the shadow of her knight. The title of 'Sword Saint', as overwhelmingly famous as it is, is not especially useful when choosing a new Ruler. The attitudes of the local lords, including those in the Astrea domain, veer closer to distrust than caution.

But Felt overcame this poor situation quite unexpectedly. Rather than consult the powerful nobles who could stymie the other candidates, she assembled those who had resigned from office and commoners on the streets. Felt is stupidly good at picking out those with hidden aspirations, or talented people who were never given a chance. Never mind the rumours about her having royal blood, she can identify people's talents and assign them to a post, which is perhaps the most important quality in a leader. From that small trigger, the Astrea household and its surrounding territories burst into activity, while the onlooking lords began to slowly change their tune. It's still just a small spark, but she is definitely carving herself a place in history. Nobody important in this nation is ignoring her.

Otto: ?...is where each faction is now. Our faction is quite notable for its achievements, but the other two parties have a more stable foundation. Though, I believe that we could disregard that if the Sizeable Hare offensive were officially acknowledged.?

Emilia: ?Otto-kun, you're saying the same things as Subaru. But maybe this means it's safe to take a narcissistic view, and say that we're about in the middle.?

Otto: ?For now. Yes. But... there have been some changes on Duchess Karsten's front. Ones that are to our benefit.?

Emilia: ?To our benefit??

Otto: ?Yes. Duchess Crusch Karsten, as if she's a different person, has lost some of her lustre over this

year. She used to be stern in both public and private affairs, someone that the supporters of the previous Duke Karsten couldn't help but accept.?

Something has changed in her politics and policies. She has become less decisive, and plainly gives a soft impression. Rumours have spread that she attempted her best to serve the unwomanly role of Duchess, but finally her true colours have come through.
She's apparently busy dealing with unsatisfied subjects and lords, even calling upon the previous, retired Duke's assistance.

Otto: ?People were certain that she'd win the Selection, being that she secured the first achievement with the White Whale offensive... but, it's unclear what exactly led to her downfall. Emilia-sama, be sure to keep vigilant.?

Emilia: ?—I see.?

Emilia lowers her eyes, full of gloom. She can't help but feel sympathetic for her rivals, but Otto finds that stance dangerous and fragile. They're eventually going to oppose each other. It's disadvantageous to be unduly supportive. This last year has taught Otto that the truism applies in both commerce and politics.

Otto: ?Try not to brood on it. More conversations like this will have to happen in the future.?

Emilia: ?Mm. Thank you. I know you're just looking out for me.?

Otto: ?Excellent. Now, let's finally get onto the topic of Anastasia's faction. They have nowhere to call their base in Lugnica, but have the backing of important merchants in Kararagi. Stores that had originally been considering the idea are now springing up across Lugnica, all with Hoshin Enterprises’s backing.?

Emilia: ?But what does that mean? Maybe there are lots of new stores, but that doesn't mean lots of new suppor... oh, there's more people who know her, so she's more visible??

Otto: ?That would be a side-effect, I think. Her goal is more simple than that. —She can use far much more money. And since money is so simple, it works on anyone. There is no creature of society out there who lives in peace after economic downfall.?

Making allies of merchants means making more friends in the world of business. And being that economics supports society, holding economic power means she can attack and defend that society. She's making allies all over the place, making it nigh impossible to counter her, a businesswoman who prioritises her economic strength.

Otto: ?I believe that Anastasia's faction is the one we must be most cautious of. And then we get an invitation from them... and it all feels like we're going to wind up in their debt. Do you understand how immeasurably troubled I am??

Emilia: ?...It's finally sunken in sooo deep. I'm sorry for acting so rashly.?

Otto: ?Nothing to worry, just as long as you understand. You'll never do anything careless again I'm

sure... I'm sure... because I'm sure that you understand!?

Emilia bows her head, and Otto shakes his in submission, then sighs.

Otto's clear explanation of matters makes it very easy to understand. Emilia nods over and over.

Indeed. The world of politics is complex and tricky.
She already knew that her thoughts of 'I'll do my best' and 'Let's do our best' wouldn't secure her the victory, but it dizzies her to think that she has to pay mind to what the others are doing. She's glad that he's revealed these secrets to her, but it also makes her far more uneasy.

Otto: ?You don't have to agonize over it alone.?

Says Otto, imagining how Emilia must feel. Emilia looks up. Otto fiddles with his grey hair.

Otto: ?You may be the central figure, but that doesn't mean that you have to do everything yourself. You have this whole carriage with you.?

Emilia: ?This whole carriage??

Otto: ?Natsuki-san is at the reigns. Beatrice-chan is on guard to make sure he doesn't slack off. Garfiel is keeping lookout atop the carriage, and I am the one who planned our itinerary. What you do is thank all of us for our work, and we'll bumble our way to Pristella.?

Emilia's eyes widen, comprehending what Otto means. And it's funny, because this indirect phrasing reminds her of someone else.

Emilia: ?Otto-kun. You sound sooo much like Subaru.?

Otto: ?What!? Truly!? Oh no... he must've infected me over all this time spent with him... n-no, please no, this terrifying thought just—?

Subaru: ?Hey, Otto! What are you talking so cheerily about with Emilia-tan? Emilia-tan smiles are my diet, so you better not steal any!?

Otto's shoulders hitch up as the person in question butts into the conversation. Otto's reaction makes Emilia smile, and Otto smiles back, looking defeated.

Subaru: ?Come on! What's so interesting!? This isn't fair! Beatrice, take the reigns. I'm busting in.?

Beatrice: ?Auh! No, in fact! Stop, I suppose! I can't... I-it'll flip over! It's going to flip over, in fact! Look, she's going to flip it over, I suppose!?

Hearing the yells from the driver's seat, Otto resignedly gets to his feet. A certain impatient knight must be hitting his limit. Time to swap places and visit the dragons.

Emilia: ?Otto-kun.?

When Emilia calls Otto from behind as he prepares to move to the driver's seat. He glances back at her, and his breath catches. Emilia's trusting smile stabs him through the chest.

Emilia: ?I know I'll cause some problems, but I'll still do my best. I'm counting on you.?

Otto: ?—Yes, please do. I'll take my own enjoyment in the scraps.?

Emilia: ?That also sounded kind of like Subaru.?

With a bitter smile, Otto steps over to the driver's platform. Subaru and Emilia are both devious. For Otto, stricken with an illness where he must answer to the expectations upon him, they're a lethal combination.

While all this banter unfolds, twelve days pass from their departure. Emilia's group safely arrives at the Watergate City, Pristella.

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Arc 5 - Chapter 40, "Corrosion of Wrath"

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Thursday, November 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/29/arc-5-chapter-40-corrosion-of-wrath/

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- Credit to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

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Twenty-five shelters per district made a total of about a hundred shelters in all of Pristella.

At Al’s suggestion, they started their search on First Street, where they were more likely to be able to find those needing help. They were pursuing a prudent path of travel and moving cautiously in order to avoid as much combat as possible.

Al: “Having said that, I feel like we’re overreacting. After all, we have that kid with us. You’d think we wouldn’t need to be so excessively timid, bro.”

Subaru: “It’s not excessive. Our own forces are limited, whereas the enemy’s barely been scratched. Even one second of negligence would cost us. Not to mention, in addition to the watching out enemy, we’re trying to avoid any kind of commotion, here.”

Back in the City Hall, Anastasia had introduced the notion that populace’s unrest could lead to riots. Although he wanted to believe it wouldn’t happen, he couldn’t deny that possibility.

Visiting the various shelters and trying to assess the situation while recruiting combat power— Subaru intended to his mission as an opportunity as fight the mounting sense of unease.

Al: “Yep, that also sounds about right. … Well, you won’t hear me complain about going the safe route. After all, if it comes down to a fight, all I can do is rely on the kid.”

Subaru: “You… although you deny being able to, can you really not fight? You did manage to reach the City Hall safely.”

Al: “If I had to choose between “combatant” and “non-combatant”, I’d have to go with the former. However, at best, my skill’s just that of a normal person. If I’m up against the superhuman type, the result would be my corpse sitting in a corner in about two seconds. Nope, no way, it’d be pointless to consider.”

As he waved his right arm about in dismissal, Al’s declaration of inability echoed from his helmet.

Although somewhat dissatisfied with his attitude, Subaru’s opinion on the matter matched Al’s. There was a certain level of skill that he would never be able to reach.

Perhaps the difficulty of survival in this world meant that the fundamental biological composition of its inhabitants was different. No matter how much Subaru trained, he’d never be able to match the likes of Julius or Garfiel. And let’s not mention Reinhard; no one could ever reach that level.

Subaru: “But, that shouldn’t be enough reason not to fight.”

Al: “Shouldn’t it? Personally, I think that having no chance of victory is more than enough to convince me not to even try. Ahhh, leaving behind regrets is another topic entirely. Well, I’m not that type that kind of person anyway.”

Subaru: “——”

Al: “C’mon, don’t be mad, bro. I think your positive attitude is great. It’s just not one that’d ever be meant for me. It’s just that kind of circumstance, y’know?”

With the stance of each party already established, their dialogue could only run parallel.

Subaru kept quiet, and Al apologized as is pleading guilty, before looking up over at Garfiel, who had been quietly scouting the road that lay ahead.

Crouching on all fours, Garfiel turned back eerily silently.

Garfiel: “Looks like th’ next three roads’re all clear. Or actually more like lifeless n’ barren n’ empty. ‘S technically safe, but really damn suspicious, yeah?”

That was the impression Garfiel’s twitching nose kept finding.

Avoiding battles had been their goal, but not having encountered a single incident also incited a sense of unease. Be that as it may, time didn’t allow them to entertain such hesitation.

Subaru: “Pointlessly fretting won’t do us any good. Our destination’s just up ahead. Let’s get as fast as we can. That’ll be fine, right?”

Garfiel: “My amazin’ nose says so, at least. Damn, looks like we don’t have any other choice.”

Scratching his short blond hair, Garfiel gave the ground an anxious stomp.

Subaru nodded, and Al’s silent shrug indicated that he had no objections.

Although their journey from the City Hall had already taken about fifteen minutes, thanks to the the care and attention they’d paid, it had been safe and sound thus far. After all, the worst case that they’d considered would be that the witch cult had stationed troops all about the city.

Thinking that they’d stumble upon road after road of them would be no exaggeration.

Al: “Doesn’t it seem like the Witch Cult’s unexpectedly neglected to set up sentries?”

As he ran, Al turned to comment. Following his line of sight, Subaru gave a “why would you think that?” in response.

Al: “The reason’s very simple, they don’t have the manpower to monitor the streets. Haven’t you noticed, bro? Compared with the archbishops on the towers, doesn’t this seem a bit too lax? And it’s the same with allowing the opposing forced to move so freely. If they seriously wanted their proposal fulfilled, they wouldn’t be acting like this.”

Subaru: “Blocking everything off and giving such exact demands would be the common thing to do, wouldn’t it? But you think they have some other goal in mind?”

Al: “Hah, I wouldn’t claim know. But, I’d imagine it’s something like,”

Although Al had probably wanted to respond casually, at Subaru’s stern glare, he fell silent for a moment, probably with a wry smile under his helmet.

Al: “—Whether or not we comply with their demands doesn’t really matter.”

Subaru: “Huh?”

Al: “If they were serious about their demands, you’d think they’d have been more precise and detailed. However, I’m sure you’d agree, bro… that they’re not seriously intending to insist upon their demands. If we follow through, great. If we don’t, whatever; it’s that kind of feeling.”

Subaru: “Then… it’s like they’re just toying with us…!”

Al: “Aren’t they just toying with us? Isn’t that what those bastards are for?”

In contrast to Subaru’s speechlessness, Al spoke with a blank, listless voice. And Subaru found himself

unable to even utter an affirmation.

—They were entirely just being toyed with.

Considering the vicious imagination of the Witch Cult, such a possibility was no joke. During their attack, although they acted with the advantage and made tactically sound decision, there were many places where their movements were incomprehensible. During the battle in the City Hall, Capella and Alphard had been lying in ambush, but Sirius and Regulus were absent, indicating a lack of a full scale assault. In addition, Subaru's side had suffered no casualties.

Now, the disparity between the city's hopeless siege and the witch cult's lax attitude also served as evidence that the Cult weren't taking means to secure their demands.

Garfiel: "Cap'n! No need t' listen that kinda bastard's words. N' you, 'f you keep casually plantin' funny thoughts like that in my cap'n's head, my amazin'self'll kill ya, yeah?"

As Subaru fell into a sea of contemplativeness, Garfiel turned to fix Al, who was running alongside Subaru, with a ferocious gaze as he snapped at him.

Garfiel: "Endlessly chatterin' on 'bout stuff that doesn't even matter, a bastard with no fightin' spirit like ya should jus' shut th' fuck up! No matter what those fuckers're tryin' we'll just keep hittin' and beatin' and defeatin' 'em! 'S long as we keep that in mind, we can go on!"

Al: "That a pretty extreme and brutal argument, isn't it? Although it is true that I'm no match in a real confrontation, that's unrelated to guessing what they're thinking. Speaking of which, what harm does guessing their intentions bring us, huh?

Garfiel: "You bastard—"

As his teeth made a sharp ringing sound, Garfiel's steps fell dead still. At the same time, Al also stopped moving, filling atmosphere with tension and mutual disregard.

Subaru cut between them at once, holding a hand against each of their chests.

Subaru: "Hold up! The hell's wrong with the two of you? Is this really time to be turning your weapons on allies?"

Garfiel: "'S bastard's not an ally, cap'n. 'S clear he's up t' no good. 'T'd probably be best 'f we just did away with him here 'n now."

Al: "Actively looking for a fight's a "no thanks", but I'm not a follower of those pacifist movements when it comes to motivated opponents."

Garfiel cracked his wrists, and Al turned around.

And Subaru, frustrated at their attitude, felt rage begin to boil within him.

And he felt the pricking of a thousand thorns emanating from the core of his body, bidding him to beat and punch and kick the two uncooperative men—.

Subaru: “Something’s wrong…”

His head was messed up if it was overheating and immediately jumping to murder as a response.

No matter what, his own anger had escalated too quickly. And why were all of them so eager to turn on each other?

And the conflict between the two seemed to be agitating Subaru as well—

Subaru: “No, it’s…”

An inability to direct the flow of his thoughts and feelings— with that realization, Subaru felt a chill. After all, this exact sense of disgust was already incredibly familiar to him.

Subaru: “That bitch Sirius, is her influence approaching…!?”

Fanning his face with slaps, Subaru tried to reawaken his own sense of consciousness as he glanced around.

His inspection yielded no sightings of strange figures, not did he hear anything out of place. However, the dim feeling of gloom and disgust pressed heavily into his very being.

Subaru: “Hey, Garfiel, Al, stop! Take a deep breath and calm down. Isn’t it strange that your argument’s escalating so quickly? That’s probably due to [Wrath]’s influence. Your feelings are becoming uncontrollable.”

Garfiel: “Hah? Whadya mean, cap’n? ‘S guy’s flamboyance’s what’s pissin’… wait.”

Subaru: “——”

Hearing Subaru’s claim, Garfiel gritted his teeth, pressing a palm onto his head. Slowly, he shook his head and blinked rapidly.

Garfiel: “… ‘s not really worth fightin’ over. That kinda thing’s usually only just an annoyance.”

Subaru: “That’s [Wrath]’s ability. Let's make sure that there are no enemies around us, okay?”

Garfiel: “Th’ scent, th’ miasma… nothin’s wrong there. But,”

Precisely because his senses were so trustworthy, Garfiel began to shudder.

In other words, the scope of the Sirius's power reached far beyond anything they’d ever imagined. If the theory that she was currently occupying a tower was correct, then the range of her power extended over

almost the entire city. Of course, there was a degree of difference compared to its intensity in the square, but—.

Al: “Well now. This what it feels like to be toyed with. Not something I’d want to experience more than once. Now I’ve tasted the worst feeling.”

Al murmured; as with Garfiel, the torrent of anger engulfing him had cleared. He glance over at Subaru, lifting his chin.

Al: “But, bro. If we don’t get a move on, we’ll be in trouble, won’t we?”

Subaru: “What, what are you talking about?”

Al: “You noticed it, bro, and after listening to you said, we also realized something was wrong. However, no one else would. If this feeling spreads through the entire city… for the average person, unaware of the situation, it’d be impossible to stay rational, yeah?”

Subaru: “—hk!”

As he considered the fact that Al had pointed out, the worst case scenario flashed through Subaru’s mind. He exchanged a glance with Garfiel, who had imagined the same scenario and flinched sharply. Instantly, they sprang into action, beginning a reckless sprint. Their destination was the nearest shelter.

Al: “Ah, wait for me!”

Watching the two of them shoot off, the slower Al hurriedly turned to chase them from behind.

In his anxiety, Subaru completely disregarded stealth as he raced forward with reckless abandon. Garfiel’s steps, however, were sharper and quicker than Subaru’s, and in the blink of an eye, he had left Subaru in the dust. His shadow vanished at the T junction of the next street.

According to the map, there should be a shelter at the corner where Garfiel disappeared.

Al: “Is the road safe!?”

Subaru: “Garfiel rushed in without any hesitation. So there shouldn’t be anyone there!”

Answered the shouts coming from behind, Subaru arrived at the corner, lagging far behind Garfiel. Without losing so much as a single drop of momentum, he turned the corner and saw the stone cottage.

Driven toward the hastily opened door, confirming that there was indeed a ladder connecting to the ground, sprinting frantically down the stairs, and his dim field of vision opened—,

Subaru: “You’re… kidding me…”

—Splattered with blood and sorrow, a landscape of hell spread before him.

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Al: “They killed and killed… and only a fifth of them are still breathing. And those guys are going to have to completely recover. This is really the worst of situations.”

Regarding the scene of horror, Al bit back his feelings and whispered with a strangled voice. Subaru, sitting toward the side, had no energy with which to respond.

In the shelter that they had rushed into, the refugees had turned on each other, causing a fratricidal catastrophe.

The initial argument had most likely been a trivial matter.

Forced to squeeze into a cramped, claustrophobic, fearing the demands that the Witch Cult had put on broadcast.

During that time, dark thoughts sneaked their way into their hearts. If we do what they ask, then the situation will improve, won’t it? Isn’t it okay to for us to take action?

Those emerging ideas aroused action, and action required contact with others. However, was contact brought wasn’t necessarily anything good.

The explosive conflict between Garfiel and Al, on the road, had been the product of that as well.

However, there was no Subaru in the shelter to calm everyone down. The quarrels had intensified as everyone feelings collided and spread, infecting the surrounding area, doubling the effect.

As emotions rose back and forth, anxieties became unbearable, grew into abominations, and resulted in tragedy.

Garfiel: “We can let th’ survivors fall asleep n’ I can treat their wounds. But th’ burial ‘f the dead… ‘ll have t’ wait. Cap’n, have ya contacted ‘em yet?”

Subaru: “I have. The Iron Fang should be on their way. I think entrusting survivors to them is will be fine. The problem is, after that…”

Subaru had underestimated the degree of the disaster caused by an unnatural increase of tempers running high.

The intensity of the waves of emotion transversing through people trapped in the enclosed space of the shelter was not unforeseen. Of course, no one would be able to maintain a positive and optimistic attitude; however, even amongst negative emotions, nuances could still usher in tremendous differences.

If the initial feelings were only sorrow, lament, or despondency, without any initiative to take action, the people would be relatively fine.

However, if the initial emotion had been rage, or anything similar, the result would be the one they were currently witnessing.

Subaru: “Being forced to trap themselves within these shelters… that emotion could even be one of hatred.”

If the [Wrath]’s ability were something akin to the sharing of emotions, then the greater number of people residing in her sphere of influence, the more effective her power would become.

In short, if people were mirrors, any beams of light originating from them would be reflected back infinitely, due to the sheer number of reflections. Replace light with emotions, and…

Even the barest contact with others would lead to a terrible end.

In this place of unease and fear, this power forced each person to walk alone.

Subaru: “How disgusting…”

Garfiel: “Cap’n, how d’ we go about handlin’ this? Although we said we’d visit each shelter, ‘f things go on like this…”

Having finished with healing, Garfiel, with sweat beading forehead, wore a disturbed expression. Understanding the reason for his unease, Subaru fretted over the wording of his response.

No matter what, Subaru couldn’t organize his thoughts. To visit the various shelters, to assemble forces, to call on everyone to not give up; none of those courses of action were wrong.

However, the pressing situation did not allow the Subaru slowly travel the city.

The handful of people who were willing to fight on had likely been the source of the tragedy; their hearts had brought about strife. The shelters had become a coagulated solution of emotions; perhaps persuade the remaining refugees to leave improve their respective survival rates.

Subaru: “But if we do that and fail to retake the towers, they’ll all die.”

After all, these were shelter residing in the city of Pristella.

They were design to protect its citizens against any potential floods the Watergate City would experience; in the case that Subaru’s side was overwhelmed and the water gates were released, the people who left the shelters due to fear of their companions would suffer certain deaths.

Whether staying inside or going outside, a foolproof measure did not exist.

Garfiel: “Cap’n…”

Subaru: “——”

As Subaru wallowed in his indecision, Garfiel called for him.

That was an expression and voice which sought answers and salvation from Subaru. That was the figure of someone seeking the only light they could depend on in a world of darkness, looking for guidance and reassurance.

How could Subaru respond to that expression?

Grasping for solutions? He was the same way. Seeing a light in the dark? Subaru too was lost.

However, there was no point in complaining about his weakness. Throwing a tantrum, raging to the heavens, would save no one. If he had the leisure to complain, it would be far better for him to say something meaningful.

Anything meaningful at all would be fine, as long as it meant something to someone.

Al: “Captain this, captain that… really, it’s like you’re casting a reliable, convenient charm, kid. What an outstanding attitude, it’s making me tear up, really.”

However, the one who broke Subaru’s hesitant silence was instead the one-armed man. Leaning his back against the wall, Al’s gaze move from the scene of horror Garfiel.

His cold indifference shocked Garfiel silent for a spell.

Garfiel: “Hah? Th’ hell’s that mean, ya bastard…”

Al: “Do you not understand without explanation? I meant just what I said. Refusing to think and delegating your judgment to others is easy. Is “captain” some kind of magic spell to you? To be able to figure out solutions to anything at all, is he some kind of renowned Superman?”

Interrupting Garfiel was Al’s mocking attitude.

Al: “From just those moments I can tell how much you depend on him, but is he really so exaggeratedly reliable? In terms of strength, you have him beat, no question. In terms of intelligence, there’ll always be someone out there better than him. And luck? Even if you dare to mention luck in a situation like this, no one’d believe you, yeah?”

Garfiel: “Shut th’ fuck up! Ya can’t talk shit ‘bout the Cap’n like that! Th’ hell d’ ya even know ‘bout his strength? This person here’s damn amazin’!”

Al: “He’s strong, he’s amazing, are you just a kid? Where is that strength, then? If he were really as amazing as you say, he’d already have done something by now. Or are you saying that he’s already thought up a solution, and he’s just pretending to fumble along?"

Even as Garfiel began shouting, Al’s ironic tone didn’t falter. And as he learned over to peer into Subaru’s face, Subaru found that he couldn’t dismiss him.

At that reaction, Al straightened up, continuing with a “you see?”,

Al: “Being responsible for everything, carrying every solution in your hands, is remarkable, isn’t it. It’s a protagonist privilege. However, most commoners can’t afford that mission; they’re not strong enough. Of course, that goes without saying for me, and even your bro’s the same. So why are you making him carry all that? Don’t place too much hope in him, yeah? How pitiful!”

Subaru: “——”

Subaru had no clue whatsoever of what Al was trying to say.

Could he be once again under the sway of [Wrath]’s power? If so, what kind of feeling now dominated Al’s heart?

Anger? Sadness? Something else?

He seemed furious, but also mournful, and also jeering; even figuring out what he felt in that moment was impossible.

Al: “Hey now, bro. What’s been troubling you all this time?”

Subaru: “… what’s been troubling me? All this…”

How to save this city. How to find a conclusion without hurting the people fleeing the shelters.

How to rescue Emilia. How to cure Crusch. How to restore Rem. How to drive away the Witch Cult. How to find the best path, where everyone would be saved.

Al: “How to best serve your venerated princess— are you unable to even immediately say that?”

Subaru: “——”

Hearing the disappointment in Al’s voice, Subaru slowly raised his head.

Motionlessly, Al was scrutinizing Subaru. As his face covered with a helmet, his expression was indiscernible. However, somehow, Subaru found himself incredibly anxious.

Al: “I only care about the princess… about Priscilla. So everyone else, frankly speaking, is completely irrelevant to me. For example, acting in tandem with you, bro, is only so I can improve my odds of surviving and encountering the princess.”

Subaru: “Al…”

Al: “So, I don’t understand your feelings at all, bro. This is important, that’s a priority… In that case, it’ll be impossible for you to see what’s most important. Trying to solve everything and whatever, doesn’t that just make you a cliché of a guy who doesn’t know how to fight for what you find most precious?”

Clicking his tongue, Al strangled some kind of emotion.

Even Garfiel couldn't find a retort to that chilly demeanor. And Subaru, who bore the brunt of it, found himself lost for words.

Al: "The silver-haired miss is your most important one, isn't she, bro? If you're just saving her, do away with the fretting and hesitating and act. It'll be easy."

Subaru: "… Don't say that to me. I'll definitely kill the bastard who kidnapped Emilia. And in any case, it's not like I even have any concrete plans. It isn't as easy as you say."

Al: "But it's a much less arduous task than saving everything. If you reduce your load, your body becomes lighter, and the scope of your reach will increase. Isn't that the case?"

Subaru's weak resistance was deflect smoothly by Al.

Al: "Are you trying be a saint or a hero? If yes, you should have a limit."

Shrugging his shoulders, Al discarded the Subaru's confusion as something ridiculous. Subaru found that very attitude incomprehensible.

When he'd quarreled with Anastasia in the City Hall, the one who could even described as stubbornly assertive, and who regarded him as an ally was none other than Al.

The one who had agreed with his desperate struggle of self satisfaction was also Al. However, after arriving here, why did subvert his opinion?

Subaru: "What is what you're saying now totally different from before? Are you or are you not interested in acting as my ally, which is it?"

Al: "No, no, you're completely off. I'm not saying that indulging in self-satisfaction is wrong. But the limit of that self-satisfaction is another topic entirely. Your idea, of wanting to rescue everyone, bro, was denied when you saw the horror in this shelter, right? In that case, it's enough, isn't it? Frankly, if you're only guarding what matters to you, slipping away from here isn't a notion that should be condemned, is it?"

Subaru: "Slipping away… you mean running away? At a time like this?"

Al: "What's so wrong? In a place where you're so powerless, is choosing to flee really so wrong? I, after the recovering the princess, intend to flee from the city. in this way. I don't have any obligation to the people here, or to morals about humanity or anything."

Sticking his fingers into the neck of the helmet and scratching lightly, Al turned to look at the silent Subaru.

Al: "You could do that too, bro. Save just the miss… just Emilia, and run away, and you'll be just fine.

Anyway, pests like the Witch Cult'll just come back even if defeated here. Just like bandits on the side of the road, yeah? You'll lose something just by interacting with it."

There was only one answer to Al's suggestion.

The Witch Cults were pests; Subaru shared this exact feeling. And that they could stain even those unrelated to them was a notion he wouldn't deny.

However, they were the ones who had instigated such a catastrophe. Subaru had to take action to deny the advent of those sparks.

From Al's perspective, he had no reason to interfere.

Of course, the imminent danger Emilia was in was another matter. Even assuming that Emilia had nothing to do with the situation, Subaru could never choose the option of escape.

And the question was why. Well, that was because—,

Al: "And even if it needs to be done, it doesn't have to be you, bro. So why are you so insistent?"

Subaru: "When a kid runs toward the busy intersection of a road without paying attention to the light, before thinking about the why, I'd immediately pull him back onto the sidewalk… it's probably something like that."

Al: "——"

Al's sigh in response to Subaru's answer was obvious.

His answer just now was unrefined, and bits of it were still confused. But when he took a moment to think, he could blurt out that answer, and the tightness in his chest would vanish.

Subaru: "I don't find it a hassle to put everyone into consideration. Because I'm here, I'll try to do those things. one by one to think ah. Because I am here, I will be able to do things. The are a lot of places I won't be able to reach, as the people here prove. But,"

Wasn't thinking that everything was out of the reach of your fingertips cowardly and despicable? Subaru thought of his goal as an obligation.

Garfiel: "Cap…"

As be began to blurt something toward Subaru, who had responded so calmly, Garfiel seemed to cut himself off.

Now, Garfiel hesitated say "captain"; as Al had just pointed out Garfiel's reliance, he was probably trying to resist the automatic urge.

Subaru found himself pleased by Garfiel's concerned hesitation. At the same time, he realized something. A sudden whim.

A miraculous coup that could be used to take advantage of the authority of [Wrath].

Subaru: "Garfiel, don't hesitate, okay? Just call out to me like you always have."

Garfiel: "——"

Subaru: "Although, initially, you embarrassed me a little, that shyness is long gone. Although there's no guarantee that I can live up expectation, as long as it can be done, I'll do it."

What the Subaru reflected in Garfiel's expectant gaze looked like, he had no way of knowing.

However, in the a place that Garfiel must have thought to be the hopeless, he saw the sun rise where Subaru stood, precisely as a result of Subaru's flailing actions. And a once lonely young girl, who had once denied everything, felt the same way.

Therefore, Subaru had no choice but to take responsibility with his actions.

Garfiel: "…… Yeah. Yeah, 's right, cap'n. Got 't. My amazin's self's also going to be helpin', no how much power's needed. So, 's long as ya don't say anythin' feeble, 't'll turn out jus' fine."

Subaru: "Alright. Then, I'll be relying on you. After entrusting the wounded here to the [Iron Fang], we'll have to return to the City Hall immediately. Anastasia, after all, probably thinks something contradictory."

Standing up and patting himself down, Subaru also went over to Garfiel, whose head was still lowered, and patted his shoulders.

After seeing Garfiel clench his first with an air of reinvigoration, Subaru turned to the silent Al.

Subaru: "My mind's been made. Although in a different direction than you were hoping for."

Al: "… as you like, bro. At least, unless I confirm that I can't find the princess, before it becomes meaningless for me to stick with you, I'll follow you everywhere, bro."

Although his proposal was entirely rejected, Al responded without any disappointment.

Even if puzzled by the attitude, Subaru shifted his footsteps toward the outside of the shelter, prepared to act immediately after reinforcements arrived.

Behind him, along with Garfiel, Al followed suit from a slight ways away.

As he regarded the backs of the two who were striding forward, Al reached for the back of his neck with his one arm, propping it up with a hand, and exhaled a long, long sigh.

Al: “Like this… when you have to respond to the expectations of all kinds of people, what’ll become of you? After all, without those painful experiences, you certainly wouldn’t know.”

Arc 5 - Chapter 43, "Before The Rendezvous"

by admin - Thursday, October 25, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/10/25/arc-5-chapter-43-before-the-rendezvous/

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Translated By :

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ALL RIGHTS BELONG TO **TAPPEI NAGATSUKI**, THE **ORIGINAL AUTHOR** OF RE:ZERO STARTING A LIFE IN A DIFFERENT WORLD FROM ZERO, THIS IS A TRANSLATION OF THE **FREE** JAPANESE WEB NOVEL INTO ENGLISH

JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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[Forgive me for not providing assistance at this critical moment. I can only reflect on how I was lacking.]

Receiving the gazes of those present inside, Reinhard apologized.

At the sight of the Sword Saint with bowed head, everyone grew silent for a moment.

Speaking out harshly in response to his apology would be a simple matter. But, words of blame were easier to form than ones which conveyed true intent.

In truth, that all this time they were in dire need of his power, and Reinhard had been missing with his status unknown had not changed.

At the moment City Hall was being retaken, if that same strength had been there, it was unthinkable.

So even simply negative words, did not easily emerge from anyone’s lips.

Only,

[Really, you idiot. Because you weren’t here, how hard do you think it was for us?]

Approaching that crimson hero, Subaru called out while shoving his chest.

As that fist lightly touched him, Reinhard, with an attitude like he could not justify himself to Subaru

turned his gaze away. At that scolded and crestfallen appearance unbefitting of him, Subaru snorted.

[You know, if you're coming anyway, just show up 15 minutes earlier! Then I wouldn't have to give a speech not fitting my character at all. That's supposed to be your job.]

[Sorry….. However, it was a great speech fitting of you. Though many things are required of me, giving courage-rousing broadcasts of that extent is not something I could do. You were the right choice.]

[Between me and you, the required role for that broadcast is a little different, I think.]

At that bitterly smiling Reinhard's chest, Subaru shoved once again. And, he also poked the tip of that downcast hero's nose with a finger.

[Reinhard.]

[…… ?]

[Since you came it's like a hundred guys did, no, a thousand. If it's just that, I can expect that much right? I'm counting on it?]

[????]

It was power that rivaled the force of the tides. Subaru's hundredfold, even thousandfold evaluation was laughable.

At Subaru's expectation-filled question, Reinhard's blue eyes blinked. But that hesitation immediately faded, and Reinhard's lips formed into a smile.

[Aah, count on me. If you would expect that much of me, I will comply.]

[That somehow-making-women-happy-type kind of talk, can you not stop that? What, enough…… And with that, if everyone now has something they want to say, please tell us.]

Seeing that initial discomfort disappear from Reinhard's face as he laughed, Subaru turned and looked back. Gazing over at those that until then had not said anything, he indicated Reinhard.

[At these times, the side that gets special treatment suffers much more. Besides, a chance to scold this sword saint that wants to be scolded doesn't happen often. So as much as you want to, do it, do it.]

[????]

[After confessing what's on our minds, let's talk.??About how to help everyone.]

Opening his heart, Subaru spoke like that.

At that attitude, the mood was of one holding their breath.

Otto and Garfiel, only those two were used to Subaru's bravado and were smiling at that.

Anyway, having one or two fellows there see through to his true intentions was just right.

They did not have to hold in their thoughts, because it was right after he had made that kind of speech.

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After that, Reinhard's personal talking to (details omitted) was held, and again talk of how to recapture the city started up again.

Even saying that, other than Reinhard and Otto's thoughts agreeing, there was no clear improvement. The number of enemies that they could not avoid attacking, and the capture strategy of hitting all control towers simultaneously did not change.

[But in the midst of this chaos, where was Reinhard and what was he up to?]

As they all sat around in a circle talking, Subaru moved to start with that question.

Reinhard's expression clouded at his words. Today, his face often grew like that.

[You don't have Felt with you, and there's a lot of things I want to hear about. Ah, something like scolding you, this isn't like that? On that matter, with the words from just before, I am treating it like nothing happened.]

[What Natsuki-kun was sayin', well, 's a part that bothers me too. No way the?Sword Saint? got scared and was hidin', I wasn't thinking anything like that. But I am wantin' to hear a convincing reason.]

At Subaru's question, Anastasia joined in. Looking carefully at Anastasia's attitude, it definitely seemed like she had been receiving reports from Julius.

Right before the turmoil began, Reinhard and Felt were contacting Heinkel together, she said.

After that question from her, Reinhard's expression clouding over seemed to be proof of that assertion.

Wilhelm too, but when it came to Heinkel the Astreas' explanations were very vague. Saying that, their approach was like---,

[Like someone stuck inside for ten years, and now is a pro-NEET child that's treated as a tumor by the aged parents…..]

[Natsuki-san is jumping to weird delusions so I'm sorry, but what will you do? If it is hard for Reinhard-san to say, then I can speak, but.]

While Subaru recalled flashes of a evening news special on Hikkikomori, Otto chimed in. His worried gaze was directed at Reinhard, and his tone held an apologetic sort of mood.

[And you came together with Reinhard, right, but could you have been with him during the turmoil too?]

[No, there was nothing like that? I joined up with Reinhard-san at the last moment….. However, I have mostly figured out the situation.]

[Thank you, Otto. But this is a problem of my House. Truly, it is a difficult topic to discuss, but it would be for the best to speak of it myself.]

At Otto's consideration, Reinhard bowed his head and refused his offer.

He gazed ahead, and drew his posture straight a moment later.

[Firstly, though I have said it many times, let me apologize once more. While being in a position that should assist from the very beginning, for many hours I could not join together to help with the situation. I deeply apologize, and take this matter seriously.]

[…...On that point our view is as we said just now. We cannot forgive everything like there was no problem. However, you are needed in the upcoming battle. If you seek to repent, then perform well in the fights to come.]

[I will do that, Julius….When the Witch Cult first broadcast, Felt-sama and I were at the 2nd Street corner being called upon. The one summoning us was Vice-Captain Heinkel.]

Reinhard, who had started speaking, called Heinkel "Vice-Captain" in a stiff voice.

It was widely known that they were father and son. Even with that, calling his father by title, it was plenty to bring about the realization that the relationship between the two was not just a simple father-son relationship.

[After that fighting and separation from before, Felt obeyed a summons from him?]

[Felt-sama too, in her heart would have wanted to refuse. However, the talk was regarding a matter under the authority of Astrea's Lord, so the option of rejection did not exist. What request would be made was unknown to us…...Felt-sama accompanying me, we headed towards the appointed place.]

[How did the talk there become decided……]

[My apologies, but as that matter is directly related to and regarding the Royal Selection. I would appreciate being allowed not to elaborate. It is enough to say, the talk did not go smoothly.]

Reinhard tone of voice was falling, and it was easy to figure out the talk had gone poorly.

Even if it wasn't like that, Felt lacked experience dealing with negative emotions.

Taking Heinkel's despicable nature into account, it was not difficult to imagine how the talk would have played out.

In the midst of such conversation--,

[Then, the Witch Cult's first broadcast happened. While we could hardly believe our ears, it was clear we needed to move immediately. If there was a truly dire situation. it was my intention to head out right away. The other retainers, they also had a method to call for me if needed prepared beforehand.]

That method was, to launch magic into the sky at any time. It would be the signal.

When Sirius appeared, if Latius fired off the signal Reinhard always ran to the scene within 30 seconds. What he said was true.

However, Reinhard had heard the Witch Cult's so-called broadcast and its clear malice yet still did not move. He did not come running to the scene, and not just that, for several hours later he had kept silent.

That was so.. Why the hell?

[The broadcast, that it claimed to be sent from City Hall, you would have known that too. At that point, you would have had the option to run to City Hall. …..Then why, didn't you come?]

[????]

It was not that he was scolding him. That was not the intent, but his voice was hard as he pressed for answers.

There were more than a few things that occurred to him. If before that hard-fought City Hall recapture, Reinhard's presence had arrived there.---Even now, Crusch who was fighting her suffering would not have been harmed. It might even have ended without Subaru's right leg suffering its strange accident.

Though it was not intentional, the gazes growing harsh here were not just Subaru's.

Receiving the stares of everyone in the room, Reinhard, who had until then been speaking fluently closed his mouth, and lowered his gaze once again.

With long lashes and shining eyes, in front of that he was hesitant to speak any words.

Even so, after those few conflicted seconds slowly passed, the hero's stopped words started again.

[??Vice-Captain Heinkel had, taken Felt-sama as a hostage.]

[……]

[That is my, irreversible failure. Felt-sama was grabbed, and a sword was held against her neck to stop my movements. And so, I could not act.]

Speaking those words, Subaru clearly understood why Reinhard had struggled with it so much.

The mistress he should give his all for, by none other than his father's hands had been taken captive.

Humiliated and shamed, just how much had Reinhard mentally blamed himself?

[…..Che, what's that? That, Vice-Captain, is he a pawn of the Witch Cult or something?]

Receiving a shocking confession, Subaru while considering Reinhard's feelings was muttering to himself. Was that, a truth too cruel. The Witch Cult was hidden here and there, so who could know who was a cultist, that he had heard. But to appear among family like that was something he did not even want to think about. Besides Petelgeuse, after seeing the reality of the other Sin Archbishops, he now thought that even more strongly. Because the Witch Cultists were all, the lowest of the low, mere human trash.

[??If it was like that, how would I react. My feelings, how might they be..]

[What?]

However, at Subaru's offered conclusion—Of those present, about half seemed convinced, and Reinhard with a somewhere catching voice responded.

That attitude of his, Subaru wondered at it. However, the other half, made up of Anastasia, Julius, and Otto, were making expressions that said they had come to another conclusion.

[The Vice-Captain, is not a member of the Witch Cult. …..At least in his remarks after seizing Felt-sama, I saw nothing that suggested that.]

[Then what is it, is he some kind of idiot? No, even if he isn't stupid it is fine…… Then, why? Why take Felt hostage? Doing something like that, what point--]

Is there, Subaru was about to say when he realized.

The depressed look on Reinhard's face and the pitying one on Otto. Seeing those, the conclusion he drew almost made him want to laugh.

He could not smile at that. There was no way to save it. If you say that, Heinkel's actions,

[It wasn't, just because he wanted to keep you there?]

[????]

[From the Witch Cult broadcast, he realized the city was dangerous…...So, to quickly get himself safe and protected, he just want to dearly hold onto the strongest guy there?]

[…...The Vice-Captain was saying.. Your precious mistress and father are both here. Will you abandon them to save some bastards whose faces you don't even know?]

[Your own father spouted that bullshit!]

Subaru struck the floor with his fist.

All day today, in the repeating morning he had met this anger face-to-face. But no way, he had never imagined feeling this furious about an opponent completely unrelated to the Witch Cult.

[I had no words to reply with. Of course, Felt-sama was saying it was all a bluff. Since she would be fine, go rescue the others.??But remaining there even then, was my decision. The blame indeed lies with myself.]

[How does it go there! Whose fault it is, it's obvious to everyone here who that is!]

[Even so, the choice was mine.]

At the shouting Subaru, Reinhard would not concede his share of the blame.

That obstinate Reinhard, he probably wouldn't bend on that no matter what anyone said. Subaru furiously held his tongue, and forced his violent feelings to calm down.

[Nevertheless, in that way I became trapped in a stalemate. What happened after is nothing remarkable. Even after further broadcasts I was left unable to act…...I merely received severe scoldings from Felt-sama.]

[But she's not with you, is Felt-chan doin' alright?]

Anastasia asked the wryly smiling Reinhard.

That girl who was feeling up her shawl while making a hard-to-read blank look, showed concern for Felt's state as she had not joined them.

[Bein' held hostage like that for hours would be quite tiring mentally. Now that Reinhard-kun is here like this doin' this, I'm thinkin' the issue has probably been all sorted out though.]

[Yes, that is the case. Felt-sama is now joined with her retainers at a shelter. The Vice-Captain has been arrested and Felt-sama is watching over him.]

[Arrested…...He was caught, huh.]

[That much I happily accepted. But without Otto's cooperation, even that could hardly have been achieved, I think.]

[Otto's name shows up here, huh.]

At the Otto who had not shown signs of appearing until now, Subaru furrowed his brows. Otto was, now at his turn lightly clearing his throat to call for attention.

[The matter was like that. Even saying so, how I arrived at that scene was the result of coinciding chance

and coincidence. Simply since I was aware of the relationship between the three, by happening upon the scene I could roughly come to understand the situation.]

The Astreas' family problems and the situation with Felt's royal candidacy.

Knowing that much already, he had spotted Heinkel holding Reinhard in place with Felt as a hostage. Even if your brain had bad circulation, you could still figure out what the situation was with that.

[I, too, understood that being unable to borrow Reinhard's power in the fight against the Witch Cult was the worst-case scenario. At the same time I grew pale, and thought of how I could help.]

[And so Otto somehow drew attention to himself, and somehow Felt was freed. That was how Reinhard was able to move, and now he managed to reach us…...Like that, is that right?]

[Luckily, Natsuki-san's big speech happened too, so the meetup point was decided without any worry. It would have been nice if we could have moved a little faster, but I had much going on as well.]

Though it was short, at Otto's contribution Reinhard nodded as well.

Again, while people are not looking secretly acting well, it is the shadowy savior Otto.

[But still, just how has things with Otto-san been up to now? Honestly walking around the city with Otto-san's strength, it's fine to see that as acting suicidal.]

[About that, there were a lot of twists and turns…...No, I will talk about it.]

Clearing his throat, Otto indicated the outside of the City Hall building.

[As scheduled for the morning, I left for the Muse Company alone. To request of Kiritaka-san the resuming of negotiations. That side had also cooled their head after one night passed, and it seemed a promise of further negotiations could be obtained without much issue……]

[It seemed, but?]

At the moment he stopped talking and paused, the Witch Cult would have started their broadcast, Subaru guessed.

However, Otto resumed speaking while shaking his head.

[At the location of the Muse Company, the 3rd Street plaza, the Witch Cult…...A Sin Archbishop made an appearance. That figure created an uproar, so the Witch Cult attack was discovered.]

[An Archbishop……! Before the broadcast?]

[Yes. Indeed, before the broadcast.]

Otto confirmed for the surprised Subaru, who was leaning forward.

But, if you thought about it, that was not impossible. If one were to speak of Sin Archbishops acting before the broadcast, Sirius and Regulus were included too.

Other than Capella who was then attacking City Hall, those Archbishops with free time in Pristella would have been doing something, the likelihood was high--,

[Wait, Otto.]

[????]

At the Subaru whose tone of voice had lowered, Otto's gaze had a grim light.

That worried attitude of his, it confirmed the thoughts appearing in Subaru's imagination.

Sirius and Regulus were both encountering Subaru at the time and so could not be there. Capella too would have been participating in the attack on City Hall.

Saying that, the Archbishop appearing before Otto could only be one.

[The one you met by chance, could it be the Archbishop of?Gluttony??]

[…...Yes. He was claiming to be such. There is no specific reason to lie about it, so I think it is the truth. At the plaza, introducing himself as the Sin Archbishop of Gluttony, he still appeared to be a child.]

Otto's testimony, matched up with what Subaru had seen of Roy Alphard.

The selection standard for Archbishops, it was not that he wanted to know anything about that, but?Gluttony?was at least outwardly a child. A rag-draped, dirty looking child. In words as well as attitude he seemed just like a kid.

[At first, unsure if it was an abandoned child someone called them while drawing closer. Since he was standing guard near the Muse Company, I think it was one of the?White Dragon's Scales?. That person was, the first to succumb to?Gluttony?. Literally, I became unable to move.]

[……]

[Just like that, a person is simply done in, even if it seemed unreal you could not help but believe it. Immediately, more?White Dragon's Scales?all moved to surround him, but it did not come to a happy end.]

With a face growing blue, Otto quietly spoke of that wrenched spectacle.

?Gluttony?, as if he was dancing, simply cut through the mercenaries in order. What was even scarier was, the keen nose of?Gluttony?—It was a sense of smell which never lost track of his prey.

[Because it was that situation, without worrying about who was first, they all tried to run away. However, that guy did not allow that. What he did, I in truth do not know. But even faraway people definitely had attacks from?Gluttony?reach them. Even inside buildings, it was the same.]

[What, was he after?]

After absentmindedly asking, Subaru realized it was a meaningless question.

The acts of the Witch Cult, the motives of those guys had nothing like certainty. Actually, Otto turned his head instead of replying.

[Let’s see, what could it have been.. But anyway, it became a dire situation. Even those trying to flee from that spot, the moment their back was shown they might be attacked. There were few there but it was a complete dead end……. If Kiritaka-san was not there, I think I too could not have made it here.]

[Kiritika, how did he do that?]

[To begin with, it seems he was a careful person. In the president’s office of the Muse Company, there was an underground concealed passage in the building connected to the channel. I escaped from out there using a small boat. While running away, I saw Kiritaka-san's back being cut open.]

[????]

[From the 3rd street, I disorderly ran away is what I am saying. After that, the Witch Cult broadcast happened and it became impossible to walk around in the city carelessly, nevertheless I cautiously moved around the area. Then that happened, and we barely managed to meet, the scene described just before.]

In other words, by “the scene” he means the one where he found Reinhard stuck.

As the story linked up that far, at the same moment Subaru understood that Otto had gone through suffering, and had again by any means managed to survive.

But, in what was said just now, weighing on his thoughts,

[Why did Kiritika go that far? If it was like you said, he even sacrificed his own body to aid in Otto’s escape. That was how it sounded like to me.]

[…...Yes, indeed. Kiritika-san, by sacrificing himself let me escape. At the end, him being slashed, was because he pushed me to the floor and covered me with his body.]

[Why go so far……]

Inside Subaru, his mental picture of Kiritika was almost nonexistent. Even the slight image he had was, of his face going red, him screaming, throwing the magic stones while shaking, it was that situation only. Of course, that this was all there was to the man was not what he had assumed.

But to sacrifice his body trying to save a stranger. That level of strength, in the end he had not seen in him.

[Since I was a customer invited to his shop, he might have held something like a trader's pride. But definitely, it would seem he had a better reason for himself as well. One a little, easier to understand.]

[Easier to understand, you say]

[Did you not realize? It's Natsuki-san.]

To the confused Subaru, Otto firmly asserted as he gave that reply.

When his name appeared abruptly, Subaru was shaken.

At that Subaru's reaction, Otto closed his eyes for a while,

[Looking on the existence known as the Archbishop of Sin, and seeing his own subordinates fall, Kiritika-san must have had something faint left in his inner thoughts. Just, he must have held onto some sense of duty, I think. Then the one that became his hope was, you, Natsuki-san.]

[……]

[After the happenings of the day before, Kiritaka-san already knew about Natsuki-san remaining here. And definitely about your achievement of vanquishing?Sloth?as well. If so, then naturally that would flow into hope. Putting saving me first over all else, it must be because he expected me to join with Natsuki-san as a partner.]

Otto's explanation fit perfectly, and it slammed into Subaru's chest with a thud.

But that nevertheless, was an unreasonable story.

With his head, he knew. To go on, to carry that, it was true, he had decided that already.

But, is it that again. Was everyone expecting that from Subaru?

Just a small, hopeless, and useless person, were they really trusting the fate of the city to someone like that?

[Natsuki-san, please do not misunderstand?]

Unknowingly forming a cynical smile, Subaru was pulled back by a voice.

Otto looked straight ahead, as if gazing into Subaru. He spoke to that stiffening Subaru's expression while shrugging,

[Kiritaka-san too, in his head would have thought of various angles, regarding his role and responsibility

to the city. That Natsuki-san too is hesitating about bearing the fate of the city, I am aware. But, definitely, what Kiritaka-san entrusted Natsuki-san with is a slightly simpler matter.]

[…...What?]

[It is obvious. Somewhere in this city is, the woman Kiritika-san loves. Before wishing for the safety of the city, what he would have hoped for most from Natsuki-san, was for his loved one to be safe.]

[????]

[Because when he pushed me onto the floor, that is what he said.]

In short, Otto wanted to tell Subaru, you struggle too much.

Having taken up the fate of the city just because he felt like it and now worried about that, watching that Subaru now struggling under that weight, he could not help but speak those words.

And that over everything else, stabbed at the tough-acting Subaru’s heart strongly.

His face growing hot, Subaru felt ashamed of himself.

What is this city’s fate, what is all this of hopes and expectations, how ridiculously stupid.

The city, which would find itself in disaster if it was not lifted up and saved, that was just what he was seeing.

A something, which if Subaru failed to protect then it wouldn’t do, it was not like those outwardly obvious and hard words. Making up the city was a person, a single person. Just one, and then another.. It was those lives that mattered.

And each of those lives in turn had another precious to them, and it was just a matter of saving those connections.

[To think of it not as bearing a single large entity, but instead as lifting many small parts of the whole on your back, does that ease your feelings a bit?]

Otto’s assistant power was just too high, Subaru really could only give into to him.

That Subaru’s face which had only been lowered before turned upwards, and at that result Otto seemed satisfied.

[What’s that, isn’t it a nice relationship? Lookin’ at it even makes me a little jealous.]

Sensing a pause in their chat, Anastasia threw out a joke like that. Sitting around, having almost gazed face-to-face as they talked, Subaru and Otto there reflected on themselves.

And then gazing again at all of them, Anastasia tilted her head.

[Even sayin' so, based on what you said…...The Muse Company is finished..]

[We cannot know for sure, that is the truth. I only saw up to Kiritaka-san being slashed, but whether that wound was life-threatening..]

[That?Gluttony?'s motives, is thinking about it a waste of time? To me, no matter what, the idea that he caused that disturbance for no reason is unthinkable.]

The one who had spoken was Julius, making a disgusted face.

That assertive tone of voice stuck in one's mind.

[Don't just get weird like that. Is there, some piece of evidence for that?]

[…...No, that there is some clear basis for it, I cannot claim. It is merely my impression from crossing swords with him at City Hall. That one, to write him off merely as a simple hedonist is mistaken, I believe.]

In that, Subaru was also in agreement. He was not simply a hedonist, he was a malicious hedonist.

But that impression, was it not a different answer than what Julius was assuming..

[According to the broadcast, wasn't?Gluttony?'s request about an artificial spirit? Maybe, there is a chance he had gone to find it?]

[If it is indeed a possibility. However, the more pressing question is, first, should we not suspect whether the being known as an?Artificial Spirit?even exists? Truly, is there even such a thing?]

While Subaru was keeping his mouth shut, Reinhard joined in.

His question, many others that had heard the broadcast's demands must have had as well.

The answer to it, in this place only Subaru and Anastasia knew.

Without meaning to, Subaru peeked at Anastasia's face, but her expression was unchanged, as expected of her experience. She had no intention of being discovered, is that what she was saying?

[??Sorry, just one thing.]

In front of Subaru, who was wavering in his judgement, Otto was again requesting attention.

That guy, with a touch of anxiety held in his face, let out a sigh mixed with resignation.

And,

[On the matter of the artificial spirit, it is also difficult for me to know. But regarding another request, about the?Book of Wisdom?from the contents of ?Wrath?’s.]

Cutting off his words there, after a moment of hesitation Otto spoke.

Arc 5 - Chapter 45, "An Inescapable Curse"

by admin - Friday, September 07, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/09/07/arc-5-chapter-45-an-inescapable-curse/

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Translated by

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ALL RIGHTS BELONG TO **TAPPEI NAGATSUKI**, THE **ORIGINAL AUTHOR** OF RE:ZERO STARTING A LIFE IN A DIFFERENT WORLD FROM ZERO, THIS IS A TRANSLATION OF THE **FREE** JAPANESE WEB NOVEL INTO ENGLISH

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As Wilhelm spoke the name of a Witch he had never heard of before, Subaru shuddered.

He only knew about ‘witches’ aside from Satella from having met the six Witches of Sin in Echidna’s tomb.

That ‘witches’ other than those somehow existed was devastating news.

[Subaru: Then, Wilhelm-san, if that Sphinx witch is involved with this raid by the Witch Cult…… Are you saying, other than the Archbishops there’s another Witch too?]

If so, the main enemies numbered four Archbishops and two warriors. Adding to that a Witch joined to their forces made the already difficult power cost for the task become a desperate matter.

At Subaru’s concerns, Wilhelm, while raising his hand,

[Wilhelm: Pardon me, my wording was unclear. The existence of the Witch known as ‘Sphinx’ perished in the Demihuman War. That one could not have been involved in this raid.]

[Subaru: The witch’s dead? Is there no mistake? Pretending to be dead, and even after really dying having lots of freedom is the impression I have of witches.]

Satella was like that. Whenever Subaru violated the taboo it would draw her out, and in the Citadel of Dreams enjoying her afterlife, Echidna was the same.

Even hearing they were dead guaranteed nothing at all, that was a Witch.

[Wilhelm: What impression Subaru-dono has of witches I am unaware. But Sphinx is only named a witch, it is merely an existence which was called that. The fact is, the forces of the Kingdom referred to it as such, but the concerned party never called itself the same.]

[Subaru: Calling them a concerned party… Did Wilhelm-san ever meet them directly?]

[Wilhelm: There were many times during the civil war. For the end of the Demihuman War, the deciding moment may even have been the beheading of the Sphinx. Roswaal, Bordeaux, and his wife were leading figures of that time.]

[Subaru: Roswaal!?]

An unexpected name popping up caused Subaru to open his eyes wide.

At that reaction from Subaru, Wilhelm slightly lowered his head for a moment and became immersed in thought.

[Wilhelm: I knew the Roswaal-dono of two generations ago. Although back then I wasn't too friendly… she took care of me.]

[Subaru: Two generations ago… aah, is that that case? Then the name 'Roswaal' is inherited from generation to generation.]

[Wilhelm: Unfortunately, she passed away soon afterward, and after that I grew distant from them. the current lord Mathers is only a passing acquaintance… but this is all superfluous talk.]

He was now lending an ear to tales of surprising relationships, but the original topic was definitely not about that.

Subaru nodded his head, and then Wilhelm with "And so" continued his tale.

[Wilhelm: Not the Sphinx, but somehow a being using a spell that acts similarly, is my thought. The method of controlling the dead was at the time called cases of 'Corpse Soldiers'.]

[Subaru: Corpse Soldiers…...That… Does it have anything like weaknesses?]

[Wilhelm: From what I know, the Corpse Soldier is limited to a technique for moving the body. It is not such that it can bring back abilities possessed in life. It merely shames the dead while keeping the appearance, and actually reflects the skills of the culprit instead.]

[Subaru: But, the [Eight Arms] and…… That.]

He was at a loss for words.

The one turned into a Corpse Soldier whose very death was being profaned was Wilhelm's wife. Nevertheless, at Wilhelm who had accepted it Subaru was speaking of it like he was hesitating.

Wilhelm made a bitter face at Subaru's reluctance.

[Wilhelm: I thank you for your concern. But, it is necessary.??Mh, my wife and Kurgan's skills are close to how they were in life. It simply exceeds the power Corpse Soldier can pull out.]

[Subaru: Then, isn't possible that this is something other than Corpse Soldier? If so, then your wife might not even have died……]

[Wilhelm: My wife is dead. Because my strength was lacking.]

The side hanging onto a fragile hope here was Subaru.

That Subaru's feelings Wilhelm's clear voice cut down with a single stroke.

And the words Subaru could say to that elder swordsman's profile were none at all.

[Wilhelm: Even at the time, that which could not simply be judged as merely a Corpse Soldier did very rarely exist. Whether it was due to aptitude in the procedure, or if rather another factor I do not know, but…...We have to consider the strength of those two as such.]

[Subaru: Do you have a way to take them down?]

[Wilhelm: Thoroughly destroying the body, or cutting away too the curse mark somewhere on the body. Then the Corpse Soldier will return to a simple corpse. It must be done this way.]

The deeply thinking Wilhelm's voice could not easily be heard.

Searching for what he should do, coming to conclusions with effort he was searching for it.??His trembling voice, his clenched fist, his scrunched eyes, he was hiding nothing.

[Wilhelm: I apologize for holding you this long. Crusch-sama cannot be made to wait any longer. Now, this way.]

Wilhelm bent his back and indicated the door at the room they had come up to. On the innermost part of the 4th floor, with a crumbled plate labeling it as a lounge was the room.

Inside, Crusch who had called Subaru was waiting.

Passing Wilhelm's side, Subaru with the sound of footsteps headed for the door.

Definitely, the distance to the door felt awfully long. The soles of his shoes stuck to the floor and interfered with Subaru's progress, that was the impression he got.

That it was his defeated self's weakness, Subaru was clearly aware of it.

[Subaru: ??It's me. Natsuki Subaru. Is… Crusch-san?]

He knocked on the door, and with a voice so quiet he wondered if it reached the other called out. Like that, after a moment's brief silence, the other side slowly opened the door.

The face that appeared was Ferris'. But, his appearance had changed entirely.

[Ferris: Subaru-*kyun*…….]

Red eyes puffed up from crying and disheveled brown hair. Covering his body was, not his, but someone else's blood staining black, and with his white skin splattered he must not have had time to clean. His cheek and neck was also smeared with fresh blood.

At that miserable appearance, his breath inadvertently caught in his throat.

[Subaru: Crusch-san called me, I heard. So.]

[Ferris: Yeah. Inside, she's on the bed…….Definitely don't do anything unnecessary please.]

A firm voice, with some hatred near the end.

However, that hate was not directed at Subaru. It could be said to be directed at everything. Hating everyone in this world, rage with nowhere to go was now controlling Ferris.

Taking a deep breath, Subaru followed Ferris inside.

Even calling it a lounge, it was not a very spacious room. Long tables and chairs were arranged in two rows, and further back, the small room was divided by a threshold. The bed was past it.

And, on that shabby bed lay her.

[Crusch: Na, tski-sama?]

The conscious Crusch recognized Subaru had entered and called him by name.

Reacting to that girl's voice, Subaru's neck grew rigid. Readying himself, feigning calm, calling out assuring words.??To be unable to even do something so simple..

[Crusch: My appearance is not presentable… My apologies…..]

[Subaru: …..No, that's not, like that…… It's. Not like that.]

Seeing the frozen appearance of Subaru, Crusch apologized in a lethargic voice. At that girl's sorrowful attitude, the shaken Subaru spoke with vague words.

??Having been drenched in Capella’s blood and clothed in its curse, Crusch was in a wretched state.

Her neck, the back of her hands and feet, over all skin that could be seen dark-blackened veins shone. It was not difficult to imagine that under the towels and blankets and clothes the skin there would be afflicted with the same. These black blood vessels that pulsed instead of circulating blood, as if a writhing serpent seemed to be strangling the thin Crusch’s body instead.

That formerly white, unblemished skin of hers was now being violated horribly.

Of course, the damage was not limited to below the neck.

The gallant Crush’s clever visage, reminiscent of a long drawn sword??Its left had received disfiguring stains. Compared to that, the right side of her face retained her beauty. That rather emphasized the contrast between the two sides, and made the unfairness of a noble person being defiled more apparent.

As if covering the left eye, a patch was hung there, and the sight underneath it was difficult to imagine.

[Subaru: This is…..The same curse of dragon’s blood as on me?]

If it was just the same, then that much was not cruel at all.

Knowing Crusch Karsten, Subaru’s worry did not end at that.

He looked down at his own right leg. Like Crusch’s skin, it also was mottled and wrapped with blackened veins. However, Subaru’s leg, terrible sight notwithstanding, was otherwise unaffected. Neither pain nor feelings of soreness were felt by him at all.

But Crusch was definitely different. Her breathing was labored, and whenever the dark veins pulsed, she sighed as if resisting pain.

[Subaru: Ferris……]

How is it not cured, he turned to gaze at the greatest healer in the kingdom. However, that Subaru’s brief thought only served to hurt Ferris, who was gritting his teeth helplessly, even more.

Biting down on his lips, stabbing his own arms with his nails while bowing his head was Ferris. Ferris understood his lack of power and was dismayed by it more than anyone else there.

Knowing the relationship between the two, Subaru had no reason to doubt all possible methods beyond his imagination had been exhausted already.

[Subaru: Crusch-san…...To me...What is it?]

Why, in such a painful situation had she called out for him?

That there was something he could do, he didn’t think so. Maybe there was something she wanted to say.

To ask for revenge on the [Lust] that had made her this way. Perhaps even some resentful words would be directed towards Subaru.

Even if fed insults, even if curses are poured on, he'll accept it all.

At Subaru's question, Crusch opened her mouth as if it pained her to do so.

Lending those lips his whole body, not missing the feeble sigh she gave, he focused and listened.

And

[Crusch: …...Un...Unharmed...I'm relieved.]

[Subaru: ????]

[Crusch: The same…...As me...Were cursed too…..I heard……]

Subaru felt a burden lift from her in the softness of her relieved sigh.

At the same time, he understood the true feelings in his heart, and he grew so angry at his own stupidity he wanted to die.

He had been thinking it would be easier to be criticized.

So he had doubted Crusch's integrity, and cut down in his view her noble heart. And she had just been truly worried, that Subaru had been afflicted with the same pain as herself.

[Subaru: Sor…...I'm sorry...Crusch-san……]

Having suspected her feelings, the result of things having been her suffering, being unable to suffer instead on her behalf, in a voice mixed with all those feelings he squeezed out.

Without realizing what he was doing, he stretched out his hand and grasped the hands Crusch had weakly laid over her stomach. The black blood vessels had no special texture even if touched. That the feel of skin with this ruined of an appearance did not change was even more pitiful. But,

[Crusch: Fu, u…..?]

[Subaru: Gu!?]

The suddenly falling sound of Crusch's sigh, and at the same time a pained noise from Subaru's throat overlapped.

Agony as if he had grasped a hot iron stabbed into him from his palm. In an instant, Subaru released Crusch's hand and stared at the palm the sensation had come from.

That blackened erosion was spreading over it.

[Subaru: Wh-, at……!?]

[Ferris: Show me, Subaru-kyun!]

Grasping the groaning and hurt Subaru's hand, Ferris inspected the erosion. The light of healing blanketed the spot, but there was no sign of either the pain or the affliction fading away. Instead??

[Subaru: Ferris…...Crusch-san's hand!]

[Ferris: Eh……?]

The wide-eyed Subaru's gaze pulled Ferris to where he was looking. And those yellow eyes, seeing the same thing as Subaru now widened too.

Subaru had grasped Crusch's left hand??On that hand, though slightly, the blackened erosion had thinned.

That change, and looking down at his right hand, what was passing through Subaru's mind was.

[Subaru: No way, it moved from Crusch's body to mine…...Is that it?]

It could only be thought of like that. The touched hand and the change on his own was directly a plus and a minus. That the lightened curse had traveled to Subaru's body from Crusch, there was no reason to doubt.

[Ferris: Bu, but, I haven't changed at all? I examined Crusch-sama's body, I touched her many many times since…… Me, for me…...]

At Subaru's hypothesis, Ferris shook his head.

That was not joy at a possibility for healing being found, but rather an appearance of suspecting that the hypothesis was false. No, his own feelings were definitely different.

[Ferris: I can't make Crusch-sama feel better…...]

[Subaru: Then let's try it one more time.]

Pushing aside the taken-aback Ferris, Subaru once again stood before Crusch. Crusch, with a face that was unaware of what had occurred yet was directing glistening eyes at the approaching Subaru. To not show a frozen face for that eyepatch-wearing single-eyed gaze, Subaru took a deep breath.

To check it again, this time, he lightly brushed Crusch's cheek.

[Subaru: ??Gu, euh!]

Immediately after, Subaru's brain was stabbed. With pain as if magma spilled into his veins. Through the tips of his fingers, the body-violating curse in Crusch's body flowed in and burned his senses.

[Subaru: Ga, aaaah!]

Feeling stabbing pains which were difficult to bear, Subaru loudly screamed and yanked his body away. Like that, falling back with the momentum, the hand which was touching Crusch fell away.

[Subaru: Ah, ha, haa……]

His lungs shivered, and his eyeballs cramped.

Like a fish on land, parting his lips Subaru desperately sought oxygen.

[Ferris: Su, Subaru-kyun…...Are you ok?]

Seeing his breathing start to calm, Ferris spoke to Subaru. Barely able to spare enough feeling to notice the hard floor he had landed on, he raised his body with difficulty.

And gazing up at the face of Crusch lying in bed

[Subaru: How is it, Ferris. Was it a little effective?]

[Ferris: Ah……]

With a plop, Ferris who had confirmed Crusch's condition sat back down again.

He too would have seen with his own eyes. The cheek which was eroded by the curse was, from that curse, relieved a little bit. If such treatment was possible, then saving Crusch was also??.

[Crusch: You can't, Natsuki-sama…...]

To try once more Subaru rose. However, it was none other than Crusch herself that stopped him.

Not understanding the meaning of her words, Subaru asked.

[Subaru: Did you not…notice? Your hand is……]

[Crusch: ??Hand?]

Hearing this, she looked down at her right hand. And it was then that she finally realized the change that had occurred.

Just like the right leg blackened veins spread over the skin. That much was fine. If it was that much, his resolve to take on Crusch's curse would not be shaken.

But, there was definitely something strange here.

Compared to the erosion which had been taken from Crusch, the extent was much greater.

The erosion on her body, the darkened parts of her left hand and cheek had grown a shade lighter due to Subaru's touch.

However, Subaru who had taken it up onto his right arm from the elbow down to the back of the skin had been completely covered by the blackened erosion. The degree of it was definitely not comparable at all.

The ratio the curse was transferred at was not one-to-one. It was more on the level of ten-to-one.

[Subaru: No, even then…...]

Whether that was cause to hesitate was another matter.

There was pain in the moment of transfer. But, once it had been accepted onto the body, there was no sign yet that the curse would actually hurt Subaru.

Compared to Crusch's constant hellish suffering, what Subaru received was but for a moment. There, between man or woman, which side should bear the burden of its torture, there wasn't even any need to consider it.

Whether it was his right leg or right hand blackening, if it was for the sake of saving Crusch it didn't matter.

[Crusch: Natsuki-sama, that cannot be…...I am unable to accept those feelings.]

[Subaru: Don't be silly. It only stings a little so it's fine. Compared to getting a tattoo while showing off and regretting it later, let's think about it as dirtying a body that was like that in the first place. I can take away the pain too. It's strange, but it doesn't give me any trouble. So.]

[Crusch: Can you guarantee that will be true in the future? …...It could be that both Natsuki-sama and I become unable to fight. In this current situation that would be a fatal blow……]

Worrying more for the city and the people than her own body, that was Crusch's judgment. It was logically sound, but not everything should be pressed forward with just that.

[Crusch: Ferris, please stop Natsuki-sama……]

[Ferris: I, I am……]

[Crusch: Please. Because Natsuki-sama is now one who is needed by others than just myself……]

[Ferris: If Subaru-kyun resolved to help…… K-Krusch-sama's suffering..]

The hesitating judgment of Ferris was one which kept Crusch first. That nobody could blame him for. None of those present was in the wrong, after all.

The notion that ‘whatever is not wrong is right’ was mistaken.

[Crusch: You must not be overwhelmed by the emotions of a single moment. Natsuki-sama, I ask of you……]

[Subaru: Crusch-san, even then I am.]

[Crusch: Didn’t...You say so before.??What’s left, leave it all to me.]

[Subaru: ??Euh!]

Crusch’s pleading eyes took hold of Subaru and would not let go.

Had those reliable words come from his mouth? Hearing that, for Crusch to say all that, was she telling him to..?

[Crusch: Please say that to...Me as well……]

[Subaru: ????]

[Crusch: ‘All that’s left, to leave it all to me.’]

A pained smile was awaiting Subaru’s words.

Swallowing his breath and shifting his tongue in his dry mouth, Subaru quietly closed his eyes.

Without thinking of the future, only immersed in what was in front of him, he was making her say things that didn’t need to be said, so at least??.

[Subaru: Crusch-san, calmly rest here, please.]

[Crusch: …...Natsuki…sama.]

[Subaru: Because everything that’s left, you can leave it all to me.]

[Crusch:??Yes.]

If it was just filling the needed role and saying the desired words, then it just had to be done.

Hearing Subaru’s reply, Crusch took a deep breath and seemed to relax.

Her eyelids weakly blinking shut not a moment after proved that, up until now, by any means possible she had been holding onto attentiveness. At that moment breathing a quiet sigh, Crusch once more began her

time of battling with the effects of the curse.

[Subaru: Sorry, Ferris. But I have to go now.]

[Ferris: I'm…...What should I...Is it alright?]

Draping a towel like a blanket over Crusch and standing up, Subaru heard a small voice as he was leaving. It was the first time Subaru had seen Ferris showing weakness.

In his innermost thoughts, what he wanted now was to remain at Crusch's side.

But in the current situation, Ferris' ability would not allow for such a thing.

[Subaru: I need your strength. I'm not saying to leave City Hall. But if something happens, I'll let them know to evacuate the wounded here. So, I'll leave that that to you.]

[Ferris: …...The one I wanted to save most…And I can't help them.]

[Subaru: Ferris……]

[Ferris: Sorry. I said something silly…...Just give me a moment, please.]

While looking away, Ferris sat down on a chair next to the bed. Subaru finally lightly patted his shoulder and stepped out of the lounge.

Unchanged from when he had entered, Wilhelm remained waiting in the hallway.

[Wilhelm: Thank you very much for considering Crusch-sama's feelings.]

Towards the returning Subaru Wilhelm said this. Did what happened within leak out outside, or perhaps Subaru's expression was just easy to read?

[Subaru: It isn't some noble tale like I considered her feelings. Since it's more a story of how I was encouraged…….My body, what's up with it anyway?]

Taking on Crusch's curse, and its effect being weakened against him in the first place. Going back even further, the so-called witch factor and [Return by Death], all of it was really vague.

One day, would he get to see their reasons and their end?

[Subaru: Crusch-san will leave it to Ferris. When everything is solved, I'm thinking of trying what I did before once more.]

[Wilhelm: Is that right arm all right?]

[Subaru: At first glance it's a bit iffy. If I wore long sleeves and wore gloves it might be ok…...For the

sake of rescuing a pretty girl, just one scar that doesn't fade away isn't any trouble at all.]

Even though he had some aversion to it, that was Subaru's true feelings.

If there wasn't any other solution, then taking on Crusch's curse fully was also fine. Even if his body became pitch-black because of it. Emilia, Rem, and Beatrice, he would have to beg forgiveness from all of them.

[Subaru: But, that's all talk for after we pass this hurdle and live. Wilhelm-san, let's head down. They're probably talking about the plan to retake the control towers right now.]

Probably, all the top-class powers that this side could muster would already be gathered there.

What followed after would depend on the cooperation and abilities of the Archbishops of Sin, as well as the timing and execution of the plan of attack. From the deadline imposed by the Witch Cult, only six hours were left.

[Wilhelm: Subaru-dono, regarding that matter I have a request.]

[Subaru: A request?]

Wilhelm's words stopped Subaru as he headed for the stairs??The elder swordsman nodded his head with the lobby door behind his back, showing concern in his eyes for his mistress within.

[Wilhelm: If it is possible, please recommend for me the task of subjugating [Lust]. Since I understand well its powers of mutation and super-regeneration, I will request this of you.]

[Subaru: Is that revenge for Crusch-san?]

[Wilhelm: It is so, but beyond that, it is essential to capture [Lust] alive and hear from it about what was done to Crusch. For that I will even become a demon. Before cutting off its head, I will definitely pry from it the truth.]

The killing intent given off by the Sword Demon felt like a wave of heat to Subaru.

Furiously, darkly, having been unable to do anything, Wilhelm's ardor to avenge his mistress now rose up like flames.

[Subaru: That spirit is fine…...But are the corpse soldiers alright?]

[Wilhelm: ????]

[Subaru: Your wife, wouldn't you know her best? No matter what happens, Wilhelm will be needed to make judgments.]

[Wilhelm: Subaru-dono, has Reinhard arrived below?]

Wilhelm suddenly interrupted as he spoke of his concerns.

Awkwardly, Subaru nodded. Reinhard's powers could not be left out of the attack. However, that the warriors would be there as obstacles for him was certain.

[Wilhelm: The true nature of the corpse soldiers, could you avoid speaking of it to Reinhard?]

[Subaru: …...Huh?]

The perplexed Subaru was unable to grasp the reason for the abrupt request.

[Subaru: Then…...Don't tell that guy about Wilhelm's wife…...Is that what you mean?]

[Wilhelm: Yes, it is so. For Reinhard…... For my son, I want to avoid him meeting my wife in the form of a corpse soldier. He will surely blame me. Because the fault is none other than my own.]

[Subaru: Wilhelm-san's fault, to say that kind of thing..]

It's not true, he wanted to say, but Subaru could not carelessly remark so.

Because the image of Heinkel's appearance ruining the mood earlier in the morning had appeared in his mind.

There was no credibility. But it could not be denied.

Wilhelm considered Reinhard the cause of his wife's death. And such a difficult and unbelievable past he did not deny.

[Wilhelm: Does Subaru-dono think that the [Blessing of the Sword Saint] as something special?]

[Subaru:…...Honestly speaking, I would say I know little about it. Maybe the people called [Sword Saint] all had it and if you have it you become incredibly strong, I only have an impression like that…...]

[Wilhelm: To know of it as that isn't wrong. But if there is a difference between the [Blessing of the Sword Saint] and other blessings…...Is that, it can be inherited.]

[Subaru: An inherited...Blessing……]

At Subaru's breath, Wilhelm nodded.

The elder swordsman closed his eyes as if recalling sorrowful memories.

[Wilhelm: That blessing has passed down without fail from the time of Reid Astrea. The blessing became the inheritance of the Astrea family, and always a member of the clan was chosen to be the next Sword Saint. My wife's blessing definitely passed down to Reinhard.]

[Subaru: So a blessing that is inherited down the clan…..Is it…Is that so. And when your wife passed away, the blessing transferred to Reinhard.]

While understanding that too, something caught in Subaru's head as he was growing convinced.

After the Sword Saint was slain by the White Whale, the line of succession led to Reinhard. It was a sad past, but one that could also be described a proper passing on.

That flow did not fit at all with what had been said in the argument between Astreas this morning.

Wilhelm's heartbreak, Heinkel's mockery, Reinhard's silence, was interfering with the idea of a proper succession.

And the answer is??

[Wilhelm: It was, at the time of the White Whale subjugation.]

[Subaru: Wilhelm...san……]

[Wilhelm: Reinhard received the blessing while my wife was in the middle of the expedition against the White Whale. During that conflict, my wife, abandoned by the sword, could only take on the battle as an ordinary woman.]

??That was the truth of the Astrea family division.

In the midst of the battle to subjugate the White Whale, the blessing had suddenly passed down during the fighting. And, on the battlefield, the result was that only the now-former Sword Saint remained.

Now left a predecessor and an ordinary person, to defend many other soldiers she had still fought with the Witchfiend??And they had lost contact with her.

[Wilhelm: The one that took away the sword from my wife was none other than me. Overruling my wife who was loved by the sword, forcing her to cast it aside, and turning her into an ordinary woman, it was none other than myself. That, was what called forth the death of my wife.]

[Subaru: ????]

[Wilhelm: The sword that my wife betrayed did not forgive her, and so her blessing was taken away on the battlefield. She could rely only on a single blade, I think of how she must have felt then.....It was true that I could not accept it, and defamed Reinhard whom the blessing had chosen. As he was weeping over the death of his grandmother and bearing the heavy new burden, I impetuously could not forgive him...I, regret that now.]

Last night, the regret that Wilhelm had revealed to Subaru??It, was that mistake.

Even knowing that Reinhard had not done anything wrong, Wilhelm had been mourning his wife's death

and was unable to accept it. As a result, the Astreas had split apart.

[Wilhelm: I do not want to repeat it again. Reinhard has no blame in my wife's death. I have no reason to blame my grandson at all.]

And so, instead of revealing it to Reinhard he was saying he would bring this to a close himself.

That feeling, he now understood painfully well from this talk. If Subaru could do it, he wanted to as well. But, the burden Wilhelm bore was too high.

[Subaru: About Crusch-san and your wife…...It will be buried there, Wilhelm-san. Even if I don't talk about the corpse soldiers, the question of where they might appear is..]

[Wilhelm: That is definitely a needless worry, Subaru-dono.]

[Subaru: Huh……?]

Wilhelm shook his head at Subaru as he was about to point out that it was not certain.

And the Sword Demon spoke as his expression twisted into a fearsome grimace.

[Wilhelm: ??Because, there is no chance of my wife not coming to meet me.]

Arc 5 - Chapter 47, "Recapturing the City Outpost"

by admin - Thursday, September 13, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/09/13/arc-5-chapter-47-recapturing-the-city-outpost/

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Translated by

- Fr, u/fr81

Proofread by

- Members of our Discord Channel!

Original post

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[Subaru: First, let’s leave the work of dealing with [Wrath] to Priscilla’s team. We have assurance from Reinhard that Liliana has a blessing.]

[Reinhard: An unfamiliar blessing may not sound very reassuring. But certainly, if it is Liliana-sama’s song, I believe it may be an effective countermeasure for what we’ve heard about [Wrath].]

Following Subaru and Reinhard’s remarks, the gazes of the round table participants turned to Liliana.

She was playing with her braid, and while holding it under her nose, she was play-acting as if it was a [beard],

[Liliana: Ee-yeh, please leave it to me. This Liliana, once she gets a request, she definitely gets the work done. Rest assured, I only sing. In a place where my singing is desired. And if wanted I trill! Isn't this such a happy thing! If I could even get some tips, then that's time to throw up my arms and celebrate!]

[Subaru: Something like a tip won't be coming out of this, so first quit with the capitalist pig talk.]

[Liliana: *Bu-hi— !*]

The excited Liliana deflated, and now Priscilla let out a snort instead. With eyes like red flames, she turned to inspect Subaru and Reinhard in turn.

[Priscilla: Seeing two boys gossiping in whispers, I looked into what they were plotting, but it seems they are merely wasting their energy on a useless consultation. That singer's worth by mine own self has already been confirmed. I will deign to crush this mere fanatic fool.]

[Subaru: Even saying that, to be certain it's necessary to check……]

[Priscilla: How amusing.—A singer is one who stakes their life on singing. This singer who ran her mouth, why would she take on some uncertain danger to her life. To take that kind of risk, there is just no point.]

[Subaru: ——]

Saying those words, didn't leave Subaru much to reply with. In truth, the one that suggested using Liliana, and believing it enough to face off against [Wrath] was Priscilla herself.

Unlike her words and attitude, her prudence and cleverness were exceptional, and already well-known.

[Al: Princess, don't be botherin' bro too much. Let's just stay quiet, us two.]

[Priscilla: What's that, Al? Worm, are your thoughts and your views still crooked? You've aged quite enough as a man but still just act like a girl, I see. Do not lower your worth bit-by-bit even further in front of these commoners.]

[Al: …...'s not like that.]

Turning away his gaze with a swish, Al rested his chin on his right arm and entered a complete observer mode. Priscilla also gave a snort and got off his back about it.

Finally, it seemed like the story could flow into the next part now.

[Subaru: And with that, the attack on [Wrath] will be left to Priscilla's team. For the others…… It's about [Lust]. About who to handle that one, I would like to nominate Wilhelm-san for the assignment.]

[Julius: Nominating Wilhelm-sama? May I ask about the meaning of that?]

[Wilhelm: I have humbly requested as much from Subaru-dono, Julius-dono.]

Towards the wondering Julius, Wilhelm raised his hand and answered.

The elder swordsman collected his gaze, and lightly shifted it upstairs.

[Wilhelm: As you all well know, my mistress Crusch-sama is suffering still under the effects of the witch [Lust]'s cruel power. I am under obligation to fight for my mistress as Crusch-sama's servant. This is also a wish of mine that goes beyond my sense of duty.]

[Anastasia: If possible, you want to capture the Sin Archbishop alive, and ask 'em about those symptoms. Wilhelm-san's motive must be somethin' like that.]

[Wilhelm: As you say, and for that, if the subjugation of [Lust] could be left to me?]

Those blue eyes with strong will behind them, gave off a darkness which pressured the room.

Wilhelm's deeply-held determination, and his righteousness towards his mistress—With eyes that showed those feelings, nobody could raise halfhearted words against it.

Except only, of his own flesh and blood.

[Reinhard: In truth, I am opposed to it.]

[Wilhelm:…...Reinhard]

While everyone was overwhelmed by the swordsman, only Reinhard's expression did not change. Staring at Wilhelm with his usual serious expression,

[Reinhard: Currently grandfather has lost his composure. Of course, to feel hostility towards the Sin Archbishop who harmed Crusch-sama is understandable. However, I do not believe that you will be able to achieve the objective with that feeling.]

[Wilhelm: Losing your calm, is a distraction from achieving the objective? Is that what you are saying to me?]

[Reinhard: Considering Crusch-sama, the failure to capture [Lust] is not forgivable. Therefore, I will take on that task. At least, I will be able to face that side with a better mental state.]

Reinhard's words were correct, and formed with sound logic that considered possible situations to ensure as much certainty as possible.

That Wilhelm was being too forceful, and was losing his composure was not incorrect. But, when Reinhard gave that opinion, Wilhelm loosened his lips. Surely not gently, but instead with a smile like a wild beast's.

[Wilhelm: —Losing calmness here is a given, Reinhard.]

[Reinhard: Nevertheless, grandfather……]

[Wilhelm: Just who, are you thinking your grandfather is? I am the Sword Demon Wilhelm. Giving my effort all to live as just a sword, but unable to stop myself from coming to love a woman too, only half. Though in my method of existence I only came halfway, in the end, for what needed to be done, I have *never* let it stay unfinished!]

A fierce smile, came over Wilhelm's clear and mild impression. It now reminded one of, blood and iron and life burning with flame, the ghost of one whose daylight feelings were taken away.

[Wilhelm: When I decide to wield the sword, my heart is uplifted. Even not being calm, on the battlefield it is all the same to me. That is how I have lived on to this age. This time also, I have no intention of rotting away without repaying my obligation to my mistress in full. Your pointless worry is not necessary.]

[Reinhard: That reasoning, is not just that mentality……]

[Wilhelm: A mentality held to the end becomes certainty. Even if it takes fourteen years, even what some may call a blunted sword will fulfill my vengeance on my wife's enemies.]

If, by the White Whale fight, Wilhelm said his revenge for his grandmother was paid in full, Reinhard could not say anything more to that.

But even then, Reinhard was lowering his eyes unconvinced. At the obstinate posture of his grandson, Wilhelm with [Besides…...] continued on.

[Wilhelm: The battlefield which needs you is not here. The scene you are needed in is elsewhere.]

[Reinhard: The scene I am needed in……]

[Wilhelm:—Subaru-dono. My grandson, please take him with you to your battlefield. To rescue Emilia-sama, you will need to battle [Greed]. This Reinhard, would act as a sword for you.]

Suddenly having his name called, Subaru opened his eyes wide. As if pulled along by the nodding Wilhelm, Reinhard's gaze also turned to him.

At that appearance, Subaru scratched his head as if thinking it can't he helped.

[Subaru: Honestly, I wanted to wait to say this until after the talk of [Lust] was sorted out…...Yeah. Your power is frankly, something I want to borrow for the fight against [Greed] I'm in charge of. For that annoying fucker, I definitely think I'll need your strength.]

Regulus of [Greed] floated into his mind.

According to his fragmented knowledge of the Sin Archbishop' abilities, the power Regulus possessed was the most dangerous of them all, unless the target was a crowd.

Though he could not say for sure, in the current situation, he could not imagine calling it by anything other than a stupid word like [Invincible]. Of course, he did not want to think of him as a simply [Invincible] existence. Some kind of weakness or limit had to exist, that was what he wanted to believe, but.

[Subaru: To break through the [Invincible] protection of Regulus, to fight that guy we need strong attacking ability. His offensive and defensive ability, simply compared with the other the Sin Archbishops, I think is at the top. So I want to borrow Reinhard's power for when we attack him.]

[Reinhard: An untouchable opponent…… Certainly, for a monster such as that, I would be the right choice. However.]

Even after hearing of Regulus' absurd power, Reinhard's hesitation did not disappear. But, seeing Reinhard's worrying, another voice rang out.

That sound was coming from, none other than the one next to Subaru.

[???: —Then. Wilhelm gramps will just be goin' with my amazin' self.]

Striding forward was Garfiel, gnashing his sharp fangs as he glared at Reinhard.

Reinhard was making a surprised face at him, as if wondering, [You are?].

[Garfiel: The Captain is proposin' you. Yer skills, my amazin' self knows about that too. For rescuin' Emilia-sama, my amazin' self 's not needed, then. Right, Captain?]

[Subaru: No, Garfiel.. For me, even if it's like that I don't want to just tell that to you……]

[Garfiel: I don't need comfortin'. And I'm not sayin' this stuff just 'cause I'm sulkin'. It's the other way around. For my amazin' self, this time there's another bastard that needs seein' to here.]

His brows furrowing at the roughly breathing Garfiel's attitude, Subaru realized too late.

That was it. Among those whose appearances had been changed by [Lust] during the city hall recapture, there had been a person who was like a friend to him—Turned into a black dragon, such a person had existed then.

Then, for Garfiel, [Lust] was not just an unrelated opponent.

Besides—,

[Garfiel: It's true that we can't forgive that damn woman, but it's not jus' that. When we fought against that second one, it was where [Lust] was last time.]

[Subaru: ——]

[Garfiel: ‘Cause of my amazin’ self’s mistake, there’s an idiot that got injured without needin’ to there. So my amazin’ self, I have to give as good as they got fer that one. An’ so, my amazin’ self will be followin’ gramps over there.]

At Garfiel’s keen gaze, Wilhelm slowly lowered his chin.

Here, the elder swordsman and the young warrior both, were united together in a fight for vengeance. At the root, they both shared motives borne of thinking strongly about women they care about, so they had even more in common.

Towards Garfiel’s expression, Subaru too had nothing more to say.

[Subaru: I might be repeating myself here, but [Lust]’s power is Variation and Change. She alters herself and can also force mutations onto others. And, her blood. No matter what, do not let her blood touch you. It’s what caused Crusch-san’s injuries. Personality-wise…...They’re all terrible, but she’s especially bad.]

[Wilhelm: Understood.]

[Garfiel: Stomp on ‘em and crush ‘em.]

At Subaru’s last confirmation, neither Wilhelm nor Garfiel showed any sign of backing down.

When Subaru finally made eye contact with Reinhard to check what he thought, the Sword Saint who had been firm up to this resolute scene seemed to have lost the desire to speak.

[Reinhard: It does not matter. Garfiel’s ability is certain. And if grandfather is there, then by whatever means necessary he will cut them down, that can be relied on.]

[Garfiel: You sayin’ it like that, ‘s unconvincin’. ’S like, [The torktoi’s mild but ‘s taste’s superb.]]

[Reinhard: It is the truth. Your, and grandfather’s, victory I believe in it. I will act as Subaru’s sword.]

As Garfiel scratched his face with an uncomfortable look, Reinhard nodded his head at Subaru. From the Sword Saint’s believable words, Subaru felt like he had earned a lot of help.

[Subaru: I’m sorry about this selfish desire, Reinhard.]

[Reinhard: It is fine. No matter where the battlefield is, I will give my utmost efforts. If that will be of help to you, then that is what I wished for.]

[Subaru: For just relying on you, I’m really sorry. The situation is, I’m relying too much on you being really strong…….The parts where you’re lacking, I’ll fill them in somehow, so please look forward to it.]

[Reinhard: ——]

Hearing those words, Reinhard suddenly widened his eyes and shut his mouth. Subaru tilted his head at

the rarely-seen reaction, and Reinhard right away with a [No,] laughed a bit.

[Reinhard: For you, that would be, nothing at all.——Aah, I will look forward to it. You filling in for me, the parts I cannot reach.]

[Subaru: —? Then, look forward to it a lot. So, I think we know the flow by now, but inevitably there's [Gluttony], the last one..]

[Julius: Then, me and Ricardo, are left to be in charge of that.]

Following after Subaru's words, the one agreeing in a low voice was Julius. Hearing him speak in a rough voice which was unlike him, Anastasia directed a concerned gaze at the knight.

[Anastasia: Julius, you alright? Since before, your complexion isn't lookin' so good..]

[Julius: I apologize for causing you anxiety. However, I am fine. When speaking of comforts and discomforts of the body, I cannot make something like weak complaints in front of Subaru.]

[Subaru: What do you mean, by that.]

[Julius: Of course, I was thinking of your difficulties with your leg when I spoke. Please do not snap at me like that. In a situation like this, I have no intention of getting into arguments with you.]

[Subaru: Mu...…]

He took a lot of damage from a motive that he hadn't thought of. At the same time, he felt a strange sense of something being out of place. Julius' appearance seemed suspicious to him just as it had been for Anastasia. Why that was, he still didn't know, but even then..

[Julius: Ricardo and I will be taking the leftover responsibility of handling [Gluttony]. Originally, Subaru and Wilhelm-sama would have served as his opponent. Due to their ties with him, they would have wanted to manage it themselves. Because you assigned this task to us while enduring those feelings, we will definitely carry it out for both of you to see.]

[Subaru: …...Aah, it's like that.]

What Julius felt was, Subaru would have wanted to subjugate [Gluttony] himself. Wilhelm would too, and above them now the still-suffering Crusch would have felt the same.

By the memory-eating, name-consuming [Gluttony]'s authority—Thinking of the still sleeping Rem who had suffered that damage, Subaru wanted to crush [Gluttony] completely with his own hand.

Hitting, kicking, stomping on him, forcing him to regret the atrocities he has committed, to turn his face into a teary mess as he forced him to bow down to the ground until he felt catharsis, that was what he wanted to do.

That role, he had given over to others——.

[Subaru: No matter who it is, honestly, I don't want to leave it to them. Rem.. I wanted to restore her. I wanted to get her back myself. I believed that doing that was my role.]

[Julius: ...…]

[Subaru: But, if it won't do unless I entrust it to someone, then I'll leave it to you. Don't get the wrong idea. It's the process of elimination…...That it's by process of elimination there's no doubt, but I will leave it to you. For me, you're the only one I can tolerate handing this role to, even if I don't like it.

Rem's very memory and existence, was being held hostage.
Emilia's freedom had been taken away, and she was still waiting for help to come.
Both of them were precious relations to Subaru, both of them were precious people he had to get back, and so to both of them Subaru wanted to show them his cool side.

However, Subaru was Emilia's knight, and Rem's hero too, so.

[Subaru: I will topple [Greed], and I will rescue Emilia. Blowing away [Gluttony], I'll hand it to you…….Don't screw it up.]

[Julius: ——To your expectations, I will respond. Especially this time, definitely this time.]

With a firm nod, Julius accepted Subaru's yielding.

The knight called the [Greatest] then gazed towards Wilhelm, and inclined his head slightly.

[Julius: Wilhelm-sama.]

[Wilhelm: Of what I wanted to say, Subaru-dono has spoken most of that for me. It is true that I do not have the most harmonious feelings for [Gluttony]…...And so too, I will entrust it to Julius-dono. There are too many scoundrels caught up in this.]

From that Sword Demon growing sharp, Julius seemed to gain a bit of courage. Ricardo, who had until then quietly observed their talk, now said

[Ricardo: An' what's this, my thoughts don' even seem to be heard in this talk goin' on. I don't even get to be cared that much, 's that it! Now that this lineup so far 's the best, I can agree to that.]

[Anastasia: Ricardo really is wantin' attention. Gettin' miffed like that with your big size doesn't really look cute, you know…...Julius, I will ask of you.]

[Ricardo: Relax. Have ya ever see me lyin'? Ana-bo.]

[Anastasia: Usin' that title, could you rightly stop that? I'm, Ricardo's mistress you know.]

Ricardo guffawed loudly at the sight of Anastasia's miffed face and puffed up cheeks. The black-iris eyes that gazed down on Anastasia, had a very kind glint in them.

[Subaru: Then, with this, the lineups are decided, right.]

—Following Subaru's remark, all those present at the round table nodded their heads.

[Subaru: For the attack on Sirius of [Wrath], Priscilla and Al. Counting Liliana, that's three in all.]

[Priscilla: The notion that mine self may succumb to the toying of emotions is a laughable one indeed. Showing mine opponent how they were in the wrong place at the wrong time while facing the wrong enemy, such a helpless fool deserves a lesson!]

[Liliana: I only sing~, I only sing~ It's what I am, just a lump of meat that sings! Do not cherish your life, cherish the stage. Okay, good, I feel like I can do it. Right now, I really feel like I can do it!]

[Subaru: ????]

Priscilla fanned herself as Liliana engaged in questionable self-hypnosis. Al's face could not be seen, but the impression that he was still not convinced seemed to come from his whole body.

Though it was a mildly unsettling trio, confidence-wise they were the strongest there.

[Subaru: Next up, for the capturing of [Lust], Garfiel and Wilhelm-san.]

[Garfiel: Got it. My amazin' self will grab 'em by the throat, 'n make 'em cry, 'n say sorry.]

[Wilhelm: Please leave it to me.??With the both of us, it is assured.]

The pair with the most fighting spirit, could it be said to be these two?

The Sword Demon Wilhelm had his mistress' obligation, and also his wife, who he could not forget even for a moment.

As for Garfiel, there was some form inside him that could not be grasped, some emotion that made his feelings shake.

Perhaps these two warriors both sought some answers in the battle ahead, he couldn't be sure if that's how they felt.

[Subaru: And for the conquest of [Gluttony], it's the two of you, Julius and Ricardo.]

[Julius: By none other than you both, we have been entrusted this task. It will certainly be resolved. Like this, then, I will negate him.]

[Ricardo: My family, those damn bastards made 'em suffer. I don't need t' hear those words to know.

I'll punch 'em, hit 'em hard and make 'em cry.]

This pair had the least connections to the Witch Cult. And yet they could safely be expected to not fall behind the others, since it was definitely certain that both were highly respected opponents.

Together, he had already overcome hardship with them. Nowhere in these comrades-in-arms lay any cause for doubt.

Because of that, the choice to yield the detestable [Gluttony] was made possible.

[Subaru: The last one is [Greed], with Reinhard and I making two. I'm counting on you?]

[Reinhard: ?Aah, leave it to me. I am depending on you as well, Subaru.]

At Subaru's request, Reinhard nodded his head with his usual resolute attitude. But something in his draped mien seemed soft, and while in the middle of battle it may strike one as insincere, but now his appearance seemed to overflow with humanity.

Why it was such a reassuring look, Subaru could not know.

[Subaru: Then, with this, the choices for the fights are decided. And on the matter of choosing places to set up communication mirrors for reports, there are three of them in all. Assuming I leave one in City Hall….For the others left, what should we do?]

[Subaru: Personally, I definitely want someone to take one for [Wrath]. And one to…… [Lust] or [Gluttony], one of those two would be nice, I think.]

[???: What are your reasons?]

[Subaru: [Wrath] is someone with influence over the whole city. By whether they fall or not, the situation that befalls the city will be changed. Therefore, that news is something I want to be able to share quickly.]

Regarding the use of communication mirrors, they all nodded as if Subaru's suggestion was the truth. As for the reason for bringing a different one to [Greed],

[Subaru: It doesn't really need to be said, but Reinhard will be with [Greed]. Assuming anything more about [Greed] than his power being unknown is optimistic, but I can't say that the possibility of it being handled instantly doesn't exist. If it becomes like that, I want to set up a situation where Reinhard can be sent as reinforcements.]

[Reinhard: However, unless the team at [Greed] possesses a communication mirror, then sharing that information is impossible, is it not? But, I certainly believe that Natsuki-san's opinion is largely correct.]

[Subaru: The answer to that is simple. Use the broadcast magic device. With a city-wide broadcast, I want us to keep everyone informed of places that need help. Using the communication mirror, Anastasia-san will organize all the information, and will take on the responsibility of conveying it to everyone. How's

that?]

[Anastasia: I'm thinkin' that's wise. Your head seems t' work well sometimes, Natsuki-kun.]

Anastasia laughed with an impressed look, and tossed a communication mirror at Priscilla.

Priscilla caught it with her fan, and rolled it in front of Liliana.

[Liliana: Wa, wa, *wah*!?]

[Priscilla: Singer, you take it. Since mine self cannot lift anything heavier than tableware.]

[Liliana: That fan, it's almost as heavy as some dishes. Don't say pompous things.]

[Priscilla: Do not speak so foolishly, inspect this design. Gold is hung and inlaid from it luxuriously, and from just that it is weighty. Do not toss it in with the likes of dishes.]

[Liliana: Isn't that heavier than the dishes…...]

Regardless of what she said, in the end Liliana wound up taking it. Ignoring Liliana, who was quickly fixing her hair in the mirror, the last communication mirror was passed to Wilhelm.

[Subaru: Considering the number of enemies, the [Lust] side will need a mirror more than the group for [Gluttony]. Two people will be fine, I thinking, but contact Anastasia right away if it seems dangerous.]

[Wilhelm: Understood, I will be sure to contact her.]

Showing consideration for Julius, Wilhelm placed the mirror in his breast pocket.

However, it was a slightly worrying judgment. As it is, Wilhelm could become hot with fury and ignore the instructions from now. And Garfiel, needless to say, was the type to explode at the slightest provocation.

?Regardless, like this the battle preparations were complete.

[Subaru: I'll leave, a little more time. When that ends we will start, the Control Towers Recapture Operation commences.]

At Subaru's words, all present replied by nodding their heads.

However, seeing their quiet, tense appearances, Subaru thought the mood was bad anyhow.

[Subaru: If you're making angry faces, don't you get the feeling that bad stuff gets closer?]

[Otto: Once more a sign that Natsuki-san will say something strange occurred.]

[Subaru: It’s not weird. It’s important. No matter how large of an army gathers, if morale is low, it can turn into a rabble. I’m not saying our morale is low here, but I don’t think my motives are bad. So, let’s raise our voice.]

While clapping his hands, Subaru stood up.

[Subaru: Let’s clean it all up, everyone! With this fight, get rid of the the city-disturbing bastards! The Witch Cult fails and we get a *happy end*!]

[Others: ??]

At Subaru’s urging, they looked at each others’ faces. Then, nodding,

[Others: Hooooh?!!]

Like that, a high-morale reply came back.

If they can give such a strong answer, then they’ll definitely be fine.

This many members, this much of a vanguard, it wasn’t something that could just be prepared again.

?The city recapture, began in earnest.

[Subaru: ?This fight, is our victory!!]

With Subaru saying whatever he wanted, the round table meeting concluded.

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Sometime later, her muffled sensations recovering, her consciousness slowly returned to reality.

As reality started to permeate through drowsy senses, the feelings in her hands and feet naturally returned.

Then, while feeling spread through the rest of her body, her first sensation was of something soft embracing her.

Warm, it was relaxing like a large animal’s fur had wrapped her up.

She had felt something similar quite a long time ago. A long time ago, back when she was young, a time when her body could not follow the fairies, a time when she feared sleeping alone.

Now far from the feeling of that fur’s texture, quite some time had passed since then.

[Emilia: ??Ah.]

At first, her eyes welled with tears from its nostalgic touch.

Putting aside her silly desire to keep feeling the warmth, she slowly opened her eyes.
Her long eyelashes shivered, and amethyst irises blankly noted the world.

She was in a room with high ceilings, and decorations she had never seen before. Lying on a bed there, she found herself wrapped up in a summer blanket crafted from quality fur.

A stranger seated beside her had been cleaning her face with a wet towel.

[Emilia: You're……?]

[???: ??]

Looking down on her when she opened her eyes was, a beautiful woman with a pure-white face.

On the rather sickly, blood-drained face, a pretty and expressionless face like a doll's was attached. Her beauty was such that she would surely light up the room if she smiled, but her face was rigidly held like a mask which could not laugh.

Rising, her long hair waving behind her, the woman in a black dress left the room right away.

She quickly tried to call out to her, but as she fretted on how to call her while not knowing her name, the door clicked shut. As such, she found herself alone.

[Emilia: Here...I wonder where that is?]

Hesitantly, she sat up on the bed.

Though she was faintly weary, no pain or signs of poor condition could be felt. The heaviness must be from using too much magic she was not yet used to, as it was a sign that her body was unable to withstand it.

Having gotten that far, right away she remembered the rest of what had occurred in her situation.

[Emilia: Right. Ah, at the square, I fought a strange person, and……]

Continuing on, in her head the events from just before she lost consciousness came to mind.

A monster with a face wrapped in bandages??The one Subaru had called [Wrath], had come for her with fearsome combat prowess and downright creepy amounts of anger. For a moment, she had taken on the fight at an advantage, but then losing to the force of fiercely burning flames, she had been sent flying??.

[Emilia: And then, I must have passed out. But, I'm still alive.]

As she was outmatched, there was no doubt it had been a desperate situation.

Someone had probably come to her aid. Subaru and Beatrice had been there, it could be she was rescued

by those two. Even then, her heart was crushed by her own patheticness.

Emilia had struck such a pose at Subaru, and had talked really loudly, but not only had she lost, she needed to be helped too.

[Emilia: Mmh, there isn't any time to be dejected. Even if I don't do that, I'm already late to depart, so there isn't time to pause in my steps and repent. I'll repent while walking.]

Tapping her snow white cheeks with both hands, she raised her spirits. Time spent depressed was time squandered.

Having been provided a bed and blanket. And even being watched over by a caretaker, this place must be a benevolent someone's home. Since she hadn't been taken to her own place, her situation may have been quite severe.

[Emilia: But I can't feel any pain, so maybe a skilled healer…...Eeh?]

While moving to stand, Emilia came to realize something about herself.

[Emilia: I'm, naked.]

At the point bare feet touched the floor, she noticed that not a single piece of cloth was draped on her body. Emilia's head tilting, she first wrapped the blanket around her body and got down from the bed. Gazing around the room, she looked around hoping for something to wear, but regrettably could not find anything.

[Emilia: Mmh, what should I do? If I leave the room like this, I'll be thought of as bad-mannered……]

Before leaving the forest, when she was studying matters on leaving the forest, and learning lots of things from Puck, that point had been energetically enough placed in her head.

She shouldn't show skin in front of others. Following that rule, then her own appearance right now was completely a problem,

[Emilia: But, since I'm worried about everyone, it's an emergency so it can't be helped.]

The battle with the Sin Archbishops, how it had concluded, she had to find out as quickly as possible. With that task as justification, Emilia emerged from the room garbed in a single blanket.

Walking out to the corridor, it was definitely not a building she had ever seen before. Just, compared to how she imagined it, the outside of the room gave an oddly unsophisticated impression of a cold hallway.

[Emilia: I thought I was somewhere like a mansion, but that was totally wrong. Mmh, is it just this room that's strange?]

Turning back, she saw the room where she had slept in.

A big bed, and a small wardrobe. However, upon closer inspection, she could not escape the impression that something was unbalanced about it. It gave the impression of a bed and other furniture bought and messily piled inside an empty room.

And that might not be wrong.

By checking the atmosphere of the corridor, this was definitely not a place meant for people to live in. This was a place where people worked. If she focused her ears, the faint sound of water and a hint of something could be heard.

While Emilia puzzled over that, there??.

[???: Ah, it seems you've opened your eyes, how relieving, what a relief. I'm relieved you're safe.]

Spoken to so, Emilia turned back.

Just then, at the far end of the corridor, a young man emerged. Having discovered Emilia, the white-haired youth grinned at her.

[???: However, I'm not comfortable with you walking around right after waking. Various things happened and you had a big day, so if there's something with your body it's a headache. That part, I'm telling you to go about your work with certain care. Moreover since it's not just your body, I mean.]

[Emilia: Then, you are……?]

Blinking, Emilia gazed at the young man speaking to her.

That attitude of narrowing the gap between others with a single step was somewhat close to Subaru's. However, the crucial difference between Subaru and him, was that his attitude had no intention of respecting the other person.

That was Subaru's timid virtue, and the young man in front of her did not show any hint of it. It was as if he did not have any remorse for others.

??At the same time, Emilia was recalling a feeling she could not reveal to the young man in front of her.

[???: Is that so, sorry, sorry. I've even seen your sleeping face, but this is your first time seeing me I'd say. I haven't even given you my name yet. No matter how you're in a relationship with me, this kind of impolite attitude won't do. I was too hasty on that point, it is my fault. Truly, like I'm sorry I will apologize. Since I am a human being capable of such things.]

[Emilia: Y-yes……]

Emilia's reply to that endlessly, fluently speaking young man was quite heavy.

The reason for that may be that his attitude overwhelmed her, but a more significant meaning was

contained within. That was, Emilia's subconscious was appealing to her.

?This young man, somewhere, I remember seeing him before.

[???: It's a waste of a scene, it's a shame that this place place lacks atmosphere. But I believe this too, when you look back, will think of as a special moment. If you look at it that way it's not even a bad thing. A small happiness day-by-day is just, more than enough to make the path known as life brighten up. If it's with you, then I definitely especially think so. Not just as being in a bad place, but seeing the nice sides of it, that's the way of life want to try. Do you not think so too, Emilia?]

[Emilia: I, do not remember telling you my name…...So, you are?]

[???: Oops, sorry. When my feelings get too lofty, without knowing it myself I stop noticing my surroundings, it is a bad habit of mine. It is for that reason, that I sometimes dislike my affectionate personality. It could be that you are the one making me feel so deeply. And, my name, was it.]

After an incredibly long and flexible detour, this young man was barely entering the main building.

Feeling warning tingles burn her skin, Emilia did not take her eyes off of the young man's actions. That her own safety was at risk, she intuitively understood.

And the cause of that intuition was, the young man in front of her.

[Regulus: My name is Regulus Corneas. I hold an executive position in a certain group, but something like that is not important to you. What is indeed important to you is just one thing. That I am your husband, and that you are my 79th wife.]

[Emilia: ……Eeh?]

The young man gave a name?What Regulus marvelously spoke of, the meaning of it she did not understand. Emilia fretted, and her pretty brows frowned. But, Regulus was not paying Emilia's reaction any mind, and was staring at the body of a girl covered only with a single light cloth,

[Regulus: That appearance is poison to the eyes. I'll order a change of clothes to be brought over right away. You can relax. They are in the same situation as you, my other wives. Putting on wedding attire is something they would have gotten used to.]

[Emilia: A wedding dress, what do you mean? No, it isn't just that. Calling me your wife, what are you saying?]

[Regulus: Right. I was forgetting something important! For one such as myself, that was dangerous.]

Emilia opened her mouth to ask another question, but Regulus was not listening. He clapped his hands, and lightly grabbed Emilia's shoulder as she was about to ask. As she felt the odd amount of force coming from those fingers, Emilia frowned. Drawing close enough to touch Emilia's forehead, Regulus gazed into her eyes.

[Regulus: I was forgetting an important, important question. Your awareness of the wedding comes after this. Emilia, this is important, so I want you to answer carefully. For our future, it’s very important.]

[Emilia: ??]

At that weird level of pressure, Emilia swallowed her breath and was silent.
Taking her attitude as assent, Regulus smiled. With a smile, he asked.

[Regulus: Emilia, are you a virgin? That’s all, it’s really important.]

With a smile, he spoke.

Arc 5 - Chapter 49, "Thus Opens the Crusade Against Greed"

by admin - Tuesday, September 18, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/09/18/arc-5-chapter-49-thus-opens-the-crusade-against-greed/

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Translated by :

- Nanashi

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Emilia: “—Subaru!”

A voice which seemed to summon Subaru, who had crashed through the entrance of the church and sprinted inside.

It belonged to Emilia, who stood in front of an altar, clad in a wedding dress.

Dressed in a snow white dress, her long hair coiled in a braid on her head, she was too beautiful; lovely to a truly dazzling degree. In the right circumstance, Subaru, more than anyone else, would have wanted to admire Emilia’s bridal attire.

Subaru: “I’ll sort out my thoughts on E·M·T later. Seems like we crashed this wedding here.”

Reinhard. “The ceremony was already going awry, it seems. Though we’ll still be regarded as the intruders here.”

From a ways away, Reinhard snuck a glance at Emilia and Regulus as they glared at each other, and agreed with Subaru's mutters. The ceremony seemed to be proceeding poorly, offering them a perfect opportunity to intrude.

Upon hearing their words, Regulus's already impatient face reddened with rage. He yanked at the front of his suit as his mouth twisted in a vicious pout.

Regulus: "Sorry, though I feel for uninvited guests such as yourselves, this wedding will soon become a funeral anyway. The emotional preparation for such a joyous event to become one of lament… ah, right, you needn't consider such matters anyway. Since you'll soon go from the ones bidding farewell to the ones who should be bid farewell to."

Subaru: "Hey now, what are you going on about when you were rejected right before the wedding? And the bride is so fed up with you she's taking a Narita divorce. Show me a little shame here. Besides, didn't you hear me when I introduced this guy beside me?"

Regarding Regulus's murderous rambling, Subaru taunted him as he eyed Reinhard. Surprised, Regulus exhaled an "*ah*" between his teeth.

Regulus: "Who, the Sword Saint? I think I've heard of him once. Isn't that the moniker of some guy who knows of nothing but swinging a sword? What are you planning to do with that kind of guy? Could it be that you thought of him as some trump card? Ahah, that's rich. Whether it be reputation from history or glory from the bloodline or whatnot, all that is nothing but old-fashioned traditionalism. Notions like that, when struck by a wave of progress, should crumble to ash. Isn't that just nature at work? You two, are you here to demonstrate?"

Reinhard: "Knows of nothing but swinging a sword, huh. It's funny that you'd say that. In truth, many expectations of my roles all stem from that one fact. But, there's a slight problem here."

Even faced with such arrogance, Reinhard showed not a trace of annoyance. As he spoke, his hand crept quietly toward his waist.

Sheathed there was a celestial sword, with engravings traced by the claws of the dragon itself, which Reinhard always carried. However, as he clenched his palm around the hilt, he shook his head.

Subaru: "What's wrong, Reinhard?"

Reinhard: "The [Dragon Sword] is a unparalleled blade which has been passed down since the start of the Astrea line, but it does have one flaw. It refuses to be unsheathed in the presence of any enemy it deems unworthy."

Subaru: "Which means?"

Reinhard: "It seems that the sword has concluded that this enemy isn't worthy of being drawn against."

Subaru: "*—hk*"

Regardless of whether Reinhard meant it this way, Regulus had received a rather humiliating evaluation. But Subaru had personally witnessed how, during a confrontation with Elsa, the sword hadn't made its appearance, and so he understood what Reinhard meant.

But, even with that in mind, Regulus's unflattering appraisal remained.

Regulus: "A Sword Saint who can't even draw his sword, why should I even bother with you? Know your place, scum. In the first place, I'm not even on the same level as you; you, who struggle with your ugliness and unfettered excuses, can't even be compared to one who has already achieved perfection. A fool who can't assure his self-worth without comparing himself to others has no right to face my divine self."

Subaru: "Sounds like, you really do think you're all that."

Facing the burning obscenity in Regulus's eyes, Subaru found himself genuinely surprised.

Ignoring all his threats, and listening to only the heart of his speech—

Subaru: "Hypocrisy is your forte, isn't it? Claiming to have achieved perfection, when you fall short in every comparison to anyone you find?"

Regulus: "—*hk*! You lowlife, don't you condescend to preach to my flawless self!"

Infuriated by Subaru's jeers, Regulus finally put his threats into action.

With murderous intent, he slammed the ground in front of the altar; instantly, the paved floor shattered with astonishing force. The torrent of destruction pummeled straight ahead, sweeping shards of wood and stone into its overwhelming embrace and shattering them even further.

Subaru: "—*uwa*!?"

Reinhard: "Subaru, over here."

Just as the destructive wave neared him, someone caught him by the neck and yanked him to safety.

A sudden gust of wind freed Subaru from the shackles of that torrent; this was Reinhard's doing. With one hand, he'd pulled Subaru to his side as he evaded the attack.

Gently depositing Subaru back on the ground, Reinhard spun around, preparing to face Regulus. However—

Regulus: "Don't move! Dare to try anything, and they'll all be dead in an instant."

Reinhard: "——"

Glaring at Reinhard, who stood at attention, Regulus placed his hands on the walls of the church.

Rows of elaborately dressed women watched him impassively. Clearly, they recognized the intent of his actions and the severity of the situation, but they only stood in their lines, indifferently accepting the surrounding chaos.

Subaru: “On that note, though I’d rather not look too far into it, who are these women?”

Regulus: “All of them are my dear beloved wives. Lovely princesses who cherish and are cherished by me. Could you bear to allow such innocents to die? How could you be so cruel!?”

Subaru: “Goddamn, I had a slight suspicion, but I can’t establish a conversation at all.”

Had there ever any we he could? Regulus’s rhetoric was completely illogical.

To hold these women hostage, and yet to declare that they were his wives, existed in no realm of reason. The worst of it was that both the proclamation of [innocence] and the notion that [Regulus would kill them] were undoubtedly true.

This illogical battle of hostages was indeed an extremely effective tactic.

Regulus: “It’s not like I want them to die, or anything. Even so, if you still resist further, I’ll have no choice. I’ll start at the beginning and go in order. Isn’t forcing me to do something so awful just heartless?”

Subaru: “Not like that makes any sense at all, but I don’t remember pushing you to that point?”

Regulus: “Don't nitpick! Maybe I’d be the one directly killing them. But *you* ignited this fuse. Your murderous intent would be the true weapon. You’re using me as a prop. You’re the real murderers! Don't evade responsibility. You heartless wife-murderers…!”

Obscenities burned in Regulus’s eyes as he gnashed his teeth. The murderer who spouted his twisted rhetoric seemed not disturbed in the least by his revolting statements.

While trying to buy time with dialogue, Subaru snuck a meaningful glance at Reinhard. However, their volatile opponent held about fifty hostages in his grasp. If both walls collapsed at the same time, even Reinhard wouldn’t be able to prevent any casualties.

Subaru: “——”

If it went on like this, they’d be stuck in stalemate— no, this was developing exactly the way Regulus hoped it would.

However, the moment that he thought so,

Emilia: “Have you forgotten about me already?”

Regulus: “Huh?”

Celeste lights began to dance from beside Regulus.

In one instant, the light enveloped the entire church; in the next, a sharp sound was born. The light and sound chained into each other, intertwined and resonating, a simple, clear melody filling the temple.

At the same time, a grand enchantment of ice shone in the center of the room.

That celeste enchantment centered itself on the altar, forming a sanctuary of ice around the women who Regulus had taken hostage.

In addition, the ice had frozen Regulus's legs to the ground, and a frozen sword pressed itself against his bare neck— a sword which extended from Emilia's hand.

Emilia: "You were far too careless there. Even I can't expect to just jump into a fight with you, so I prepared long and hard to freeze you like that. You lost."

Regulus: "… I say, you're truly incapable of reading the atmosphere, aren't you? Right now, aren't I about to force them to back down? This is an important scene, showing that I'm righteously capable of facing despicable enemies with resolve. And my wives too, everyone clearly believes in and prays for my victory… who do you think you are?"

Emilia: "Free all of us this instant. Although no one's said it, some of them only stay with you because they're afraid. Even so, you should cherish them, since they're the ones who go out of their way to help you…"

Regulus: "—Really, who do you think you're talking to? Looks like not making you a wife was wise indeed."

Emilia: "Eh?"

Subaru: "Emilia, no! It's not enough to stop him!"

Normally, this would be the finale of the act. Emilia's judgement wasn't off.

However, her opponent simply [exceeded the limits of humanity].

Regulus: "—*tch*"

With a sigh, Regulus began twisting his frozen limbs; that slight motion began to disintegrate the ice trapping his legs.

As the rest of the ice began melting off, the frozen prison shattered to dust. Faced with this reversal, Emilia had nary the time to even draw breath before Regulus seized her by the neck, and allowed her to dangle, suspended by only his hand.

Regulus: "Such arrogance, without even knowing how to keep yourself decent for a man. It doesn't

matter that you're physically and mentally a virgin, your impure spirit defines you. You whore. You filthy slut. As if toying with my innocent heart weren't enough, you took it a step further, and tried to force my hand. Never have I seen such an unforgivable woman."

Emilia: "*Kuu, huu… uuu…*"

Regulus: "Your cute face, just how many men has it deceived? Just a brief smile, and you'd warm all their hearts. Just a small sound, and you'd win all their attention. Just a gentle touch, and they'd pour gift upon gift onto you. Ah, ah, what a dirty woman."

Subaru: "Stop! Take your hands off her, you fucker!"

Sighing to himself, Regulus's voice was filled with disdain as he spoke to Emilia, still caught in his grasp. His eyes, cold and inhuman, cut through Subaru's outrage at those unspeakable words.

Regulus: "How stupid are you, that you can't work this situation out? Or are you one of those fools who've already given up on understanding? Here am I, ceaselessly trying to explain, but people like you, who thinks no thoughts of self-improvement and abandons all conscious thought, don't you think you're too wasteful of generosity? Do your best to to stand in someone else's shoes, can't you even do that? Still playing cards like that, isn't your skill in interaction just too outrageous?"

Reinhard: "Let Emilia-sama go, and I'll hear out your requests."

From beside Subaru, who found himself speechless with rage, Reinhard spoke to Regulus.

Hearing that, savage raised his eyebrows. Seemingly judging that conversation could come to flow more smoothly with Reinhard than with the seething Subaru, Regulus

Regulus: "Not bad, not bad, that modest attitude. Precisely because people have all sorts of means of communication, if they want a topic to flow in the direction which they desire, they have to learn to use these methods effectively. Those who don't understand this, the majority, can only rely on brute force to see a message through. How off-putting. Shouldn't it be clear that matters which can be settled through negotiation don't require a show of strength? Well, people like that aren't impressive in the least. Fellows like those stand no chance against a pacifist like me, isn't that just nature?"

Reinhard: "No need to spin it so dramatically. Allow me to listen to your request. Witnessing Emilia-sama's suffering is painful for both me and my friend."

Regulus: "Alright. Then I'll say it straightforwardly. —Drop that sheathe from your waist and come stand in front of the altar."

As Emilia's face turned ashen, Regulus, in a deliberate motion, hoisted her higher. Her feet dangled in midair, and her sword of ice clattered to the found.

Faced with that display, Reinhard hesitated no longer. He freed the Dragon Sword from his waist and handed it to Subaru.

Subaru: "… If this were a play, I'd really have loved to draw this sword and end that bastard."

Reinhard: "That's quite the idea, but, regrettably, I doubt you'd be able to unsheathe it either. Rest assured, I will rescue Emilia-sama."

Concluding their whispered conversation, Reinhard complied with Regulus's orders.

The Sword Saint stood, unarmed, in the middle of the temple, stopping when Regulus commanded, "*stop here*". There were only about five meters left between the two; a distance which Reinhard could cross in an instant.

And yet, the issue lay in how Regulus currently held Emilia in his hands, and would obliterate her the second Reinhard drew near. And the true nature of Regulus's invincibility had yet to be solved, even with the hints they possessed.

Freeing himself from Emilia's prison, and setting off a path of destruction. Somewhere in those actions lay the principle behind his [invincibility].

Subaru: "——"

Holding his breath, Subaru monitored Reinhard's movements carefully.

At this moment, unable to find an opportunity to break the stalemate, he could only rely on Reinhard. Eager as he was to leap into action, he knew that he nothing he did would solve it.

Reinhard: "As you wish, I'll stop here. What next?"

Regulus: "Let me kill you. Isn't it easy? It's a little cliche, I think so too. But are you here for my wives, or for this slut? I can't feel any sincerity in your thoughts. It's not that I want to force your hand. I just don't want to be misunderstood as a selfish and self-centered person. I'm just a normal man, satisfied with the simple joys of my everyday life. I do hope you fully understand."

Reinhard: "——"

Regulus: "So, there's only one condition for me to free the hostages. You stand in this place, and bear one strike from me. No defending yourself, and no evasion. As long as you do this, I'll free everyone. Won't your unfair attack on me be forgiven, that way?"

Reinhard: "One strike, yes?"

Faced with Regulus's proposal, Reinhard stroked his chin as he mediated upon it.

Watching his thoughtful figure, Subaru mentally shook his head desperately at the absurdity of the proposal. Regardless of how Regulus appeared, the power behind his attacks were obvious.

An obscene power which could disintegrate seemingly anything; even Reinhard wouldn't be able to

withstand such a strike. Even if he barely clung to his life, if he were left indisposed, this battle couldn't possibly continue.

Reinhard: "I understand. I accept."

However, contrary to Subaru's internal fracas, Reinhard accepted the condition easily. Stunned, Subaru watched Regulus nod with approval.

Regulus: "A wise epiphany, I see. You have my respect. Although you're an enemy who tried to kill my wives, you seem to have at least some basic human humility."

Subaru: "Hanging onto hostages even as some invincible person, and he doesn't feel as if he's in the wrong…"

At a glimpse, Regulus and his mellifluous, flowery words were truly disgusting. However, it seemed that Regulus didn't hear Subaru's spite, for he kept his hand laid on Emilia's neck as he turned his right hand to face Reinhard.

Subaru: "R-Reinhard, you… what are you thinking?"

Reinhard: "Subaru, as promised. Where I'm lacking, you'll find a way to fill in the gaps, right?"

Subaru: "Quit being so discouraging…"

Even the hardest battle has a chance of being won, was the answer that Subaru had been hoping to hear. However, before he had time to respond, Regulus waved an arm at Reinhard.

He couldn't see. Fingertips sliced through the air, as if tossing something at Reinhard; however, the projectile was invisible. That attack might well very have been something like an [Unseen Hand].

Whether or not the speculation was true was left unanswered.

Reinhard: "——"

Reinhard's figure, which had been standing in front of Subaru, collapsed into a splatter of blood.

His bisected body toppled to the ground, as if stuck by an oblique sniper, completely absent of its normal refined temperament.

Subaru: "Eh—?"

Blood flowed forth from Reinhard's fallen corpse, dying the crimson carpet a shade of aubergine. His body trembled like a spring, convulsing in its death throes.

Finally, the moment came where even those movements subsided, and the corpse entered the realm of true death.

This was Reinhard van Astrea's certain demise.

Regulus: "No matter how a person acted in life, death is a simple matter. Those who have accomplished great feats, those who have committed great sins; death treats them equally, stealing their lives in the same way. In this gravely unjust world, it's one of the few truly just parts of life."

Having killed Reinhard with only a wave of his hands, Regulus, simply shook his head.

The murderer wore a serene look, as if this had nothing to do with his own actions.

Regulus: "Precisely because they know that the end will inevitably come, the living shouldn't pursue too much happiness while they live. Therefore, I am extremely satisfied with the low threshold of my happiness. And if I am [Greed], it's only because I'm always eager to appreciate what I do have, and what I will come to have. If I were never satisfied myself with the amount I have, I would never be happy in my lifetime. But fortunately, I was born with a unique gift. The sensibility of finding satisfaction in simple joys."

Holding the arm which had killed Reinhard to his chest, Regulus began to laugh.

Then—

Regulus: "My satisfied self wants to know, are you satisfied with death? If so, congratulations on your death. If not, then those are the words of fate."

Subaru: "*AAAAAAAAAAAAAAUGH—*"

Before the echo of Regulus's ridiculous words had even faded, Subaru sprung into action with a roar.

He grabbed a chair and flung it at Regulus. Facing the projectile, Regulus swept it away with a single swipe, as if it were a mere insect. To say that the impact shattered the chair would be an understatement, and Regulus stepped away wearing an unpleasant expression.

Regulus: "Compared to that graceful one, you really are really both noisy and crude."

Subaru: "Being a knight without a trace of knightliness happens to be my specialty!"

Treading on the carpet stained with Reinhard's blood, Subaru unclasped his whip from his waist, and directed the tip toward Regulus.

In response, Regulus simply made a show of tightening his grip on Emilia's neck as he lifted her.

Regulus: "Are your eyes just for decoration? Can't you see that I have leverage here?"

Reinhard: "—This is all very strange. According to what you promised, you should have liberated the hostages."

Regulus: “—Eh!?”

The instant he heard that sound, Regulus’s face became stricken with horror.

Tearing his gaze away from the center of the church, Subaru saw a slender, bloodstained figure, and felt his throat close with shock.

Regulus: “Wha—!?”

Reinhard: “—The?Divine Protection of The Phoenix?.”

With brevity, Reinhard responded to the wavering Regulus, and three figures moved as one.

Subaru leapt toward the altar, allowing his whip to yank a blonde-haired woman to safety.

Even as her throat was being choked, Emilia kicked her sword of ice over to Reinhard.

Reinhard, who had appeared out of nowhere, caught the sword and pointed it at Regulus.

With the women shielded from the line of fire, the wielder of that blade hesitated no longer.

In the next instant, sound vanished from the world— a brilliant blue light accompanied the shockwave that engulfed the church.

Arc 5 - Chapter 5, "The Watergate City Pristella"

by admin - Wednesday, November 28, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/28/arc-5-chapter-5-the-watergate-city-pristella/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

Credit for the first five chapters document belongs to Summary Anon, who left behind only the following contact information:

ankaa.burner@gmail.com https://mega.nz/#F!VNdzDYYK!nK9fNU3LeprlZSbRAnlsRg

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—Upon their arrival, Subaru and the others are greeted by towering, grand walls. Subaru: “Yeah, this looks exactly like the prison I expected it to...”

Mutters Subaru as he pokes his head out of the carriage window, Otto at the reigns. Beatrice captures Subaru's muttering, her head also out the window beneath Subaru.

Beatrice: “Joshua said it was a sightseeing spot, but Betty doubts that, in fact. It looks far more depressing than relaxing, I suppose.”

Subaru: “Agreed. I mean, I guess the bridge and gates and stuff are kinda cool.” Subaru nods in agreement to Beatrice and looks down.

Their carriage is travelling across the massive, stone Tigracy Bridge, which leads to the front gates of Pristella.

Subaru stretches slights and looks over to the horizon, where he sees sunlight glinting on the water. To him it looks like an ocean, but since oceans don't exist in this world, it has to be a lake or a river.

Beatrice: “Pristella is a city built upon a lake, in fact. The land inside those walls becomes so flat that it forms a basin in the centre, I suppose. If you envision the city as an old trap, then of course you'd expect the centre to easily flood, in fact.”

Subaru: “You mean that thing 'bout it being a trap for some nasty witchbeast. Emilia mentioned that too. Is it actually true though?”

Beatrice: “This is my first time seeing this place, and I don't know what the specific purpose of it was either, I suppose. But I suspect it is true, now that I've seen it, in fact.”

Beatrice's bluish eyes gaze at the city's gates beyond the bridge.

The walls keep her from peering inside, but she must be imagining what the city looks like. It's unclear how precisely the books in the Forbidden Archive spoke of the world, but Beatrice's extensive knowledge has helped on more than a few occasions.

Beatrice: “...Why are you stroking Betty's head, I suppose.”

Subaru: “Because it's there. I wanna spend all the time patting you that I'm able.”

Beatrice: “Utter nonsense, and patronising, undesired nonsense at that, in fact!”

Nevertheless Beatrice neglects to swat Subaru's hand a way and he proceeds to pat her more while gazing past the bridge-railing, at the lake. The pristine waters give him a clear view to the bottom of the lake, with not a single piece of litter or pollution in sight.

If the whole lake is like this, it's an example of incredible ethics.

Subaru: “Actually I didn't notice any litter or illegally dumped industrial waste on the road either. Probably 'cause people don't have much stuff but still it's nice.”

Otto: “Pristella is particularly strict on littering since it has to preserve its landscape. There will be a simple border check once we enter the gates, please don't get weirdly assertive and reject the binding paperwork they give you.”

Warns Otto, having caught Subaru's muttering. Subaru tilts his head.

Subaru: “Paperwork?”

Emilia: “I think you're usually exempted from it if you have a crest on your carriage when you're going to the Capital, but absolutely everyone has to fill out paperwork to enter Pristella.”

Subaru nods, impressed, and more or less accepts it as a passport and customs check. But once again he

tilts his head at the words 'binding paperwork'.

Subaru: “Is it written on paper that makes you geass yourself? Like it does something to your od once you sign, and the second you break the terms your gate stops working or something...”

Emilia: “Eek, that'd be sooo scary... there shouldn't be anything that forceful. The paperwork is just a statement that you won't do anything bad. But it means your conscience will be keeping a close eye on you.”

Subaru: “...We'd have world peace if everyone were as strict on themselves as you, Emilia-tan.”

Subaru smiles wryly, aware of his own scummy personality, at Emilia's idealism.

Either way, he understands that there is paperwork, and that it is not actually binding.

Otto: “There are nationals laws that must be upheld, but the Mayor and Lord who manage the city have rather extensive authority there. There are many things about Pristella that simply differ from national law. The paperwork will surely mention what they are, so please refrain from mocking it and actually read it.”

Garfiel: “'S a goddamn pain. How 'bout you read it n' tell us what it said when yer done.”

Otto: “You'll never mature with that attitude. It's necessary for you to learn how to at least skim paperwork, what with your social position. You can't just stockpile bizarre trivia from the books you like.”

Garfiel: “It ain't b'zarre trivia, 's a man's lust fer th'dramatic. Yeh, Captain?” Subaru: “You got it.”

Garfiel balances precariously on the carriage roof as he peeks his head over and down. Subaru nods firmly in reply, Otto sighs, and Emilia watches happily. Beatrice shakes her head in lamentation.

Beatrice: “You two children are just impossible, in fact.” Otto: “They are a nightmare to herd.”

Who could guess how Beatrice's statement resounded with him.

Unfortunately for him, no one else in the carriage is capable of empathising with his grief and exhaustion.

—Patrasche roars, and everyone directs their attention to the front. The gates of Pristella stand directly before them.

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The border inspection ends with underwhelming ease.

Emilia and Otto were right. The paperwork described the terms they would have to follow to enter the city, and the rules by which they needed to abide once inside.

That said, every term was practically impossible to accidentally violate, so there's no need to pay that much conscious attention to them.

All you have to do to enter the city is read the paper, sign your name, and get the officer's approval. The officers did panic a little once Emilia introduced herself, but being that Anastasia passed through here too, they probably figure that something is going on.

Subaru: “Guess it is pretty big news to have two girls with the right to the Throne in one place.”

Emilia: “There wasn't too much fuss, so I think Anastasia let them know beforehand. Or maybe it was Joshua-kun or Mimi-chan.”

Subaru: “Joshua feels possible if you ignore his clumsiness, but I seriously doubt it was Mimi.”

It doesn't feel like the catgirl has that kind of sensibility.

But not because she's selfish or anything. How to describe it?

Subaru: “'Cause she's cute.”

Emilia: “Yes, because she's cute.”

And it's so mysteriously persuasive that it makes Emilia nod. Subaru crosses his arms, finding that no other word fits. Also for some reason Beatrice stomps on his foot.

Subaru kills his time by placating a displeased Beatrice, until Otto and Garfiel finally finish their drawn-out inspection and join the others beyond the gates.

Subaru: “Hey guys. What held you up?”

Otto: “Garfiel did. I've been constantly, constantly telling him to practice his writing, and still...”

Subaru: “Garfiel, you can't write?”

Garfiel: “I can. 'S just, eh, puttin' it how you would yer'd call it avant garde or, eh, whatever.”

Meaning his handwriting is so horrendous that the officers couldn't read it.

The officers must have offered to write for their illiterate client, but Garfiel's pride would not allow it.

Subaru: “I won't say anything against you, but you better study if you don't want this to happen again. I know you write letters to Lewes-san, and those ones have to be legible.”

Garfiel: “Ha, now there's a joke, Captain. Me n' granny go way back. My nanna can read anythin' my amazin' self writes, even if it's with my left hand.”

Subaru: “You aren't thinking to improve at all are you.”

Says Subaru, sighing in exhaustion, to a proud Garfiel.

Garfiel's grandmother Lewes is not living with him in Roswaal's mansion. She and the twenty-four duplicates have been tasked with duties in various forests in Roswaal's domain.

Emilia and Garfiel still hold the command right for the doubles, and their orders still reach the doubles from a distance. The team is trying to utilize this and have the girls serve as middlemen for communicating orders.

Subaru proposed the idea, and Lewes carries the responsibility for the work. Garfiel opposed it all at first, but generally agrees with it now.

And so Lewes and the doubles are living in Arlam Village. The plan is to go girl-by-girl, teaching them everything they need to know, and sending them to towns and villages once they're ready.

Subaru: “It's like a huge spy operation, which kinda makes it sound bad...”

But he loathes to simply leave them there, hanging around without any role or purpose. Perhaps Subaru's guilt from discarding them in a previous loop is what spurred the idea.

Emilia: “Subaru? They finished the bag check for the carriage, let's go?”

Emilia calls Subaru out of his reverie, and he hurriedly glances up. He gives a strained smile as she looks curiously on, and grabs Pastasche's reigns.

As if sensing Subaru's unease, the smart black dragon nuzzles her snout against the back of his neck. It mystifies Subaru how relaxing the rough sensation is.

Subaru: “...Thank you, for everything.”

Subaru replies to her silent compassion by stroking her hard scales. Patrasche responds with her snout, and Subaru finally tugs the reigns to set off for Pristella proper.

They exit the front gate to find a river flowing between the exterior gates and the city. They cross the stone bridge over the river, the inner gates open, and Pristella reveals itself.

Subaru: “Woah...”

Subaru sighs in admiration at the sight unfolding before him.

And he isn't the only one reacting like this. Emilia and Beatrice, seated on either side of him, also express their wonder.

He must apologize for using the word 'jail' on this aquatic city.

When Subaru first heard about Pristella, he envisioned something like the old world's Venice. He was correct to do so.

The city is circular, enclosed in turn by the circular walls.

Ignoring the fact that its size is that of a city, its shape is essentially that of a sports arena. The outer rim is the most elevated, elevation dropping the closer you get to the centre.

Dense rows of stone buildings line the tiers of the city, the most western-seeming architecture that Subaru has seen yet.

Large canals run through the town, with notably massive canals—rather, waterways—dividing the circular city into four even sections. Subaru sees several gondolas paddling on the water, and a tingle shoots down his spine at the thought: gondoliers.

The Blue City, The City of Water, The Watergate City Pristella. Each one rings true. The sight brings nothing but wonder.

Subaru: “Amazing...”

He says, and no one can deny him.

The guardsmen at the gates smile in satisfaction at the group's astonishment. Most likely, everyone who passes through these gates reacts exactly the same way.

That reaction both fulfils the guardsmen's office-bound obligations, and is the greatest of rewards to them. Definitely is. Right into their trap.

Garfiel: “Yeah, this's stunnin'. So Otto wasn't just spoutin' bullcrap.”

Garfiel recovers from the shock first and rubs the tip of his nose. But his excitement has not faded, for his cheeks remain slightly red.

His masculine passion for the dramatic must have been set alight by this amazing place (which falls under the heading of 'things that are gigantic').

Otto: “I've always wished to visit this place, connected as it is to the God of Merchants, Hoshin, but this is stupendous. It was worth visiting regardless of Hoshin.”

Otto fidgets with his hands, looking incredibly emotional.

The mention of Hoshin reminds Subaru of the name: Hoshin of the Wastes.

Subaru: “Hoshin's that guy. That one merchant guy from ages ago who made crazy riches from a burnt wasteland.”

Otto: “You're a little off, but overall correct. Four hundred years ago, Hoshin travelled the yet- untamed lands of Kararagi unaided, transformed it into an economic infrastructure using solely his own wits, and made a fortune. The man is a paragon.”

Solely because it's about a merchant, Otto's eyes blaze with passion as he tells the story of Hoshin. If he built the foundations for one of the four great countries, the Kararagi City State, then Subaru can agree with the legend being passed down.

Subaru: “Anastasia calls herself Hoshin after him too.”

Otto: “It's very bold of her. I doubt there is any way to more plainly state her enthusiasm and goals, but everyone alive is going to be sceptical. Though I do presently think she has achieved enough to warrant the name.”

Subaru: “If she's seriously doing something to warrant the name, then... well, snagging Lugnica's throne works. Just marching toward her goal.”

Sincerely impressed, Subaru manages to pry himself from the beautiful scenery.

He strokes Beatrice's head and tugs Emilia's sleeve to pull them away from the mesmerising city.

Subaru: “So, Anastasia's waiting for us at the Seasylph Lodge. Dunno where it is, but considering who she is, doubt it's someplace cheap.”

Emilia: “Mm, right. I think she told the gate officers about the visit too, so it's going to be a nice

place. I think Otto-kun investigated more into that...”

Otto nods and hops onto the coachman's platform. He jerks his chin, gesturing to the carriage.

Otto: “I've supposed the route, so allow me to lead. We won't be able to rush since boats have higher priority than carriages in this town. Which I note because I suspect Natsuki-san still struggles with leisurely carriage rides.”

Subaru: “Oh yeah? If it was just Patrasche, I wouldn't even have to say anything just stare at her in my trembling boots, and she'd have the carriage doing whatever I want. Right?”

Subaru boldly gazes at Patrasche and winks. Patrasche looks away. Somehow, it feels like she just sighed at him.

The unexpected reaction dejects Subaru. Emilia consolingly pats his back, while Beatrice takes his hand and files him into the carriage.

Garfiel: “N' we're off!”

Announces Garfiel from his new, dedicated perch on the carriage's roof. Otto smiles wryly as he whips

the reigns, and the carriage rolls into motion.

Their pace is truly slow, so sluggish that the drop in speed from the uphill inclines cannot feasibly explain it.

Subaru: “But going off what I'm seeing out the windows, there really aren't many carriages.”

Emilia: “There aren't. And look how all the roads wide enough for carriages aren't straight, they're windy, because the canals have higher priority than streets.”

Subaru: “Ah, you're right.”

Emilia is right. Footpaths and carriage roads make winding detours around the canals, which cross through the city. It is inconvenient, but stops feeling that way once Subaru watches the canals alongside the carriage, and the gondolas passing by.

Subaru: “Carriages have the Windbreaker Blessing, but do boats have anything? Like a Blessing of No Capsizing, or a Seabreeze Blessing, something.”

Emilia: “I don't really know, but I don't think the boats themselves have blessings. But maybe the boatsmen have a Blessing of Lakes or Blessing of Ferrying.”

Beatrice: “Though this knowledge isn't particularly widespread, water dragons have blessings, in fact. One that protects then from the effects of water, much like those of earth dragons, I suppose.”

Subaru: “Water dragons. Wouldn't mind seeing one. And just one.”

Beatrice: “I'm sure there's bound to be some in this city, in fact.”

Though she answers Subaru's question, Beatrice's reply is not proactive, what with her dislike of animals. Her strange awkwardness does not end merely with Patrasche, but apparently extends to water dragons.

Subaru: “I don't think hugging, say, a liger'd be that unpleasant.”

Beatrice: “It doesn't kill me not to touch animals, I suppose. Betty is cuter than them, in fact.”

Subaru: “Doubt fighting an animal in a match of cuteness'd go anywhere... actually you might lose a few points if you fought on the same terms?”

To Subaru's eyes, even Patrasche looks a combination of cool and cute. But a different kind of cute to Emilia, Rem, and Beatrice's cute of course.

Beatrice looks on suspiciously, while Emilia jumps excitedly on the word 'liger' and gazes at Subaru.

Emilia: “Me too! Do you think they'd let me touch them if I asked?”

Subaru: “You could've asked when Mimi was at the mansion. You get weirdly considerate about things like that.”

Emilia: “They're their riding dogs, I can't just do whatever I want with them. I've been missing the feeling of fur, since Puck hasn't been around.”

It seems that even Emilia, who loves Puck like family, has been enchanted by his fur. Subaru agrees to ask about it and Emilia starts humming happily. While hideously tone-deaf.

Listening to her shoddy humming, Subaru puts his hand to his cheek and leans on his elbow as he gazes at the cityscape. He leans on the windowframe. Beatrice gazes out the window's glass, kneeling on her seat. Subaru deliberates whether to tell her that it's bad manners to do that, when,

Beatrice: “Oh, Subaru. Here's your chance, in fact.”

Subaru: “Hm? Wh—woah!”

Subaru looks over to see a giant spray of water from the canal as a passing fish—or no, it's not a fish. The creature has a long, serpentine body, alongside stubby but present limbs. It's a water dragon. Its blue, slippery skin evokes images of snakes, but its head is clearly a dragon's.

Sharp fangs crowd its mouth, and catfish whiskers extend from its snout. The earth dragon looks like a bipedal lizard, while the water dragon is more oriental. Subaru almost wants to call it Shenlong.

Subaru: “But it looks kinda stuck up, or unfriendly.”

Beatrice: “That's what it looks like to humans, I suppose. Water dragons are much more bothersome to domesticate than earth dragons, in fact. You must raise it from hatchling to adult before it recognizes you as its master, I suppose.”

Subaru: “So they take time. Me and Patrasche bonded the second our eyes met.”

Beatrice: “It baffles me how she's so attached to you, in fact.”

It baffles Subaru too.

Though she is originally from Crusch's faction, she grew extremely attached to Subaru from the moment he picked her for the White Whale offensive. Subaru believes his choice back then, picking the highly assertive Patrasche, was the correct one.

There are so many times where he would have failed without her.

Subaru: “Hmpf. The visage of our Patrasche abounds in refinement far the superior.”

Emilia: “Subaru. How come you're suddenly talking like Anne?”

A strange rebellion against the water dragon, dancing through the canal, overtakes Subaru. And though the dragon couldn't have noticed his gaze, it turns to glance at him. The dragon pokes its head out of the water and screeches.For some reason Subaru hears the “Eyes off, interlopers,” loud and clear.

Subaru: “I think this asshole just insulted us. Which means it's time for...”

Dragon: “—?!”

As revenge, Subaru decides to mimic the roars of the giant black witchbeast he saw when the mansion was burning down.

When a sharp, dignified roar cuts through to the water. Patrasche's roar.

She perceived her master's belligerence toward the dragon and got him revenge. Subaru doesn't know what she meant with that bellow, but her voice and glare terrify the water dragon, which squeaks and slinks back underwater. Then it speeds up and carts its boat swiftly away. The boatsman panics at the sudden speed while Subaru watches on, dazed.

Subaru: “Wh-what just happened?”

Otto: “—Natsuki-san, please keep Patrasche-chan from doing anything too strange. I'd truly prefer that we didn't make a scene so shortly after entering the city.”

Scolds Otto from the driver's seat. Subaru waves at him dismissively and whistles through his fingers so that Patrasche can hear him. They can't exactly communicate by whistling, but hopefully it lets her know that he's grateful.

Subaru: “Water dragons are pretty cool, but Patrasche is the coolest.”

Beatrice: “...Ours is better than that undignified water dragon, in fact.”

Beatrice begrudgingly agrees with Subaru, perhaps because he spoke so happily.

While they cross a canal by bridge, Subaru thinks of the panoramic view of the city he saw from the gates.

Subaru: “Feels like these canals split the city into four or something.”

Emilia: “They do. The giant waterways in the middle of Pristella divide it into districts. Going clockwise from the main gates, they're District One, District Two, District Three, and District Four.”

Subaru hums.

Subaru: “Pretty uncreative naming scheme. They could've gone for something more like East Blue. Don't you agree?”

Garfiel: “That I do, Captain.”

Beatrice: “No one cares about your tastes, I suppose.”

Says Beatrice icily at the happy pair. Emilia smiles as she watches on and raises her finger, speaking as if she has read this in a book,

Emilia: “The numbered districts all have different stores and occupations, and the residential areas are concentrated in districts Two and Three, which are farthest from the gates. The Seasylph Lodge must have lots of visiting travellers, so it'll be in District One.”

Subaru: “Which means we should be hitting it soon... or now.”

The slow carriage comes to a stop during their conversation. Apparently they've reached the inn. Otto loops around from the driver's seat and into the carriage.

Otto: “We've arrived. I'll speak with the employees to have Frufoo and Patrasche-chan moved to the stables, so feel free to... no, actually, please wait by the entrance.”

Subaru: “What changed your mind? Is it really that bad for us to go in first!?”

Otto: “It is. We don't want you to encounter Anastasia-san, and for me to come back and find she's hooked you.”

Subaru frowns at Otto's lack of trust, but nobody can refute him considering their track record. They take their hand luggage and leave the carriage while an employee escorts Otto behind the establishment, out of sight.

Subaru watches them go, stretches, and finally directs his gaze to the Seasylph Lodge.

Subaru: “Now, just what kind of lodgings have we... we.”

Subaru's jaw drops.Emilia puts her finger to her cheek, tilting her head.

Emilia: “The building looks sooo funny. I don't think I've seen one like it.”

Garfiel and Beatrice share Emilia's candid thoughts. But Subaru gets a different impression from the place. Of course he would. After all,

Subaru: “An inn? ...This is a ryokan.”

Built of smooth wood, with sliding glass doors.

And hedges, and a gravel path from the gates to the entrance, and a tiled roof, leaving no room for doubt.

Right there in the middle of such a western city, and entirely out-of-place piece of architecture. This is the

day that Natsuki Subaru meets the wafuu structure called the Seasylph Lodge.

???: “Look at the surprise on you. Was a good choice I made, hand-picking this hotel.” When a calm, cheerful voice cuts into his stupefaction.

Still stunned, Subaru slowly redirects his gaze—beyond the hedges, to where someone peers over at their group.

She has a white fur dress and an eye-catching fox scarf. The cold season has already gone, and the dress has fabric thin enough to call in season, but the scarf could be important since it's exactly the same as ever.

A slight frame and long, wavy violet hair. A pleasant smile on her charming face, and an indecipherable glint her her aquamarine eyes.

No doubt about it. This is the one who invited them here. A direct, face-to-face welcome from Anastasia Hoshin. And,

Anastasia: “Been some time since I last seen you. Many thanks to you for coming all the way. Figures to me the journey's worn you out. How says we spend time relaxing inside, then chat?”

Before Otto can return, she easily takes the lead.

—Everyone present can see so.

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Arc 5 - Chapter 50, "The Shackles of Love"

by admin - Sunday, November 04, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/04/arc-5-chapter-50-the-shackles-of-love/

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Translated By :

- Nanashi
- Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)

Contributions By :

- Furuta (/u/GracedHarperd)

Proofread By :

- Fr
- Ice

Fan Art Source

- HaruSabin

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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—When the supernova faded and Subaru’s vision had returned to him, the state of the church had completely changed.

Subaru: “Though I know I’ve said this before…”

Witnessing that scene with his own eyes, Subaru took a soft breath.

In order to avoid inhaling the scattered dust particles and wood chips, he covered his mouth with his sleeve.

Standing in the now open air church, bathed in the evening breeze, Subaru stomped on the floor and jabbed a finger at the man in front of him.

Subaru: “Sure enough, this guy’s a fucking monster!”

Reinhardt: “Though I’ve said this before, how depressing. Even my heart would be hurt by such words.”

Subaru: “Is this really an occasion to complain about heartache!? Your physical wounds are obviously the bigger issue here! The hell do you think this is?”

In the face of Reinhardt’s apparent aberrance, Subaru couldn’t help but frustratedly bury his face in his hands,

Reinhardt returned him a wry smile, as the sword of ice in his right hand shattered and dissipated. Although it has only been swung once, being able to withstand the Sword Saint’s might indicated that its durability was deserving of praise.

The one who’d made that sword, Emilia, was currently being embraced by Reinhardt’s left arm.

In that instant, he’d freed Emilia’s neck from Regulus’s grasp, keeping her safe.

As a result, Regulus was the only one who’d suffered that bombardment.

Aside from that initial blow, everything seemed to have worked out—

Subaru: “On that note, what a close call we had. Hey, are you okay?”

184: “——”

The object of his concern was the woman who he’d yanked out of danger, just as Reinhard had, before chaos had fallen. Although the golden-haired woman was rather beautiful, her empty eyes and expressionless face gave off a foreboding air.

Sure enough, the shock of the situation had gotten to her, was Subaru’s thought, and so he met the eyes of the woman as she sat.

Subaru: “Sorry if we surprised you, but in order to take advantages of his weaknesses, we didn’t really have any other choice. If you’re hurt anywhere, tell us and and we can help fix you up.”

184: “——”

Although Subaru called out to her, she still gave no reaction.

Although this situation was worrying indeed, he couldn’t worry about just her and her alone. Leaving the still sitting woman where she was, he strode toward the altar— or, rather, where the altar had once stood.

This place, which strongly resembled what Subaru knew as a church, had been completely desecrated by Reinhardt.

The front of the building— where the altar and the corridor leading to a side room had been located, had all been demolished in the wake of the supernova. All that had barely survived were the very edges and the back of the building. Fortunately, due to the protection of Emilia's wall of ice, the seated women had remained untouched.

Subaru ran where Emilia and Reinhardt were standing near the crumbling altar. Stepping out of Reinhardt's arms, Emilia immediately gave a pained cough.

Subaru: "Emilia-tan, are you okay?"

Emilia: "—*hk*… ah, I'm fine. It's just that my throat feels itchy…"

Subaru: "How are you? Did anything strange happen? Did that creep lick your face or anything? And this wedding dress is spectacular… did he put it on you? Damn, that fucker, I won't let him go. But this dress truly is amazing. No matter what you wear, you look cute, Emilia-tan."

Emilia: "Subaru, calm down a bit. I can't quite figure out what you want say."

Faced with the frantically concerned Subaru, Emilia retreated gently.

Looking at his distressed appearance as he carefully ascertained that she was safe and sound, Emilia sighed with a smile.

Emilia: "Right, thank you for coming to save me. I knew all along that you'd come."

Subaru: "I also knew that Emilia-tan believes in me and would wait for rescue. But if I'd crashed the wedding even a little later, who knows what could've…"

Emilia: "It doesn't matter. I wouldn't have married him. If I were to marry, it would have to be someone I like."

Subaru: "That, that's great! Really reassuring. Then, this person you like…"

Emilia: "Ah! Reinhardt! Your injury, how is it!?"

Just as Subaru prepared to go on an offensive strike, Emilia caught sight of Reinhardt and cried out at him.

Seeing Emilia's interest in Reinhardt where it mattered, Subaru paused and scowled.

The Reinhardt who'd saved Emilia— unexpectedly, he'd sustained a heavy injury.

The front of the white clothes had been almost exaggeratedly torn and stained entirely with red.

Witnessing this explosive scene, Emilia sucked in a cold breath.

Subaru: “Ack, how brutal! —you sure this is fine!?”

Emilia: “Yes, what a grievous wound! Let me take a look, I’ll heal you!”

Reinhardt: “Thank you. But don't worry about it. The wound has begun to heal.”

Responding to the fretting, flustered pair with a smile, Reinhard wiped at the blood with his own white sleeves.

And on his cleaned chest, the traces of the injury were indeed disappearing. The wound was completely gone, leaving only Reinhardt’s pristine skin.

Subaru: “The wound’s, vanished… Hey, what happened just now? You hid it even from me. Did you sneakily hide some blood packets on your person or something?”

Reinhardt: “And by ‘just now’, you mean…”

Subaru: “Stop putting on airs, or are you being for real right now? … Just now with Regulus’s hostage situation, I didn't know how you planned to deal with it, so I just watched silently. But how did you survive? Ah, just tell me already!”

Reinhardt: “Let’s put it this way, watching silently was a huge help. Thanks for taking care not to set him off.”

Even faced with Subaru’s impatience, Reinhardt responded in in an even tone. Thinking that he was just trying to maintain a lighter atmosphere, Subaru sighed.

Subaru: “I just thought that since it’s you, there must have been some trick up your sleeve. But seeing you fall in that shower of blood had me thinking you really were dead, how terrifying…”

Reinhardt: “Even so, you reacted in time. I’m very happy you had such faith in me.”

Subaru: “Who told you to give this dramatic speech on shortcomings and whatnot?”

He lightly knocked Reinhardt’s shoulders, responding to that guilelessness with coarse words. Listening to their conversation, Emilia’s eyes widened with surprise.

Emilia: “Only with those words, you worked that entire scheme out?”

Subaru: “Emilia-tan, when you passed the sword of ice to Reinhardt while I was moving, that’s what happened too.”

Reinhardt: “That really was a huge help. Not having a weapon on hand and having to strike his body directly was an uneasy notion, for some reason. But I’m glad that it worked out.”

Subaru: “Yep, it ended with half the building collapsing. Please take responsible for it. Well, this also counts as a survival flag.”

Having had numerous encounter with Elsa in the past, Subaru couldn’t be too optimistic.

Now, while talking like this, there is no slack in his alarm toward Regulus.

Subaru: “So, Reinhardt, the correct answer to the mystery of that scene is…? Did you use an avatar? It couldn’t be some kind of cloning technique. Please don’t tell me that in addition to being a knight, you’re a ninja as well.”

Reinhardt; “Although I don't know what an ninja is, I’m sure it’s not such a huge mystery. This [Divine Protection of the Phoenix] is just a blessing that can be used to revive the dead. So your observation that I looked like I was dead was correct, I was just a little bit dead.”

Subaru: “Just a little bit dead, my ass! Did that mess you up, or are you just an idiot?”

Being met with such an unexpected answer sent Subaru into another frenzy.

Dying under the [Divine Protection of the Phoenix] or whatnot, wasn’t it just making a mockery of death? Those were word better left unsaid to Subaru— or, rather, perhaps it was better to say that only Subaru could speak like that.

Subaru: “What’re you doing, stealing my niche and all that…”

Reinhardt: “—? Sorry. But at the time, I felt that it was the most effective way to deal with the Sin Archbishop. And it did in fact work rather smoothly. Ah, but, if possible, I’d prefer to avoid dying again.”

Emilia: “Dying in order to save only me, I can’t help but feel guilty…”

Subaru: “*—kuu*”

Emilia: “Subaru? What’s with the expression?”

Struck by the force of her reply, the psychological burden of those words was quite something.

Moreover, it seems that this dialogue could continue no further.

Reinhardt: “—Subaru.”

Subaru: “Understood.”

Narrowing his blue eyes, Reinhardt called for Subaru.

Subaru raised his head at the call, and Emilia glanced to where Reinhardt was looking.

—The predator, emitting an ominous aura, filled their line of sight.

He stood atop the collapses remains of the church, overlooking the other three. White hair, white clothes, and a blank expression; this predator, made of white, snorted and spoke.

Regulus: “Leaving me out, and just bantering and laughing in a place like this. Speaking of which how can you stand to maintain an air of normalcy, isn’t that too inhumane? Unless, you felt like you’ve just stepped on an ant or something? Is blowing me away no different from stepping on a bug? Well, how about it?”

As he fanned the flames of his own exaggerated outrage, Regulus leapt from the smouldering wreckage to the remains of the church.

As he landed, he straightened out the coat of his white suit, brushed at the sleeves of his shirt, and readjusted the legs of his matching trousers, before turning his narrowed gaze upon them.

His body was unchanged from Reinhardt’s blow.

Whether injury or filthiness, neither showed even a trace on his form.

Reinhardt: “I see, As I heard from Subaru, you truly are a fearsome opponent.”

Emilia: “Just now, the Sin Archbishop that you mentioned, Subaru… he’s the one?”

Regarding him, Reinhardt and Emilia each offered their own input.

Hearing this, Regulus turned a spiteful glare upon Emilia.

Regulus: “Ah, that’s right. I’m the Witch Cult’s Sin Archbishop of Greed, Regulus Corneas… Speaking of which, without knowing even the identity of the other party, you tried to go through a wedding ceremony. This is a problem that precedes not having an awareness of being a wife. Impudent, immoral, iniquitous! Really, your deficiency as a woman knows no bounds, honestly!”

Emilia: “Iniquitous and whatnot, you didn’t tell me anything at all. Impure and immoral are also groundless. And you’re a Sin Archbishop of the Witch Cult… Witch Cult, Witch Cult…”

Faced with the resentfully cursing Regulus, Emilia was about to refute his points before she suddenly sank into silence.

Her hand on her head, Emilia’s eyebrows lifted as if she were thinking hard.

Emilia: “The Witch Cult’s, Sin Archbishop… you, have you ever faced me before?”

Regulus: “Hah? How would I know? Although, right now, if you were to say that our meeting was fate, that would just be a ridiculous farce. Such a face of rare sweetness, but in spirit you’re such a degenerate, how endlessly infuriating… *uwa*!”

Subaru: “The fuck are you rambling on about aimlessly, you bastard?”

Aiming at the endlessly ranting Regulus’s face Subaru flicked his whip. Under that impact, Regulus’s face snapped to the side, and he snarled with fury.

Unsurprisingly, his face bore no trace of the blow.

Subaru: “At this point, for real, if we can’t solve the mystery of his [Invincibility], we can’t secure out victory…”

Reinhardt: “Whether at close range or from afar, every attack is negated. Even Emilia-sama’s magic does nothing to stop him. There has to be some kind of trick to defeating him… Subaru, watch out for yourself, alright?”

Subaru: “Why does it sound like you’re saying something acrimonious…!?”

Reinhardt patted that confused Subaru’s shoulder briefly—then, he vanished.

In the next moment, Reinhardt slammed directly into the predator’s body, sending him sprawling backward.

Regulus: “Huh, ah—!?”

With a cry, Regulus, who’d had no time to brace himself, flew backward and slammed into a mountain of debris, further causing it to collapse and disintegrate.

Reinhardt: “His opponent will me. Hopefully you can solve the mystery of his [invincibility] as quickly as you can. I’ll buy time for you.”

Subaru: “Right, buying time is nice and all… but wouldn’t it be better to just defeat him in one fell swoop?”

Reinhardt: "If I could, I would have done so already. Take these women to safety. If they remain here, they’ll be dragged into the battlefield.”

Emilia: “Wait, Reinhardt. Although it’s probably not too effective, use this.”

Calling out to stop Reinhardt in his tracks, was Emilia, holding a sword of ice freshly shaped with magic.

Emilia: “I’ve been concentrating su~per hard to make this— it should be a little more durable than the last one.”

Reinhardt: “My thanks is inexpressible.”

Accepting her proffered blade, Reinhardt offered her his ceremonious gratitude in return.

Then he turned and leapt away from the ruins of the church to Regulus. In a single step, he vanished from Subaru's field of vision, crossing an impossible distance.

Immediately following his disappearance, a shock wave slammed into Subaru's skin.

As he bathed in this feeling, he turned to look at Emilia.

Subaru: "Emilia-tan! In order to avoid getting caught up in Reinhardt's battle, for time being, help get these women somewhere safe. They all have to leave… speaking of which, are they all married to Regulus?"

Both now and before, the uniformity of the women trapped in the wall of ice felt unnatural.

Being Regulus's wives made them all members of the Witch Cult. At a glance, there were more or less fifty of them. If they attacked as one, how could Subaru handle them without Beatrice's help? Only now had be begun to worry.

However, Emilia shook her head, denying this uneasiness.

Emilia: "It's fine. Although they are his wives, most of them are probably only here through force and coercion. So don't worry."

Subaru: "Right, yeah. If they were a threat, Reinhardt wouldn't have overlooked… gah, watch out! Just now, flying missiles have started attacking us! How dangerous!"

Outside of the church, Reinhardt and Regulus were engaging in a battle that resided far beyond the limits of humanity.

The wreckage and stone fragments, swept away by various impacts, flew like missiles. If he were to be struck by one, there was no guarantee that he'd stay intact.

Although Reinhardt had an absolute advantage when it came to offense, as long as the nature of Regulus's power remained a mystery, that advantage faded bit by bit. Subaru needed to come up with a countermeasure before the predator could overwhelm him—.

Emilia: "Hey, are you okay? No injuries?"

During his moment of reflection, Emilia had started shaking the blonde woman by the shoulders.

That was the same woman Subaru had just rescued using his whip. Based on her position in front of the altar, her status seemed unique. However, her expression was just as blank, bearing not even the faintest trace of irritation.

Looking up at Emilia, the woman shook her head slowly.

184: "I… we have to stay here. If you want to escape, please take care."

Emilia: “Stay, why? Are your feet injured? Then I’ll heal you right away. Just this wall of ice isn’t enough to keep you safe. Hurry up, we have to leave!”

184: “Please allow me to refuse. Only you can leave this place.”

Emilia: “Why!? Staying here will involve you in the fight! Regulus will, regardless of your presence, attack anything he wants to. Please, hurry and come with us…”

184: “—Master-sama did not give instructions to leave.”

Emilia’s persuasion was interrupted by the woman’s cold voice, conveying her feelings, equally devoid of warmth.

Her cold, frozen gaze met Emilia’s own amethyst eyes.

184: “Not listening to Husband-sama will make him angry. If that happens, there’s only one possible result.”

Emilia: “That’s… not…”

Subaru shared Emilia’s speechless reaction.

To call her determined would be wrong, for she had no selfhood. To call her unwavering would be wrong, for she had no resolve.

Her speech and attitude spoke of a heavy despair that had long become inexorable.

She— or rather, they had given up long ago.

Those hearts, shattered by Regulus, could no longer consider anything other than him.

This was a cursed brutality which no longer required words or actions.

Subaru: “Regulus’s opponent is the [Sword Saint] Reinhardt. I know you’re terrified of him, but Reinhardt’s not going to have any issue killing him. So, don’t stay here. There’s no need to endanger your lives.”

184: “It doesn’t matter who the opponent is. [Sword Saint]? Please, don’t kid. How could anyone match Husband-sama… Regulus Corneas?”

The woman dismissed Subaru’s reassurances with naught but contempt.

That was her first time, showing any sort of genuine emotion.

The scornful dismissal of an adult, looking down upon a child’s ignorant delusion.

—Only then, did Subaru understand the true nature of this distorted relationship.

The wives of Regulus Corneas had absolute faith in their husband.

Even the knowledge that his opponent was the [Sword Saint] Reinhardt did nothing to loosen the shackle of the curse that no one could undo.

The unparalleled, overwhelming power Regulus possessed held complete dominion over the hearts of his wives.

The wife trusts her husband, and the husband maintains a firm grip on his wife's heart. In a sense, it was the ideal state of a relationship.

But that serene surface gave way to inner distortions.

Subaru: "Damnit…"

Subaru came to the painful realization that mere words would not move them.

The women before him all unanimously believed this; the lack of dissent and dead silence only served to prove so.

To force them to leave would take nothing less thorough than knocking all of them out and moving them one by one; but they were pressed for the freedom to take such drastic actions.

Subaru: "—Reinhardt! Change of plans! Do what I mentioned before!"

Dispelling the idea of persuading the women, Subaru climbed atop the collapsed church and called out to Reinhardt, who was currently defying the law of gravity as he dashed across the side of a building. He flicked his eyes to the side.

Reinhardt: *Are we speeding up the battle? Hey, Subaru, have you ensured the women's safety?*

Subaru: "—!? The hell!? Where's this sound coming from!?"

Reinhardt: *This is the [Divine Protection of Telepathy], which can spread my voice to those within a certain range.*

Subaru: "Could you stop being so superhuman!?"

Even to the borderline noncombatant Subaru, Reinhardt's movements were clearly beyond the scope of human comprehension.

Running and kicking off from a wall, Reinhardt flew into the air and spun rapidly.

The instant before he landed, he allowed his clothing to spread, slowing down his momentum, and swung

his slender legs to send a blade of wind slicing toward the ground.

Sweeping up both dust and brick, the wave slammed directly into the predator waiting at the end—Regulus's figure, unable to stay standing, was blown away again.

Subaru: "That murder circus just now, what was it?"

Reinhardt: *He attacks by throwing stones or sand. There's really no gap of safety between the particles being scattered around.*

Subaru: "In my case it sounds like I want to hide from the rain. —More importantly, move the battlefield! Those women won't move! They're so terrified of Regulus, they don't dare to!"

Reinhardt: *I see, understood. —Then, allow me to try.*

Lowering his voice, Reinhardt leapt lightly toward Regulus.

Climbing to his feet once again, Regulus, stomped on the ground, sending bits of wood and sand flying. However, with economic movements, Reinhardt evaded and drew Emilia's ice sword, slashing at Regulus and sending him flying once more.

The screaming of the predator overlapped with the crisp sound of the shattering of the ice blade.

Emilia: "Subaru! What are we planning to do?"

Subaru: "Lead that bastard away from here… Wow, Emilia-tan is bold."

Emilia: "This dress is pretty, but really inconvenient…"

Standing in from of Subaru was Emilia, who had yanked away part of her dress.

The restrictive parts of the white wedding dress had been daringly torn open, revealing more of Emilia's white thighs than should have been visible in an enticing sight.

Emilia: "It doesn't matter! Anyway, what do you want from Reinhardt?"

Subaru: "A plan we thought of before the battle, since we don't know what the true extent of Regulus's power is. —We'll have to test possible weaknesses one by one."

Emilia nodded as Subaru retrieved Reinhardt's loved sword from the church. Then, he and Emilia rushed straight toward Reinhardt's battlefield.

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Regulus: "Gah! Fucker, quit jumping up and down!"

Cursing loudly, Regulus waved his both hands up and down.

His target was Reinhardt, who weaved rapidly back and forth, and his weapon was the plentiful gravel laying about.

Normally, bits of gravel could only serve to blind an opponent; people who used it as a weapon had character is unworthy of praise— but if Regulus were the wielder, the power of this despicable tactic would skyrocket.

Buildings began to crumble where the gravel came into contact with them, and the surrounding scenery fell into ruination.

Reinhardt: "—*tch*"

Watching the cataclysmic destruction unfolding in front of him, Reinhardt launched into a dramatic evasion.

He lowered his body as if he were planning to drop into a crawl, and sped into motion. Contrary to his seemingly unsightly appearance, he was moving so fast that he'd ventured beyond the reach of ordinary people.

And thus, Regulus, who was no different from an ordinary person, had no way of catching up to Reinhardt.

Regulus: "Damn… Hey! Where'd you run off to, looking like a bug!"

Faced with the thread of losing his target, Regulus attacked indiscriminately from all directions.

The rising of goosebumps on skin a sure sign that approaching would be terribly dangerous— a survival instinct everyone was born with, warning against enemies close at hand.

In actuality, this has little to do with the presence of a clear threat. Any living creature was susceptible to this feeling. Regulus was no exception; the tingling of his nerves, all throughout his body, tipped him off that something was wrong.

—Only, this incredible threat was approaching from all directions, an oppressive ring of menace.

Regulus: "You fucker, what in the world areeee—!?"

Reinhardt: "I am but a knight to the King Candidate Felt-sama. Please also be sure to give her all your support."

Regulus: "——!?"

With a line that may or may not have been a joke, a steady voice spoke.

The shocked Regulus took a sharp impact on his head— perhaps it was smashed by steel. The weapon had been bent completely out of shape, and a squeaking sound indicated that it had been cast aside.

Humiliated, Regulus glared at the ground as he bit his lip.

With crisp footwork that prevented ease of attack, Reinhardt assumed his stance.

The offensive and defensive battles of the [Sword Saint] and [Greed] were clear to both parties to the confrontation.

Exerting the conventional combat power, the strength of Reinhardt, which could toy with even the deadliest of Sin Archbishops, could not be said to be of world. But, even so—.

Regulus: “The one to win will be me, can't you understand? Although I have no clue how well you've been doing with this violent power that can only think of oppressing others; someone like you, whose happiness is built upon the sacrifice of others, will be stopped here! With this power, how many people's lives have you trampled upon? That greed really is despicable.”

Reinhardt: “—That really is distressing to hear. It is true that, because of me, some have lost sight of their happiness. Without question, the reason why I do what I do is none other than for the sake of atonement.”

In the face of Regulus’s ridiculous rhetoric, Reinhardt’s eyes narrowed slightly.

Seeing the Sword Saint’s responsive movement, Regulus widened his own.

Regulus: “The hell is this? Some kind of ‘you don’t need to say it because I already know’ ploy? ‘I'm aware of my own sins. I'm aware so I'm trying to fix my bad qualities, I tell you!’ So it's an attempt to let it all be water under the bridge? Jokes can only go so far. No one’s holding any expectations to what you'll do in the future. All that matters is what you did in the past. Your feet were once planted on the ground, where someone licked your soles. To such a person, whether you help tens of thousands or hundreds of millions of people, it’s all meaningless. Sinner, just die. You, able only to beg of others, stop pretending to be a good person already.”

Reinhardt: “Talking to you, I really do get the feeling of being shown a mirror. This must be the reason why Subaru told me to avoid seriously lending an ear to you.”

Regulus: “Speaking of which… that guy over there, is that this ‘Subaru’? The rotten man who snatched by bride from me, that hateful bastard… Even if she ended up being a dirty whore, his transgression can never be forgiven. To those who try to take what belongs to others, due punishment is— uwa!?”

Halfway through his tirade, Regulus’s world suddenly spun upside down.

At that moment, Reinhardt had dropped his stance and grabbed Regulus’s left ankle, spinning him around. A rotating field of violent destruction, Regulus’s back hit a wall.

Under that impact, a shower of dust scattered as Regulus’s body, still being swung back and forth,

crashed through and collapsed a building.

Reinhardt: “Although direct contact with you feels rather dangerous, but I’ll try to get it over with as soon as possible.”

Regulus: “What, are you doing this so you can call him a friend? What a goddamn fake show of hypocrisy… your debased self naturally has no decent friends. With someone known as a rapist, sharing a friendship is—”

Reinhardt: “Dealing with you really is unbearable— doubly so when you slander my friends.”

The wind suddenly wrapped around their bodies, and the sense of rapid rising followed closely.

If you were to take a glimpse, the figures of the two are suspended in the midst of the night sky, and right next to them, the full moon shines brightly. At that place, where the light of the moon lay within reach, Regulus tsked.

Regulus: “So, it is not a matter of strength at all. —Dropping me from such a height will end this, you can’t be truly naive enough to believe that. Are you playing me for a fool?”

Reinardt: “Indeed, I could try slamming you down and lodging you in the earth… but those weren’t my instructions.”

Regulus: “What are you…”

In midair, without any foothold, Reinhardt alternated between drifting up and down by shifting his body slightly. Regulus, still being gripped by his foot, was subjected to centrifugal force and, still being swung by Reinhardt, his eyes widened as he glanced downward.

Regulus: “No way…”

Reinhardt: “What’s coming seems to be known as ‘the first wave’. —I hope that I will not see you again afterwards.”

It was a rare sarcastic line from Reinhard, but Regulus had no leeway to pay attention to it

Reinhardt, with all his might, swung Regulus downward. Whipping through the air, Regulus’s dense form sped into the canal directly beneath him with the momentum of a bullet. —Regulus, bathed by the wind, could only watch as the surface of the canal approached.

Regulus: “The only threat is the water…!”

Rotating back and forth as he sailed downward, Regulus stretched out his hands, intending for them to slam into the water. The unprepared Reinhardt, hovering defenselessly in the sky, would follow in a moment.

Then, that calm face of his could be shattered in a single blow.

At that thought—

Subaru: “—Emilia, go!”

Emilia: “*Ul Huma*!”

Hearing the voices of that hateful man and woman, the lingering light of the corner of his eye immediately illuminated that detestable pair.

A black-haired boy gesturing with a finger, and a silver-haired girl who chanted quietly.

In the next moment, falling from above Regulus, were icicles shooting forward at a speed which matched his momentum.

The icicles caught his clothes limbs, accelerating his fall. Further, the last one slammed directly into Regulus’s back, freezing his body solid.

A total of five icicles bound Regulus’s extremities, using his body as a freezing point as it plummeted into the canal. Immediately, a hand of ice stretched forward, centering on where Regulus had fallen tracing the flow of the water. —The canal was sealed in an icy tomb, without so much as a single opening.

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Subaru: “?Operation [Splash], nicknamed Operation I was a complete success!”

Reinhardt: “I hope it was effective.”

Next to Subaru, who gazed into the frozen waterway, landed Reinhard, cloaked in moonlight.

After having thrown Regulus from the sky, the trajectory of that fall should have meant that he would not be able to avoid the falling water, but in fact even a droplet brushing him would have been a miracle.

That Reinhardt could move so well in midair was hardly even surprising.

Emilia: “Sealing his range of movement and tossing him into water, freezing it afterward. There’s no way he’ll ever surface again, is there…”

From Reinhardt’s other side, Emilia stared into the water.

The one who had drawn up the battle plans had been Subaru, and the one who had facilitated them had been Reinhardt. However, Emilia had been the one who had pushed Regulus into a state of desperation. Even if the other party had been an unreasonable murderer, Emilia still wore a rather timid expression.

If everything proceeded smoothly, he'd soon be naught but a drowned corpse.

Emilia felt that she'd overstepped; this feeling was not without reason.

Subaru: "——"

Regarding that Emilia, Subaru crossed his arms in consideration.

Although he felt rather sorry for her, to have Regulus drown was the best outcome of this. If that weren't possible, leaving him in a state mirroring death would be best.

However, the worst possibility must also be expected. For example—,

Subaru: "Reinhard!"

Reinhardt: "—Tsk!"

—Right in front of their eyes, the ice's surface cracked, and immediately after, a jet of water spouted up, blasting straight toward them.

At the sight of the spouting water, Reinhardt grabbed both Emilia and Subaru as the jet of water closed in on them.

His arms wrapped around their waists, he jumped backwards in one leap— after they were well out of the reach of the jet of water, Reinhardt narrowed his eyes.

Reinhardt: "It seems that it hasn't been settled yet."

Subaru: "Right. On that note, this guy, he's really bad news."

Reinhard and Subaru had each fixated on something different.

Reinhard was watching the figure standing atop a drifting piece of ice, whereas Subaru was looking at the outcome that had been caused by the jet of water which that figure had capriciously unleashed.

Water droplets flew about, pouring down near where Subaru and the others were standing.

The outcome was nothing so charming as the pitter-patter stopping and just dampening the earth below; each part of the spray bored thoroughly into the earth, carving through the ground as if biting with the force of a gigantic beast.

This destructive power was not inferior to that of stones and sand thrown by Regulus.

Which is to say, whether wielding solid or liquid, Regulus's attack power stayed constant.

Emilia: "… His body, it's not frozen at all. Just like what happened at the church."

Muttering this, Emilia looked at Regulus, still perched atop that piece of drifting ice.

Subaru had entrusted her with the task of freezing his body and limbs using magic. As per Subaru's instructions to 'show no mercy', the icicle pierced right through the middle of Regulus' body and limbs, such an act should have left him more than half dead.

However, when he'd fallen into the water, the tip of the icicle hadn't penetrated his body, and so Regulus was merely frozen on the surface, just as he had been in the church.

To Regulus, neither freezing nor magic was effective.

Like projectiles and strikes, he could also invalidate those types of attacks.

Subaru: "Although, when he shrugged off [Wrath]'s flames, I did suspect a little… the fundamental of his invincibility, is a unilateral specialization cancelling out any physical or magical attacks?"

Reinhardt: "Is there something I can try to confirm with combat?"

Subaru: "About that, if we don't close in to try…!?"

Interrupting Subaru's response to Reinhardt's words was a change in the canal.

A vortex appeared on the water's frozen surface, a distance from where the crack was. Gradually, its momentum increased, pulling in the drifting ice which Regulus occupied. And then—

Subaru: "Water Dragon—!"

Leaping from the heart of the maelstrom, the dragon bared its fangs at Regulus, who was standing on top of the ice.

Usually occupying the waterways surrounding the city, was one the the domesticated Water Dragons. The supposedly docile Water Dragon opened its jaws wide, aiming to lunge at Regulus's slender back.

Perhaps, even that Water Dragon had received quite a bit of [Wrath]'s influence, a tragedy that never should have taken place?however, its jaws did not have a chance to close.

Subaru: "—*hk*"

Subaru's throat involuntarily clogged up at the gruesome spectacle unfolding before him.

What happened in this moment, how could it even be described?

—The Water Dragon's maw jerked out of place at the very moment they had clamped down onto Regulus.

As if in a game of Daruma Otoshi, the Water Dragon's lower jaw was dislocated.

Keeping its momentum as it flew toward Regulus, its mandible shifted. A maw which should have dragged Regulus into the canal. However, unable to correct the dislocation, it split in two with a great shudder.

The halves of bisected water dragon poured blood into the water as they were submerged.

After a moment, an exaggerated amount of blood and viscera that once been a water dragon floated to the surface; this had been its gruesome demise.

Reinhardt: “Emilia-sama. If possible, could you make me a spear?”

Emilia: “… Huh?”

Reinhardt: “A spear. A spear of ice, please. I’ve troubled you”

Faced with the same sight, Reinhardt muttered this to the befuddled Emilia. Connecting the dots, Emilia hurriedly focused her mana. After several unsuccessful attempts, eventually Emilia created an ice spear, and handed it over to Reinhardt. After testing its balance,

Reinhardt: “Excuse me.”

Grasping the ice spear, he drew his wrist back back to aim Regulus, and let the missile fly.

The spear flew true— however, it wasn’t the sharp tip that had been pointed at Regulus. As it turned to its side, its shaft scored a direct hit. But the fact of matter was that when the shaft of the spear crashed against Regulus, it fell straight into the waterway, broken into two.

Emilia: “What is the meaning of this…?”

Subaru: “I see… I get it, Reinhardt.”

Seeing the state of the broken spear, Emilia tilted her head in confusion. From beside her, Subaru grasped the meaning behind why Reinhardt had done this, shuddering at its outcome.

Hearing Subaru’s acknowledgement, Reinhardt nodded and said,

Reinhardt: “Emilia-sama, did you see what happened to the spear when it hit him?”

Emilia: “It broke, right? A spear of ice is different from a real one, so it’s natural for it to have broken in two after it struck with such force…”

Reinhardt: “Not quite, the spear didn’t break. The part of the spear that hit him is missing. The part that hit him is missing, separated. The spear was broken not into two, but three.”

Reinhardt’s explanation served as an answer to what had happened to the spear and with the Water Dragon.

Neither object, upon contact with Regulus, managed to penetrate his body. With an ordinary barrier, the collision would have caused a projectile to bounce off or shatter from the impact, but neither had happened.

Regulus's body literally rejected anything that collided with it.

Regulus: "— What cluelessly naive expressions you're all wearing. This is just how it is."

Just as the three reached a consensus, Regulus's voice suddenly sounded from the ice.

That calm voice made it sound as if he were just whispering to himself. The instant Subaru thought that, an unpleasant shock hit him in the back.

Regulus: "Ununderstanding, ununderstandingununderstandingununderstanding. All of you, really, reallyreally understand nothing. It won't amount to anything. You have no chance. You'll achieve nothing. No matter how much you strain and struggle, it's meaningless. Why can't you see that? I'll say it to you, show it to you, force you to see… you could never understand."

Regulus whispered to himself as he leapt from the ice. Having jumped forward only slightly, his body plummeted into the canal; for a moment, his figure vanished. However, with one hand on the edge of the canal, he pulled himself from the water, climbing back onto the street. Then, once again, he squared his gaze at those who were watching him.

Reinhardt: "—His body isn't wet in the slightest. His breathing remains unchanged. Naturally, the fragments of ice need not even a mention, nor has a single a drop of blood splashed onto him. His clothes are completely clean, and equally unstained by water.

Observing Regulus, Reinhardt gave a quick report.

Upon hearing it, Subaru nodded and tried to consider all his concerns even as he suppressed his horror. It seemed that everything he'd intended to confirm with combat had been checked.

However, there was not a trace of good news; this was the worst forecast possible.

Reinhardt: "Subaru, my sword."

Subaru: "Oh, ah, right…"

At Reinhardt's request, Subaru quickly handed over the sword that he'd been holding all along. As Reinhardt gently tested the handle of his beloved sword, Emilia looked on from the side, wondering timidly,

Emilia: "Can the sword be unsheathed?"

Reinhardt: "No, the handle is still fixed. It seems that it won't be obedient… but there's no other weapon that can be used to confront him."

Emilia: “Since your sword can’t be drawn, what are you going to do? Attack him directly with the sheathe?”

Reinhardt: “Not exactly. But that’s not too far off.”

With nary a trace of tenseness in his voice, Reinhardt stepped forward.

He placed himself in front of Subaru and Emilia, shielding them from Regulus’s line of sight.

Reinhardt: “Subaru, please allow the task of buying time to be handed over to me. You can continue to decipher his power.”

Subaru: “Feels like the difficulty just rose a setting. But I’ll be cheering for you.”

Emilia: “I, I’ll also cheer!”

Reinhardt: “Then, I will also cheer. —Go!”

As soon as the sound of his voice fell, Reinhardt flew forward.

Regulus, who had been kept waiting, met him with only calmness.

Regulus: “I say, did you not see? If not fate of the dragon, then the spear. … Is your imagination truly so lacking?”

Reinhardt: “Only paying attention to a coin by your foot will draw your attention away from what is important— as my master once said.”

Regulus: “Is that so.”

Regulus’s sigh, deep and uninterested, overlapped with Reinhardt’s opening strike.

The sound of the muscles and bones being penetrated by something sharp tore through the air, and Subaru’s throat couldn’t help but stiffen. He watched as Reinhardt gripped the scabbard, slamming the hilt of the sword into Regulus.

Regulus: “—Oh, seems that you don’t even have a strategy.”

The sound of these blows was different from the fate of the water dragon and the ice gun; at least Reinhardt’s beloved sword would not break upon hitting Regulus, no matter what he did.

However, Regulus gave no reaction to the attacks. Reinhardt’s previous attacks, although dealing no damage, had at least been enough to send him flying; now, even that effect was lost.

Reinhardt: “Feel free to be proud. You are the second to force me to use Dragon Sword Reid.”

Regulus: “I can’t hear anything but belittlement, do you truly disregard me so? This isn’t the nature of sword, is that what you mean? Such a denigrating gaze, such disparaging words, to one as enlightened as myself, it’s only natural that I’d understand!”

Reinhardt: “That’s all rather— *ah*!”

As he provoked Regulus, Reinhardt weaved in and out of close proximity. Faced with those murderous fingertips Reinhardt’s evasive movements put his whole body into motion.

Suddenly, his legs stopped moving. No, they were kept from moving.

Reinhardt collapsed onto his knees, kneeling in place.

His right calf had split open, spilling forth copious amounts of blood.

Subaru: “Were you hit!? What happened!?”

Subaru cried out, and Reinhardt frowned through his confusion.

Neither Subaru, observing from a distance, not Reinhardt, from right up close, could discern what had happened. The one who had posed this question gave his evaluation of failure.

Regulus: “With your inhuman eyesight and reactions, you can escape the bits gravel and water. But you’re too naive, aren’t you? If you truly want to confront me, prevent me from breathing. You can’t, can you? Just now. I exhaled.”

Reinhardt: “Even breaths…”

Against Reinhardt, who’d fallen to the ground, Regulus approached without mercy.

With a direct hit, his attack would be enough to send Reinhardt flying, into pieces. Toward this attack, Reinhardt no longer had any time to dodge.

Hastily, he quickly lifted the sword in his arms, blocking the blow with its black scabbard—

Reinhardt: “*kuu*…!”

Regulus: “Just what do you think you can do, with that annoying scabbard in the way. Clinging to something that you’re unworthy of, why do people like you do such things? I can’t understand at all.”

With this defensive action, Reinhardt’s body was sent flying as if it were a toy ball.

Although protected from the fatal power of the kick, he fell into the street, crashing through the surrounding architecture. As Reinhardt’s body rolled and rolled, the destruction only continued.

In that moment, Reinhardt’s form, sent flying, became nothing but a bullet.

Regulus: “Right, and now—”

Subaru: “——!”

Seeing Reinhardt off well into the distance, Regulus seemed to remember something as he turned around. Being firmly fixed by that gaze, Subaru immediately tensed.

Emilia, from beside him, immediately chanted a canto, and in an instant the sky was covered with a multitude of icicles, which ruthlessly flew toward Regulus.

However, the results spoke for themselves.

Regulus: “A woman who can’t read the situation is just the word. Having to spend time on disciplining them is such a shame. However, because women are just ignorant creatures, they must first be taught. That’s just how it is. They’re much better after they’ve been tamed.”

Slamming into his body and shattering into shards, those icicles were unable to even budge him before they fell to the ground. Languidly, Regulus approached them.

Subaru: “Emilia! Trying to fight is useless right now! If we still don’t understand the mystery, even if we attack, it won’t have any effect!”

Emilia: “But…!”

Subaru: “Right, for now let’s just get out of here!”

Seizing the wrist of the stubborn Emilia, Subaru tried to pull her away from Regulus.

Subaru’s actions only served to excite Regulus further—

Regulus: “Haha, are you trying to flee? Well, that’s only natural. Now that the situation is like this, where you stand no chance against me, though you should have understood that well before you childishly knock upon my door… if you want to flee, then run.”

Just what was he thinking? Regulus watches them flee with nothing but smiles.

However, given this chance to escape, they needed to capitalize on it. No matter what, right now, they had no time to even—

Regulus: “—But, you’d have to get away first.”

As he spoke, Regulus approached canal; leaning over, he hoisted half of the water dragon’s corpse out of the water.

Grabbing its tail, he began to whip it back and forth with a ferocious smile.

Emilia: “H-hey, Subaru… I, have this feeling of foreboding.”

Subaru: “What a coincidence, so do I.”

As for what he would do, neither had any clue.

However, every unremarkable action he took had completely extraordinary results, that much was plain as day.

Therefore, Subaru and Emilia’s pace increased rapidly.

Taking his time, Regulus laughed pleasantly as he raised his head, before leaping into motion. He set foot on the roof of an adjacent building, then jumped over its upper floors, landing on another, taller structure, until he finally reached a building the height of a clock tower.

After that period, both parties now stood a sizable distance apart.

However, despite the distance they’d gained, Subaru could still make out Regulus’s face.

—Showing so clearly, was that murderous smirk.

Regulus: “Come, if you want to try to hide, see if you can. —Whore undeserving of becoming a bride, and bastard who regards this woman as a treasure. I will deliver to you a rain of blood!”

Regulus lifted the half of water dragon with both hands, and twisted the corpse mercilessly.

The dragon’s flesh split with an unpleasant squelch, and the slowly dripping blood gushed forth. The bloody wreckage was gleefully waved by Regulus from his high platform.

Holding the corpse’s tail, sill drenched in blood, as if waving a wet towel.

As it rotating over his head, endlessly, blood scattered in a halo.

Farther, father, until its momentum brought it to where Subaru and Emilia had fled.

Then, the result was—

Emilia: “—Subaru!”

Subaru: “Run run run run run run—!”

The downpour of blood became a rain of destruction, further blighting the city, this carpet bombing aimed directly at the retreating figures of the pair that had been forced to flee.

Arc 5 - Chapter 52, "The Stars and The Sin Archbishops"

by admin - Thursday, January 24, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/01/24/arc-5-chapter-52-the-stars-and-the-sin-archbishops/

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Translated By :

- Nanashi
- Ringo
- Frr
- Paper

Proofread By :

- Review
- Matterfied
- Azeem
- Nobidexx

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The collapse was pushing in.

That shower of fresh blood, each drop and every drop, like a malevolent hand grasping gallant destruction, trampled over the city.

Wherever the droplets touched, more so than striking a sheet of paper with the edge of a blade, it unresistingly lost its cohesion. The destructive propagation demolished buildings, and the aftermath, in turn, spread further collapse around it.

Subaru: “Aaaaaaaaa!!”

Emilia: “??Tsk!”

Fully aware that he was being unreasonable, yet wringing out breath from his lungs, Subaru continued powering through his sprint. Jogging alongside him was Emilia, her gleaming silver hair fluttering through the air and her mouth tightly shut, similarly mid-stride.

However, the scenic water city's specialty canals stretched out from them in all directions.

Simply put, finding a straight path to properly escape on was proving difficult. In front of the dashing pair spread waterways, while destruction from the rear threatened to swallow them both.

Subaru: "Watch out!"

Emilia: "We're sailing close to the wind, but…...Subaru, grab on!"

As their escape route cutting off caused Subaru to raise his voice, Emilia instantly conceived of a different notion. He grabbed onto her outstretched arm without hesitation, and in that same moment, a chill came over the surrounding air.

It was the effect of both magic borne of the spirits' borrowed strength and the power of Emilia herself, acting together.

Emilia: "??Please, everyone!"

Once Emilia commanded them so, from each luminous point blue light surged downwards.

In the next instant, the ground beneath was instantly soaked with white, and in the blink of an eye a whole world of frost had spread.

Subaru: "Oouh!? Emilia-tan is amazing! So clever!"

Emilia: "Control is difficult, so don't let go of my hand!"

Subaru looked up, his right hand still linked with Emilia's own. Tightly grasped in the half-elf's raised left fist, was an icicle directed ahead which had shot forward moments before.

Freezing the ground and thrusting from it an icicle, her borrowing of the propulsive force from her magic had thus hastened their escape. Even more surprising was the course of ice formed by the spirits in the air.

On the edge of the waterway in front of them, something like a ski jump had been formed, and the Subaru and Emilia pair, gliding with their built-up momentum, had sailed over the channel.

Subaru: "Eee-yahaa!"

On the other side of the waterway, another course of ice had been created. While she was touching down and skating over it, Subaru honestly praised Emilia's skill.

Subaru: “*Nice*, Emilia-tan! I fell for you all over again!”

Emilia: “But, I can’t think of a way to stop! What should we do?”

Subaru: “Eeh.”

Emilia had already released the icicle, but the leftover momentum was still plenty to cause unavoidably high damage once they hit an obstacle. Using only her ice magic, conveniently making something like a cushion for two to absorb the heavy impact wasn’t a possibility.

In the meantime, the pair was drawing closer and closer to a wall. Moments before impact, feeling Emilia’s hand tightly squeezing his, Subaru made a snap judgement.

Subaru: “Emilia-tan! Install curve!”

Emilia: “Cu, cur?ve?”

Subaru: “A gently-bending kind of wall! In a circle!”

Hearing Subaru’s desperate call, Emilia with her magic meekly obeyed.

Right in front of their sliding forms, a gentle curve formed, and following along it while turning widely, those two avoided impact.

Subaru: “Just like that, don’t let the curves cut off! Twirl?! Twirl?!”

Emilia: “T, twirl?! Twirl?!”

Just so, turning widely like that, as to not cut off at a wall, more curves of ice formed.

Viewed from above, an ice wall shaped like mosquito-repellent coil was created, and the two bodies reaching the midpoint just barely lost enough speed to safely come to a stop.

Subaru: “Huuh, after wasting a bunch of Emilia-tan’s magic, we did it somehow.”

Emilia: “More importantly, the attack from earlier.”

As the stopped Subaru let out a sigh, Emilia whacked her ice formation with her hand and shattered it. Watching the crushed ice returning to mana particles, and turning to see the traces of the destruction they fled from, a shiver ran up Subaru’s spine.

Centered around the tower on which Regulus’ attack had originated, the scenery of the city had changed.

Especially near the center, where the impacts of blood had been strongly felt, the destruction was severe. Further outwards in the perimeter of destruction, deviations in its traces formed. But even then, few buildings still held their original shape. In other words, it was an attack with an abnormally high area of

effect.

At Subaru's location, the attack had crossed the waterway and reached over. That it had barely failed to reach Subaru was the result of chance and a desperate escape??not.

Subaru: "Reinhardt."

On the building Regulus had stood up to this moment, there was now no one.

Instead, in its vicinity thick smoke was rising, and the sound of tremendous destruction was echoing.

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Regulus sent the Water Dragon to its death by tearing it apart, smirking while it sprayed blood.

In that moment, he could already see two small figures desperately trying to escape down an alley.

How puny, how very petty, how truly trivial.

Laughing mockingly as his scattered blood trampled on the city, he eagerly awaited the moment that destruction would catch up to the fleeing duo.

A Prostitute and a Rapist. For them, death in a hail of blood was fitting.

Regulus: "Scatter! Scatter away! You heinous fiends who trampled on my heart!"

Reinhardt: "??My apologies, but I can't let you do that."

Immediately after declaring his rage and victory with those words, he was startled by a voice speaking close to his ear.

As he turned around, a head of red hair with the appearance of flames fanned by the wind came into view.

Regulus: "How foolish you look! Getting in the way of someone's love with such zeal!"

Reinhardt: "If your method was proper and respectful of rights, if once rejected you could promise to pull away cleanly, then I would not even hesitate to cheer for you."

At Regulus' infuriated voice, Reinhardt responded with a laugh and a tease.

While that ever-so-composed posture was indeed hateful, what now took hold of Regulus' feelings was an inexplicable suspicion.??Then, leaping in a single burst, came Reinhardt's leg.

Certainly, that right leg, on its shin it had suffered a serious injury.

Though not entirely torn off, to say it was held to the ankle with a mere strip of leather was no

exaggeration. Far from battle-worthy, it was in no state to bear walking on. That it had left that state meant,

Regulus: “That is so dumb, it’s not just swordsmanship, is healing magic your specialty, too? With all those talents of yours that better than others, just how much did you trample over their hearts on the way here? Shattering the hearts of others without even trying filthy does that feel good huh?!”

Regulus: “Among your misconceptions?In one respect, I will definitely correct you.”

Reinhardt twisted, the wind shrieking as it shrouded his body.

His released spinning kick blew through the air, landing directly on the water dragon’s body wielded by Regulus. That corpse which had already become a simple mass of meat now shattered??,

Regulus: “Wha!”

Reinhardt: “I cannot use any kind of magic, let alone healing magic. It was simply the spirits in the air that came to my aid, hastily healing the wounds on my foot.”

As the force from his leg demolished the body, with a twist of his ankle he rescued it from Regulus’ grasp. Through that very skillful footwork, the water dragon’s remains was not excessively ill-treated, and was then gently tossed onto the roof of a partially-wrecked building.

Then,

Reinhardt: “Perfect.??Next on the checklist, Tactic J will commence.”

Regulus: “Kuaa!”

At the same moment he begrudged Reinhardt’s hypocritical act, his sword’s pommel knocked him upside the head. Smacked away, Regulus’ body rolled down the slope of the roof.

Askew over the ground and headed straight downwards, in his ear again was,

Reinhardt: “I’ll put it to the test.”

Regulus: “??!?”

Leaping at the same angle with a bullet’s speed, Reinhardt drew close, grasping Regulus’ leg as he inverted mid-fall, and with a shake his form was swallowed up by Reinhardt’s actions. Now Reinhardt, while carrying Regulus, leapt in the direction of the fleeing Subaru with an awesome storm, accelerating quickly enough to tear off the leg of any ordinary person.

Regulus: “Just whaaat the??”

Reinhardt: “Nothing particularly special.”

Claiming so, Reinhardt lifted up Regulus' body as he stopped.

With the attitude of a child grasping a doll's leg and playing roughly - While Regulus' temper at that treatment was exploding, he came to understand the finer details of Reinhardt's plan.

Wielding Regulus's body, Reinhardt flung him into the falling droplets of blood.

Even demolishing buildings formed from stone, that shower of blood imbued with force by Regulus.

If it had such power, then that attack made by Regulus' ability may even be effective against whatever protection he had on his own body.

If that had been the idea, it proved a foolish one.

Regulus: "If it's my own strike then it must work on me? I don't know just how naturally gifted you were born but don't viciously look down on others so much I say. There's no way I myself would be done in with some stupid method like that?"

Reinhardt: "This too was ineffective?"

Those droplets of blood, touching Regulus' body, became simple droplets on the spot and splashed off of his form. Obviously, the priority was different.

At that same moment, Reinhardt suddenly released his grip on Regulus' leg.

He was an intelligent fellow. If he had let the droplets reach him as such, his palm would have turned into a mess which couldn't possibly grasp a sword again.

The force of the swing disappeared. Landing there onto the street, Regulus once again faced Reinhardt. He narrowed his eyes in warning.

Reinhardt: "Somehow, it no longer seems possible to touch him again."

Regulus: "It seems you have a keen nose, do you want to get hurt again like you did a while ago."

Reinhard: "From now on, I will be wary of your breath and vision both. If there are any other precautions to take, I would be glad to hear them."

Regulus: "Get out of my sight, right now!"

Stepping forth with both hands raised, Regulus ran at Reinhardt.

With unbelievable speed, Reinhardt turned in a broad arc to dodge, giving him a wide berth. Using the pommel of the dragon sword, he rained blows down on Regulus from a distance.

Regulus: "You just love to run, no matter where you go…!"

Reinhardt: “Being unable to solve the problem with sword strikes, how impotent. Truly, I am ashamed of myself.”

Regulus: “You haven’t even drawn that sword of yours yet!”

Facing Reinhardt as he weaved back and forth, Regulus made a relatively unseen motion of reaching out his hand.

However, such a flippant attack could never reach a hero like Reinhardt. Not only that, Reinhardt’s bright blue eyes were still wary of the heavily breathing Regulus’s petty tricks.

Regulus: “Ah?”

But then, a spear suddenly flew straight forward.

Aiming at Regulus, who faced the straight-backed Reinhardt, an icicle speared through the ground at his feet.

However, the ice under his feet, after he’d taken a single step, shattered before the image could even become concrete.

Flippantly, Regulus cast his gaze about, settling on the silver-haired maiden who stood at the other end of the canal, hand outstretched. Undoubtedly, the ice magic had been one of her little tricks.

Disgusting, was this visceral feeling of tumbling and boiling.

Regulus: “Each and every one of you, what can’t you understand already?! The fact that we’re different! What we have from the moment of our birth is different! You all can’t reach or compete with my completed self. Accept that you’re lackluster, be satisfied with it, and die!”

Nomatterwhatnomatterwhat, enough of the relentless opposing evildoers.

Such an absolute gap could not be reduced. Why, was this so hard to grasp.

Reinhardt: “Tactic A has also failed. What next?”

Regulus stomped his feet, splitting the alleyway, no space left in his ears to listen to Reinhardt’s mumbling.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Emilia: “No good! As expected, that attack was ineffective!”

Subaru: “It didn’t! Which is to say, the possibility of his feet being an achilles heel is also gone…”

Emilia, as per her instructions, had attacked the soles of Regulus’s feet- however, they’d rent the ice

without any trace of injury.

Reinhardt: “Tactic J failed as well. Apologies, my capabilities are lacking.”

In an instant, Reinhardt had also used the [Divine Protection of Telepathy] to send a psychic message, and Subaru no longer found himself thrown off balance by these superhuman idiosyncrasies. Closely examining the injury on his right foot revealed that it had stopped bleeding, but even if it had been entirely shredded, this wouldn’t have been the least bit surprising.

Besides, the implications of a shredded foot, Subaru had already experienced.

Subaru: “If his invincibility is a barrier, it may not extend to where his feet come in contact with the ground, so I came up with Tactic A (Soles of Feet)…”

The grounded parts of him had to have disabled the power, or he’d just sink into the ground. Subaru had thought this might be the case, but he’d turned out to have been wrong.

According to Reinhardt’s report of Tactic J (Self-Destruct), the idea that Regulus would have to disable his invincibility to launch his invincible attacks was also off.

In that case, Tactic I (Ball in Pool) was also a no-go. It seemed that reality denied the notion that there would be a weakness in his invincibility.

Subaru: “Is, is there anything else? An invincible enemy’s weakness, weakness…!”

Covering his mouth, Subaru furiously ordered his mind to spin.

Before encountering and even after having met Regulus, what he’d often been troubled by, was the means of defeating someone with an ultimate shield, and whatever other ways there may be.

Flying through Subaru’s mind were answers from a variety of subcultures, as though he’d almost figured it out, but there was no clean-cut answer.

Subaru: “Is the way I’m thinking about this off? Is the direction wrong?”

What was needed, was perhaps not a way to break through the invincibility.

Rather, something more fundamental- Regulus’s authority, what was its nature?

Emila: “Subaru, what else is there? I, what should I do?”

Emilia questioned Subaru, who’d fallen deep into thought.

Before them, across a large canal, the fierce battle between Reinhardt and Regulus continued, but she was unable to offer any help, which left her feeling discomfited.

Whether Emilia or Reinhardt, both trusted in Subaru, both had expectations of Subaru.

And not just the two of them. The allies stationed elsewhere, and the citizens of Pristella he'd called with his broadcast, all shared those sentiments.

"????"

Thinking, thinking, thinkingthinkingthinkingthinkingthinking.

Although those memories were distasteful, Subaru began to think back to everything since his first encounter with Regulus, up until this instant, his actions and words, the attacks and schemes he'd tried to pull.

There should have been something. There should have been some reason. Not just Regulus was fine. Including the other Sin Archbishops, there should have been something. They were all scum. That much was already clear. It wasn't that-

Subaru: "The names of, the stars."

Emilia: "Subaru?"

Suddenly, Subaru realized it.

Before, he'd thought of the same thing, and now he cast aside the joke to think of it seriously.

Now that things had reached this point, he began to consider an abandoned idea anew.

Regulus, Capella, Alphard, Sirius, Petelgeuse.

These star-related names gathered in one place, could he really treat them so casually as a coincidence?

In retrospect, the Water Plumage Pavilion, the customs of Kararagi, Hoshin of the Wastes.

In this world, so many places had been touched by the influence of Subaru's original world, that he couldn't simply treat it as a joke. Why had he only realized just now, that the Witch Cult did not originate from here?

Petelgeuse, was Betelgeuse. [The hand of Orion], [Unseen Hand].

Regulus was Leo, [Little King]. Thus, he had a title.

This [Little King], was truly a title commensurate with him-.

Subaru: "Emilia. I have something to ask you."

Subaru spoke quietly, and Emilia opened her eyes to nod.

Subaru could feel the attention radiating from her snow white face, and closed one eye.

Subaru: “That man grabbed you about by the neck once, right? It’s about that time.”

Emilia: “Mmm.”

Subaru: “Regulus’s hand, was it warm? Or was it cold?”

Emilia: “????”

At Subaru’s inquiry, Emilia widened her eyes.

And so, she touched a hand to her slender neck, with a tap, and replied.

Emilia: “No. Thinking back on it… I couldn’t feel anything. Neither heat nor cold, there was no temperature.”

Hearing Emilia’s response, Subaru held his breath.

From when he’d been cast into the canal, his undisturbed breathing and unsoaked body. The ineffectiveness of attacking the soles of his feet, the ineffectiveness of the cancellation of his own attacks. Impeccable in both offense and defense.

If this was no simple, mere [Invincibility]-.

Subaru: “Reinhardt!”

He called across the canal, the name of the hero doing battle against the evil.

In relentless battle, Reinhardt determinedly looked toward Subaru.

In order for him to hear, Subaru raised his voice high.

Subaru: “-That man, check if his heart is beating!”

Subaru’s loud words had Emilia, had Reinhardt widening their eyes.

So, Regulus, he-

Regulus-.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Otto also left the City Hall for fulfilling the duty imposed on him after he confirmed the simultaneous raids on the four control places had been carried out, and after each of the parties had departed to conduct them.

Anastasia: “I don't think it's strange to think that he should be stopped..... but it is also true that right now, we have to reconfirm where the Book of Wisdom, that the Witch Cult had requested, is. Pitiful, isn't he, that Otto-kun.”

Was what Anastasia said at Otto's departure.

It seemed to be true that Anastasia wanted Otto to remain in the city hall as well. It was the place where Subaru and the other camps had already clashed with a Sin Archbishop.

Though the city hall is expected to function as the headquarters, there were not many brains that could scout for information from several different places at the moment.

However, leaving the Book of Wisdom in the hands of others was not something that could be done either.

You can establish a relationship of cooperation with the opposing Sin Archbishop, but once out of that situation, they will return to being an enemy. When that happens, the effectiveness of the Book of Wisdom being watched over by others was something that should be avoided.

Truthfully, it was about the Book of Wisdom being completely away from the situation in which it would be negotiated over-- but Subaru and Garfiel were fine with that.

Otto wanted to sigh as he felt his own personality was at fault here.

Otto: “I wonder, when did I become someone who ran around for others like this.....”

Hitting his grey hair with his hand, Otto worried over the question that had come to his mind several times in the past year.

The position he stood in was unexpected, his relationship with people was unexpected, his current emotions were unexpected.

What will his family think when they get to know that he is doing all this?

Otto: “If I am fine and successful, I'll try writing a letter.....”

If Subaru was here, he would definitely point out a death flag, saying something strange, as Otto stepped onto the city's third avenue.

The Sin Archbishops should be concentrated in the control towers, and considering that, they should not be in the city. They should not, be.

Otto: “Ha~a..... ha ~tsk”

Grabbing his chest tightly, Otto felt his heartbeat quicken.

Witch Cult, Sin Archbishop, Witch Cultists -- Otto had bad memories of them.

A year ago, Otto recalled his first encounter with Subaru. He couldn’t forget how scared he was of the Sin Archbishop back then.

The eyes of a madman who wouldn't think twice before taking away one's life. That madman, the figure of fanatics, who would dedicate their blood and flesh by his own will.

When he truly hoped for help, only the silence and loneliness had dominated.

He had never been as scared at any other time. He had never felt so empty in any other moment.

Comparing the fear of then to fighting Garfiel, facing the bowel-hunter, encountering herds of witch beasts, that was nothing.

The encounter with the Witch Cult dropped an immensely dark shadow on Otto's heart. Even though he knew how horrible that thing was, it was not something that could be erased so easily.

Emilia, who, due to her similarity with the Witch of Envy, could not escape prejudice due to the witch.

Subaru, who was fated to become her knight and fight for her, and aim for the devils of the Witch Cult.

Beatrice, who fought along with Subaru, and spent all the strength she had in that small body.

Garfiel, who put his everything to his fist in order to protect his family.

Ram, with sweetness that cannot be ignored, but on the flip side, with a stinging tongue.

Frederica, who lived in negative feelings for her brother, and has a sense of responsibility for her position.

Petra, who acted with a clear smiling face with everyone while being treated as a child.

I love everyone.

Though he had not intended to stay in one place too long, unfortunately, it was too comfortable.

Even though he knew to stay away from scary things, he was unable to avoid them.

In order to save this place, I would like to stand by their side and support them; even in my fear, I want to help them where their hands cannot reach. That's why--,

Otto: “Somehow, I must fulfill my role.”

Saying this, he stepped onto Third Avenue. There stood a small figure in front of him.

Beyond the stone bridge on the waterway there was a square, and that was where the shadow was.

Besides that shadow, several more figures could be seen.

But right now, Otto's eyes were fixed on only one small phantom.

Sound disappeared. Everything went terribly quiet, and nothing could be heard. A situation where living beings sucked in their breath and held it, trying desperately to conceal their existence, Otto Suwen knew this situation well.

Subsequently, the figure in front his eyes gently clapped its hands and, as it disheveled its long hair, raised its face. But still, his heartbeats were surprisingly calm.

???: “Welcome, onii-san.”

Ley: “Welcome to the Witch Cult's Sin Archbishop, representing Gluttony..... Ley Batenkaitos' dinner banquet ~tsu.”

Opening his mouth, full of fangs, the Sin Archbishop who shouldn’t have been there, laughed gruesomely.

TL Note

Before starting Chapter 53, it's best to read this short story here for a bit of context for one of the upcoming scenes!

Arc 5 - Chapter 54, "Combat Power of Non-Combatants"

by admin - Thursday, February 07, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/02/07/arc-5-chapter-54-combat-power-of-non-combatants/

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Translated by :

- Ringo
- Nanashi

Proofread by :

- Furuta
- Shifty
- Ice
- Tournament

Fan Art Source :

- Twitter

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

???: “Gluttony..... ~tsu.”

Before the nightmare that stood in front, Otto could not help but have cold sweat run down his back.

The opponent who identified as a Sin Archbishop?? the name of ?Gluttony? had already been heard by Otto. However, that name was.

Otto: “From what I heard, the name of the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony? was supposed to be Roy Alphard though.”

???: “Arere, you have already met us before meeting us? If so, then, onii-san, to be left uneaten and coming out normally is quite impressive indeed. Especially when a~nything is a treat for Roy of Bizarre Eating.”

The boy, who claimed to be Ley Batenkaitos, smiled and laughed at Otto’s question. Hearing that laughter, Otto knew that his terrible idea was affirmed.

??There are two, Sin Archbishops of ?Gluttony?.

Otto: “No, to be accurate, at least two of them.....”

Ley and Roy, rather, the duo of Batenkaitos and Alphard? At worst, it may be necessary to assume that they were a nightmare like the great rabbit of the myriads.

Julius and Ricardo were supposed to go and capture ?Gluttony’s? control tower, but if the one waiting there wasn’t alone, then, rather than a tough struggle, it would be an inevitable defeat.

???: “Hey! Is this the time to talk and get along with that bastard?! This isn’t the time for all that!”

Otto had the nerves of his guts seemingly sharpened accompanying a burning sensation on his forehead. What interrupted his thoughts at that moment was an extremely feminine voice.

Of course, Otto also noticed the owner of that voice. Because he had noticed that there were puzzles as well.

Otto: “Why is Felt-sama here? I’m sure Reinhard-san told you to stay quietly in an evacuation centre!”

Felt: “When the city is in this condition, as if I would ignore that and go and sit in a small corner of the evacuation centre!”

The girl with blonde hair and red eyes said bravely. A person who stood out, with there being no possibility of mistaking her for someone else, that’s who Felt was.

Otto: “With that restlessness, what you first see after jumping out is an encounter with a Sin Archbishop, huh. Now that that has happened, my defeat is inevitable because of my bad luck.....”

Ley: “You don’t need to be so pessimistic, onii-san. Fo~r us, any encounter is a spice to gourmet. We are supposed to be ?Gluttony? but, we co~mpletely understand the importance of preparation ~tsu."

Batenkaitos was at the centre, with Otto and Felt standing in a position that made a triangle. On the remaining vertice, stood another figure, with whom Otto seemed to be familiar.

Otto: "I am happy to see you again, Kiritaka-san....."

Kiritaka: "Quiet voice with dead eyes and unable to take things obediently, -kun! I don't understand the feeling though!"

The figure of Kiritaka, who was covered in thin bandages and was in pain, stood in front of Otto. Despite his presence, Otto was not rejoicing at seeing him.

When Otto escaped the headquarters of Muse company, he ran into ?Gluttony?, making his fate uncertain. He is happy to have had survived that, but the actors on the current stage still made things uncertain.

"????"

And that is, Otto, along with Felt and Kiritaka, got the same thought at the same time. ??Proper combatants were needed here.

Otto: "There are three groups, all of which are non-combatants, who have encountered a main force among the enemy. What a bad joke this is. Please just stop."

Felt: "I don't think that my allies, would be coming anytime soon. Right back at you nii-chan, you rely on just yourself too much."

Felt told Otto. Otto, as well, could not make any excuses at this point. Behind Felt is a humongous-looking servant who wore a tough appearance. Kiritaka also had some members of the ?White Dragon's Scales? with him. It was only Otto who was alone.

Ley: "We're saying that it will be the same no matter how many people you gather. If it's you guys, then this thirst of ours can never be healed ~tsu! A~h, where are you, we're looking for you, we want to meet you, we want to meet you, let us meet you."

Otto and the others were surrounded by pessimism regarding their fighting strength, but Batenkaitos arbitrarily displayed his selfish attitude.

Otto: "Want to meet? Just, what on earth are you saying."

Otto tried to continue the conversation by picking up his words. On the margin of Batenkaitos' reasonability.

If it came down to it, Otto could be knocked down in a moment. Buying even the slightest of time?? there was a need to create that gap, at all costs.

Ley: "It would indeed be troublesome to explain it so many times, huh. We can't afford to have our mouths broken by others either ~tsu. That'd be the worst, won't that be the worst, it would be the absolute worst, wouldn't that be the worst, isn't that the worst is what we're saying."

"????"

With steep expressions, Felt and Kiritaka shook their heads at Batenkaitos' words. Rather than being answered, it seemed as if they were being questioned by multiple people. And, as that conversation got unexpectedly established, Otto continued to stare as he was unable to talk to ?Gluttony?.

But still, Otto, with his ?Divine Protection of Soul Language?, could talk to even those beings which could not possibly have a human's will.

Let's negotiate. No matter what the challenge may be, it would still be better than the problem Subaru was surrounded by.

??Please, lend me your strength, Natsuki-san.

Otto: "By saying that, I might actually become stronger. Please, try and talk to me. The one which was mentioned in the request, could it perhaps be that you are talking about the Artificial Spirit?"

Quite a dangerous step. That choice of words, that stubborn tone could easily ignite Batenkaitos' fuse. But, Batenkaitos swung his head.

When the young boy received Otto's words with the intention of responding to the conversation, he laughed joyfully,

Ley: "Who we want to know is only one..... the one, who did the broadcast from earlier. The hero who did it, is the one we are searching for."

"????"

I take back those words.

After all, Subaru did not lend me his power, and neither do I want to lend away his name.

Ley: "That beloved, beloved hero seems to have come to cast his judgement upon us. This small chest, is hurting in search of hi~m ~tsu."

Otto: ".....The coming of a person of such a troublesome nature, can he even manage to do anything at all, that person."

If he was really here, "keep on dre~aming!" is what he would have had said, but there is no point in citing curses on part those who aren't present here in the first place.

At Otto's reaction, Felt frowned,

Felt: "I told you that you will only waste time by talking! Who is going to sell away their family anyway. Even for my merciless self, there are no doubts in that, except for Reinhardt?, I’m not sure about him."

Otto: "I am sorry to hear such an evaluation, but I won't say anything because I saw Felt-sama captured in that descent!"

The rough Felt, did not say a word which answered Batenkaitos' query. The same went for Kiritaka.

Both of them immediately knew that Batenkaitos' request was Subaru, and immediately discarded it.

"????"

That judgment was good as a person, but was undoubtedly too hasty in this situation.

With this rapid exchange, Subaru ended up not being sold away.

Otto: "This person messed it up. This girl and the others are just impatient, and by hearing the speech of

the hero you are looking for, got excited and jumped out of the evacuation center, it's all just mere impatience."

Felt: "Hu~h!?"

Kiritaka: "Shh??"

Otto's story made Felt float on the blue line. And, the one who quietened her was Kiritaka.

As expected of the head merchant of the Muse company, he immediately understood Otto's judgment. At the same time, their gaze and line of sight match.

On his gaze, Otto drew in his chin.

Otto: "If you don't want to answer any questions, then I shall guide you to the hero. I also want my life. I demand its security, however."

Ley: "Really! You know? You know it? The place where our hero is! The figure of our beloved hero! That weak and fragile, unable to help anything unless he is supported, that person!"

Otto: "??? Yes, uh, yes."

Otto nods, as he recognizes the sense of incongruity in the spirit of Batenkaitos' words.

As if he knew a lot about Subaru. Calling out for his hero, and also taking such deep notice of the person named Natsuki Subaru.

Otto: "No, I will guide you."

However, Otto got confused about it. It was regarding Subaru. It would not be surprising if two or three Sin Archbishops already knew about his face. Maybe all the members should not be included after all, ?Greed?, ?Gluttony?, ?Lust?, ?Wrath???they were all of them. But that was all of them in the first place.

Ley: "You have a face that is frowning badly, onii-san hu~h."

Otto: "There is no need for you to care so much. Rather than that, what will you do. Killing every one of us at this place, or guaranteeing the lives of everyone here and encountering the hero in return. ??What do you choose to do?"

Ley: "What a nasty way of talking, you are a dealer, aren't you? Such kinds of things in which you have to use your brains, neither we nor us are good at it."

Otto: "If that's the case, then choosing what is recommended and seeing it for yourself isn't so bad either. That is a saying among the merchants though."

Ley: "......Hmm."

There was initiative in the conversation. Batenkaitos was really obedient for a Sin Archbishop. It felt just like he was simply a child, and a distorted imbalance made him project himself as a monster. Maybe, he is just a pitiable young boy after all??.

Ley: "??Just now, you pitied us, didn't you?"

Just when such feelings gathered inside the inner part of Otto's heart, Batenkaitos said that with a brisk voice in a low tone.

Otto: "huh?"

Ley: "Those eyes, we remember them. Those are eyes which look down upon. Those are eyes which are scornful. With those eyes, thinking that we are some product..... A~h, is that so. We were getting a nasty feeling since earlier."

Otto continued to watch as Batenkaitos' eyes became filled with complete disgust and hostility.

Ley: "You, are a merchant, right? Putting price tags on things, they are people who sell them to line their own pockets. Human values and opinions too, everything, everything! They are dead people who put them on a scale and calculate, aren't they?"

Otto: "That is..... somewhat, I think there is a little difference in opinions here."

As clouds of doubt began to form, Otto, whose mind was already tightroped, also got blindfolded. Did he manage to get his message across?? that was a question whose answer was clearly visible on the expressions of Felt and Kiritaka, who had done nothing but witness the discussion.

Ley: "Who the hell will listen to what you guys are saying ~tsu! After all, this world is gluttonous drinking ~tsu! Gluttony ~tsu! Until we have eaten it, licked it, swallowed it, we will not trust it!"

Batenkaitos shouted while stepping ahead, displaying his fangs.

The crisis could not be stopped. No explosion or word could get close to this explosive.

Felt: "So it did end up like this in the end, didn't it."

Saying this with dissatisfaction, Felt held her knife in her hand. Strangely enough, what Batenkaitos had were also short knives attached on both his hands.

Nonetheless, there would be a huge difference in the skill-level.

Kiritaka: "If it has come to this, the ones to rely on are everyone of the ?White Dragon's Scales?."

???: "Heyhey! For once, I'm saying we're also here!"

The fellow who was next to Felt raised his voice, but Felt swung her head. Which means, it will be quite a

lively show.

Someone like Subaru would only prove to be useless in this scene.

Otto: "Just by thinking that, the value of that person gets significantly reduced, huh....."

Ley: "Is your talking, do~ne?"

Batenkaitos, slowly, looked at the faces of Otto and the rest. An expression of fighting was on everyone's face. Looking at that, Batenkaitos nodded with satisfaction.

Ley: "In gourmet, preparations and ingredients are important. Starting from assembling the good ingredients available, only then will the virtue of the dish be eatable ~tsu!"

Otto: "I sort of get it, I sort of don't get it....."

Ley: "It's fine even if you don't understand ~tsu! Neither have we ever thought, that our aesthetics can be understood by anyone except us ~tsu! No~w, well then, about time. ??Let's eat!"

The conversation cemented the fate. Batenkaitos, opening his large mouth, approached Otto with a tremendously powerful jump. Otto, who was standing next to water, pointed his finger towards the blasphemer.

Otto: "I am glad that the assurance has been given!"

Ley: "??Hu~h?"

Otto: "This is how it is??!"

Otto makes a high sound twice with his shoes in front of the doubtful Batenkaitos.

Hearing that sound, something was drawn closer--.

Ley: "??~Tsu!!"

Behind Otto, a flock of water dragons jumped out of the waterway and charged towards Batenkaitos in a single stroke.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??Otto had managed to brainwash the herd of water dragons, accompanied by the immense influence of the Authority of ?Wrath?.

The Authority of ?Wrath?, with its ultra wide range, even if it didn’t cover the entire city, greatly shook the emotions of people, planting the seeds of faint spirit among the citizens, resulting in enormous disarray and suspicion.

Nevertheless, the recent speech by Natsuki Subaru raised the people's morale, which was also the basis of Otto's hypothesis of using the water dragons' strength.

Ley: "Oh, o~h?? ~tsu!?"

Batenkaitos, mid-air, could not stop the largely numbered water dragons.

With their limbless and serpentine body structures, and weight that was not below a hundred kilos, the multiple bodies crush Batenkaitos. As they continued glaring with their blue and white scales, their fangs continuously aimed for the crushed Batenkaitos.

Ley: "Hunting water dragons is cruel."

With their fangs on their prey, they spin and tear the flesh apart. That small body would turn into countless pieces of meat, even without such an enormous number of water dragons.

"????"

The aftermath won't be good.

Due to the influence of the Authority of ?Wrath?, the water dragons were in a strong and excited state, and were skillfully deceived by words with the ?Divine Protection of Soul Language?.

Felt: "Amazing! This, was done by nii-chan!"

Felt ran up, as she rose to cheer.

Despite not moving a single eyebrow seeing this cruel scene, only now does it seem that she had been moved.

Otto: "What I did was to give just a pinch to the water dragons. Whether it's a Sin Archbishop or not, he cannot win against nature."

Kiritaka: "Possibly so but..... you are, a person who can do much more horrible things than what I thought."

Otto: "Anyway, I am glad we're okay. Kiritaka-san too, to think that you survived....."

Kiritaka: "I did indeed get injured on my back but, ?White Dragon's Scales?, which is a famous mercenary group, helped me out with their expertise in medical treatment."

However, it unquestionably looked painful. Still, what could be the reason for which Kiritaka was still on the move, even with such an injury. Understanding the meaning behind Otto's gaze, Kiritaka put his hands on his chest with a look that reeked of seriousness.

Kiritaka: "It is decided, isn't it. I have the position of executive in Priestella's management. I heard the

broadcast, but I cannot leave everything to it."

Otto: "I believe that spirit is commendable but....."

Kiritaka: "Of course, there is a low possibility of me being able to fight properly and be of any help. But, for once, even I should be able to do something."

Kiritaka shamefully made that remark after the effect of the Authority of ?Wrath? and Subaru's speech.

Indeed, it had been Subaru's speech which provided a support to the citizens, and it was a medicine too strong for people who already had strong missions to complete. To the extent, that it disabled the fear and reason that would normally stop a person from doing such reckless acts.

Felt: "'That's just recklessness, don't go about thinking such things."

Reading Otto's thoughts, Felt said this with sharpened lips.

Felt: "Everyone has the right to fight for the things important to them. Nobody can stop the feeling of someone who wants to do something for those things, even if it is not backed by a great reason, can they."

Otto: "That is..... an individual opinion, and such a judgment should not be taken by someone who is in a responsible position."

Felt: "It depends on the things! Also, I never said that this applied for this situation, did I. Both me, and those guys, came out only because we could win."

Otto: "Win, you say?"

Following Kiritaka, Felt rubbed under her nose with her finger.

Felt: "I also heard nii-chan's speech. That stupid Reinhardt? too, along with you, went to the city government building. Everyone except me, isn't that right?"

Unfairly enough, what Felt was feeling right now was a misunderstanding. In this world, just as there are right words to fit, there are also some things that can only be done by those humans who are apt enough.

Just as that theory, Otto stopped pursuing further, since he seemed to not know the reason why he was here.

Otto: "Is Heinkel-shi properly captured?"

Felt: "He is kept at Camberley's shelter. Me and Gaston were going back to take what was taken."

What was taken, saying that, Felt turned her jaw towards Gaston. Gaston held a white packet in his hands, and it looked like a long spear.

Otto: "That is?"

Felt: "Old man Rom..... it seems to be a secret weapon that he kept in our staff's bag. It's a magic tool, I mean."

Otto: "Magic tool!? How convenient for such a timing!"

Ideally, the intimidating power of the magic tool would make it possible to have results that would normally not be possible.

After hearing that it was a magical tool, one's expectations were bound to increase.

Felt: "The conditions for using it are a pain, but it's worth it for its power. Even so, this thing can come in handy in cleaning up the mess nii-chan is in....."

???: "??~Hk."

Felt's words may not have had, but what entered Otto's ears at that moment was a scream.

Otto looks back to where it came from, and Felt and Kiritaka react by widening their eyes. They didn't hear that scream anymore. It's obvious. As it was the scream of a voice incomprehensible to humans.

Ley: "They seem to be a much more fun opponent than we thought bu~t..... Mere water lizards are no food, are they. Whether it's for us Gourmet or for any other gastronomer, they're une~atable."

A voice was heard, a voice that seemed to be able to beat up and defeat anything in this world.

At the same time, the flock of water dragons which should have had been jumping around and preying upon that prey. Their figures, with their tails, torsos, heads? now disheveled, were extremely excited at the time of the initial attack, but their painful suffering and their flowing blood conveyed the abnormality of the situation to everyone.

Otto: "Felt-sama, this magic tool..... is powerful, right?"

Felt: "From what Old Man Rom said, even Reinhardt can't avoid it, you know?"

Otto: "I see. That is certainly assuring..... Kiritaka-san!"

Kiritaka: "W-What is it?"

Felt, who received that answer, and Kiritaka, who had an expression of despair after seeing the water dragons. Him leaving behind the ?White Dragon's Scales? was still, for the non-combatant Kiritaka, very dangerous.

Otto: "Me, Felt-sama, and everyone of the ?White Dragon's Scales? will buy time. In that time, Kiritaka-san should go to the city government building..... no, first go to the eight evacuation centre of the town!"

Kiritaka: "Go there, is there something over there!?"

Otto: "??If you go there, you will understand everything. The one who can win, which Kiritaka-san will subsequently send here, is present there."

Seeing Otto's determined face as he made that declaration, Kirtaka, changing his expression, nodded powerfully. He then turned back towards his guards,

Kiritaka: "It’s just as you heard. I will, from now, just as Otto-shi instructed, head for the evacuation centre. I want you to stay here, and fight along with them. To protect this city."

???: "Our work is to be young man's guard..... that's what it's supposed to be, when did it become such a bothersome position."

Kiritaka: "That's wrong. Your job is not to be my guard. Help me with my purpose, was the first contract."

In front of the bitterly smiling faces of the ?White Dragon's Scales?, Kiritaka answered with a face that showed utmost seriousness. The reason why his way of addressing his way of self reference became further polite, was because the city meant much more to Kiritaka than just having a responsible position in it.

Kiritaka: "Help me with my purpose, ?White Dragon's Scales?. To protect our important workplace Priestella, and let's fight to save our beloved songstress, Liliana."

???: "Even though turning back would be impossible."

Kiritaka: "It has nothing to do with not being able to smile again, or what lies in my thoughts. I love Liliana, and I need no more reason to put my life in danger."

Saying that, Kiritaka looked at Otto and Felt. At the same time, he lifted the bag he was holding in his hands.

Kiritaka: "Without fail, let's show that we can do it. Because no one knows the navigation of this city and Liliana more than me."

Felt: "For a moment, I thought it was cool but it's all disappointing in the end."

Otto agreed with Felt's impression, but he did not mention it, he nodded silently seeing Kiritaka's preparations.

Ley: "??About time, are you prepared?"

The movements of the agitated water dragons had stopped, and stripped of their white eyes, they were close to dying.

Through the gap in that group, Batenkaitos slowly appeared. The blasphemer shaped like a young boy, embraced his shoulders and happily asserted himself as an adversary, and glared.

Ley: "Wasn't that nice, that counterattack. Recklessness and braveness are different, and abandonment and persistence too are absolutely unlike! That's a face that knows about that. We're glad. Finally, you guys too, got the qualification to be taken to our dinner table."

Felt: "Till now everything we did was just worth going into the trash can huh, this guy, has everything messed up."

Otto: "Whether being recognized as the enemy is good or bad is again different. Personally, I think that those who get disdained, can still do a lot."

Did he get this idea by being around Subaru. Or could it be that his thoughts had been influenced by Subaru. How bad would that be. Anyway,

Otto: "Kiritaka-san!"

Kiritaka: "??I wish for good fortune in the upcoming? battle for you!"

Following Otto's call, Kiritaka ran to leave this place. Just one person, Batenkaitos, tilted his head after seeing the figure of Kiritaka, who was trying to escape from the battlefield.

Ley: "Just sto~p. After how you've gently stimulated our motivation and this fee~ling of hunger!"

Following the back of the escaping Kiritaka, Batenkaitos' body jumped forward. Fully using his small body, his aerial speed in a single direction was unbelievably fast. With the same pace, Batenkaitos' fangs pass straight through and reach Kiritaka?? they were on their verge to do so.

Felt: "Gaston!"

Gaston: "If I die here, I'll cry and come to haunt you after becoming a spirit!"

Felt's voice ripped through the air and the giant, who jumped at almost the same time, interrupted Batenkaitos' course. Crossing his arms in front of his face and curling his back, it was Felt's servant, Gaston.

Ley: "Don't get in the wa~y??"

Swinging the daggers of his arms, Batenkaitos tried to cut down the hindrance. The steel blade shines brightly, and it's blow struck Gaston's exposed arm.

Sounds echoed, and Batenkaitos' dagger broke.

Ley: "Hu~h?"

"????"

Batenkaitos' questioning voice was accompanied by Otto's. They had seen what had happened.

Gaston's position did not change at all. With his arm, he broke Batenkaitos' dagger.

Felt: "My giant is pretty tough. Enough to be my guard."

The happy Felt, who seemed to think that they scared him off, threw the knife she held in her hands towards Batenkaitos. Batenkaitos avoided it with the same momentum as he avoided Gaston's kick. Just as he somersaulted backwards towards the open distance, the "White Dragon's Scales" changed their positions and blocked the road.

Kiritaka's retreat, had become a reality.

Ley: "Hmm, he~y. We see."

The overwhelming existence called Batenkaitos was outnumbered, but the pleasant smile that was sticking to his face did not cease.

With the same pace, Batenkaitos glanced at the opposing Otto,

Ley: "The number of people Louis is likely to be pleased with, is three huh."

Whispering with a trembling sigh, he removed the broken dagger from his arm. Now his left arm was bare-handed, and only his right hand was armed.

Otto: "For some reason, I feel the gap hasn't been filled at all."

As usual, Otto's warning bell continued to respond to this, the greatest of threats.

Ignoring that voice in his head, Otto looked at Felt. That unchanging face, determinedly, looked at the intense battle.

Let's fight, without the option of running away.

Otto: "Considering the amount of opportunities of fighting I have gotten in the past year, what will I even do as a merchant."

The voice that spilled from that mouth did not reach anyone.

Henceforth, no one noticed that the voice had a pessimistic tone not because of the content of the words in it.

Arc 5 - Chapter 6, "Two Spirit Knights, Two Greedy Merchants, and One Selfless Angel "

by admin - Wednesday, November 28, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/28/arc-5-chapter-6-two-spirit-knights-two-greedy-merchants-and-one-selfless-angel/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

- Credit to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.

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Contrary to everyone’s expectations, Anastasia seemed to be striking a preemptive blow. The atmosphere in the Water Plumage Pavilion tensed.

Emilia: “—Thanks for welcoming us in person, it really makes me feel at ease.”

Coming out to meet Emilia was certainly calculated. While Subaru was lost in thought, a slightly confused Emilia voiced a reply, grabbing his attention.

Anastasia cast a frown at Subaru, probably pondering the origins of Garfiel, who was standing next to him, and Beatrice, who was clinging to his sleeve. Subaru, having spent many days frolicking with them in the mansion, was steadied by their presence.

Anastasia: “—The same face as always.” (*she has a kansai dialect)

Her gaze left Subaru for Emilia as she murmured to herself, her light green eyes bearing a hint of ridicule. Her relationship with Emilia had changed little in the year past; a small conflict between them wasn’t

unexpected.
Subaru: “Well, she’s just as cute as… no, she’s even cuter than before.”

Emilia: “Subaru, don’t kid around with such a serious expression.”
Hearing her response, Subaru rubbed his nose with an air of awkwardness, noting that Beatrice was paying close attention to the proceedings. The corners of Anastasia’s mouth lifted in a faint smile.

Anastasia: “Natsuki-kun, I heard that after the subjugation of the White Whale things went a bit awry. Are Roswaal’s border territories doing well?”

Subaru: “Sorry you had to catch such unpleasant news. Thanks to your troops, we survived the aftermath. As companions, we’ll mutually support each other, right?”

Anastasia: “Is that so? I’m glad you think so, too. The two of us were glad you could come. It’s been a while since you’ve seen Julius, yes?”

Anastasia clapped her hands together, taking an opportunity to tease Subaru, who immediately caught on and frowned. Emilia and Anastasia laughed simultaneously, as Subaru grew uncomfortable, thinking that neither of them understood his complex relationship with Julius. He’d tried to explain it over and over to Emilia, but each attempt inevitably ended in failure.

Garfiel: “Ah...’s bit strange. Guess the woman’s one of Emilia-sama’s enemies?”

The previously silent Garfiel voiced a question, making no attempt to conceal his hostility. Subaru scratched his head in helpless embarrassment, and Anastasia’s round eyes grew rounder.

Emilia: “Garfiel, you’re not wrong, but you’re putting it in a pretty extreme way. After all, weren’t we invited here?”

Garfiel: “Yah but still, won’t ya hav’t stab each other in the back one day? Th’s gonna sting after acting all buddy-buddy.”

Emilia: “That's true. Garfiel's a gentle person, so I'm worried about that...” Garfiel: “—hk! Who’s gentle! What’re ya talkin’ bout, Emilia-sama!”

As expected of him, Garfiel hurriedly tried to deflect Emilia’s words. Anastasia eyed him curiously, wondering why he seemed so embarrassed, when,

???: “Ah! Garf is here! Miss, why didn’t you tell me!?”

The wooden door of the inn was flung open with a bang. The racket was caused by Mimi, a catgirl whose lovely face shone brightly as she saw her audience. She flew into the room and surprised everyone by firmly grasping Garfiel’s arm.

Mimi: “Welcome! You’re tired, you’re tired, so Mimi will guide you to your room! That’s where you’ll be staying! Hey, you’re not budging at all!”

Garfiel: “O, Oi, wait, wait! My amazin’ self hasn’t agreed… you’re strong! What!?” Mimi: “This way! That way! Hurry!”

The petite Mimi clung to Garfiel's arm and, though he should have been strong enough to break free, he was dragged along helplessly, nonetheless. Perhaps she was a using secret technique, but it’s more likely that Garfiel didn’t want to distance Mimi by shaking her off. After all, despite appearances, they were supposed to be the same age.

Anastasia: “Er...”

Garfiel allowed himself to be dragged away with little resistance and Anastasia had a rare troubled look on her face, as did Emilia.

Anastasia: “Hah, Mimi has always been lively, but even so, I was a bit surprised just now.”

Emilia: “Ah, that’s right. That’s good. I thought you might have felt she left you alone.”

Anastasia: “Not at all, that wouldn’t be a problem. However—”

After their exchange, Anastasia’s briefly softened gaze sharpened into a freezing calmness, and Subaru unconsciously moved to stand in front of Emilia.

Anastasia: “I'd like you to tell me what kind of a child he is, the one who has attracted Mimi’s attention.”

The dangerous question was loaded with the quiet, burning rage a woman would hold toward pests who surrounded her cute daughter or little sister. It subtly conveyed that Mimi was loved, and, although they’d arrived early, the thought of dealing with this left Subaru exhausted.

???: “...why is it, Natsuki-san, that you suddenly have such a tired face?”

At that moment, Otto, who had returned from securing the ground dragons and their carriage, found Subaru in an exhausted state and joined their gathering.

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Pristella’s famed hotel, the Water Plumage Pavilion, was tiled with wooden floor boards resembling tatami mats. This place was clearly geared toward exhausted pedestrians like Subaru, who immediately seated himself on a cushion. Beatrice calmly took a seat next to him, but Emilia and others seemed puzzled at the notion of sitting directly on the floor. The long wooden desk and the large hall were all reminiscent of a Japanese style inn, excluding the lack of an actual tatami floor.

However, a true expert like Subaru found places to detract points.

Subaru: “For example, this place lacks a sliding door and a paper door, and, unfortunately, the employees are not dressed kimonos. It’s poor taste to outwardly resemble a ryokan when the atmosphere is not faithfully reproduced.”

Ultimately, Subaru can't shake away the uncomfortable feeling that the setting is straight out of a fantasy in spite of the employees' clothing and hospitality.

Subaru: "So, my grade totals to seventy points. This place is barely acceptable, but what is good is good, is how I would grade it. I hope you will work hard to improve in the future."

Beatrice: "What are you talking about, in fact?"

Subaru: "It's a kind cheap, spirited, and light-hearted kind of fun that relieves my frustration… so I'll be fine even if you let go of my hand."

Beatrice: "...just to be sure, I'll hold it for a little while longer, I suppose."

The grip on Subaru's left hand slightly strengthens, and he said no more, instead turning to face Emilia on his right. Emilia, who had been examining the strange surroundings, noticed his gaze.

Emilia: "It's so amazing, isn't it? It's only a little strange from the outside, but as soon as I enter it I feel sooo odd, sitting on the floor and taking off my shoes…"

Subaru: "I didn't have a bed in my bedroom, I had a futon on the floor. I'd be surprised if this place doesn't have any... would the employees let me have one?"

Otto: "What an unusual and unnecessary proposition… or, rather, is Natsuki-san familiar with Kararagi-style customs?"

Otto, sitting opposite Beatrice, joins the conversation. The phrase 'Kararagi-style' caught Subaru's attention.

Subaru: "'Kararagi-style'? Is this building a product of it?"

Otto: "That's right, these Wafu architectural styles are designs taken from Kararagi, although their use isn't widespread here. In Kararagi itself, designs similar to the Water Plumage Pavilion's are considered traditional."

Subaru: "So why is this hotel in that style? Is it a diplomacy thing?"

This building was doubtlessly of Japanese design. Subaru wanted to confirm his suspicions on why that was.

As if to supplement Subaru's thoughts, Otto raised a finger and spoke.

Otto: "That would be because of Pristella's history itself. Hoshin of the Wastes was responsible for its construction. I trust you've heard of him?"

Subaru: "Really, I've heard a bit about this Hoshin of the Wastes."

Otto: “Despite being born in such a dark age, he managed so many achievements. Even calling him a Sage wouldn’t be a stretch. However, it was due to how dazzling he was that disputes ended up happening.”

Otto’s story took place just over a hundred years ago, when Pristella was split between Lugunican and Kararagian cultures. Pristella was geographically Lugnican, but it’s founder Hoshin considered himself and was considered Kararagian. Lugunica disliked the cultural influence of Kararagi and and tried to eradicate all traces of its culture, but the locals took offense and protested, which led to several territorial disputes between Lugunica and Kararagi. Eventually, diplomatic relations deteriorated to the point where both countries were on the verge of cutting off their relationship.

Otto: “Fortunately, this didn’t last. Gradually, regulations became more relaxed, and Lugunica and Kararagi mended their relations. During that period, the import of the customs of Kararagi slowed. It was probably due to that that Luguncia felt secure in letting its security measures become more lax.”

Subaru: “In any case, it’s good the problem was solved. So Kararagi customs can be traced back to Hoshin?”

Otto: “It seems so. Hoshin was a person with innovative ideas from the start. His influences on ideology, technology, and legislation were immense.”

Subaru: “—I see.”

Subaru had received his answer. Otto’s story confirmed that Kararagi’s founder, Hoshin of the Wastes, had the same identity as Subaru and Al, a person summoned from a different world.

Subaru now knew of three people who had been summonsed at various times; Hoshin from 400 years ago, Al from 20 years ago, and himself from one year ago.

Subaru didn’t understand the time gap, or why he was chosen, and it was meaningless for him to speculate wildly. But he certainly wasn’t alone. Just knowing that granted Subaru’s heart some small salvation.

Anastasia: “—It would appear that everyone’s enjoying the inn.”

A thin sliding door made of wood slid open quietly, and Anastasia, entering with perfect timing, stood at the other side with a smile.

And, standing next to her,

???: “Long time no see, Emilia-sama. I sincerely apologize for being late. I should have been the first to welcome you.”

A man with an apologetic face and a sweet, soft spoken voice. Just from hearing it, many women would assume it to be the voice of an angel. An amusing pipe dream, but the voice did have the necessary color, beauty, and strength. This was the voice of the Knight of Knights, Julius Juukulius, which existed solely

to vex. At least, that was how it felt to Subaru.

Emilia: “Mm, it’s been a while, Julius. You look like you’re doing well.”

Julius: “I am grateful for your consideration. Likewise, Emilia sama’s kindness and beauty are ever the more polished. It’s as if the shade of your gaze alone strengthes this kingdom, while the rest of the world suffers a loss.”

Subaru found his speech, as always, pretentious and disgusting. Julius turned his gaze to him.

Julius: “It's been a while since we’ve met face to face. You seem lively as always, Natsuki Subaru-dono.”

Subaru: “...Stop with your phony attitude, it sends shivers down my spine. Subaru-dono my ass, you're so transparent.”

Julius; “It’s a well-known fact that you were recognized as Emilia-sama’s knight. Your former disrespect of the position should now be disregarded by both of us. First and foremost, as a knight, are you trying to behave accordingly?”

Watching Julius’s virtuous attitude, Subaru scowled.

Subaru: “Yeah, I’m her knight now. No one thought I could do it, but here I am.”

Julius: “I see. Although your position has changed, your attitude has not. —In that case, I will make due without the courtesy.”

Julius dropped his formal attitude and gave a slight smile before approaching and looking down towards Subaru who was sitting on the floor.

Julius: “Then, once again... long time no see, Natsuki Subaru. Do you work hard every day to be an honorable knight?”

Subaru: “Do you even need to ask? After all, I was beaten horribly by someone who thought I was dishonorable, or whatever.”

Julius: “It seems my reputation is being attacked. I recall it being an honorable duel.” Subaru: “Don’t oversimplify, you bastard...”

However, the one at fault was Subaru, and even if he tried to say otherwise it would only make himself look worse. So Subaru, rather than futilely defend himself, insulted Julius in a light exchange of banter. Seeing this, Julius narrowed his eyes as if to say “hmm”,

Julius: “It seems that your shortcomings have been rectified somewhat. If you learn to see things with a knight’s perspective, you would go far. Emilia-sama and Roswaal-sama have an eye for potential, it seems. Even so...”

Julius: “—?”

After appraising Subaru, Julius’s looked around until his yellow eyes stopped on Beatrice, who met his gaze steadily with her own pale blue eyes.

Beatrice: “What is it? You shouldn’t stare too hard at a lady, I suppose.”

Julius: “That was terribly rude of me. I did not expect that a high-level spirit like you would be present here.”

Beatrice: “Because Betty is Subaru’s partner, it is natural I appear here. I am on a completely different level than the quasi spirits who you have brought in. I wonder if you are afraid of me, in fact.”

Beatrice stands with her hands on Subaru's shoulders and her chest puffed up. That grumpy attitude is based on Julius’s attitude toward Subaru, who is inferior to Julius in every way except one. Both are spirit knights, but Subaru’s contracted spirit is of a higher grade.

Julius was accompanied by his six quasi-spirits corresponding to the six attributes. Greater spirits were stronger than quasi spirits, who were stronger than lesser spirits. Taking that into consideration, it could be said that Subaru and Beatrice were the stronger team.

—However,

Subaru: “If you’re comparing actual ability, we have so many faults and are such a waste of potential that we can’t even compare to his quasi spirits.”

Beatrice: “Hmph. If he does not stop disrespecting Subaru... I will tell you what will happen if you disdain Betty's partner, even if you are a handsome man who causes Betty’s heart to waver, I suppose!”

Subaru: “A handsome man who causes your heart to waver!?”

That was hardly what Subaru wanted to hear, but it was Julius himself, the cause of the crack in their relationship, who caught the reason for it.

Julis: “Do not misunderstand, your spirit is not going to betray you. Her instinct is merely being shaken by my divine protection."

Subaru: “Your protection…? Seriously, you also have one? What kind of protection?”

Julius: “The protection I have is the Blessing of Gathering Spirits. Simply speaking, it is a kind of blessing that garners the favor of spirits. I also have a contract with quasi-spirits of six attributes. Only with the power of that protection am I able to maintain them.”

Beatrice: “Betty will not lose! Subaru is better than you… I suppose!” Subaru: “Thank you! Please, don’t hurt me any further!”

Although the bond of trust between Subaru and Beatrice was unbreakable, he was still disappointed at his lack of a firm response. Whenever Subaru faced Julius he would, without fail, become worked up over any of his own shortcomings. That was the main reason for his former hatred of Julius.

Anastasia: “As usual, our knight is attentive to Natsuki-kun.”

Julius: “Not at all. I am merely discussing the attitude of a knight as his senior. The knights of the kingdom of Lugunica may be judged from his behavior.”

Anastasia: “Well, Natsuki-kun already has a reputation as a knight, doesn’t he? That Julius really is dishonest.”

In response to Anastasia’s teasing, Julius lowers his head and nods silently. Anastasia probably would have won anyway, only to be smug about it later. Their motions had that air of familiarity.

—Beatrice patted Subaru’s left shoulder, while Emilia his right.

Beatrice: “Don’t be too worried, in fact. Looks aren’t everything, I suppose.”

Emilia: “I’m glad that Subaru and Julius are getting along, I’d be happy if you two became good friends.”

How would other people view this? All Subaru could receive from them was unhelpful comfort. He scratched his cheek with frustration as Anastasia took a seat across from him.

Subaru: “Come to think of it, why are only the two of you here? Mimi and Garfiel... are probably on a date, but…”

Anastasia: “It’s like you said, Mimi is with the blond child right now. Hetaro adores his sister and is probably keeping an eye on them, and Tivey is probably keeping an eye on Hetaro.

That’s why they’re not with me at the moment.”

Subaru: “Did Ricardo not come? I know that the kitten triplets are pretty strong, but isn’t it comforting to have a full grown knight around?”

It was odd that the triplets were here, but Ricardo, who usually handled their antics, was missing, as was Julius’s brother Joshua.

Julius: “Unfortunately, we’re not just in Pristella for fun. Ricardo and my brother Joshua have business elsewhere. You should have met him by now, yes?”

Subaru: “Yeah... and he’s a lot like you. If his frame were a little steadier, he could play you perfectly. Actually, he should do that anyway. You can leave now.”

Julius: “I’ll keep your interesting opinion in mind, but that would be difficult for Joshua. He’s not a child

well suited for excessive travel. Frustratingly, I hold several concerns about him, as his older brother."

To Subaru's annoyance, Julius took him seriously and began worrying about Joshua. Otto interrupted Subaru's awkward silence by clearing his throat.

Otto: "Ehm — I don't mind this casual atmosphere, but now that almost everyone's here, could we all give introductions?"

Anastasia: "I'd like introductions too, since the only people here I really know are Emilia-san and Natsuki-kun. I especially want to hear more about this competent seeming officer and the powerful great spirit-chan."

Otto: "Oioi, it's really not like you to be lacking information, Anastasia-sama. Is something amiss in your reports?"

Anastasia: "I can imagine why you would have that impression, but I think it would be best if we don't get into whose information is accurate!"

Dodging a question by the competent seeming officer, she gives a nod to Julius.

Julius: "Allow me to reintroduce myself. I am Julius Juukulius of the Knights of the Kingdom of Lugunica, although presently I am only serving as Anastasia-sama's knight."

Julius gave Otto a slight bow, who nodded in response to his elegant gesture. Julius then moved on to an introduction of his master, Anastasia.

Julius: "I present one the candidates for king of the Kingdom of Lugunica, Anastasia Hoshin, the gifted businesswoman who runs Kararagi's Hoshin Company."
Otto: "Right… right, yes!"

Subaru: "Don't bow to just an introduction!"

Otto: "—hk! It was a mistake, the momentum was overwhelming!"
Subaru gave the back of Otto's head a whack, as Anastasia watched, pleased with Julius's introduction.

Subaru: "Don't be intimidated by titles! Our Emilia-tan is a wonderful candidate for the same throne, and she won't lose to Anastasia!"

Emilia: "Mm, that's right. I'm also a candidate, so I'll do my best." Subaru: "Ahhhh, you're so cute. I can't help but say EMT!" Emilia: "I'm somewhat troubled that I find your antics calming..."

Seeing their typical, pointless, banter, Otto regains his composure and faces the opposing camp.

Otto: "Thank you for your detailed introduction. I'm slightly late in saying this, but I'm Otto Suwen, Emilia-sama's Minister of Internal Affairs… Yes, thanks to a certain circumstances caused by a certain someone, a Minister of Internal Affairs is indeed what I am."

Subaru: “There seems to be bitterness about that decision.”

Otto: “Originally I was going to be a simple merchant, but now what has become of me...”

Although his voice echoed with lament, Subaru stood firm, refusing to give Otto the opportunity to escape. Anastasia stuck her tongue out, in a show of sympathy for Otto.

Next, everyone turned to Beatrice. Seeing their gazes, she presented her small frame openly and squarely then declared,

Beatrice: “Betty is the great spirit Beatrice, I suppose. I am Subaru's contract spirit, I suppose. As you can see, I rank highly both as a spirit and in cuteness, in fact. I would appreciate some delicious tea and a sweet snack, I suppose.”

Subaru: “Maintain dignity until the end!”

It would always be in Beatrice’s nature to be a mascot character.
Subaru pulled her into his lap and began stroking her hair while she glared, displeased.

Subaru: “Well, that’s why she’s is in a contract with me.”

Julius: “I did believe you had a good compatibility with your spirit, and I wouldn’t call this unexpected, but I didn't imagine a contract with a great spirit like Beatrice-sama would resemble this.”

Subaru: “Don’t praise my Beako too much. She’s just like her family, anything nice will just go to her head.”

Beatrice: “Hmph. I’m declaring my displeasure with that hasty treatment, in fact.”

Beatrice gave him a look suggesting that she barely accepted him, and Subaru patted her cheek in response. Now that things had calmed down,

Otto: “Well, introductions are over and the atmosphere seems to have calmed down for time being. So, let’s talk business, yes?”

As Emilia’s Minister of Internal Affairs, it was Otto’s role to take the lead in conversations like this and prevent them from being derailed. Anastasia answered while fiddiling with her white fox fur scarf.

Anastasia: “Eh...? Well, it is our job as the hosts to entertain our guests. If you like.” Otto: “Well then. First of all, what are your reasons for inviting us to Pristella?

Anastasia: “Don’t worry, you don’t need to be so on guard. I’m not planning anything. A year has passed since the king's election started, and we haven’t had opportunities to see each other recently, so I thought I’d just set one up.”

Most people would be easily mislead by her gentle demeanor, but Otto was a veteran at negotiating. The

conversation had turned into a battle between merchants.

Otto: “Taking our situation into consideration, we’re here because you lured us with bait. It’s only natural that we would be cautious.”

Ana: “Well, we did invite you here for a reason. There are souvenirs in Pristella that you would want, aren’t there? Think of this as a gift.”

Subaru: “...how did you know which gift we would want?”

Ana: “It’s sort of company secret, Natsuki-kun. We’ll just say that I’m an inquisitive gal and leave it at that.”

Anastasia covered her mouth while laughing. It would be a stretch to say she was making fun of Subaru’s frustration, but that was how it felt. Aware of his angst, Beatrice could not help but sigh, while Subaru wondered how Anastasia learned of their circumstances.

Emilia: “It’s not something I was hiding, so it was inevitable for that information to leak.”

Emilia’s frank admission assuaged a part of Subaru’s worries, and Anastasia blinked in Emilia’s direction, who responded by tilting her head.

Emilia: “From this point onwards, I think that it would be better if everyone would appreciate what Anastasia’s done, instead of being suspicious of her.”

Anastasia: “...to respond to your enemy in such a well intentioned way. Besides, I’m not helping you purely for your benefit, Emilia-san.”

Emilia: “But, thanks to you, I have a way to find what I’ve been looking for. Thank you. I don’t know how I can repay you, but I truly do thank you.

Anastasia: “————“

Anastasia’s eyes widened at Emilia’s smiling response. To her surprise, Julius, seated next to her, softened his gaze, earning himself a glare.

Anastasia: “Is something strange, Julius?”

Julius: “No, it’s merely that your surprised expression is so rare. I think that it is just as beautiful as your natural, unaffected face.”

Anastasia: “Trying to escape with flattery… well, I still appreciate those sweet words.”

With the help of Julius’s words, Anastasia shook off her surprise and regained her usual tone. Then she fixed a sharpened gaze on a curious Emilia.

Anastasia: “Emilia-san, it’s been a year and you still have a disadvantage that you need to work around.”

Emilia: “Mm, I’m lacking in many areas and causing everyone so much trouble, so I'm trying hard to catch up as soon as I…”

Anastasia: “One correction; your greatest disadvantage isn’t that. It’s that you resemble a the terrifying witch from the stories.”

Anastasia exhales deeply and smiles, causing Emilia to stiffen in shock at her sudden change in attitude. Disregarding her, Anastasia turned to Subaru and Otto.

Anastasia: “What about you two? Will you continue to support her? If you do, her reputation will affect your own.”

Subaru: “I will, and I’ll do my best to, because it’s my policy to praise and support her no matter what!”

Otto: “Because of that, most of the burden lands on me. Funnily enough, I have no way out either…”

Subaru throwing a thumbs up, Otto glaring with a bitter gaze. Seeing their conflicting attitudes, Anastasia readjusted her scarf.

Anastasia: “Well, it's fine. You surely understand the value of gratitude, after all.”

Otto: “Gratitude, huh? Gratitude is great. You don't have to keep it in the inventory, and there's no deadline attached to it.”

Anastasia: “Yep, isn’t that right? And most importantly—”

Otto’s words matched Anastasia’s as the two each revealed the face of a merchant.

Anastasia and Otto: “—You don’t have to put a price tag on it.”

They spoke unanimously.

Anastasia clapped her hands as Otto drooped his shoulders. It seemed that this was an established saying. Their perspectives on gratitude were chillingly identical.

Anastasia: “Now, back to what Emilia-san needs... a colorless magical ore, one of the highest possible grade of purity.”

Emilia: “Yes, that's right, can you tell me what you know?”

On the way to Pristella, Emilia, having consciously realized that she had been acting out of selfishness, had felt guilty and hadn’t wanted to involve Subaru and Otto and the others.

Nevertheless, with the opportunity right in front of her, she of course needed to act. She was closer than

ever to seeing her precious family again.

Ana: “The best supplier of high density ore is Muse Company. The person responsible for it currently resides in this town, Kiritaka Muse—a man whose heart was stolen by a songstress.”

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Arc 5 - Chapter 7, "The Sinful Man Sets Sail"

by admin - Wednesday, November 28, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/28/arc-5-chapter-7-the-sinful-man-sets-sail/

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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Subaru: “His heart was stolen by a Songstress… is that a nickname? It doesn’t sound cool at all, but he’s using it as if it is.”

Upon hearing Subaru’s response, Anastasia laughs before playing with the tips of her soft hair.

Anastasia: “You’re right, it sounds more like a nickname than a title. But, that’s what he claims. ‘My heart was stolen by a Songstress.’”

Subaru: “Eh, what does that even mean?”

Anastasia: “His heart was stolen by a woman, and he proudly and publicly announces it— doesn’t that remind you of what happened during the Royal Selection in the capital?”

Subaru: “Leave that dark, embarrassing history out of this.”

Subaru’s face twists just thinking of the humiliation at Julius’s hands. It made him want to grab his head and roll on the floor. Even though he still believed he was in the right, his way of expressing his thoughts

left much to be desired. Anyway,

Subaru: “I see what you mean though. Although I regret to admit it, I can actually relate. Then, what’s he like?”

Anastasia: “The nickname is rather excessive, but the man himself is both responsible and flexible. Being named heir to Muse Company takes more than just being the eldest son. There’s no need to doubt him as a businessman.”

Otto: “I can also guarantee that, Natsuki-san. The young master of Muse Company... Kiritaka Muse, is famous indeed. His skill is astounding, even without Muse Company’s already famous reputation for dealing with magical ore.”

As a merchant, Otto also knew of Kiritaka. However, after agreeing with her appraisal, he cast a sharp glare at Anastasia.

Otto: “Indeed, Emilia-sama needs pure magical stones from a professional supplier, and we sent inquiry to Muse Company… but they weren’t open to negotiation. It does make one wonder how and why Anastasia-sama is securing their aid.”

Anastasia: “Perhaps it is a matter of trust? Maybe it is a matter of sincerity. Whatever the case, one side must be willing to approach the other in order to establish a working relationship, don’t you agree?”

Otto: “...I guess you could say that.”

Otto gave up on challenging the impassive Anastasia, who had been feigning a poor understanding of the situation. He moved on to discuss the magical stones themselves.

Otto: “First of all, do they actually have the rare magical stone we’re looking for?”

Anastasia: “I can understand your suspicions, but I’m sure you realize it would be obvious if we were simply lying about a prominent trader.”

Otto: “I see. Then, are there any other conditions, or is it alright for us to negotiate with him?

Anastasia: “You’re quite worried, but it’s fine. Remember, I was simply aware of the location of the magical ore that Emilia-san’s faction was looking for, and I’ve already explained why I gave you that information.”

As Anastasia had said, gratitude required no price tag.

Otto, understanding this, relented his questioning of Anastasia. Seeing their conversation draw to a close, Emilia raised a nervous hand.

Emilia: “Um, is it okay if I ask something?”

Anastasia: “Please, go ahead. Anything involving our business and personal relationships are a matter of trust. Clearing doubts will give us peace of mind.”

Emilia: “It seems this doesn’t have much to do with money, does it…”

Anastasia: “This is more than just a matter of hourly wages, after all. Well, that’s to be expected. Don’t you agree, Natsuki-kun?”

Anastasia smiled at Subaru, who gave an indifferent shrug in response. Emilia continued to ask her questions,

Emilia: “You’ve told us a little about Kiritaka-san, but I’m still curious about the Songstress you mentioned. Is she someone famous?”

Although it was a simple question, Subaru also wanted an answer. As far as he knew, Kiritaka’s surname, Muse, was something like a Goddess of Song in his world’s mythology. It was an odd coincidence, but it could simply have been his fate to fall for a songstress.

Subaru: “I wonder if she’s supposed to be some kind of mythical figure. Of course, she’s not as influential as Hoshin of the Wastes. Actually, if Hoshin had fallen for someone mythical, it would have probably been a disaster.”

Julius: “Rest assured, the Songstress Liliana-san is very real and currently remains in Pristella. Having been taken in by Kiritaka-san... that’s what her position is like right now.”

Subaru: “Currently… is that different from her normal situation?”

Julius: “I heard that she was originally a poetic bard who sang and travelled. Kiritaka-san saw one of her concerts, and the situation became what it is now.”

Listening to Julius' answer, Subaru pictured a bird caught in a birdcage. Birds were animals who could live freely until they caught the eye of a master who would entrap them. Was that what Liliana's situation was like? Did Kiritaka's paranoid affection keep Liliana trapped?

Subaru: “That’s an unpleasant story. Her singing shouldn’t be meant for just one person, she should do it freely.”

Julius: “I do agree with that, but there may be a misunderstanding here. Although, given Kiritaka-san’s obsession with Liliana, it may be an inevitable conclusion.”

Subaru: “My opinion of this Kiritaka guy just lowered somewhat. Will the negotiation really be fine? It’s hard to imagine communicating with someone like that.”

A greedy and disgusting rich man comes to mind, one who was gluttonous and lustful. As Otto had mentioned earlier, it was strange of him to turn a blind eye to Emilia’s seemingly innocent search for magical ore. Subaru’s impression of the man was poor indeed.

Subaru: “I’m not looking forward to showing my pretty Emilia-tan to such a person.”

Julius: “Him seeing Emilia-sama shouldn’t be a problem. Kiritaka-san is a little difficult to handle, but he wouldn’t be so indiscreet. However…”

Julius broke off, as if unsure how to continue, leaving Subaru puzzled at his rare hesitation. Finally, Julius sighed quietly and shifted his gaze from Emilia to Subaru.

Julius: “It might be best not to bring Beatrice-sama with you.” Subaru: “What’s that supposed to mean!?”

Anastasia: “Well, Kiritaka-san and I are on good terms, so I’ve spoken with him enough to imagine what he would think.”

Julius’s and Anastasia’s words.
They lead to only one conclusion. Subaru stands up and,

Subaru: “… He’s a lolicon!?”

Julius: “It’s something that people can only speculate on. In other words, it’s an unconfirmed rumor. In any case, his tastes don’t change how charming Anastasia-sama is.”

Anastasia: “Your words lack elegance.”

Elegant or not, Anastasia didn’t seem to mind what Julius said. Subaru’s theory wasn’t refuted and he accepted that it was true. Even so, he thought to himself, are you serious.

Subaru: “More annoying lolicons, as if Clind-san weren’t enough trouble…”

Recalling the universally competent butler, Subaru wanted to bury his head in his hands. However, there was definitely a difference between Clind and Kiritaka’s tastes. Clind would probably show no interest in Anastasia. What Clind sought was inner youth and it was reflected by his attitude toward Emilia. He saw her inner immaturity and respected her as a loli in spirit.

—On the other hand, Kiritaka was a person who places emphasis on external appearances. Anastasia was probably around the same age as Subaru, but she looked significantly younger. Since her body has little potential for further development, she could be considered a legal loli. Kiritaka’s inclination to like her was obvious. And Beatrice…

Subaru: “Our Beako is a versatile loli that can accommodate the tastes of both Clind and Kiritaka…”

Beatrice: “I did not quite understand that, but I feel like it was a very rude comment, in fact.”

Subaru: “Idiot! Ugh. I’m worried about you! You... you have have a dangerous appeal. You’ll make me worry if you’re not more aware!”

Beatrice: “I-, ah, mm... i-if you’re that worried, then I suppose you’re not doing anything wrong. Hehehe.”

Although she didn’t share Subaru’s panic, Beatrice happily grabbed on to the hem of Subaru’s sleeve. For the time being, Subaru was going to hold onto her tightly. As long as they were in this city, it would be a good idea to keep an eye on her.

Emilia: “So, um, does he just like short people?”

Anastasia: “Such an innocent response. No, it’s more like he’s the type of person who likes eating fresh, immature fruits...”

Subaru: “STOOOOOOP!! Don’t say such dirty things to my angel! I understand now! No more is needed! Yes? Stop, stop!”

Subaru guarded Beatrice with his left hand and Emilia with his right. Anastasia laughed at Subaru’s overprotectiveness while Julius showed a wry smile.

Otto: “Setting aside Natsuki-san's attitude, we accept your conditions. If possible, I would like to meet Kiritaka-san. Would I find him in Pristella’s Chamber of Commerce?”

Anastasia: “That’s right. Well, Kiritaka-san is pretty busy, seeing as he has to run many of the city’s functions. I wonder which building you would find him in.”

Anastasia responded to Otto’s serious question with light teasing, who could only helplessly accept her answer. Otto brings his hand to his chin, then turns to Subaru.

Otto: “As expected, even the first step will be difficult. I would like to set up a safe place to calmly talk things through beforehand, but... where should we go?”

Subaru: “That’s right... well, to be honest, I have no idea where anything is. So I was planning to just wander around.”

From the main gate, Pristella didn’t appear too large, but as an outsider, navigating the unfamiliar townscape would be a nightmare. Subaru is confident in his sense of direction, but how useful was that confidence in a town where travel was conducted by waterway?

Otto: “Perhaps, there are people giving tours along the waterway—after all, many tourists come here, and there are probably people who are giving tours to capitalize on that.”

Subaru: “That wouldn’t work, I’d definitely get seasick. Once in elementary school, I got so seasick crossing a lake on a field trip that people made fun of me for being drunk.”

Beatrice: “I don’t quite understand what that means, but you look like you have bad memories of it, in fact.”

Looking at a reminiscing Subaru, Beatrice voiced her pity. In any case, Otto's suggestion was probably the best, so Subaru would have to accept it. When,

Julius: "Forgive me for interrupting your discussion, but that worry is needless." Emilia: "What do you mean, Julius?"

Emilia turned to look at Julius, who smiled faintly.

Julius: "It's simple. We've already sent messengers to correspond with Kiritaka-san."

Emilia: "Messengers?"

Julius: "My younger brother Joshua, of course. Ricardo is accompanying him."

Subaru was glad to finally know where those two were, but he was also somewhat annoyed. Although they were addressing a natural obligation,

Subaru: "It would have been nice if they we were here to welcome us."

Julius: "Since we invited you, it's our duty to handle these arrangements. You don't need to be worried about the finer subtleties. They're not worth mentioning."

Subaru: "Don't bring them up then!"

Their banter was the same as always. On one hand, Subaru's respect for Julius's faction grew, but on the other, he was deeply troubled by his own faction's lack preparation. Anyway,

Anastasia: "In that case, you're probably all anxious, but we should probably wait for the two of them to come back. Speaking of which, my personal bodyguard hasn't returned."

Subaru: "Oh, right."

Subaru assumes a more relaxed posture and sits down. He prepares himself to answer questions about the absent Garfiel. Anastasia immediately follows that lead,

Anastasia: "As you can see, Mimi is absent—what's she doing? That child accompanying her... the one named Garfiel. Tell me about him."

Subaru: "His name is Garfiel Tinsel. He's 15 years old, the age where kids dream too much. He's in the habit of biting things and snoring loudly. But, other than that, he's an honest, straightforward kid. Even if his feelings are battered, his naive way of looking at things won't change. He's that kind of pure youth."

Anastasia: "That's likely true."

'I don't want my cute little sister stolen from me,' seemed to be what Anastasia is desperately, but sweetly, thinking. Even without considering his potential relationship with Mimi, Subaru thought of

Garfiel as a cute little brother, and believed in making his value known.

Emilia: “I wonder what Songstress-san’s famous voice sounds like. I feel sooo anxious. I wonder if she’d perform for me if I gave her a request.”

Julius: “Don’t worry, Liliana is someone well-versed in social customs. So if she’s present at your meeting with Kiritaka-san, I’m sure she’d be eager to perform.”

Emilia: “Wa, that’s right. It sounds fun.”

—Meanwhile, Julius’s words seemed to further Emilia’s interest in the Songtress. Otto, seeing the dialogue between the two groups, sighed.

Otto: “Since we’re in opposing factions, I thought relationships would be more tense… did I overthink things?”

Beatrice: “You don’t need to be discouraged, in fact. You’re not thinking too much, Subaru and Emilia aren’t thinking enough, I suppose.”

Beatrice’s rare show of sympathy confirmed Otto’s suspicions that he will be mentally and physically overtaxed during his stay in Pristella.

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Joshua had returned, while Garfiel was soon to arrive as well.

Joshua: “Kiritaka-san is usually busy, but rather than being at the city hall today, he’ll be at the his office in the Muse Company Headquarters, so this is an ideal time to visit him.”

Anastasia: “That’s that, then. Mm, you did well, Joshua.”

Joshua, upon returning to his older brother and his lady, makes his report. After Anastasia nodded, satisfied, Joshua turned his gaze to Subaru.

Joshua: “...thank you for coming such a long way. I’m sure you’ve heard the story from Anastasia-sama by now, but we’ve established contact with Kiritaka-san.”

Subaru: “Oh, thanks a lot. That saves us loads of time.”

Joshua: "I do not enjoy helping you, I’m just following Anastasia-sama’s orders. I really wanted to avoid having my brother meet you.”

Subaru: “You’re honest, as usual.”

Julius’s eyes widened at Joshua’s frank speech. He was apparently unaware of the animosity Joshua held toward Subaru.

Julius: “Joshua. Everyone present, including him, are here under Anastasia-sama’s invitation. Being rude to our guests will hurt Anastasia-sama’s reputation, so please refrain from doing so.”

Joshua: “...my sincere apologies, brother.” (uses –sama honorific)

Julius sighs at Joshua, whose gaze had turned sulky. He then turned to Subaru and said apologetically,

Julius: “Apologies. From both of us. Usually, my brother does not engage in this kind of behavior… it seems that it’s being caused by the unfamiliar environment.”

Subaru: “I don’t mind if you guys do it separately, but being picked on by both brothers together in this environment is kind of scary for me, too.”

Julius: “Heh. We’ll keep that in mind.”

Julius responded to Subaru's words with a mixture of humor and irony. Joshua looked unsatisfied, but when Subaru caught his eye, he turned away. Was the reason intense jealousy?

Emilia: “Well, thanks to your favor, we can go visit Kiritaka-san now. Can we consider the inn a place to stay afterward?”

Anastasia: “Feel free to do so. The Water Plumage Pavilion is a lodging with a great track record, both in atmosphere and comfort. Please look forward to dinner.”

Emilia: “That’s true. In that case, we’ll look forward to it.”

Emilia smiled at the confident Anastasia, running a hand through her long silver hair.

Emilia: “We’ll be sure to speak properly with Kiritaka-san first so that we can enjoy a delicious dinner without any worries.”

As Emilia finished talking, she stood up to leave the inn. Subaru followed behind her as they made their way toward the the ship that Joshua had secured for them, when,

???: “Oi, Captain! Wait there! I’m tellin’ ya!”

Garfiel hurriedly leapt in front of the inn to intercept them. His shining blonde hair and clothes were slightly dirtied, and his expression was tired.

Garfiel: “Ah...h... foun’ya. Not fer th’ dog faced guy, don’t think I’d ‘f survived.”

Subaru: “By dog faced guy, do you mean Ricardo? Were you on a sweet date with Mimi, before her big, scary uncle interrupted?”

Garfiel: “A date? It’s no joke! Soon’s that midget dragged me ‘way, ‘nother midget same’s her attacked me ‘n nearly killed me. If I fought back, they’d prob’ly start cryin’, so instead I jus’ spent t’day runnin’

away…”

From Garfiel’s story, Subaru surmised that it had been Ricardo who had prevented that tragedy. Mimi, of course, had two twin brothers who could have caused it. Perhaps it was Tivey, whose calm disposition could have been hiding a sharper side. Or perhaps Hetaro, fearing that his sister would be taken away, had displayed his siscon tendencies for the first time. Whoever it had been, the situation seemed fine now.

Garfiel: “So, seein’s I didn’ want’b excluded’m yer plans, I rushed over here, Captain.”

Subaru: “Ah, my bad. We were planning on meeting the guy who’s selling the magical ore. Thinking on it, I guess we should’ve waited for our bodyguard.”

Garfiel: “Th’s obvious, ya?”

Subaru added the relieved Garfiel to his party and made way for the docks. The boat that Subaru’s group was going to ride on had already been prepared. All of the boats were fairly small with only enough room for eight people, including the boat’s sailor.

Sailor: “There’s a city law about boat size. If the boats are too large, the waterways get clogged, and it’s unsafe if boats get too close together.”

The dark-skinned sailor steering their boat was happy to answer Subaru’s questions. Dragon carriages on wide highways weren’t much of a problem, but on waterways, traffic rules needed to be set.

Sailor: “If a collision happens and a ship sinks, that’s usually regarded as the fault of the sailor’s lack of technique. Besides, a lot of these ships have been passed down from generation to generation, so losing one would mean losing your reputation as well.”

Subaru: “Of course. Regarding the ships water dragons... are there any conflicts between them?”

Sailor: “The water dragons live here and, in a way, they manage to be polite with one another.

Like land dragons, they have good instincts and can be trusted to handle a smaller boat. "You should try one out if you have the chance”, Subaru remembered the way he felt the first time he saw a land dragon and was excited by the sailor’s recommendation. Maybe his first ride with a water dragon would evoke the same sense of wonder.

Emilia: “This is my first time crossing water with a ship. I’m soooo excited.” Subaru: “Is that so? Well, this does feel different than the sea.”

Emilia: “What is the ‘sea’?”

Subaru: “Imagine an endless pool of water. My hometown was right next to it.” Emilia: “Hmmm... but, that would be nice when you felt thirsty.”

Subaru laughs in response to Emilia’s childlike answer. Unfortunately, drinking sea water when you’re

thirsty would lead to death. Regardless, he couldn't mention that sea water is saltwater without it raising more questions.

Otto: "Where there's a river there's usually a bridge, but if you need to smuggle without crossing a bridge, your only other option is going by boat."

Subaru: "Sure sounds like you're talking from experience."

Otto: "I-It's not like I've ever done anything like that! I-It's just, second hand knowledge! Stop casting such strange suspicions on me, really!"

Garfiel: "Otto-nii, ya really sweatin' over there."

As if ignoring Otto's suspiciously specific denial, the boat followed the sailor's movements as it turned to join the main waterway ahead. Incredibly, the current was flowing against the direction of the boats.

Subaru: "What, how is the water flowing like this?"

Emilia: "Hehehe. I actually know the answer to that. Look, see the city walls."

She lightly patted Subaru's shoulder and pointed into the distance with her free hand. Subaru cast his gaze in that direction and saw the great stone towers stationed on the city's walls. There were four of these towers, oriented north, south, east, and west of the city.

Emilia: "Those towers control the flow of water in the town. It uses a sophisticated magical mechanism that operates with the power of a magical water stone. It seems that the big floodgates in the city are also controlled by it."

Subaru: "Wow, that is incredible. This is even cooler than the travel laws."

Thanks to Emilia's explanation, Subaru more or less understood the mysterious mechanism behind the flowing water. Sure enough, the Watergate City Pristella was very different from the others, and Subaru still had much he needed to learn about it, including the city's laws.

Subaru: "The laws here are closely related to the operation of the city, right?"

Emilia: "Is this about Kiritaka-san? Like I said. I wonder what kind of a person he is… it would be great if he gave us the magical ore upon hearing our story."

Touching the pendant hanging on her chest, Emilia murmured her hopes uncertainly. While listening to her murmurs, Subaru placed his hands on his chin and closed his eyes. Then, he swayed his head along with the movement of the boat and whispered,

Subaru: "————."

Beatrice: "...I didn't catch what you said just now, I suppose."

Beatrice was probably the only one who could hear him. Upon hearing her loud voice, everyone turned to stare at him. Feeling their gazes fixed on him, Subaru smiled and said,

Subaru: “Crap, I’m gonna puke.”

—In that moment, a fuss was created.

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Arc 5 - Chapter 77, "A Nameless Knight" (Part 1/?)

by admin - Wednesday, August 22, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/08/22/arc-5-chapter-77-a-nameless-knight-part-1/

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE.

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Translated by :

- Ringo, /u/Ringo_17

Proofread by :

- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd

Fan Art Created by :

- Ringo, /u/Ringo_17

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Receiving the shocking impact, the body was displaced.

This wasn't the position to clench the blade, even if it was a broken knight sword, it could not avoid the approaching hand. Julius immediately took notice of the consequence which otherwise someone watching would not be able to.

But, it's another thing to be relieved or be thankful for that--

Julius: "Ricardo--!"

Ricardo: "Ah, now you've frickin' done it.....~tsu"

Ricardo raises a voice that was full of pain, and makes a big mistake by pushing Julius. At the same time at that which he shouted his name, droplets of blood jet and cover Julius' vision.

Blood sprayed from Ricardo' thick and hard right arm -- where the wound was his lost arm till his elbow, exposing a smooth cross section.

An arm covered with the fur of an animal falls on the stone payment, making a noise, and the victimised giant also rolled on the ground while raising a dull voice.

Julius: "Just what is..... ~tsu"

Ricardo: "Y~ou damned idiot, is this the time to say this, Julius! Raise your face towards the fro~nt....."

Ricardo tries to throw words of encouragement to Julius, who was breathing at a fast pace. However, a dagger's slash swings into his abdomen, and a direct hit by a knee that crushed his nose do not allow that to come true.

In a bad shape, Ricardo falls to the ground and "Gluttony" appears.

Roy: "Ha~a! We said, that we won't let you speak everything ~tsu!"

"--~tsu"

Alphard appeared as he shouted happily while Ricardo fell down. The two figures were visible to Julius and something strikes his mind at the same time.

No matter which one was prioritised, there undoubtedly was a gap.

And "Gluttony's" appetite would never miss that gap.

Roy: "Things like disappointment, are not included in the mannerisms of meals?, nii-sama--!"

Julius: "You bastard.....!"

Like spring-loaded dolls, Alphard jumps to trick him. Julius' reactions slightly lagged behind his phantom-like movement.

The protruding palm and the broken knight sword collided, and he felt a sensation of tracing of a palm on his chest-- the action of piercing from his side was avoided, and he felt a mysterious feeling of being lost shortly afterwards.

Roy: "A~h-- thank you for the treat ~tsu"

With the end of that voice, for some reason, the consciousness faded away, and--

Arc 5 - Chapter 8, "Traveling With Seasickness"

by admin - Wednesday, November 28, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/28/arc-5-chapter-8-traveling-with-seasickness/

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http://ncode.syosetu.com/N2267BE/216

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detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

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Beatrice: “You should be better now, I suppose.”

Subaru: “No, wait a little more. Wow, this is terrible, the world is still shaking. I’m still shaking. Even death can’t cure this sickness…”

On a street facing a large aqueduct, Subaru and Beatrice sat side by side, their feet dangling over the side of the waterway. Together, they admired the flow of the clear water. Passerbys smiled faintly upon seeing them. Perhaps they assumed they were siblings, or perhaps they thought they were tourists who had never seen such structures.

Subaru: “Neither of those assumptions are entirely wrong... but it’s sad that they don’t really know what our relationship is. Ueh.”

Beatrice: “You should focus on recovering rather than pointlessly worrying, in fact. I wonder why you think Betty is here, I suppose.”

Subaru: “Were you worried that I’d be lonely? Beako is so kind.”

Beatrice: “...that’s irrelevant, in fact. Just hurry up and get better, I suppose.”

In order to accommodate the weight of Subaru leaning against her, Beatrice strained her small frame. Seeing this, Subaru's love for her increased exponentially. Could it ever stop growing?

About fifteen minutes ago, Subaru had been forced to continue his journey on foot after the fuss he had created with his seasickness. Emilia, Otto, Garfiel remained on the boat to head for the negotiations with the Muse Company and Kiritaka.

Originally, Emilia had also wanted to accompany Subaru on foot, but Otto had said, "The longer we keep the other party waiting, the worse our impression will be".

Heeding his advice, she left Subaru behind. It was most likely the right decision.

Subaru: "Well, even if Anastasia had told us to be careful... in broad daylight, most people probably aren't going to try anything."

Certainly, there was anxiety in being left alone in an unfamiliar city after being invited there by a political opponent, but there was an escort named Garfiel to deal with that.

However, the currently alone Subaru was important enough to Emilia Camp that an attack on him wasn't completely inconceivable.

Even so, if Anastasia had malicious intent, she was too savvy to orchestrate an attack on him in the middle of the day. In addition, Subaru trusted that Julius wouldn't condone any type of ambush.

Subaru: "As he had said, a knight must remain chivalrous at all times…"

Beatrice: "Subaru. It's rather annoying when you laugh to yourself, I suppose."

Subaru: "Wait, I totally wasn't laughing! Well, I'd never think of that guy and laugh! Anyway, let's go."

Subaru stood up and took a deep breath, rubbing his arms and neck lightly. Although they still felt a little heavy, the seasickness was mostly gone. He could more or less move around normally again.

Beatrice: "Well, Betty will help if needed, I suppose."

Subaru: "Ohh, I'm counting on you. Even so, I doubt anything will happen. Only an idiot would attack us in broad daylight with so many people around."

All of the king candidates needed to keep an eye on their reputation. In public, they needed to appear both pleasant and authentic. Emilia, who was a naturally honest and kind girl, did not need to worry herself about pretenses.

Subaru: "In other words, Emilia's real advantage over the other candidates is her angelic innocence...!"

Beatrice: "Your thoughts are going in an unpleasant direction, in fact. —Subaru, Subaru, look, let's go that way, I suppose. Follow me."

In the past year, Beatrice had become entirely accustomed to putting up with the easily distracted Subaru. She had been navigating through the unfamiliar cityscape with ease while leading him by hand. Muse Company's headquarters was apparently located at the boundary between the first and second districts. Subaru, having been seasick, had only dimly registered the directions, but Beatrice had memorized them all. If they had one problem, it would be the complexity of Pristella's pathways.

Although they had arrived by following the main canal, they had to take detours around the several small waterways feeding into the main one. Sometimes there were bridges, but on several occasions Subaru needed to jump over a narrow waterway while carrying Beatrice.

Beatrice: "Subaru, that is a splendid fountain, I suppose." Subaru: "You're right… Beako, how did we get to the park?"

The fountain which had caught Beatrice's attention stood in the center of a park. It was surrounded by well maintained flowerbeds and children playing games. This was indeed a peaceful and relaxing sight. The only issue was,

Subaru: "Is this where we're suppose to be going? This is the last place I'd picture finding the heir of a large company. If businessmen made deals here, then all of their money would get wet."

Beatrice: "I wonder if seasickness makes you cynical, I suppose. That's the first thing you think of upon seeing this beautiful scenery... Betty feels sorry for you, in fact."

Subaru: "The old you would have blushed and tried to hide this mistake, but now you're becoming rather fresh… you're breaking your father's heart."

Beatrice: "Y-You're four hundred years too early to be calling yourself Betty's father! Subaru lacks consciousness in discussing such matters, in fact!"

Subaru was unsure why Beatrice had overreacted to the latter half of his sentence, but didn't pursue the issue. Their problem right now was figuring out how they arrived at the park.

Subaru: "Beako. Since you were leading me so confidently, I thought you knew the way?"

Beatrice: "I know the destination, in fact. However, the roads were complicated, I suppose. In order to avoid getting lost, I used the 'left-hand method' that I'd read about before. It didn't work, I suppose."

Subaru: "The 'left hand method'?"

Beatrice: "Holding out your left hand and following the wall, in fact." Subaru: "Isn't that for mazes!?"

Beatrice's method was the a well known tactic in conquering a maze. Subaru recognized its effectiveness, but there were a number of drawbacks, too. Namely,

Subaru: "If you start using the left hand method in the middle of a maze, you might end up touching the inside wall and never be able to leave! Furthermore, we're not in a maze, we're in a city!"

Beatrice: “Hmph! It’s just like Subaru to disregard tried and tested wisdom, I suppose. Betty was a librarian managing a forbidden archive. She pities any fool who disregards the wisdom of history, in fact.”

Subaru: “I’m not a fool, you’re a fool for assuming you understand everything!”

She was old enough to be self-righteous (400 years) but it took her long enough to enter the outside world (400 years) that there was a big enough gap (400 years) between her logic and common sense. And so, she was a surprisingly unreliable loli.

Beatrice: “I wonder if Subaru has a better idea, in fact. Let’s see you try, I suppose.” She put her hands on her waist, fixating on Subaru with a disagreeable glare.

—On the other hand, Subaru had just suffered the embarrassment of letting Beatrice see his seasickness and wanted to make up for it by appearing reliable.

Subaru: “Ha ha. You correctly decided that this place is like a labyrinth, but you were wrong to think that it was a perfect maze and to use the left hand rule. I have some less flawed, no, flawless tactics.”

Beatrice: “Ho ho, you’re pretty confident, I suppose. Go ahead and tell me your plan, in fact.”

Subaru: “Hee, I’ll tell you. Its name is the Caged Method.”

Beatrice: “——?”

Beatrice tilted her head, a question mark floating above it. The name didn’t convey the actual content of his plan, so Subaru cleared his throat and started to explain thoroughly.

Subaru: “Okay. First of all, we’ll call our current position the starting point. If we proceed, we’ll eventually come to a fork. We’ll continue until we hit a dead end. Then, we’ll go back to our first fork.”

Beatrice: “...mm, continue, I suppose.”

Subaru: “Then, we’ll map that branch and choose another one. Using the same method as the first branch, we’ll walk until we hit a dead end. Eventually, we’ll have every branch and every path of the dungeon mapped out.”

Beatrice: “That would take far too long, in fact! I wonder if we would even arrive before nightfall, I suppose!”

Subaru: “I-Idiot! What’s wrong with taking the certain path!? How many people do you think safely survived a dungeon with this method? I’m doing just as you said, relying on the wisdom of history!”

Beatrice: “Losing sight of your goal by relying on wisdom is a bad habit, in fact!”
Certainly, it hurt that Beatrice trampled on his idea, but even Subaru had to admit his plan had too many faults. It was a time consuming tactic, and besides, they had no pen or paper with which to draw a map.

Subaru: “Then there’s only one other method...”

Beatrice: “What is it, in fact? Betty’s trust in you is significantly lower now, I suppose.”

Although this method was reliable, it wasn’t going to improve Subaru’s image. Acting in good faith doesn’t make you reliable.

Subaru: “Okay, we’ll have to work together here.” Beatrice: “On what?”

Subaru: “Let’s humbly ask for directions.”

Beatrice: “That’s fine, in fact…”

Subaru had accepted that he couldn’t solve the problem on his own. He thought Beatrice’s pride would be the only problem, but she seemed okay with it as well. Fortunately, Kiritaka Muse was both a famous merchant and heavily involved in urban planning. Everyone would know where his office was. With that in mind, Subaru looked around, hoping to find someone to ask. But,

Subaru: “Even though this is a park, there’s nobody here.”

Beatrice: “The timing is bad, in fact. It’s late afternoon, the perfect time for naps, I suppose.”

Subaru definitely agreed with Beatrice and the temptation to nap in the shade rose. He decided to head back to the direction of the main canal, where there were more people, when,

Subaru: “—Do you hear something?”

The faint sound of wind and water. No, it was the sound of a singing human voice?

“____“

Subaru could hear it only intermittently, but he was drawn toward it, looking for the source. Beside him, Beatrice also seemed to be moving toward the sound.

Upon arriving at the scene, they stood, overwhelmed, forgetting to even breathe.

—A lone girl stood in front of a monument at the back of the park, her voice raised in song.

She was a small girl with dark skin, large round eyes, and a vibrant face. Her crisp yellow twintails were decorated with small, strange ornaments. In her hands, she held an instrument between the size of a guitar and an ukulele. She played and sang simultaneously.

The energy contained in the song could only be described as overwhelming.

Subaru, listening to her sing, felt a nonexistent squall by his face and a nonexistent earthquake under his feet. The clarity, the volume, of her song was overwhelming. Her voice, singing a balladic tune, was the

only sound in existence.

“____“

That lone girl, using only her voice and fingertips, created an energy comparable to that of an orchestra.

Subaru was far from the only one who had been utterly captivated by her. There was an audience of around twenty people, all holding their breaths, completely unaware of Subaru. Likewise, Subaru had only noticed the singing girl, whose presence entirely dominated the space.

As Subaru’s entire body trembled, the girl’s song came to its climax and the audience’s enthusiasm came to it’s peak—

Girl: “—Without money, without a future, without hope, with only vanity. What can I see but the darkness? And beyond that darkness, nothing. The end, the end, the end is approach—”

Subaru: “How is this song so exciting even after calming down, Oi?!”

Girl: “Huh!?”

The song which even dreams couldn’t create was unexpectedly interrupted by Subaru.

As soon as he had surprised her, the girl had stopped singing and dropped her instruments. Of course, the music had also stopped. —Immediately, the intense atmosphere surrounding the girl vanished. Subaru realized that he had messed up.
Subaru: “Oh no, I didn’t read the mood. Sorry, I didn’t mean—that hurts! —hk! —ow! —eh!?”

Beatrice: “Subaru you idiot, it’s ruined, in fact. What a waste of a rare and lovely mood, in fact. You just had to thoughtlessly ruin it, I suppose. You’ve gone too far, in fact.”

Before he could apologize, a sharp pain pierced his toes. Looking down, he saw and indignant Beatrice stomping on his foot with her heel. Beatrice seemed to return to reality when the song was interrupted, and considered that interruption unforgivable. Then,

“Oh… what was that song?” “This is a park ... just a little a while ago, I was in the darkness.” “No, I couldn’t help it at the time, but…”

The audience who had been swallowed by the song slowly tumbled back into the reality. Everyone turned to the criminal who had ruined the song. That was Natsuki Subaru—a man who had a reputation for failing to read the mood.

“—Don’t do thoughtless things!”

Everyone loudly and angrily cursed Subaru.

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Beatrice: “Thank you everyone, I suppose. Actually, I enjoyed it.”

Subaru: “Don’t sound so happy. Take a look at my feet, are they still the same size? Are my feet okay?”

Beatrice: “I wouldn’t care, in fact. For now, don’t consider Betty your companion, I suppose.”

Beatrice turned her face away and stubbornly denied Subaru, so he checked on his own. His right foot had almost doubled in size.

Subaru had poured water on the concert, so their reaction wasn’t entirely unexpected.

One by one, the audience had thanked the girl who sang and shook hands with her, and about half of them had stepped on Subaru’s foot before leaving. Subaru had been unable to say anything, and Beatrice had tolerated it, leaving Subaru a public enemy. Subaru prepared himself for both external and internal bleeding in his feet.

Subaru: “Don’t you think you should let me rely on your healing magic?”

Beatrice: “It would be a waste of my slowly accumulating mana, in fact. Wait for it to heal naturally, or ask Emilia, I suppose.”

Subaru: “You and Emilia’ve been taking care of me for a long time, huh.”

Since he’d come to this world, he’d sustained a steadily increasing amount of injuries, but they rarely lasted. Even injuries from his daily parkour, such as bruises, abrasions, and sprains, would be promptly healed by Emilia or Beatrice. His fear of pain hadn’t diminished, but there was a relief in knowing that his injuries all had a cure.

Subaru: “Well, I’ll just treat the pain as a lesson this time.”

That said, Subaru caressed Beatrice’s head, who was still turned away. Beatrice gave him her gentle hands.

Beatrice: “Well... well, I suppose it’s fine, in fact. As long as you reflect on it and learn your lesson, I suppose.”

Subaru: “Yep, I’ll do just that. Sorry, I was wrong...”

Subaru and Beatrice finished their talk, and turned to the girl. Because he’d been troublesome for her, Subaru would try to apologize. The girl, who had been watching the entire time, said,

Girl: “An inspiration!” Subaru: “Eh?”

Girl: “Listen. —I don’t know the difference between our years.”

Leaving a staggering Subaru behind, the girl strings her the instrument and instantly finds a rhythm. She

timed herself, breathed in a small breath, and started to sing.

Girl: “My love, do you see it, do you feel it? The difference between our ages. Even though our surroundings may change, I wouldn’t care one bit. All I care about is our height difference. Wait, my love. Please wait a moment. A little bit, a little bit, just a little bit more. If I stand on the tips of my toes, I can reach you. If the two of us stay so close together, the difference in our ages is irrelevant. So please, only two years, please wait that long. The distance between our love is sweetly melting away.”

Subaru: “As the distance in our love shrinks, it turns into a quiet, burning love. Eventually, two cranes will deliver to us two children, and our future will be a bright love story.”

Beatrice: “Eeeehhhhh!?”

At the end of the girl’s song, Subaru suddenly joined in with a rap. Beatrice raised her voice with astonishment, demanding an explanation.

Beatrice: “Wait a minute! Why… why is Subaru suddenly part of the song, I suppose? Why did you just accept his addition, in fact?”

Subaru: “Oioi, what are you talking about, Beako... does the song cross a line?”

Liliana: “Well said, Liliana’s heart is trembling with excitement!”

Beatrice: “Y-Your attitude that Betty is the wrong is unacceptable, I suppose...”

Subaru, feeling bad for Beatrice who had no one on her side, turned to the dark skinned girl.

Subaru: “Let me mention that Beako and I aren’t in the kind of relationship that you’re thinking of. Even if she grew two more years, she still wouldn’t be in my target range.”

Liliana: “Eh? She’ll only be thirteen or fourteen by then? Despite how I look, I’m good at guessing ages. Well, I guess this is a skill gained from life experience.”

Subaru: “She’ll be roughly 402 years old.”

Liliana: “Oh please. There’s no need to be this stubborn just because I hit the mark.”
She dismissed Subaru’s words as an excuse and ignored them. Subaru also thought that correcting her would lead to too much trouble. Anyway, the topic had changed too much.

Subaru: “Back to the original topic, was the inspiration you mentioned earlier the song?”

Liliana: “Yeah, that’s right. Despite how I may look, I’m easily moved. Once I saw your interactions, I felt like I needed to immortalize them in song. Be proud!”
The girl, speaking quickly and fluently, raised her hands or her mouth.

Liliana: “Ah, but, what I did wasn’t enough. Big brother helped by adding the bit at the end. That was the

first time I'd gotten such a reaction, I was very happy."
Subaru: "That was because the god of rap blessed me, I certainly couldn't do it again. I don't have the skill or experience."

Liliana: "—One single, shining moment…"

Seeing the mutual understanding without words between the two drained the patience of the little girl who had been left out.

Beatrice: "Subaru."

Subaru: "Mm, what is it... Beako!?"

Beatrice yanked his sleeve down and shockwaves sent Subaru flying. The momentum wouldn't kill him, but he still bounced all over the lawn of the park.

—Meanwhile, Beatrice turned to the dark skinned girl.

Beatrice: "It's no good for you to take inspiration from us anymore, in fact. Betty is putting an end to it, I suppose. If you resist you'll end up like him, in fact."

Liliana: "Ha...a...a, um, do..."

Beatrice: "Be quiet, I suppose. Only think about promptly responding to Betty, in fact. The reason nothing is happening to you right now is because your song was lovely, I suppose. But who knows how long this mercy will last, in fact."

Even seeing her trembling, Beatrice's voice held no mercy. Seeing her hurried nod, Beatrice sighed. The girl was too scared to form words. Then,

Beatrice: "Muse Company, take Betty to where Kiritaka Muse is, I suppose." Liliana: "—Eh?"

Beatrice: "I'll not say it again, in fact. Lead the way or be subjected to Betty's anger, I suppose." Liliana: "I-I'll lead you there! I will!"

When pressed with the choice, the girl instantly raised her white flag. Beatrice nodded, satisfied, as Subaru walked back toward them.

Beatrice: "Tell me if you have any complaints, in fact."

Subaru: "Is it acceptable to use your mana like this for educational purposes?"

Beatrice: "It depends on the time and place, I suppose."

Subaru: "What a kind consideration, Beako. Was it okay to threaten someone to guide us?"

Subaru scratched his face and looked down. Beatrice looked at him with a sullen gaze. Subaru continued,

Subaru: “That child is probably the famous songstress who knows Kiritaka. Maybe we shouldn’t make a bad impression on her.”

She’d mentioned that her name was Liliana earlier, and there was no mistaking that singing ability, even if her personality wasn’t what he had imagined.

Liliana: “I’ll do anything you want me to. E-Eh, whether it be guiding you or licking your shoes… all I humbly ask... is that you spare my life...”

There was a girl on the ground desperately begging for her life. Correction, that girl was the songstress Liliana.

Although, looking at her, no trace of the graceful Songstress could be seen.

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Arc 5 - Chapter 81, "The One Who Fills The Vessel of Greed"

by Gracedharperd - Furuta - Saturday, August 24, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/08/24/2780/

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Translated by :

- Gracedharperd (/u/Gracedharperd)
- Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)

Proofread by :

- Gracedharperd (/u/Gracedharperd)
- Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)

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Translation Note : Future chapters and prior ones may have used the term “Eridna” which is a different version of the translation Scarfdona “???” (Pronounced as Eridna).

Kind Regards, Gracedharperd

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Arc 5 - "Star What Make History"
Arc 5 Finale, Chapter 81 - "The One Who Fills The Vessel of Greed"

??A series of “Witch Cult Riots” arose in Pristella, the Watergate City.

The scars of the battle remained throughout the city, along with the tragedy that struck its inhabitants. There were numerous functions of the city that had yet to be fully restored to compensate for the loss of personnel.

Those problems still remained, yet the situation was settling down and beginning to move towards the next story.

For Natsuki Subaru too, the many problems of the city ached his heart.

Nevertheless as he observed the city after the withdrawal of the Witch Cult, he felt that he could presume that perhaps he'd been able to contribute a little to that conclusion.

Subaru: "Although there are still many unresolved problems..."

The scars that were left by the Sin Archbishops, especially amongst those left by "Lust" and "Gluttony", were enormous.

The inhabitants who'd had their bodies mutated by the Authority of "Lust". Their bodies had been placed in a "Temporary State of Death" by Emilia and were awaiting the moment to awaken in a shelter deep within the city.

And most of the people who had been attacked by the appetite of "Gluttony" even now found themselves in an endless sleep, and even their bonds with those who would expect their awakening from the bottom of their heart had been snatched away

Emilia's expression, who had proposed a way of postponing the solution to the problem of the transformed citizens, was painful.

Julius's anguish, who had lost his place and had suffered with how things were , was beyond imaginable.

And there was no need to mention the wounds in the hearts of the city's people who were the ones most affected.

Everybody had been hurt.

It was Subaru's duty to do everything he could to heal those wounds...

And,

Subaru: "There are still problems I have to take care of."

To solve the final unsolved problem, Subaru nodded.

Only this, was what Subaru had to do.

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Subaru: “Julius will go with us.”

Anastasia: “I see, then I can feel more calm ‘s well.”

After he’d finished with his various discussions, Subaru returned to the conference room and was welcomed by Anastasia.

Anastasia was the only one left at the roundtable in the conference room. The discussion on the main topics had been held there several hours ago.

Some of them had already returned to the inn, and others were preparing to leave Pristella. Even without that, it had been a tiring day. There was no need to rest on the hard roundtable and spend your time in the darkness of the empty shelter.

Subaru: “??What?”

And yet, she had stayed here, waiting for someone to arrive.

It wasn’t that he had been sure of it. But, Subaru too had vaguely thought that she would have been here.

After all, right now she shouldn’t have felt comfortable anywhere.

Subaru: “With this, those who are aiming for the Pleiades Watchtower are Emilia, me and Beako. In addition to that, if we add Julius and you, there are five of us in total.”

Anastasia: “Aren’t ‘cha makin’ a mistake in the number of participants? After all, there aren’t five of us, there are six of us. It would be a problem if you forgot my ‘dorable Echidna.”

She unrolled the scarf from around her neck and spread it over the roundtable whilst making her dance. The white fox scarf was obedient towards her master’s harmless game, just like a doll.

She didn’t just look like it, though.

Subaru: “I didn’t forget. ??That is why... we’re five”

Anastasia? : “????”

As he leaned his back against the door of the conference room, Subaru told that to Anastasia, who was hoisting out her scarf.

Hearing those words, Anastasia’s smile froze. Her elegant smile vanished as if it had melted, and then she tilted her head slowly.

Pulling the scarf to her lips, accompanied by a mystified look on her face,

A?n?a?s?t?a?s?i?a?: “Oh, that’s weird. How did you know I’m not Ana?”

Anastasia’s tone changed completely, so much that it was clearly noticeable.

It was terribly amicable and familiar, but the essential part was completely vacant. Although her voice was the same, it was clearly different.

Subaru: “If you want to hide it, you should do a better act of doing so. Surely, as far as I know, Anastasia is the most rational and realistic of the candidates, but… She doesn’t have an attitude as lacking in humanity as you do, nor is her way of speaking like that.”

Echidna: “I’ve been observing Ana for some time, so I should’ve been able to imitate her, but it didn’t go as well as I had thought. You are the second one to notice.”

Subaru: “The second?”

Echidna: “Al-kun also noticed. He called me a “Witch”, how could he do such a cruel thing?”

Subaru: “That’s……”

That was quite the fitting term, Subaru felt admiration for Al.

Anastasia’s Echidna and the “Witch” Echidna were essentially different, but it was impossible that they were not related, there was no doubt in that.

Perhaps it had been Al’s insight, something only he could have noticed.

He was someone summoned to this other world, just like Subaru. If the power of the “Witch of Envy” was connected to the other world summons, Al could also be related to the “Witch”.

Usually, he would have talked to him more about it, but??,

Subaru: “Anyway, that doesn’t matter now. The most important problem is you, who hijacked Anastasia’s body and tried to make it yours.”

Echidna: “Saying “hijacked” sounds pretty drastic. At a glimpse, the current situation is bad, that appears to be a fact, but I must say that it is unfortunate that you misinterpret it that way. Seriously, it’s painful.”

Subaru: “That way, you make it sound like it’s not the case.”

Echidna: “In actuality, it’s not true, even if you can’t see it. I only borrowed Ana’s body, it was inevitable. If I hadn’t, it would have been the end for the both of us. After that, I continued to use Ana as a vessel, not out of my free will.”

Subaru: “Too long. In summary?”

Echidna: “It was fine to borrow her body, but I can’t get out...”

I see, this is Scarfdona??On this occasion, he’d put it as Eridna, but he’d never thought that Eridna had been unrelated to Echidna, yet in their interaction now he’d sensed no clear traces of Echidna.

Even though the way she lengthened things was the same as the original.

Subaru: “For now, I’ll try to listen to your story.”

Moving his back away from the door, Subaru positioned himself to talk with Eridna.

Now that he had uncovered her identity she couldn’t leave him alive, it seemed safe to assume that the danger of her setting that trap had gone.

Subaru sat on the other side of the roundtable, facing Eridna.

Subaru: “To begin with, borrowing her body? What kind of situation is that?”

Echidna: “To put it simply, I overwrite my existence in Ana’s Od, and I borrow her freely, that’s the situation. In this state, I can control Ana’s body at will, I can also manipulate Ana’s gate, which is defective from the start, and use magic.”

Subaru: “What do you mean it is defective from the start?”

Echidna: “You’re quite curious, aren’t you? I understand the greed of wanting to know something so I won’t blame you, but wanting to know so much about another girl and another spirit, won’t it make your Emilia-sama and your Beatrice jealous?”

Subaru: “I don’t need your concern, even if they get jealous, they’d be cute anyways, so that’s fine. Stop stretching things out and tell me.”

When Subaru tried to slam the roundtable with his fingers in displeasure, Eridna shrugged. Then, she folded the removed scarf carefully and said “Ana is…”

Echidna: “A girl who was born with a defective Gate. I think you already know that the Gate is an organ that absorbs mana from the atmosphere and emits the mana into the body, but the ability to absorb mana doesn’t work quite well in Anastasia. She’s someone who suffers from chronic mana deficiency. There is a person who has this defect of not being able to release mana, although you should already have an idea of who I am talking about.”

Subaru: “I don’t know if that’s bad or not, and I don’t know who you’re referring to either.”

Echidna: “Oh really? That is unexpected. By the way, the one who has the deficiency of not being able to release mana is the descendant of the “Sword Saint”. Although in his case, the amount he absorbs is

unusual, and it adds to his physical ability apparently, so there is no real harm."

Subaru: "Reinhard?"

Subaru raised his eyebrows in surprise at the words of Eridna. But, on second thought, he also felt that Reinhard had said something like that somewhere before.

Reinhard couldn't use magic, only in that aspect was he inferior.

But instead the power of his Gate to absorb was strong??*I see*, so that was the reason why it was bad for him to approach spirits, including Beatrice.

Subaru : "Well, even without magic, it's not that he doesn't have ways of attacking from a long distance, to begin with, in his case it wouldn't be surprising if he defeated his opponents with the pressure of his sword, so it doesn't seem like a disadvantage at all. But, let's talk about Anastasia..."

Echidna: "I'm not trying to pretend, but it's my habit to want to talk about what I know. So, the conversation… Right, it was about Ana's constitution. When it comes to Ana's Gate, its function to draw in is underdeveloped and doesn't work well.. Therefore, she can only use magic by absorbing the mana that was initially in her body. If she's exhausted, she would have to use her Od, which is the source of life. I can't let her commit such madness, can I? That's why Ana can't use magic."

Subaru: "But, that you can use magic after borrowing her body makes no sense. The fact that the mana that originally was in her body was scarce doesn't change. Or is it that you can use the minute amounts of Mana?"

Echidna: "????"

Subaru: "Don't be quiet, answer."

Echidna: "I couldn't save her life in the first place without cutting down her life, I had no choice. However, the discussion between Ana and me on this matter is over. Someone like you, who has nothing to do with it, has no right to say anything about it. You wouldn't want me to say anything about your contract with Beatrice either, would you?"

She'd hit the mark.

Subaru and Beatrice's relationship, along with their contract, belonged only to them.

He didn't want others to intervene in that, and even if they did, he would reject them.

If Anastasia and Eridna claimed the same condition, Subaru couldn't say anything.

That was an absolute connection between the contractor and the spirit that must not be disturbed by others.

Echidna: “On this occasion, I borrowed her body out of Ana’s own will, it was an emergency after all. You know that a Sin Archbishop came to the City Hall, right? To drive her away, it was necessary for Al-kun and me to use all our strength. It was necessary to make a decision under pressure.”

Subaru: “And what’s that about you not being able to get out?”

Echidna: “Yes, there’s the current problem...”

At Subaru’s words of concern, Eridna clapped her hands and smiled. Although her appearance was that of Anastasia’s, her smile clearly showed that her contents were different.

What a strange thing, Subaru thought, but he immediately put that sentiment behind.

At last, their talk was about to cover the main question.

In front of Subaru, Eridna touched Anastasia’s thin chest.

Echidna: “This is not the first time I’ve borrowed Ana’s body this way. It hasn’t been many times, though. Ana and I don’t have an official contract. That’s also because of the problem with her Gate, I didn’t want to put a constant burden on Ana. Although even among spirits, I pride myself for being someone who consumes little energy. When it comes to just being there, I don’t need mana from a contractor.”

Subaru: “I see. My Beako wants to hold my hand three times a day.”

Echidna: “Two of the times is just because she wants to take your hand, probably. It’s all about intimacy?? So, about our talk, there weren’t many occasions where I borrowed Ana’s body in such circumstances. At most, this must be the fourth or fifth time. My relationship with her has lasted for almost eleven years now, so it’s not so surprising, is it?

Subaru: “Well, who knows? Considering that you say it’s at a pace of once every two years, isn’t that as low as the rate you catch flu at?”

Echidna: “That’s harsh.”

Eridna let out some stifled laughter, her laughter was the same as that of the Witch Subaru knew. In that moment, he’d become scared that Anastasia’s figure seemed like a double of Echidna’s.

Echidna’s existence left a weight inside Subaru that wouldn’t disappear. If possible, he never wanted to see her again because of Beatrice.

In addition to that, it would hurt Julius a lot to know that the real Anastasia had disappeared. He also wanted to avoid that.

Subaru: “Then, what happened, Echidna-san, who’s as annoying as a flu?”

Echidna: “I don’t know what that *flu* is you’re referring to, but in any case, I don’t have much experience. So, without any precedent, I don’t know why this happened either… I can’t separate my consciousness from Ana’s body. As a result, Ana is sleeping deep within her Od.”

Eridna spoke as she touched her chest, as if the Od were inside her, and then she looked at her scarf lying limp on the roundtable.

As long as Scarfdona’s consciousness was inside of Anastasia, her scarf should truly just be a fox pelt, but...

Echidna: “I was able to do pretty well as a puppeteer in the conference room, wasn’t it?”

Subaru: “There were many people who were deceived by the impact of your appearance. Though, there were also several people besides me who thought it was strange...”

Or so he thought.

Perhaps only Subaru, who was familiar with Artificial Spirits, had felt that strange sensation.

Subaru: “Even if you didn’t notice it in that place, people who are deeply related to her will immediately realize that you’re not Anastasia.”

Echidna: “And yet, only people with a superficial relationship like you and Al-kun could tell. Doesn’t that mean that my imitation of Ana went well?”

Subaru: “Right now, Ricardo and the kittens are busy with their own problems. Julius too.”

Echidna: “????”

At those words, Scarfdona narrowed her eyes.

In response to her reaction, Subaru made a suspicious face, but Scarfdona sighed immediately,

Echidna: “After all, Julius is Ana’s Knight? From the flow of the conversation in the conference room, I thought it was most likely, but… the Authority of “Gluttony” is terrifying. It could even steal my memories, and I am supposed to be an existence that’s outside the norm.”

Subaru: “You… What do you want to do with Anastasia?”

Echidna: “???”

Subaru: “On the question of whether or not you intended to hijack Anastasia’s body, honestly, even if we talk on this, nothing can be done about it, so I won’t hound you. I will say it clearly, even if you say it’s not like that, I have no basis to believe you, but…”

That she could not return Anastasia’s body... was unacceptable.

For the “Finest Knight”, it meant losing one of his hopes.

The spiritual death of a candidate ??He did not want to use that in the battle for the Royal Selection.

Subaru: “I won’t give up on bringing that person back to normal, Echidna.”

Echidna: “You can rest assured. I am not so arrogant to think that I can take over Ana’s body and live in her place.”

Faced with the enraged Subaru who moved forward with determination, Scarfdona said that with pessimism. With a sad expression, she embraced Anastasia’s small, thin body.

Echidna: “Y’know, I like Ana. The more than ten years I spent by her side without a contract weren’t mere observation cravings. I don’t know if these are the right feelings, but I have feelings similar to that of a guardian or family, I’m aware of that. If possible, I want her to be well, and more than anything, to be happy.”

Subaru: “????”

Scarfdona spoke fluently and indifferently as always, but in her appearance as she spoke and touched Anastasia’s delicate body in which she now found herself, there seemed to be affection.

Just as Puck felt love and affection for Emilia, and Beatrice for Subaru, Scarfdona may’ve felt the same for Anastasia.

If so,

Subaru: “So, that’s your real reason for wanting to meet the Sage.”

Echidna: “That’s very perceptive of you. I don’t care about the people that had their names eaten by “Gluttony”. I just want to know a way to return this body back to Ana. That’s why for that I will make use of you all as well.”

Subaru: “Is there even a guarantee that the Sage knows a way for that.”

Echidna: “There’s no guarantee. But, when it comes to the Sage which is said to see everything, and know everything, there’s a chance. I’ll wager on the chance that they can is the most likely, that is all.”

No words of immediate rebuttal came out from Subaru to Scarfdona’s words, full of iron-clad determination.

Without a doubt, it was a terribly egocentric, selfish conclusion she came to. However, Scarfdona was acting to attain her goal in her own Scarfdona-like way.

Thus, what Subaru needed to confirm was...

Subaru: “Do you really know a way of reaching the Sage in the Pleiades Watchtower?”

Echidna: “Of course.”

Subaru: “You ought’ve had a character description saying *I have no memories of the past.* Why does someone like you know a way to get to the Watchtower that no one else knows? It makes no sense.”

Echidna: “I know only what I know. It’s bothersome that you ask me for a basis for that, but it’s like so. If you want to adorn those words, then it’s because getting there is fate, I guess.”

Subaru: “Fate? Fate decided by whom?”

Echidna: “My Creator, perhaps.”

Scarfdona’s reply was lofty, but as far as Subaru was concerned, it was the worst kind of reply.

If the Creator she spoke of was Echidna, then the one who’d scorched the way to the Watchtower into the Spirit’s memories could only have been Echidna.

That meant that there was something related to Echidna in the Pleiades Watchtower.

For sure, that gave him a bad presentiment and a certain expectation towards the Sage’s knowledge.

Echidna: “I wonder, did that convince you?”

Scarfdona enquired this of Subaru, who’d remained silent, having come to that one conclusion.

Whilst hesitating on whether to agree immediately, Subaru let out a long, deep sigh.

Subaru: “Not that I’m extremely convinced, but at least I do understand. You have your own goals and things you need to do, and it doesn’t interfere with our own goals.”

Echidna: “Indeed. We both have things we want to ask to the Sage. That’s why we will cooperate in getting down to them. There’s nothing strange about that.”

Subaru: “Stop it. You became sketchy as soon as you said that.”

Echidna: “That’s rather harsh.”

It seemed like he’d go crazy if he kept talking with Scarfdona with Anastasia’s form for any longer.

In any case, they’d end up having plenty of time to keep each other company whilst they headed off to the Pleiades Watchtower. The Augria Sand Dunes, where the Watchtower was, were at eastern end of the world map?? It was a long journey.

Subaru: “I’m slowly getting used to you, so give me a bit more time.”

Echidna: “It’s a’ight, even if ya don’ like this. Really though, Natsuki-kun is too cold aroun’ such cute girls. You’ve hurt my feelin’s. Jeeeez.”

Wrapping the scarf around her neck, Scarfdona mimicked Anastasia’s behaviour.

Indeed, it was a performance well done, but…

Subaru: “Your intonation of “I” is wrong. Also, your Kansai dialect is too smooth. Compared with the people that I know from Kararagi, it lacks authenticity.”

Echidna: “Authenticity?”

It was an extremely small difference. Scarfdona rightfully croaked out those words to confirm what Subaru had told her, and eventually let out a sigh as if she’d given up.

From Subaru’s side, there was nothing he needed to confirm to Scarfdona. And, concerning returning Anastasia’s body back to her, that would depend on the Sage of the Pleiades Watchtower’s attitude.

However,

Subaru: “Don’t tell Julius….. or any of the others about the fact that you’re borrowing Anastasia’s body.”

Echidna: “……I don’ mind, but Natsuki-kun’s request is unexpected.”

Subaru: “I don’t want to cause an unnecessary uproar in this situation that is already enough of a mess. Also, if they find out it was really you, and not Anastasia, that proposed this idea, Ricardo, and some of the others, may oppose it immediately. It’ll be a bother for me too if we can’t go to the Watchtower. Albeit the selfishness of it.”

There was a chance that Ricardo, Mimi and the others would be anxious about Anastasia’s body and stop her.

In that case, they may be forced to give up their journey to the Watchtower, even if it was an excellent solution to their problems. That would be a problem for Subaru and his group as well, as they wanted to save the victims of the authorities.

Subaru: “It would be great if the victims of “Gluttony”, “Lust”, and of course, the issue with you and Anastasia could be solved by the Sage. If all goes well, then Ricardo and the others wouldn’t be able to complain afterwards. No, even if they do complain, I won’t listen to them.”

Echidna: “Like Hoshin’s saying, “*The account books are balanced in the end.*””

Subaru: “I agree with Hoshin-san on that.”

As expected of Hoshin, who may have come from the same place as he did, saying fine things.

Subaru: “Well then.”

On that note, their discussion was over for now.

In the worst case, if Scarfdona had intended to exploit Anastasia’s body, there would’ve been the chance that last battle in Pristella would have unfolded here; that it didn’t happen made him relieved.

It was for that reason alone that that question came at the time which Subaru had let his guard down.

Echidna: “By the way, Natsuki-kun”

Subaru: “Hmm?”

Subaru turned around just as he’d put his hand on the door to try and leave the conference room.

Still leaning on the roundtable chair, Scarfdona cutely tilted her head like Anastasia would towards Subaru.

Echidna: “??There’s someone else, isn’t there? Someone else, who you want to ask the Sage about a way of getting them back.”

Subaru: “????”

Echidna: “One way or another, in Pristella there are people with similar symptoms, right? It’s best to take around about one person along who exhibits those symptoms so to inquire on how to get them back to normal.”

With his hand still on the doorknob, Subaru’s throat, Subaru’s breathing, froze.

Scarf-dona, in the end, continued to look on indifferently at Subaru, whose expression had stiffened, his eyes wide open.

Echidna: “What would’cha like ta do? This depends entirely on ya, Natsuki-kun.”

Subaru: “I……”

Echidna: “In any case, we’re stoppin’ by the Margrave Mathers’ Mansion, right? If we don’ prepare for the trek across the Augria Sand Dunes, we won’ get the approval ta be able ta go to the Watchtower. When we do that, your sleepin’ beauty oughta be there.”

Subaru: “????”

Echidna: “I don’ think it’s a bad thing. We’ll save everyone, it’s just about who’ll be the first amongst ‘em……..It’ll be okay if Natsuki-kun allows this sorta’ luxury.”

Scarfdona’s indifferent voice, for some reason, seemed like a terribly demonic temptation for Subaru.

He understood what she was trying to say. And though, without a doubt, he wanted to follow with what she'd said, he wasn't able to reply back to her immediately.

Surely that was because??,

???: "Subaru!"

Subaru: "??*hk*!"

On hearing his name being called out, Subaru looked up in surprise.

Emilia and Beatrice stood in front of Subaru, whose breath had caught inside his throat. The two of them widened their eyes at Subaru's reaction, and Emilia tilted her head and asked him, "What's the matter?"

Emilia: "You said you would go and see Julius-san…...You said that, but since you weren't at the hospital ward, I ended up getting worried. What have you been doing?"

Subaru: "No, nothing really…… You know, with that guy, he was pulling such a long face that I couldn't bear to see him for long. So, it wasn't a change of atmosphere, but a change of view."

Emilia: "Really? I think Julius has a handsome face though....."

Subaru: "Emilia-tan thinks that too?"

Emilia: "Ah, but, Subaru's face is great too, I think it's a fine face. You know, the kind where the more you look at it, the more you like it, or, yeah, I think that sort of thing."

Subaru: "That follow-up is so painful!"

Emilia fretfully corrected herself, but the way she said it was an issue too. With a bitter smile, Subaru dropped his shoulders. This time, Beatrice, who stood silently by Emilia's side, had something on her mind.

Beatrice kept looking behind Subaru, towards the shelter behind him. Just as if she had an inkling about the conversation that he'd had there.

Beatrice: "Subaru, if you're going to do something dangerous, you should call Betty, I suppose. If I were to leave you alone and it got dangerous, Betty would be beside herself, in fact."

Subaru: "That's the same affection I always feel for you. Since you're so cute, I get uneasy thinking about how long it will be before you are carried off by a kidnapper who was looking to steal some candy."

Beatrice: "Betty is not such a cheap-looking spirit, I suppose! Don't make fun of me!"

Getting rather angry, Beatrice approached up to him to slap him over and over again. As she did, Subaru

hoisted Beatrice up into his arms, who let out a surprised “Fwaaaah”, and walked towards where Emilia was.

Beatrice: “Re-release me, put me down, I suppose! Ah, but, put me down without scooting off, in fact.”

Subaru: “That’s pretty difficult, so you’ll have to stay like this for now.”

Beatrice’s body was light, but strangely warm. It was the prevailing view that children have higher body temperatures, but with Beatrice being a little girl, was she also like that? Even though she was a spirit.

Emilia, who was by his side, stared at Subaru’s face from the side, who was smiling wryly in that manner. As she watched him with upturned eyes, Subaru asked her, “What’s up?”

Subaru: “Is it so unusual that me and Beako are playing?”

Emilia: “No. In this last year, it’s no longer unusual at all, but…..I think the current you is making a disconcerted face that was pretty unusual for this last year.”

Subaru: “??. Is that so? Although I can’t say that everything is MUY BIEN, most of the problems have been resolved, and for me now, my facial muscles have relaxed well enough, or so I think.”

Emilia: “If you say so, I’ll believe you, but…..”

Emilia cast her long-eyelashed eyes down at Subaru who was moulding his cheeks into shape as if they were like rubber. Then, she slowly continued her words that she’d cut off.

Emilia: “When you decide what to do, absolutely let me know. And, if you don’t find the answer no matter what, make sure to consult with me, okay? It would be nice if you promised me just that.”

Subaru: “A promise, huh?”

Emilia: “Yes, a promise that Subaru is not good at keeping. You are good at making them, don’t you think?”

Subaru: “Woah, that’s unusually venomous for Emilia-tan.”

He received a scathing evaluation from Emilia due to the results of his past promises up until now.

Then, Emilia, with a faint grin on her face, held out her pinky finger. Seeing that, Subaru instantly slung Beatrice across his shoulder, and joined his own pinky finger with her’s as Beatrice screamed out, “WHAT ARE YOU DOING, I SUPPOSE!”

Subaru: “Pinky promise, Cross my heart and hope to die. Stick a 1000 needles in my eye.”

Emilia: “Cross my heart and hope to die.”

(TL Note: So, I've anglicised this part a bit more, because Pinky Promises are slightly different in Japanese. In Japanese, the literal thing Subaru said was: Finger cut-off, ten thousand fist-punches, whoever lies has to swallow a thousand needles. And Emilia replies with Finger cut-off. Obviously this would sound like nonsense in English, hence the localisation.)

Their fingers separated from each other's.

Whilst sticking out her finger, Emilia grinned at Subaru,

Emilia: "Subaru, how many needles will it be in total with this?"

Subaru: "Well, I don't think it reaches up to 10,000."

Emilia: "In which case, make sure you really don't get up to 10,000 of them, okay?"

Subaru replied with a curt "Yeah" to Emilia's prayer-like words.

With that answer, she'd feel an absolute sense of security??Such a thing for Emilia would probably be impossible. She hadn't even planned to make the promise in the first place.

That's why her promise now was a warning to Subaru.

Echidna: "??It'll be okay if Natsuki-kun allows this sorta' luxury"

Scarfdona's final temptation floated back into his mind.

Could Subaru allow this sort of luxury, could he really allow it?

Who would allow that to him? To him, who depended on such things.

Subaru: "I will have an answer. ??By the time I return to the mansion, I definitely will."

Even so, it is what you would expect from someone who had the same name as that "Witch".

In truth, taking advantage of the weakest parts in people was her forte.

Subaru: "Truly, how odious….."

Beatrice: "You said something right now, I suppose?"

Subaru: "No, with the way I am carrying you, I can touch or slap Beako's bum as much as I want."

Beatrice: "KYAAA, IN FACT! L-let go of me, I suppose! Put me down, in fact! Slowly and gently, like you were admiring a flower, I suppose!"

Subaru: "Hahahaha"

Beatrice: “Stop slapping my buttocks whilst laughing, in fact??!!”

With Beatrice kicking up a fuss over his shoulder, Subaru set out after the slender back who’d gone up ahead of him. Turning her face back every so often, Emilia seemed like she wanted to join them.

Although he had been blessed, although he had been saved.

If only she were here, he thought, marvelling at his own “Greed”.

The curtain fell on Natsuki Subaru’s battle in the Watergate City.

??And now, it silently turned to the next story that led to the Tower of Sand.

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ARC 5 IS FINALLY FINISHED!

With Chapter 81 “The One Who Fills The Vessel of Greed” translated, we’ve *finally* reached the conclusion of the fifth Arc of Re: Starting Life in Another World From Zero!

At first, Arc 5 was translated by Summary-Anon (who has translated the fourth arc which is featured on our site), then it was translated by Nanashi and Ringo, and at last, it was translated by Gracedharperd and Ice_Occultism. But even during this long ride, we’ve finally reached the end of the “Stars What Make History” arc.

We want to thank everyone who supported us throughout 2018 and 2019, especially during our times with DMCA/Copyright problems in the beginning. We want to thank everyone who waited for our return during the times when we had to transfer our site, and start anew. We want to thank those who’ve contributed in proofreading, helping us out with various Japanese-related questions, those who were formerly part of WCT, and those who were there for us in times of need!

Special thanks to those who’re supporting us on Patreon! Without them, we wouldn’t have been able to purchase limited edition Re:Zero content, or keep our content safe and secure on our website.

Ufnprik, Andrew B, Az X, Bob M, Daniel P, James Y, Jayden H, Jose V, Long T, Nicolas G, Noir, Nonick, Poonisher378, Rep Sharkey, Roger Doger, Sonny Parks, Spencer Green, Tyler Camp, Nobidexx, Thank you all so much for becoming our patreon and having supported us throughout this journey, we love you!!!

(We still can’t believe we’ve finished it…!)

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What’s Next…? Arc 6 it is!

Witch Cult Translations already started working on the sixth arc last year, yet there are still some gaps to be filled so that the two parts of the arc bridge perfectly. Thus, we're glad to announce that we'll start working on the untranslated chapters of Arc 6.

To start reading Arc 6, simply click here. Make sure to follow us on twitter to keep you notified for announcements and updates!

Kind Regards, Gracedharperd and Ice_Occultism!

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Arc 5 - Chapter 9, "The Value of A Songstress"

by admin - Wednesday, November 28, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/28/arc-5-chapter-9-the-value-of-a-songstress/

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http://ncode.syosetu.com/N2267BE/216

This is not a professional translation. Some mistakes, both grammatical and logical, are inevitable. Also, be advised that translators have a predisposition for personal preference and the names and terminology may differ at times from what was used in the anime or is used in the fandom at large. Think of these documents as an extremely
detailed “summary” (even though they basically include everything).

- Credit to Discount Anon or u/Nanashi-tan.
- Art Source

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Liliana: “Then, let me introduce myself once again. Although I’m no longer a travelling minstrel, I’m still a free spirited bard who goes wherever the wind blows me. My name is Liliana, please continue to advise me in the future—hk”

Beatrice: “You bit yourself, in fact.”

One hand holding her instrument gracefully, Liliana smiled as blood flowed freely from her mouth. Beatrice gently wiped it away for her. It seemed her tongue had been wounded rather seriously.

Beatrice: “It’s rude to bite your tongue like that.”

Subaru: “Have you heard of—Ah, are you the famous Songstress? I know you introduced yourself with her name, but it’s probably kinda rare to just meet her on the street.”

Liliana: “Ah, um, I’m not fond of that title since I’m only a fledgling musician. It sounds so sophisticated. I’m so far from reaching my peak that if people thought I called myself the Songstress they’d say I’m too conceited.”

Wiping at the bloodied lower half of her face, Liliana’s expression seemed almost coy, leading Subaru to

hesitate over his interrogation of her. He decided that rather than interrogate, he'd try to casually converse with her. Even so, considering the words she'd just said, she seemed to have a very high sense of professionalism.

Subaru: "Although I can see where you're coming from, I think you can accept some praise. That being said, I also sort of admire your attitude about it."

Liliana: "No, no, it's nothing so grand. Focusing on getting through each day is fine. So, please." Subaru: "____?"

Liliana stretched out a hand to a confused Subaru. Since it was empty, Subaru had no idea what she wanted and tilted his head at her smiling face.

Liliana: "Now that you've heard the voice of the Songtress, please give me something in return. Did you think listening was free? If so then your attitude troubles me."

Subaru: "Then give me back the emotions you made me feel! And take back your song!"

Liliana: "What are you saying!? How do you think a bard makes a living!? Are you saying I should be giving out feelings for free!? I don't think so!"

Liliana stomped angrily on the ground. What she said wasn't wrong, but Subaru's impression of the Songstress had been significantly lowered. Judging from how cold Beatrice's large eyes were, he assumed she felt something similar.

Subaru: "Alright. Let's discuss a tip. How much do you want?"

Liliana: "No, no, the tip should be for the customer to decide based on what his heart feels. Although the more the better."

Subaru: "For crying out loud."

Taking advantage of Liliana's laughing, which showed her bloodstained teeth, Subaru pinched her chin with his cold hands.

Her face was small so it was incredibly easy to pinch, and Liliana had to run several laps around Subaru before he let her go. Stepping away dizzily, she muttered "it was just a joke" over and over to herself.

Liliana: "If you're looking for the Chamber of Commerce, aren't you Kiritaka-san's guests? I wonder if you should be acting this way."

Subaru: "You know, I don't know you very well but my impression is only getting worse. I think it's about time we got going."

The more he talked to Liliana, the closer Subaru came to reaching the limits of his patience.

When they'd found out they were lost, they were very close to being late, and if they delayed any longer they would very likely miss a critical negotiation. After negotiations there would be more challenges and Subaru didn't want to lose face by missing the critical first step.

Shaking her head, and her hair with it, Liliana ceremoniously announced "I understand" and began to lead the way.

Liliana: "So why does the honored guest want to see Kiritaka-san?"

Beatrice: "You don't understand your position here, I suppose. Stop nosing into matters that you are unrelated to and quietly take us to our destination, in fact."

Liliana: "Eep!"

Faced with Beatrice's intimidating tone, Liliana gave a cry resembling that of a small bird's. Subaru pulled on one of Beatrice's spiraled twintails.

Subaru: "You don't have to be so fierce. Then again, we can't reveal everything, so a simple, clear explanation would be difficult to make."

Liliana: "But, I'm Kiritaka-san's confidant. Isn't it just a matter of time before I find out?"

Subaru: "Well, if it's really only a matter of time, then there should be no harm in me taking precautions."

Liliana: "If you say so… you're not a person with very good character, huh."

Subaru: "You're pretty straightforward, aren't you. If you didn't have talent for singing then you'd be in serious trouble."

—There's a saying that geniuses were often strange people and Liliana was probably an example. Singing came easily to her but her social graces were lacking.

Liliana: "But really, I am a little worried. I've been out for a long time, so I'll probably be scolded when I get back."

Subaru: "When we're discussing negotiations, please take care not to speak up. Alright?"

Liliana: "I got it."

Subaru: "Huh, really?! That was unexpected."

Seeing Beatrice and Subaru's satisfied expressions, for some reason, Liliana puffed out her cheeks in a pout. She raised the instrument in her hands, and began to play.

Liliana: "Inspiration just hit me. ——Big Waves, Large Waves, Waves of the World!"

Subaru: “No thanks, we’re good.”

Before the solo could start, Subaru hurriedly snatched Liliana’s instrument out of her hands. Liliana made an “ahh” sound and she stretched to reach it, but her tiny body couldn’t reach Subaru’s hands.

Subaru: “It’s not a human hostage, it’s a musical instrument. If you lead us to the Chamber of Commerce, I’ll give it back to you.”

Liliana: “You’re terrible! Evil! Barbaric! Depraved!”

Subaru: “Hahaha, is that so!”

Having just been denounced as the world’s most wicked person, Subaru plucked a string on the instrument. The sound it made was similar to that of an acoustic guitar.

Subaru, who had a lot of free time at home, practiced until he’d become fairly skilled. He could play and sing to an 80’s folk song without much difficulty. If he introduced that music here, maybe it would take off and the music industry would be revolutionized.

Subaru: “Well, maybe it’ll be like it was with mayonnaise.”

Even though he hadn’t considered the implementation of the plan at all, the idea had taken root. In original world, finding an application for a good idea was often taken for granted. In fact, Subaru had no idea how to begin with it, just like he had no idea how to mass produce and market mayonnaise.

Subaru: “Playing guitar and telling stories to village kids are both within my skill range. Listen.”

Liliana: “Wait, wait, please stop! I can’t let a layman play my instrument! If you break it, I can’t make a living anymore... huh!? You’re pretty good! And I’ve never heard the song before! Eh, what is this?!”

As he walked, Subaru surprised Liliana with his folk songs. Like this, they began the walk to the Chamber of Commerce.

Beatrice: “Good grief, I suppose…”

An exhausted Beatrice trailed after the two, setting her pace to Subaru’s melody.

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The door of to the Muse Chamber of Commerce was not particular from the buildings surrounding it. 1st Street and 2nd Street separate the residents of Pristella from tourists and the Chamber of Commerce was located directly between the two.

This position was meant to indicate the power of the owner of this building. It was both the innermost and the outermost building, highlighting its uniqueness in an almost exaggerated way.

Liliana: “This is it, the long awaited Muse Chamber of Commerce.”

Springing over with a dance-like motion, Liliana indicated the building in front of her. Although there were taller buildings surrounding it, the four-story Chamber of Commerce seemed to stand incredibly tall. That said, Subaru felt a little regretful.

Subaru: “I knew it wouldn’t look as grand as it had appeared from the entrance of Pristella, but I’m still a little disappointed… it didn’t steal my heart the way the Water Plumage Pavilion did.”

Liliana: “The Water Plumage Pavilion, that weirdly shaped place on 1st Street? If you use that as your basis, even Kiritaka-san will look kind of poor. But, that aside…”

Liliana swung her body up and down in exaggerated motions and reached out the palms of her hands.

Liliana: “Weeell, now that I’ve fulfilled our agreement, can you give my lovely instrument back to me? If I don’t have it back by tomorrow then I’m not sure how I’ll survive.”

Subaru: “Ah, right, right. Here you go.”

Subaru had become tired of singing and playing the back-scratcher-shaped instrument halfway to their destination. Liliana hurriedly took it from him, breathing as if in a panic, and checked it for scratches, then began to rub her face against it and gave it a kiss.

Liliana: “Ahhhh, it’s good to have you back. I’ll never let you go again!”

Subaru: “It’s impressive that your attitude can annoy me this much. I think this is the most annoyed I’ve been at someone’s attitude since Petelgeuse.”

Liliana: “Hooo, I don’t know who he is, but he sounds similar to me. Tell me about him! If I ever meet this Petelgeuse-san one day, I can’t promise he wouldn’t be my enemy!”

Subaru: “He’s a Sin Archbishop of the Witch Cult.”

Liliana: “Here he goes again! Stop being such a kidder! That should be your new name!”

Liliana showered Subaru with an overreaction, but tilted her head at his cold response, and gradually began to assume a serious expression.

Liliana: “Wait, were you serious?”

Subaru: “Exactly. You probably won’t have many other opportunities to compare yourself to someone who’s dead and gone, so make what you will of it.”

Liliana: “Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait a minute!”

At Subaru’s words, Liliana objected with amazing momentum. Her reaction surprised Subaru, who

wondered if she was angry at being compared to a Sin Archbishop. Her next words threw Subaru off even more. They were,

Liliana: “What you said just now, why did it sound like you met a Sin Archbishop?”

Subaru: “...and if I did?”

He didn’t know what she’d meant to ask, but it was definitely something important. He hadn’t expected such a reaction after telling her Petelgeuse’s identity as an Archbishop. Although, it wasn’t impossible that she encountered the poisonous, insect-like Witch Cult before, since they seemed to appear everywhere.

Subaru stiffened up, alert, and Beatrice also paid close attention to the situation, ready to act immediately if need be. One slow reaction, and it would be too late for them.

An oppressive feeling atmosphere, With two people looking to see how she would react, Liliana spoke. She said,

Liliana: “Are you perhaps the... Lolimancer, Natsuki Subaru-sama?” (???? “Little Girl User”)

Subaru: “Ugh.”

Beatrice: “Ugh, I suppose.”

Under Liliana’s shining gaze, Subaru and Beatrice replied at the same time.

Subaru’s official title was Emilia’s knight, but that was the one he was known by the least. People often called him the witch’s knight, one of the many enigmatic characters she was surrounded with.

—The knight of the half elf is a mysterious person who always has a little girl with him.

Liliana: “You were indispensable in slaying one of the Three Great Witchbeasts, the White Whale, alongside Duchess Crusch Karsten, with the Sword Demon Wilhelm calling you his benefactor! And then with help from the famous businesswoman Anastasia-san and the Duchess Crusch, you defeated the Witch Cult’s Archbishop of Sloth! And there are unconfirmed rumors that you are also the hero who defeated the Sizable Hare, which has been plaguing the world for four hundred years!”

Subaru: “Itchy, itchy, itchy, itchy, itchy!”

Liliana: “What a terrifying reputation!”

Liliana, with two hands raised, wore the expression of a girl who’d found her dreams as she listed Subaru’s merits. Some were accurate, and a few were exaggerated, but he could find no real error in her list.

Even so, her words embarrassed him enough for his entire body to itch, while Beatrice wore a seemingly

dissatisfied but happy expression.

Liliana: “And the one who has a little girl who is legendarily skilled in magic following him loyally, you’re that Subaru-sama! Aren’t you?!”

Beatrice: “Haha. Betty’s Subaru will surpass even the most outstanding figures in history, in fact. He will become the brightest star known to man, I suppose! You should respect him more, in fact!”

Subaru: “H-Hey!”

Beatrice, sticking her nose out proudly, and Liliana, bowing down. The two caused more headaches than any troublemaker, and it seemed like their show at the entrance of the Chamber of Commerce had attracted attention of the staff there. Upon seeing them and finding the kneeling Liliana, they promptly all returned to their work.

Subaru: “You, do you always act so exaggeratedly? Everyone here has a strange ‘oh, it’s Liliana, as always’ type expression on their face!”

Liliana: “Ah, please stop. Seeing a legend in front of me, my heart is racing! I’m glad to have a chance to witness you in person. Hehe.”

Subaru’s previous unease had all but disappeared, but Liliana grew more and more frantic, saliva even dripping from her mouth.

Liliana: “Well, could—could the people you’re meeting with in the Chamber of Commerce really be who I’m thinking of!?”

Subaru: “...who are you thinking of?”

Lilana: “No, it’s just that I’ve made a lot of songs based on the famous Emilia-tan. I know she’s a real person, but in my mind she’s always been a fictional character! If it’s who I think it is, it’s Emilia-tan! Oh, hehe!”

Disregarding Subaru completely, Liliana flew into the Chamber of Commerce. After falling still for one shocked moment, a dumbfounded Subaru could only chase her into the building.

Beatrice: “Subaru! That girl, she even dropped her instrument, in fact!”

Subaru: “Should she really be treating her lifeline like this!?”

Hurriedly grabbing the lute-lyre from Beatrice, Subaru ran into Chamber of Commerce. Seeing the reception staff gawking at the upper floor, he deduced that Liliana had just run up the stairs.

Receptionist: “Y-You are…?”

Subaru: “We’re with Emilia-sama, who should be with Kiritaka-san right now. They told you we would

be late, right?”

Receptionist: “Yes, they’re there right now... but Liliana-sama…” Subaru: “I know the way, can I go up?”

Seeing the receptionist’s stiff nod, Subaru hurried after Liliana. There was no real reason to be in a rush, but the thought of Liliana and Emilia meeting face to face made him uneasy. Or, rather, perhaps it would be better to say that their meeting could bring about a troublesome atmosphere.

Even more frightening was that Liliana’s exceeding strange personality would clash with Emilia’s, and Emilia’s experience and skill in interaction were overwhelmingly inadequate.

Beatrice: “Liliana was acting strange, I wonder if she will stay like that!”

Subaru: “I really don’t want to think about what will happen if we don’t stop her.”

Registering Beatrice’s words, Subaru sped to the third floor. Although he hadn’t caught her, he’d saw the back of Liliana’s clothing. Now he just had to aim for his goal! Time to show off his parkour skills!

Subaru: “Come on!”

Flying up the stairs, Subaru began to skip steps entirely, using his hand to do an elegant horizontal rotation, drawing ever closer to Liliana, before finally catching her in front of a room near the staircase.

Subaru: “Liliana, WAIT!” Liliana: “Waah!?”

Liliana, who was still salivating, yelled in surprise as Subaru reeled back, gasping for breath.

Liliana: “Oh, you caught up, but I’m not quitting so easily. I’m not giving up!”

Subaru: “If you want to meet meet Emilia no matter what, I’ll ask her for a private meeting, but she’s in the middle of a very important meeting right now.”

Liliana: “Uh... well. I guess I got a little carried away.”

Hearing Subaru’s serious tone seemed to cool Liliana off a little. She relaxed her shoulders, and Subaru shook his head and handed her the instrument.

Liliana: “Ah, thanks.”

Subaru: “The tool you make a living off of is incredibly important. Don’t just throw it away and run. It wouldn’t have been surprising if the instrument used by the Songstress had been taken and pawned off.”

Liliana: “Don’t worry, Kiritaka-san gave it to me. He likes to shop around.” Subaru: “Your sponsor is really not ordinary!”

Speaking to Subaru with a bitter smile, Liliana held her cherished instrument to her chest. Her expression

was one of sincerity and disbelief at being able to abandon it so easily. Since she'd thrown it down for her ambition earlier, Subaru didn't know if he could believe her smile.

Liliana: "Well, I'm fine with saving my meeting with Emilia-sama until later... but first, can I discuss something with Subaru-sama?"

Subaru: "Drop that bothersome honorific! Well, what do you want to talk about?"

Liliana: "There's so much! I want to know how accurate the stories are. Not just so I can hear them but so I can sing about them, too. I can write so many songs from that inspiration, maybe even a heroic one that will be passed down for generations! Just thinking about it makes my heart race!"

Holding out her clenched hand, Liliana's eyes shone with energy.

While this puzzling scene was happening, Beatrice finally caught up and stumbled upon Subaru and Liliana's proximity.

Beatrice: "Ah, you, strange girl. Don't stand so close to Subaru, in fact. Move away, I suppose."

Liliana: "Don't worry, it's not that big of a deal. Speaking of which, I also have some questions for the young girl who follows Lolimancer-san!"

Beatrice: "Betty is not a young girl, I suppose! She is a proper lady, in fact!"

Subaru: "You two are so rude, always arguing like that! Shush! Emilia-tan is doing negotiations inside…"

Beatrice, who was in an awful mood, and Liliana, who didn't realize that she was the cause. Subaru was caught in the middle of their argument, and, in his frustration, inadvertently raised his voice. And, at that moment,

Emilia: "—Subaru?"

The door opened unexpectedly and Subaru's name was called from the inside.

Looking through the open door, Subaru saw what looked like a reception room, where everyone was sitting on a long backed chair, looking at him with surprised expressions.

Emilia, Otto and Garfiel. Sitting opposite of them was a lean statured young man who was wearing fine-looking clothes. The one who had opened the door was a middle-aged man who was probably with him.

Subaru: "A-ah... Emilia-tan. What a coincidence."

Emilia: "A coincidence? Why were you being so loud.... Uh, Kiritaka-san?"

Seeing Subaru making an embarrassed gesture, Emilia wore a look of confusion as she turned to the young man sitting opposite of her, who stood and grabbed something from the table. Then he turned

where Subaru was standing.

Kiritaka: “Do-, do, do, do, do, DON’T TOUCH MY LILIANA!!”

Suddenly raising his voice, the young man hurled a glowing blue piece of magic ore.

Concentrated pure energy exploded in front of Subaru, whose vision was momentarily engulfed in blue. Seeing it, he faintly registered a thought of “wow, how beautiful,” before the impact swallowed him.

—Like that, the first day of formal negotiations broke down.

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Arc 5 – Chapter 51, "Malice in Trickery"

by discountanon - Monday, December 17, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/12/17/arc-5-chapter-51-malice-in-trickery/

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Translated By:

- Nanashi (Discount Anon)
- Ringo (u/Ringo_17)

Proofread By :

- Fr (u/Fr81)
- Ice (u/IceOccultism)
- Graced (/u/GracedHarperd)
- Nobi (u/Nobidexx)

Fan Art Source

- Owari

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Arc 5, Chapter 51: Malice in Trickery

special thanks to u/Ringo_17

Ricardo: “Why're ya makin' that face. Somethin' botherin' ya?”

Just before reaching the control tower, Ricardo spoke to the knight, who wore a stiff expression.

Halting in his step, Julius raised his brows in surprise.

Julius: “How surprising, Ricardo. I never expected you to be concerned about others’ worries.”

Ricardo: “Don't mistake that phrase for somethin' else. The one with ya's just me. Even if ya say somethin', it'll be a secret from miss too.”

Julius: “… You're not wrong, huh.”

Though it was rare, Ricardo often made correct observations of people.

If not for that, he wouldn't have been able to to take up his role as the head of the [Iron Fang], hearing only fragments of his splendid career would lead tell so. Looking at only one's self and ignoring surroundings was no way to stay alive. Slave, mercenary, this applied to both roles.

Ricardo: “Now that's quite the brutal brat. Even so, I'll play the role I'm supposed to, so ya can depend on me. I'll also take son-in-law's consultation.”

Julius: “That ‘son-in-law’ is scary. I do not hold any such strange feelings for Anastasia-sama.”

Ricardo: “What's that, ‘s miss’ affair huh. Maybe it’s about Mimi. Besides, she hasn't managed to convince miss yet.”

“____”

Julius smiled bitterly. This gesture of quietly shaking his head was graceful as always, but this time he lacked precision when choosing appropriate words.

And at that gesture,

Ricardo: “Somethin’s off ‘bout the recapture of the city hall. Miss agrees too. Miss hasn't heard much ‘bout it, but I'll force it all out.”

Julius: “It seems you are rather unforgiving.”

Ricardo: “Of course, it’s life-threatening. Don't want t' leave my back to someone who's in th' dark. 'Re ya goin' t' fabricate some kinda excuse as a rebuttal?”

Julius: “… No, it is indeed as you say. It was I who was mistaken. Certainly, I am increasing our risk by hesitating to speak.”

Julius earnestly nodded to the pursuing Ricardo, and curved his brows with elegance.

However, no more words came out of the mouth of his troubled self. Facing that attitude, Ricardo got out of his own numbness and let out a sullen voice.

Ricardo: “Why're ya stoppin' there? It's sad that you're so lost. Just let it out of yer mouth and frankly speak it all out, can't ya do that? Jus' what's stoppin' ya?”

“____”

Ricardo: “Julius.”

Julius: “I apologize. I am unable to decide which words would be appropriate to express what I want to say. —The reason for my worry is just as you guessed, the Sin Archbishop that was encountered in the City Government Building. Roy Alphard of [Gluttony], was that person, unmistakably. Unmistakably, but…”

Julius confusedly cut off his words halfway as uncertainty wavered in his yellow eyes.

Julius: “Similar to the other Sin Archbishops, perhaps [Gluttony] also possesses an inexplicable ability. The power of eating memories, eating names, was noticeable back at the time of the battle with the White Whale. However…”

Ricardo: “Julius—!”

Ricardo called out the moment he felt unease touching his very core. And Julius instantly recognized the meaning behind it.

—The atmosphere trembled, all sounds disappeared from the world, and a light rose into the sky.

There could be only one situation in which that extraordinary light would pierce the night sky. It must be the aftermath of a slash by the strongest individual in this world.

Ricardo: “Such a fancy move. I'm correct to assume it's the Sword Saint, huh?"

Julius: “Ah, Reinhardt, isn't it. It seems that Subaru and the others have already come in contact with [Greed]. We cannot afford to make any delays either. We must also hurry.”

When one Sin Archbishop was attacked, the other Sin Archbishops did not come together in defense and retaliation.

Julius and Ricardo sped up their pace, aiming for the approaching control tower.

Ricardo: “So, what's so strange ‘bout that [Gluttony]? Did ya say he's an extraordinary monster?!”

Ricardo tapped on his shoulder in hopes of hearing Julius' story to its conclusion and interrupted Julius’ forward momentum. Julius turned his head and looked back, with a gaze which denied what he had just said.

Julius: “No. Although it does seem like he was not completely serious, the skill of [Gluttony] does not seem to exceed human knowledge itself. If we both are his opponents, then that may just be enough for him, however, the enemy's creepiness is a totally different subject.”

“____”

His unavoidable worry itself was because of the fact that Julius himself did not know the extent of its true

creepiness. And it was Julius' unusual selfishness which made him avoid mentioning this argument in the previous strategy meeting.

Julius considered [Gluttony] to be an unfathomable and eerie opponent, but still believed that he must cross swords with him.

Ricardo did not know the reason behind it.

It could not be said that even Julius clearly knew, either.

"____"

They kicked the stone pavement and passed the curve of the street to its exit. There lied one of four control towers, colored differently compared to the other buildings, and in front of that was—,

???: "A~h, we thought that you'd come. We expected that you'd come. That's right, that's exactly right, that's completely right, perhaps that's right, maybe that's right, probably that's right, isn't that right, isn't that probably right, because that's right ~tsu! The wait was well worth it ~tsu!"

—Before the entrance of the control tower, a lone boy stood on the cobblestone square.

Dressed in dirty rags, dark brown hair left to grow for a long time till it reached great length. His crazy eyes twinkling and shining with happiness, sharp canine teeth and a dripping tongue hung from his mouth.

With both arms slouched down, he was a young boy. No matter how you looked at him, he barely seemed to have any power and looked like simply a vagrant child—but an aura of dreadfulness emanated from his body.

Ricardo: "One more thing, jus' to confirm… It's him, right?"

There wasn't any need to ask, whether it was. There was no doubt, it was completely convincing.

As a response to Ricardo, Julius only lowered his jaw quietly.

There was no possible doubt, no possible mistake, that it was the Sin Archbishop of [Gluttony] standing there.

The worst kind of blasphemer who chewed on the names and memories of others.

Julius: "Roy Alphard—"

Roy: "Yes, correct answer. That's our name. We're happy that you remember it. Quite happy. Pretty happy. Really happy. As we're happy. Because we're happy, drinking ~tsu! Gluttony ~tsu! It would be worthwhile to eat, and dri~nk. And also…"

Declaring his name, Alphard laughed with terrible brutality. His eyes glared directly at Ricardo standing right next to Julius.

He opened his mouth and rings his nose as his eyes filled with ecstasy.

Roy: “This time it seems that we will be even getting a puppy-chan. That makes us unbelievably happy. After all, our stomach might have had gotten a bit troubled if it was ju~st Julius Juukulius-kun. Whatever you say, it would have had been completely tasteless, won't it.”

Julius: “It seems I have gotten rather bored by your words of insult. Henceforth to settle this quickly, I asked my friend to accompany me this time. Though it is definitely inelegant to have more than one person…”

Roy: “A~h, it's nice, that way of starting. Doing that to raise self-consciousness may be nice and it is typical of Julius-kun bu~t, it's rather weak. We are gourmands so tasting that is a bit problematic, but still, we are intrigued as Julius-kun is one of the top-class we have seen till now! Tidy a~nd consistent.”

Julius: “Well, well… in addition to the big welcome we received, I am grateful for those words as well.”

Roy: “Well that cannot be helped ~tsu! Our, our honesty is something that gets overlooked. What we want you to overlook right now is this slight mismatch of characters.”

Waving his hands, Alphard did not bend his posture till the end. Provocatively, Julius kept his calm, but Ricardo was unable to hide his feeling of unpleasantness. He clicked his tongue and cracked the bones of his neck.

Ricardo: “O~h, say what ya wanna say, boy. It'll be mistake to overlook you as just some brat. What ye'll get for your sins won't be very pretty. I'll even travel across dimensions just to beat your ass. Because, boy will I break that.”

Roy: “Oh, scaryscary. Don't stare at us with that scary face. We apologize if you got offe~nded that we called you a puppy, Ricardo Welkin. But still, we still longed for you a bit, you know? Don't scare us, in that rough loud voice of yo~urs!”

“____?”

Calling Ricardo by his name, he shouted, as Julius frowned. Seeing his eyes, Julius shook his head. Strange. Alphard's remarks were merely a madman's delusion, but the enormous sense of discomfort could not be easily wiped away. For example— when did he, learn Ricardo's name?

Ricardo: “Damn spooky brat..... From where, and when, did ya learn our names.”

Roy: “It wouldn't be ve~ry wise to try and investigate. It's just that, it's obvious that we would know your name. Isn't that true, Julius-ku~n?”

Julius: “No matter how much you consent, I cannot respond to you. You too, I am completely ignorant

regarding you. If this is the way you will do it, I will break the flow just as much."

Roy: "Look, there's that boring conclusion again. Even though we care about it quite much, it's uneasy it's uneasy it's unpleasant ~tsu! Hiding it in the chest, putting aside thinking about oneself for later ~tsu! It's pretty virtuous as a knight, but it's pretty boring as a person."

Pulling out his knight sword, Julius's lips silently whisper something.

And immediately afterwards, six extremely brilliant lights surrounded Julius.

They were the six quasi-spirits Julius is always accompanied by.

This mix of swordsmanship and spirit-arts was what made Julius the [Knight Impeccable].

Roy: "Neither the aroma of the feeling of inferiority, nor the rich texture of experiencing frustration, even the sweetness of a strong desire, or the rare taste of a sense of satisfaction after you've aged, you have no~ne of them ~tsu!"

Julius: "—Ricardo. Give it your everything from the very beginning. Let's work together."

Ricardo: "Yeah, leave it to me."

Shaking his arms, Alphard revealed the daggers attached on his wrists. Wielding two daggers was [Gluttony's] fighting style, but it did not seem to be enough to stop Julius' magic or prevent Ricardo's blows.

As long as the battle wasn't an ambush, their respective victory and defeat were already in sight.

Regardless, in Ricardo's eyes, Alphard did not seem an opponent that could provide a rich and challenging battle experience.

Julius: "Spirit Knight, Julius Juukulius."

As per his manners, Julius gave his name ahead of the fight.

However, Ricardo, who was standing next to him, had no such obligations to follow. They fixed their eyes, waiting for [Gluttony] to give his identity.

Seeing Ricardo's line of sight, Alphard shouted.

Roy: "How nice, quite nice, perhaps it is nice, isn't it nice , maybe it is nice, possibly it is nice, probably it is nice, because it is probably nice ~tsu! Gluttonous drinking ~tsu! Gluttony ~tsu! Gourmet, bizarre eating, satiation, overeating ~tsu! Spiciness, blandness, deliciousness, delicacy ~tsu! We will eat everything up ~tsu! Even a life without taste, is also a taste that's new to us ~tsu!"

Julius: "—El Clausel."

The vibrance of the six colours draw a circle in front of Julius's eyes, and an extremely bright light emanates from the tip of his sword that aimed to stab through Alphard's centre.

Multiple affinities mixed, that destructive power develops into a rainbow-coloured blow that could swallow up everything.

Ricardo stepped on ahead with momentum that crushed the cobblestone, just behind the dazzling light. As if in an attempt to have Ricardo push Alphard aside, right into the extremely vibrant light. Against the heavy slashes and the rainbow-coloured extremely vibrant light, Alphard uncovers his fangs.

Roy: "—Truly, nii-sama is as magnificent as imagined. We will be enchanted, geez ~tsu."

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Beneath the moon, flashes of silver sliced through wind, as sparks spilled forth from a symphony of swordplay.

The first musician was was a Sword Demon who swung a pair of blades with crisp notes.

His partner welcomed him; a swordswoman whose movements flowed reminiscent the path of a gentle stream.

Flashes of metal danced through the air; the clash of steel should have sounded cruel, and yet, somehow, this symphony was wistfully melancholic. The ringing of sharp, precise collisions resembled the gentle caresses of a pair of lovers.

The reason for this was simple; these two swordsmen complemented each other on a level beyond perfection.

Wilhelm: "Haaah—!"

The Sword Demon steeled his breath as he let loose a flurry of elliptical blows.

Those precise arcs were practically a form of art, their clean movements the ideal standard for all aspiring swordsmen.

His sheer skill was so overwhelming that anyone who was worthy of calling themself a knight would have been so captivated that their battle would be guaranteed a loss, and yet he merely, almost casually, unleashed flurry after flurry.

Thearesia: "——"

One single, light blow would have been more than fatal, in this rain of unending death.

However, meeting this peerless hurricane was a longsword whose owner was truly extraordinary.

Moreover, that longsword had an odd quality.

The length of the blade, as tall as its owner, was too unwieldy to make a proper weapon; and yet, the slender slender swordswoman swung the huge blade with ease, as if it were weightless.

Although the longsword's owner was draped from head to toe in a black cloak, impeding on her vision, the tip of her sword flowed as if dancing through water.

Whether it be in terms of speed or polish, the twin blades greatly outstripped the longsword. Even so, each and every one of the Sword Demon's piercing attacks were, without fail, absorbed and deflected.

Between the sparks and sharp clangs, with an almost pitying hiss toward the Sword Demon, the swordswoman leapt backward. A beat too slow to react to the unexpected move, just as he was about to push forward, the gleam of a blade pierced his forehead.

Wilhelm: "*—hk*"

Flashing before him, was a blow that he couldn't allow to make contact.

This was a specialized killing blow that flashed faster than the blink of an eye, which disguised the approaching blade. If not for his extensive experience in dueling her, he would have been unable to see through the imminent death he'd nearly been dealt, and glem would have passed through the brain and killed him.

The skin between his brows burned at the close call. In an instant, the Sword Demon cast off his misgivings, and began to pursue to woman who'd frozen in her stinging pose.

Wilhelm: "*huu*, *kuu*"

Thearesia: "——"

Before he'd even gathered himself enough to act, the woman had driven her toes into his flesh.

Her slender feet pierced between his well-exercised abdominal muscles and jolted his organs; the weight of her kick bent his body double, as a silver flash drew an arc, which hung over his head.

The glittering sword flew straight as true, as if meaning to cut down the moon.

Having reached the peak of its flight, the sword began to glide back to earth, and slicing straight through the atmosphere, meaning to bisect the sword demon.

The power behind that attack was incomparable to any previous ones; both the deadliness of the blade itself and its owner's skill were more than capable of slicing through any human body.

Approaching in the briefest of flashes, was this certain death.

Wilhelm: “Stop looking down on me!”

Still bent double, he immediately swung both his arms upward, staggering as they met the crushing force overhead.

The Sword Demon’s own blades overlapped as they caught the weapon bearing down on him, as his jaws clenched from its sheer power. Unable to fend it off entirely, his arms began to fall; shallowly, the blade pierced his forehead.

Blood spurted forth, splattering his field of vision red. However, he hadn’t fallen to knees, not had his own swords been broken.

Wilhelm: “*kuuuu*”

The arms holding the sword back strained upward, pushing the fallen sword back again.

Sweeping the heavy blade aside, the residual aftershocks shook the form of the swordswoman before him; taking advantage of the moment, he kicked forward.

The force that should have slammed back into the ground was instead redirected into the woman’s airborne form.

The combination of the force from the falling blade and the kick slammed the woman’s body into the distance. The aging Sword Demon lunged into the slender body that had nowhere left to flee.

—An opening.

Against the swordswoman who had flown into the air, with no escape route, the Sword Demon lowered his shoulder and unleashed an attack.

Catching up to her fleeing form, the attack came simultaneously from top and bottom. As one, the two blades drew an arc, tearing toward her slender form with the bite of a wild beast.

In midair, with her back turned toward him, she could make no counterattack.

Even so, that clarity of that attack found itself shaken.

Thearesia: “——”

The hood that had covered the swordswoman’s head, unable to withstand the tug of gravity as she flipped her body, swished back, revealing what had once been hidden,

Cascading down was long hair the color of a beautiful, raging flame.

Thearesia: “——”

At the time of its entry into her field of vision, the swordsman's attack carried a flaw which existed for briefer than a single instant.

A incredibly subtle, slight deviation from perfection, was this mistake. Even so, no one else would be able to parry this attack.

However, considering the Sword Demon's current opponent, this mistake was fatal. To an existence which had once won the favor of the the god of swords, that turbid blade could not reach at all.

Thearesia: "——"

At the scene in front of him, the Sword Demon's throat was frozen by a shudder.

That certain blow had been interrupted midway.

It hadn't been anything special. The woman merely drew her sword in midair, and wedged it between the swords that came from above and below. As easy as sliding a brace between a pair of fangs.

The blade and the pommel of her longsword completely caught the advance of the two swords right in their tracks.What had the Sword Demon shudder was that bite of steel on steel rang out only once.

Catching the two blades with only one crisp sound, meant that she had calculated the timing of both of them colliding with her own weapon down to the millisecond.

What was truly horrifying was the necessary clarity of vision, skill, and sheer nerve to even attempt such an act.

Wilhelm: "—*kuu*"

The stunt, so far beyond what common sense dictated was possible, drew a sigh from the Sword Demon's throat.

At that moment, the leg of the woman who was still caught between the swords flew in a wide arc, kicking away the Sword Demon's hands, which still rested where his attack had stalled.

The impact jolted his weapons from the hands which wielded them, and, in that moment, he found himself completely defenseless.

Then, with a flash of steel, the longsword made a cross.

The combination of the speed at which the blade approached, and the range that couldn't have been shorter.

Even with a little time and distance, the empty-handed swordsman had no way to block.

The longsword pierced his thin skin and continued drive into his organs and sever his spine, driving

through his left side in one single motion and splitting his body into halves— coughing up blood and internal organs, the body already shackled by old age breaking with blow. That was the unavoidable fate that awaited him.

That was the end that could not be evaded, and the conclusion of the matter.

After the end of his life, having lost everything, he couldn't even cling to a chance at redemption.

—That kind of conclusion was simply impossible to accept.

Wilhelm: "RAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH—!"

He rebelled against the bloody end that flashed through his mind.

The throat of the sword ghost burned with the final scene of the illusion, the vitality of his twilight years erupting forth. Breaking the limits concentration so that even passage of time stalled, only he and his opponent existed in that moment, the sounds and colors of the world fading from focus.

The impending blade traced an unexpected orbit to stab into his body.

Slowly feeling the touch of the blade piercing through his fragile skin, as well the heat and pain of bleeding, whilst feeling as if the natural force of gravity had increased tenfold, he planted all his the power into his two feet.

Digging his heels in hard enough to shatter stone, he redirected the force of swinging his arms to the right into a reactive motion.

Reversing his body with the shortest distance and best angle, turning to the side as if approaching the blade that brushed his body, a form of evasion which allowed him to roll along the blade that slid across his side.

Thearesia: "——"

Having been thwarted in her attack, the swordswoman's follow up attack was delayed by but a brief moment.

In that time, the Sword Demon retreated several paces, plucking his twin swords from midair. With a sigh, he placed the palm of his hand onto his side, checking the depth of the wound.

This was certainly no minor scratch.

He'd turned while a blade had been invading his body, after all. Spinning while being pierced, he'd naturally draw a wound on his own body.

Fortunately, by a hair's breadth, he'd kept the blade from plunging into his organs, but the amount of blood dripping from the wound mere centimeters away from his innards was by no means a small

amount.

To ordinary people, this was a serious injury. Although that was natural—

Wilhelm: “… From the very start, I didn’t feel that I could persist in this battle for long.”

He’d already been running on a time limit, it had only grown shorter.

The Sword Demon— Wilhelm rolled off his shirt and violently staunched the bleeding from his waist; exposing his healthy flesh during this emergency treatment, he was not pursued.

The woman opposing him merely watched quietly, her gaze devoid of emotion.

At his own anticipation of any swaying or subtle changes in those eyes, Wilhelm gave a bitter smile. Pressing on his open the wound, he awoke himself with the pain.

Wilhelm: “Such weakness is useless. Stop dreaming, this sacred reunion, you will one day be able to indulge in as much as you want, in the heavens.”

Thearesia: “——”

Wilhelm: “I don't think I’m hallucinating. Nor do I expect miracles. My wife was a woman who was reluctant to follow the way of the sword, but pushing the responsibility of wielding the sword onto others, was something she never once did.”

An emotionless corpse, a revived construct.

Crimson hair silky and flowing, smooth skin snowy and transparent, eyes bijous of precious gems; closing his own, he recalled that cute face that he would never tire of.

All this was before him, and all this shouldn’t have been before him.

Wilhelm: “Thearesia, how lovely you are. —Therefore, you can't remain here.”

Wilhelm tightened his grip on his swords, taking up fighting a stance again.

At this moment, standing here, was not the husband of Thearesia van Astrea. The one who prayed to stand here was not Wilhelm van Astrea.

Who stood here at this moment was Sword Demon Wilhelm.

—Facing his dead wife, Wilhelm steeled his spirit, his gaze becoming clear and clean.

Even if his blood were boiling, he wouldn’t allow his anger at the sinister presence to come to a breaking point.

But, right now, at this moment, at this time, anything else was superfluous.

His old friend, his comrade-in-arms, his wife, had said to Wilhelm.

Don’t allow heat to besmirch the blade, don’t allow your blood boil, you must learn to love the coldness of steel.

How about now? Was it growing hot?

Wilhelm: “No, it's frigid. Like the blade of a knife.”

Under the moon, the Sword Demon pierced his opponent with a gaze of steel.

The talent swordswoman who was his opponent, also waved the tip of the her longsword again, without any flaws.

In an instant, their swords once again flashed again toward each other.

The sounds of steel intertwined with each other was a wail, a plea, a courtship.

The expectation of an end, and the hope that it would never come to an end.

As if exchanging endless dialogue without a single word. The sound of swordplay played ceaselessly, echoing.

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Garfiel: “Ah, damn it! No response ‘t all, what a joke!”

Kicking off the ground, kicking off a wall, kicked off a roof, and soaring up.

Flying diagonally in the air, his short blond hair fluttering as it bathed in the wind fluttering, exposing his teeth, a picture of desperation.

Time and time again, gnashing his fangs, fighting the burning sensation in his body and chest.

Garfiel: “Bastard! What’s up, hello!”

His clothes fluttering, he broke into a run the instant he touched the ground again.

This was a feat that only those of exceptional strength and endurance, far beyond a human level, could achieve. However, the one who flew over the city with only his own body expressed no pride in his abilities.

Instead, he kept roaring into an unresponsive hand mirror.

The one sprinting was Garfiel, who was howling into the magic device in his hand— the conversation mirror.

The conversation mirror, which should have been able to link him to others who possessed one, remained silent. No one picked up Garfiel's call, even though, clearly, there were two groups of people capable of responding.

Garfiel: "City Hall guys, or [Wrath] fightin' guys! Th' hell're ya not replyin' for!"

The conversation mirrors were supposed to have been assigned so that everyone could stay in contact during their respective battles.

In fact, they'd been working perfectly fine just after he'd left the City Hall. But now, when contact was necessary, the function of the dialogue mirror had fallen silent.

—This needed to be be communicated immediately.

Garfiel: "Gotta tell 'em that they've to evacuate the City Hall *now*, damn it!"

As he said so, he leapt upward, skipping the street in front of him as he took a shortcut.

Although his rough landing shattered the roof he landed on, Garfiel had no attention to spare. Compared to damage to the city, ensuring the safety of his companions was far more important.

The goal of his rapid travel was the City Hall.

Garfiel was rushing back to the place he'd left only dozens of minutes ago. Leaving behind Wilhelm, his comrade-in-arms, he desperately called to the conversation mirror.

There was no other reason.

Danger was quickly approaching the City Hall that was serving as their base.

—Wilhelm and Garfiel had arrived at the control tower occupied by the [Lust], at about the same time that Reinhardt began to engage with [Greed].

Having witnessed the distant aurora, the two entered the control tower.

None of the witch cultists nor the troublesome people who they'd expected had appeared to intercept their path. As expected, the Witch Cult minions in the city seemed to only consist of insignificant opponents.

Everything had been smooth sailing until then, and hadn't been any other rooms worth checking out aside from the water gate control room.

So, the pair naturally headed to the top floor to prepare for a decisive battle with [Lust]. In the

imagination, the proportion of the power of the [Lust] camp is the most dangerous. In addition to [Lust], there were two outstanding fighters, which meant that the two would have to face three enemies—naturally, they were both engulfed in tension.

Wilhelm: “If possible, I’d appreciate the swordswoman being left to me.”

Garfiel: “Th’ cap’n also told me so. Seems like there’s something between ya. But, my amazin’ self also has a bone t’ pick with that woman. Can’t let ya have ‘er so easily.”

Wilhelm: “That is my wife. Those bastards made a mockery of my wife’s death, trampled upon her soul, and forced her to point a sword that which she’d sworn to protect.”

Garfiel: “——”

Wilhelm: “No matter what, this is impermissible.”

On the way, Wilhelm had revealed his reason for wanting to fight.

That was a reason that Garfiel, who should have had no basis to give up, couldn’t help but keep his mouth shut against. And his inability to form reply in that moment, may have been just what decided the most fitting opponent of the swordswoman.

Garfiel: “——”

Although he’d said nothing, Garfiel conceded the opponent to Wilhelm. Wilhelm also indicated his understanding of this, silently bowing his head to express his gratitude.

So, when he stepped into the control tower, Garfiel felt his the cold sensation of his hair sticking straight up.

If Wilhelm is going to fight the female swordsman, then he’d have to deal with the remaining two by himself. The swordswoman went without mention, and the giant accompanying her was no less powerful than she was.

Although [Lust] was seeming lacking in terms of combat effectiveness, Subaru had repeatedly emphasized that what was fearsome about the Witch Cult was its direct combat ability.

Silent tension and pervasive fighting spirit.

As his sense of smell caught an increasingly strong scent of blood, Garfiel equipped the silver shields which had been strapped legs, and rushed into the room.

There, he saw it.

[*Why the hell would I just be obediently waiting here? Fool.*]

Words scrawled in blood, occupying an entire wall of the room.

When he realized what they meant, Garfiel's head seethed.

Fleeing from a battle as if it were a matter of course, a type of personality which could straightforwardly say that there was no obligation to wait.

Wilhelm: "—Neglectful. Those bastards are exactly the type to pull this kind of trick."

Wilhelm lowered his voice and retrieved the conversation mirror from his sleeves. The reason for trying to get in touch with the City Hall so immediately was because Wilhelm had thought of the notion first.

Wilhelm: "If our forces are sent out in raids, then our base's combat power will naturally diminish. These guys won't have any shame in exploiting this gap."

Before the pale-faced Garfiel, Wilhelm grimaced at the unresponsive mirror.

At the same time, along the roof of the control tower, emerged a deep, oppressive hostility.

A feeling that his back was being stroked by a blade, was what tipped Garfiel off about the existence of the enemy.

Wilhelm had also felt the hostile presence.

Wilhelm: "Garfiel-sama, I'll entrust the City Hall to you."

Garfiel: "'F it comes down t' it, my amazin' self can get there faster."

They exchanged ideas in a flash.

The enemy was as a razor-sharp, clandestine blade. Exposing their backs as they tried to flee would only result in the both of them being cut down from behind.

Between them, one of them needed to stay.

Then, one of them needed to return to the City Hall.

Wilhelm: "Please, continue to try to establish contact. —My master, I entrust her to you."

Garfiel: "Goes without sayin'. 'S a [Libre's voice rouses the blood of soldiers]."

Garfiel caught the thrown conversation mirror and sped out of the control tower.

Like so, he flew across the city, crossed the waterway, and continued into the mirror that offered no response. —Wilhelm's battle was also probably starting.

Garfiel: “Damn it! All that, for nothin’…!”

If [Lust] launched a surprise attack on the City Hall, there would be very little forces capable of greeting her.

Anastasia and Ferris had no combat power, and Crusch had collapsed from her injuries. Although several members of the [Iron Fang] stood on guard, their combat power wasn’t enough to compare with Mimi.

The instant that he thought of Mimi, Garfiel’s chest grew sore.

The girl who, even now, hovered in the abyss of death, who he’d rescued, saved, protected.

Keep her alive, saving her, clearly should have been his duty.

That duty had been conceded to another due to sentiment, and his chance at vengeance grew further by the second. However, even the work that was taken as an alternative could not be completed satisfactorily.

What was he doing? Looking as he did, what was he doing?

To Mimi, Subaru, his sister, Ram, or anyone, he couldn’t lift his head to face them.

Garfiel: “My amazin’ self, once again—!”

Can't do anything?

The unresponsive conversation mirror reflected such an unpromising face. In the moment that he cursed himself,

Garfiel: “——!?”

As he smashed the roof whilst leaping, he was a beat too slow in reacting to the shadow flying in from the side.

That form, far more massive than his own, met him with a horizontal impact.

The reason why he couldn’t even issue a cry of pain was because his throat was hooked under an elbow. Blood and oxygen unable to circulate through his brain, maintaining his consciousness grew steadily more difficult.

Pulling him back into gradual consciousness was the force of the impact over his whole body.

The body that had greeted his obliquely from the air and slammed into a nearby building. Breaking the wall with his entire body, Garfiel tossed up a cloud of dust.

The dull pain and broken bones drew a groan from Garfiel, as he felt himself being liberated from the

restraint. Using his body's elasticity, Garfiel slammed the ground as hard as he could, pulling himself upright again.

He found himself in a structure with no lighting. The smog that filled the room had become a white smoke under the moonlight, and, before his own blood-coughing figure, he could detect another presence.

That was undoubtedly the culprit who'd sniped him and landed them in here.

Garfiel: "Ya bastard, y' really know how t'-"

The instant when he'd taken a battle stance, a fist slammed into his stomach.

Garfiel's entire abdominal area took the force of his opponent's huge fists, and his body flew upward. Then, he was smashed by the fist that had been swung from above, and the already decrepit floor broke beneath him and he fell another level.

Garfiel: "*Kuu*, what… *guu*!?"

The sole of a foot slammed into his downward falling body.

The damage caused by both the momentum and the mass caused him to spit blood, and his body, stomped on once again, crashed fiercely and directly through to the entrance to the building, where it was smashed into the street.

From this striking impact, Garfiel continued to cough and he climbed to his feet. At the same time, he applied simple healing magic himself, knitting broken bones as he raised his head.

The one who'd chased Garfiel from the top of the building to here was a hulking figure who he needed to crane his head to see.

Although covered head to toe in black robes, even that could not disguise the thickness of his arms and legs. Rather than saying he was muscular, it would be no exaggeration to say that he wore an armor of muscle.

To Garfiel, this would be the third time facing that enemy.

That name was already known as well.

Garfiel: "Kurgan of [Eight Arms]..."

He was one of the Vollachia Empire's sword swinging heroes.

Although he was said to have died in battle during the Imperial City Defense Battle decades ago, for him to be here right now, could he have suffered the same humiliation in death that Wilhelm's wife had?

Kurgan: “——”

When Garfiel spoke that name, the giant, Kurgan, extended his arms.

At that moment, the clasp of his robes gave way, revealing his figure. That is to say, the hero Kurgan revealed his expertise in close-range battle.

As expected, his strong body was covered by a thick armor of muscle.

A powerful physique which could rival the giants, and face on a neck which could be described as demonic, filled with the domineering expression of a war god.

And what made this war god a war god, were the eight arms which enabled those strange fighting techniques.

In addition to the two arms that usually grew from the shoulders, two more arms sprouted from the same place. Move down his body revealed two more arms using his shoulders as the starting point, and the rest stretched their palms forward from behind.

That was in accordance with Kurgan’s name [Eight Arms]. Someone capable of sapping his enemy’s will to fight with just his natural body.

Kurgan: “——”

Facing Garfiel, who’d swallowed a deep breath, Kurgan kept his silence as he drew his weapon.

Strapped to his thick legs, coincidentally mounted in the same style as Garfiel's shield, were a pair of thick, long, distorted blades— the [Ghost Cleavers] that this war god swung.

This war god drew two other Ghost Cleavers from his back, for a total of four. Although the remaining four arms are still unarmed, Garfiel would nonetheless be completely overwhelmed.

He had no leisure to underestimate the enemy in the slightest.

Garfiel: “——”

His body trembled.

In front of this real hero, Garfiel’s body trembled from his core.

Garfiel stared at the hero, the legendary figure, the great man who’d made a mark in history.

To not know the name of the Kurgan of [Eight Arms] was impossible for him.

Garfiel indeed took great interest in his myriad legends coming from every which way.

And today, he stood in front of his very own eyes, as an enemy.

This was a nightmare. A ongoing nightmare that had begun yesterday.

What else could it be, malicious as it was?

Garfiel: "… ha, ah, huh."

Garfiel's breath quickened as he reached toward his legs.

Mounted there in the same way as Kurgan's Ghost Cleavers were silver shields. Unaware of how many times his fingers slipped, finally, the straps came undone.

Placing his shields on his arms as if to cover his fists, he knocked them together for confirmation, creating a sharp note which echoed in the night sky.

His equipment is ready, and his injuries had healed enough to not be debilitating.

However, his mind was still, at the moment, frazzled.

Garfiel: "'S no time t' say stupid shit—!"

Clenching his fangs, Garfiel hit himself in the face.

Shaking his head from the dizzying pain and shock, he turned his gaze forward again. Assuming his stance again, he bared his fangs at the war god before him.

Garfiel: "'F you're jus' standing there, th' hell's my amazin' self for! Whether 's th' cap'n! Or the other guys too! They're all fightin'! Obviously, all yer good for 's fightin', so th' fuck're ya stallin' for?"

Kurgan: "——"

Against the screaming Garfiel, Kurgan remained impassive.

The silent war god that Garfiel was facing would only watch him quietly. With a pout, he broke the line of the street, then rushed forward with a single step.

Through the soles of his shoes, he absorbed the power of the earth, allowing his [Divine Protection of Earth Spirits] to redirect all that energy into a blow.

His fist was truly infused with the power to shatter a stone building.

His silver shield reinforced the fist's blow, one strong enough to break even a hero.

His arm flew straight and true into Kurgan's waist—

Garfiel: “—How’s this?”

Kurgan: “——”

Using the full force of his body, Garfiel’s attack was blocked by Kurgan’s Demon Cleaver.

The Demon Cleaver, blocking the direct attack to Kurgan’s abdomen, withstood the power of Garfiel’s blow. He did not evade, nor did he flinch.

With only a hard block, a full-bodied attack was dispelled. The hero of [Eight Arms] had used only a single arm.

Garfiel: “—*kuu*”

Garfiel’s stiff expression ushered in a punch from the shoulder. The body that turned backwards was caught by the arm that protruded from a side, and, unable to escape, he could only take a wild beating.

His cheekbones were broken in an instant, and his fundus was crushed. The field of view of his right eye was stained bright red. A razor fang shattered and blew away. His body still caught, he was thrown to the ground, kicked down the street by a powerful leg, and rolled, rolled, rolled, rolled into the nearby waterway.

Garfiel: “—aa”

Everything went in a flash, and he stared at the moon that floated so high above him.

That moon seemed to laugh at him. Afterward, Garfiel’s body sank into the waterway.

—The surface of the water was slowly dyed crimson.

Arc 5 – Chapter 53, "A City of Strife"

by admin - Thursday, January 31, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/01/31/arc-5-chapter-53-a-city-of-strife/

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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Translated By :

- Ringo
- Nanashi

Proofread By :

- Review

Art Source

- Created by Ringo

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Before starting Chapter 53, it's best to read this short story here **for a bit of context for one of the upcoming scenes!**

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Subaru: "—Check if his heart is still beating!"

Intuition was the instinct that had aroused Subaru's awareness.

He wasn't absolutely convinced, nor did he have a basis for thinking so. All he could think was that that thought was not without meaning.

The Sin Archbishops, the names of the stars, the Kararagi which bore influences from his original world, and those other than Subaru who found themselves summoned here.

The world still bore the marks of their claws. If the Witch Cult were also engraved with this etching, then the names of the stars Subaru had thought of didn't necessarily have only a passing relationship with them.

If Regulus Corneas's power could not be treated as straightforward [Invincibility], then, he'd need to think outside the box; and thus an idea emerged in his heart.

Hoping that there would be no connection, Subaru had already said a sort of prayer asking thus.

And, in the next moment.

Subaru: "——"

A noxious sense of oppression came, casting an illusion that had Subaru feeling as if the sun had been blotted out.

The air hung thick with pollution. He'd be hard pressed to find words with which to express this discomfort, this disgust.

The disgust of the peeling of a scab, the discomfort of a stench exhaled to the face, the aversion of a sticky tongue over bare skin.

The origin of this turbid air, was the evil which had turned his head to look back.

The instant that he met its gaze, Subaru's body began to tremble involuntarily.

Expressionless and empty, those eyes, like a curse, plunged deep into his soul. As if pierced by a rusted needle, even his lungs and heart were frozen by terror.

However, even as Subaru found himself immobile, overcome by such feelings—

Reinhardt: "Don't look anywhere unnecessary. Your opponent should be me!"

Turning to regard this Subaru, meant turning his back to the Sword Saint.

Raising his hands high, Reinhardt had clasped in his hands what could only be described as broken signposts and scrap metal. Such materials which were only ever destined to be waste, but in Reinhardt's hands, they were no inferior to a treasured blade.

A long blade slanted through the air struck the back of Regulus's suit.

The bursting shockwave expanded in midair, leaving a sorrowful wail from the assailed atmosphere in its wake, raising vortexes in the large canals where thin sheets of ice floated.

This was the aftermath of that sword's strike. Had the force of evil been shattered to pieces, it would have come as no surprise.

However, before he could take a single step.

Regulus: “Don't get me wrong, Sword Saint. I’ve been entertaining you because my heart is obliging and considerate. But even my gracious self has limits.”

Reinhardt: “——”

Lightly, Regulus patted the place where he’d been struck by the sword, and tilted his head.

Reinhardt, alerted by this motion, tossed aside the scraps in his hands and made to leap backward at a wide angle— just as he prepared to jump, his feet froze in place.

Reinhardt’s superhuman intuition.

It informed him of dire, imminent threats to his self, and preemptively detecting incoming attacks. His keen instincts told him that he could not dodge to the rear. He immediately straightened and began to search for alternative routes.

Regulus: “The air there, has already been touched by me.”

Due to the sharpening of his senses locking him into place, at that moment, Reinhardt had been left unprepared.

His opponent had him trapped in an invisible yet present envelope. Reinhardt’s judgment told him to slip by the force of evil’s side, but, in order to do so, he’d be forced to make a defensive strike.

Reinhardt: “*Haa*!”

The blow that he dealt had enough force to shear through stone.

The hilt of the Dragon Sword pierced into Regulus’s chest, but the force of evil grasped it easily.

Regulus: “Futile effort, thanks for your trouble. Just pray that you won't be hurt too badly.”

Reinhardt: “Just as Subaru said, your heart doesn’t seem to be beating.”

Regulus: “——!”

Regulus’s relaxed smile hardened, as he glanced down at his chest.

The hilt that was buried in it, and the Reinhardt who was straining his sharp senses; he wouldn’t have missed any movement of life, no matter how subtle.

Having taken that blow, Regulus leapt high in the air, agitated.

Directly, as if reproducing the scene from earlier.

Reinhardt blocked the kick with the sheath of the Dragon Sword, his body was sent flying from the impact. However, what unfolded next was different.

Subaru: “Reinhardt!”

As declared, the air behind Reinhardt had filled with countless traps of breath set by Regulus.

Shot into them in his unguarded state, the results weren’t difficult to imagine.

His white clothes stained with blood, Reinhardt’s entire body was torn. He leapt up, but how much that could mitigate his wounds was uncertain. Buried in rubble again, Reinhardt amplified the collapse of the city, making it impossible to estimate his condition.

But what could be determined for certain was Reinhardt’s answer.

Subaru: “Not bad, Reinhardt…!”

Emilia: “Subaru!”

Subaru: “It’s okay. Reinhardt, he should be fine! So worry about him later!”

Emilia: “I understand! I, what do you need me to do?”

He’d thought that Emilia would be concerned foremost with Reinhardt’s safety, and was taken aback by her response. The Emilia looking at Subaru was attentive, and fully understood where she needed to stand on this battlefield.

There was both a strong reliance on Reinhardt and perhaps a trust in Subaru.

Emilia: “Reinhardt too, he went through all that hassle because he trusted you. What should I have realized about Regulus? Tell me.”

Heavy trust. Heavy expectations. The reality of that belief was too heavy, enough to stir up his fighting spirit.

He’d certainly need to give Reinhardt proper gratitude as well. Later, he’d definitely go and help retrieve his remains.

Regulus: “The two of you, always rambling on, but acting in simplicity in your desperation, wouldn’t that be easier? Your despicable and evil behavior has angered me, so it follows that you should be punished, doesn’t it? Yes? Isn’t this right? Impoliteness, infidelity, no matter which, are rebellious acts worthy of ten thousand executions.”

Having kicked Reinhardt away, Regulus sneered at the inconvenience.

Across the canal, a spirit of evil began to swell forth, and, in truth, Subaru almost couldn’t bear to bring

himself to face it.

However, running away right now would be meaningless.

Natsuki Subaru would be unable to repay Emilia and Reinhardt van Astrea.

Subaru: “A pure heroine, yet unseen of this century, suspecting her of infidelity makes you the slut, idiot.”

Regulus: “Ah?”

Subaru: “Isn’t it uncouth to list all the reasons we should be afraid here? Try in the slightest to redirect that empty mind of yours.”

Hearing the sudden strength of his speech, Regulus widened his eyes.

Subaru knocked his own head, as if boasting.

Subaru: “Just how much of a lovely, smooth life you've had until now, I don’t know, nor do I want to know… but have you noticed yet? The you of right now, is in checkmate.”

Regulus: “Checked? You’re so vague that I can’t even laugh. What are you trying to say. No, you’re incapable of explaining yourself in comprehensible language, is also a possibility. Well, there’s no need to force yourself to say irrelevant things, isn’t that right?”

Subaru: “Eh, don’t say that, after all you have the right to listen, your favorite right.”

Regulus: “My right…?”

Regulus frowned, and Subaru, with a light, ridiculing smile, continued “*Yes, after all—*”

Subaru: “Losing without even knowing how your regret came about, would certainly leave you with regrets.”

Regulus: “—Enough of you! Just disappear!”

This movement shrinking in on himself becoming a fuse, Regulus leapt from the edge of the canal. Lacking sufficient jumping power, his body plunged into the water; however, his movements were unaffected by the flood, and he found himself with no water resistance.

Before him, Subaru confirmed patted Emilia’s shoulders.

Subaru: “Emilia, right now!”

Emilia: “Ul Huma!”

Receiving Subaru's instruction, Emilia gathered magic to release the icicles.

So enormous that they needed to be gazed up at to seen fully, the spears of ice were aimed directly at Regulus, formed an overhanging railing of ice to surround him as he surfaced.

Regulus: "I'd actually thought you'd try something, but no matter what you do, it's futile, looks like no matter how many times you're taught, you'll never learn! What, are you planning to stick with your mistakes? Without even that degree of wisdom, repeating the same thing over and over. Do you always treat others with such futility while despising them? Don't get carried away, how incomplete!"

Regulus bared his teeth, cut down the railing of the ice, smashed it, and, with overwhelming force, shattered it. The barrier collapsed with ease, and despite her best efforts, Emilia's magic couldn't sustain the cage of ice.

But it was enough. This was fine.

Emilia: "I can't, I couldn't even buy time properly."

Subaru: "That's not right, Emilia-tan."

Seeing the ineffectiveness of her power, Emilia wore a gloomy face, but Subaru shook his head.

A look from a different angle. This had been enough to accomplish Subaru's purpose.

Subaru: "That man's character is insidious. He can't help but crush what he despises. Even if it's unnecessary to destroy whatever obstacle he's facing, he can't feel that he's won without shattering it completely."

Singing ballads to fulfillment, spouting his self-satisfying rhetoric, was Regulus.

The pitiable nature of his heart, the scarcity of his tolerance, and the volume of his vanity were plain to see.

Subaru: "In the first place, there was no need for him to break through the obstacle. But he took that superfluous action. Even a second, even a millisecond, is the result."

Emilia: "With that one second, can you defeat Regulus?"

Subaru: "As long as I accumulate them, I'll definitely show him the victory. I'll pare that monster's skin from his body."

For this, Reinhardt had laid the foundation.

Testing Regulus's heartbeat, conveying that it had no movement to Subaru.

There was no heat, no heartbeat, no breath, and no outside influence from his surroundings.

Although this is undoubtedly an [Invincibility], its essence was not undefeatable.

Subaru: “Emilia, over here!”

Subaru took Emilia’s wrist and crossed the dented alleyways with her. Emilia kept pace with Subaru, as she turned back to attack Regulus with an icicle.

Regulus, seeing the two flee, pursed with rage brewing in his chest.

Regulus: “Even after all that boasting, why the hell are you running? Calling someone stupid, proclaiming that you’ll kill them, just how much do you plan on making fun of me? Who the hell do you think you are? You coward!”

Since his physical abilities were no superior, the speed pursuing Regulus was little different from the speed of the escapees. Rather, it could be said that he was slower than Subaru.

However, since he was blessed with his unrelenting composition, the ceaselessly pursuing evil would eventually catch up.

Emilia: “Subaru! Where are you running to?”

Subaru: “Our destination is the church! Our target is, Regulus’s wives! In between…”

Hearing Emilia’s inquiry, he replied back.

Suddenly, halfway through his words, he noticed from behind—

Regulus: “—Stop paying attention to extraneous things, you!”

Subaru: “Uwaaaaa!?”

The distance that had existed until now vanished without a trace, turning his head, Regulus had already appeared in front of him.

Forcing an approach to only one step away, Regulus waved his hand toward them, and Subaru barely jerked his head out of the way. He felt that his opponent was already on his heels, so he swept up Emilia and approached a nearby wall, stepping on and along it in one motion.

Emilia: “Wawawa, Subaru’s amazing.”

Subaru: “Emilia-tan, hold tight to me!”

Emilia, stunned by Subaru’s acrobatics, hugged his neck and wrapped her feet around his waist. Soft and fragrant, she filled Subaru with a fresh wave of energy. Kicking hard on the edge of the wall, he flew across it.

The results of his practice in parkour were revealed. Just gaining distance like this—

Regulus: “I’ve said already, that your commoners’ efforts are futile.”

Saying so, Regulus touched the lower part of the wall Subaru was climbing with his palm.

There was the sound of rock grinding, and the stone wall collapsed as if it were tofu. The wall lost its support and fell. Needless to say, the same happened to those climbing on the wall.

Subaru: “Uwah!”

In the process of falling, he yanked out his whip and flicked it without any real direction. The front end hooked onto something, and Subaru forcefully pulled his body upward.

With a swing of his foot, he gave a hard kick the moment he touched the wall. Combined with the force of the reaction, the centrifugal force generated by the whip allows his body to be thrown further and further, achieving an amazing climb with Emilia still on his back.

At a closer glance, the two of them had arrived at a warehouse that had already lost almost half of its volume.

Subaru crashed onto the balcony that protruded from the eaves and looked at his palm.

Subaru: “Wow, I didn't expect to achieve a brute force escape…!”

Emilia: “Subaru! In short, we just have to get to the church! The direction is!?”

No longer gazing at his palm split open with faint pain, he followed Emilia’s voice to see the surroundings. Fortunately, the height of the balcony, in addition to Regulus’s, allowed everything to be easily seen.

Far, far in the distance, he could see the church that collapsed from Reinhardt’s first attack. Somehow, at some point, it had grown quite distant.

Subaru: “No! We fled in the opposite direction! What now!?”

Emilia: “Is that it, there?”

Subaru: “It’s right there, what’s that matter…”

Emilia: “Let’s travel like this!”

Emilia, upon hearing Subaru’s response, clapped, and a bridge formed on the balcony.

The mysterious blue-and-white bridge began from the balcony and connected through the alleys of the church, imitating a large road in midair.

Subaru: “What!?”

Scattering every which way were brilliant shards of ice, as Subaru slid forward on an ice structure created by Emilia.

Using the slope of the bridge as a launchpad, using the principles of a ski jump, it leapt over the alley, and flew over Regulus toward the church.

Subaru: “Emilia-tan, you became so witty!”

Emilia: “Maybe Subaru led me astray.”

Subaru: “That statement shouldn’t be used in response to praise!”

Although he had a means of long-range attack, Regulus could only touch what was in reach of his arms’ length.

They kept well away from his figure, delirious with rage. Staring at the approaching church, Subaru’s eyes narrowed.

Emilia: “What should we do, when we meet the women in the church?”

Subaru: “I don’t know if they’ve been threatened, or if they really do admire him…”

At Emilia’s question, Subaru lowered his chin into his palm, interrupting himself.

What emerged in his mind were the women, shocked by the Regulus’s actions in the church. The fear he’d seen then, if only it were genuine, thus he prayed.

But, if it really had been an act—

Subaru: “Forget the mind, it may be that even their hearts were stolen away. —Heart in the literal sense, that is.”

Greeting his face were burst of wind blowing on the head, and the height of the ice structure began to fall, as it approached the church.

Behind, was Regulus giving chase. Reinhardt’s life hung in uncertainty. The chances of victory were slim, but the dilemma still steadily approached—

Was everyone else doing fine?

Clearly, he had no room to even ponder such questions, but couldn’t help but think of them.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

To take over the charge of the Control Tower from [Gluttony], this was the battle between Julius, Ricardo, and Alphard.

Julius: “—El Clausel”

With the power of the six-coloured quasi spirits, a rainbow coloured radiance emanated from the tip of the knight sword.

What rolled out was a preemptive strike aiming straight for its opponent's death.

[Clausel] was a magical technique of the same type as [Clarista] which had managed to damage even Petelgeuse’s body, however, unlike [Clarista] which had the destructive bright light stick to the sword itself, [Clausel] was a long-range attack.

The impression of the Sin Archbishops was still strong in Julius’ mind thanks to Petelgeuse.

The feeling which Julius got while fighting the madman, the Sin Archbishop of [Sloth], a huge sinner and someone who had given great suffering to the world for a long time, was completely different from the current situation— that is, the fight with the current enemy is completely different.

Julius Juukulius, who had gotten the title of [Greatest Knight], often misunderstands people due to their behaviour, but he believes in this so-called theory that all human nature is ultimately good.

He believes that all human action is up to interpretation, but there are some things which humanity must think about, like the influence of one party’s actions over the others.

Then, for Julius, the Sin Archbishop named Petelgeuse Romanee Conti and his self-conscious dolls, the Witch Cultists, were all too overwhelming.

Someone who can't understand that, who disregards hard work and efforts of others will inevitably become an enemy for him.

For Julius, the worst done by the Witch Cult to him was to harm his [knightliness].

No hidden tricks, no trump cards saved for the last.

From the very beginning, Julius did not hesitate to cut down those devils.

An extraordinary technique that simultaneously handled all six colours of magic with the help of six quasi-spirits.

Not even the slightest of mismatch of magical power was allowed. This was established only after the bonding of the quasi-spirits, thanks to the efforts and talent of the genius spirit user named Julius.

This was not the exact same thing as what Roswaal L. Mathers could do, who sat at the pinnacle of magic. This had been created by Julius and was unique to Julius.

At the first look, the magic doesn't feel too scary, and the opponent gets scattered away without ?an opportunity to rethink subsequently.

Julius had one belief in his chest— that he must prioritize blowing away the enemy rather than investigating the incompatibility between them.

The extremely bright destructive light shatters the stone pavement and preys upon both the arms of a small shadow.

Long dark brown hair, dirty rags, dulled shining daggers, get swallowed up by the shine of the rainbow light—

Roy: “This is surely something nii-sama didn't expect, he has a weakness of turning away your eyes from what he doesn't want to see, doesn't he?”

Ricardo: “—What!?”

As he collapsed onto the ground, Alphard's muttering voice could be heard. The blasphemer, with his long tongue hanging outside, kicked the ground with a posture low enough that it could almost be said that he was lying on the ground.

The speed of the bright light will never be late enough to not reach its opponent. In order to avoid this approaching arrow, you would need a physical ability comparable to that of Reinhardt or—.

Roy: "We admired you, nii-sama. Nii-sama, who hates to show his hard work to others, would use such devilish skills in desperation, how would we not know that ~tsu."

Julius: “What are you saying!”

Roy: “Thinking we wouldn't know, Julius nii-sama is truly innocent. But, we love that part of you ~tsu! Gyahahahaha ~tsu!”

Alphard jumps around the ground and avoids the magic, with a movement that suggested that he already knew that trump card would be used. Ricardo subsequently runs to strike Alphard, who had escaped the magic, but that pursuit too was a move which he had anticipated.

Ricardo plunges into him in front of the river, as daggers collide and sparks scatter. Ricardo was overwhelmingly superior in strength. Alphard countered the strength difference with unimaginably skilled sword handling. The cobblestone breaks and rains beside the blasphemer.

At the same time, Ricardo cried out as Alphard slashed into his shaggy torso.

Roy: “Lo~ok, a stub of dog meat ~tsu! Hard and luscious meat, should be made sticky and soft to make it easier to eat to make it easier to bite to make it easier to digest to make it easier to shit out to make it easier to decompose to make it easier to fertilize vegetables and after it makes all that so easy the meat should be eaten to start the cycle cycle cycle cycle of the food chain ~tsu! A~h, how wonderful ~tsu!!”

Ricardo: “Ngh, gh, ghk!?”

The speed of Alphard, who had given that quick speech and has daggers attached on both of his arms, was not something extraordinary. His growth period had not ended yet, and his body has still not toughened, however, his physical ability had contradicted those looks till now, as he rips into Ricardo's body, who was all defensive.

Julius: “Ricardo!!”

Fur like wires and thick muscles. Ricardo's body, which was like an armour itself compared to the normal human body, had suffered no wound by any technique till now with the exception of Alphard's attack.

With eyes wide open, Julius was stunned by looking at Ricardo's bleeding wound.

Alphard attacks with high speed moves, each move targeting and aiming precisely at the joints and thin parts of the fur. Regardless of the qualities of Ricardo's body, if you get attacked at the key areas, you will get hurt, you will shed blood, and you will lose your life.

Julius: “—hk.”

At the moment Julius saw the bombardment of blows, Julius summoned the quasi-spirit once again. The slashes of wind mixed with the flames of a fire, the sword commanded the quasi-spirits of two colours--Ia of [Fire] and Aro of [Wind]. From the side, a slash with a reddish flame heads towards Alphard.

Roy: “Yes, we knew that pattern already too ~tsu!”

Julius: “Wha!?”

Roy: “That surprise is completely honest ~tsu! Our stomach will not have any difficulty either ~tsu!”

However, Alphard was ridiculously unaffected by it, with one arm precisely attacking and with eyes at the back, to see whether what he thought would happen, as he kicked into his empty torso.

His heel penetrates into the abdominal muscles, as if he broke into Julius, who was working extremely hard in this situation, just like the person he is. At the front, just when Ricardo started his counterattack, his toe launched itself right into his lower jaw.

Roy: “How nice how nice, this has become fun ~tsu! That nii-sama is! That Ricardo-san is! They both are fighting this great battle and we are their opponent! Even though us, with our weak bodies, absolutely can't do it, can't reach it, can't see it, can't understand it, should have already had given up in this position ~tsu! A~h! To make it so fun, ho~w unfair unfair unfair ~tsu!”

Julius and Ricardo fell to their knees at the same time. Alphard, who stops their pursuit, repeatedly somersaults on the stone pavement, as if to keep the two under pressure.

They must take his incredible skill and childlike brutality under consideration.

Ricardo: “This is, much more than what I heard. Even so, the hell is that guy, pisses me off. The way he walks, the way he talks, everything 'bout him’s jus’ so creepy!”

Ricardo, who barely ever gets hurt and barely had any older scratches, said that with a foggy voice while licking the wounds on his arms. Julius rises, taking heavy breaths, and also agreed with Ricardo's anger.

Julius: “It's the same as City Hall… no, just his behaviour is still equally incomprehensible. It may be an attempt to mock us, but it's counterproductive and nothing else.”

Roy: “Even if you say that, it's always the human nii-sama hiding his feelings of worry from the non-human Ricardo-san, no? We said that we~ already know about that ~tsu!”

Julius: “You bastard…”

Clasping his hands, Alphard laughs uncontrollably, and Julius sends the quasi-spirit of [Water], Kua, under Ricardo to heal his wounds as he stepped ahead.

Ricardo: “Ah! Hey, Julius! Don't go out there!”

Julius: “You just quietly stay here, till your wounds heal enough that the bleeding stops!”

Pointing his knight sword forward, Julius dashes towards Alphard. However, the movement now was clearly not the same as the one before.

In the sharp steps and slashes, Alphard, who received the first attack, felt his eyebrow get slightly slashed.

Roy: “This is…”

Julius: “The power of the quasi-spirit of [Yang], In, and at the same time,”

Roy: “Oh?”

Alphard’s question overlapped with the responding voice.

Julius’ long legs jump up and kick down Alphard’s head, pushing down the blasphemer’s cheeks into defeat. This time, his defence wouldn’t make it in time. His hanging arms lag behind, and rolling his eyes, Alphard turns and desperately attempts to dodge.

Roy: “Uwa kyya! The one right now, was?”

Julius: “My quasi-spirit of [Yang]. The one with my sword is the quasi-spirit of [Yin] It is a mutual partnership that improves physical ability. This, was a first timer for you, isn’t it?”

Roy: “… Oh, hehe, as you’d expe~ct! Julius-sama is wonderful! Still loaded with charm that neither we nor us knew about, isn’t it ~tsu!”

Julius: “--!?”

With his cheeks dyed red, Alphard looks at Julius with flushed eyes.

At the moment Julius frowned at that warm gaze, Alphard removed and threw away the dagger attached to his arm. A shrill sound echoed as it pounded on the cobblestone.

Immediately afterwards, his heel breaks the cobblestone.

Roy: “As it seems like you cannot surprise us with swords, this time we intend to see it by using fists ~tsu.”

Julius: “Gh-- ~hk!”

Alphard closed the distance in the blink of an eye, as he launched the bottom of his palm while twisting his waist. Julius countered it with his empty left hand, but the shock penetrated right through his arm into his chest.

Unimaginably, the forceful lurch from the ground and the twisting of the waist had increased the destructive force of his palm strike, and Julius, with no time lag, was sent flying.

If Subaru would have had witnessed this sight, he would have had thought of a car accident.

Roy: “Our fists that have taken down more than eight hundred people……. we suppose they shook up nii-sama down to his bones’ medullas?, no?”

This was also an equally violent sight, like a car unable to stop runs over and sends the defenceless human beings flying.

Julius could not afford to respond to Alphard’s crazed smile.

His chest bones, his internal organs all got crushed, blood floods onto his clothes and his tall body gets blown away. Ricardo, who was being treated, quickly responds to the situation.

Ricardo: “Julius, watch out!!”

Ricardo hugs and defends Julius, who was unexpectedly going to crash into the wall straight from his head. Even the enormous dog got swallowed into the impact and got knocked into the building, crushing the stones.

Ricardo, who had rushed to help Julius, shakes his head as a plume of dirt rose. The blood in his head concentrates in one side, and he spat out the blood in his throat to prevent choking.

Ricardo: “Spirits! Don’t know if ya can hear me, but yer master’s in trouble! Get to work! Think ‘bout me later!”

Whether it was thanks to Ricardo’s call or not, the blue light pours its power into Julius' dying body. When he was at least made safe from dying, Ricardo jumped out in frustration into the brisk situation after a good amount of break he had taken from the fight.

Roy: “Welcome back! Would you like to have a meal? Would you like to have a treat? Or perhaps, di-n-n-er?”

Ricardo: “Get yer tongue back inside your damn mouth, damn brat… I'll teach you what happens when ya make fun of adults jus' like the brats at our place.”

Roy: “Ohwellohwell, let's not take it any further. We don't want a dog as a meal anyway. If you don't want to play with swords or fists… are you fine with this?”

Alphard, with a smile, spreads his hands, and Ricardo immediately increased his alertness. Ricardo chews his teeth fiercely, and was unable to take off his eyes from that.

—In the waterway behind Alphard, a stream of water rises with a whirlpool which looked like the neck of a water dragon to Ricardo.

Ricardo: “Sword skill, martial arts, and this time, magic. Jus’ what the hell are ya?”

Roy: “We are anonymous non-practicing magicians, who couldn't even be looked at with pride by our family. Something like that ~tsu!”

Immediately after Alphard rolled his tongue outside, the head of the water stream heads towards Ricardo.

Although that's just water, it's momentum and mass was enough to crush a living being's body. On top of that, there was Julius behind him, so he couldn't choose to avoid it either.

Ricardo: “Ya've done it now. Hah, hah— haa!!”

Opening his large mouth and his body clamped onto the ground, Ricardo released a roar wave.

Out of the three deputy commanders of the [Iron Fang], two of them had already shown their ability to cooperate their attack of this roar wave. However, originally, Mimi had developed this technique by imitating Ricardo, and Ricardo argues that it is originally his.

However, compared to Mimi who reduces the burden by dispersing it, roar wave used by a single person is a huge burden to the body.

The destructive roar bursts out of Ricardo's throat as he felt muddy water fall on his body which was clinging onto the ground.

Roy: “Wow, amazing ~tsu.”

Unable to hear the voice of admiration, Ricardo's roar wave crashes into the stream of muddy water.

The wave collides right from the front, and splashes the water away, and the water with a mass of several tons scatters and evaporates into mist. After a few seconds, the destroyed muddy stream hits the plaza like rain, flooding the stone pavement, and sends the leaning Ricardo crashing down.

Ricardo: “That, sure was somethin’ … even the edge of my mouth, got a bit cut, huh.”

The residual damage itself left Ricardo blank for a long time, which further burdened him after the roar wave. Breathing on his shoulder, Ricardo, however, still managed to get up because of his feelings.

Alphard was completely unaffected, without showing any signs of exhaustion, he was just dancing there.

Roy: “Amazingamazing ~tsu! It's been a while since we have seen someone endure that. So long that there is not a trace of it in either ours or our memory. How nice, quite nice, pretty nice, maybe it is nice, isn't it nice, possibly it is nice, perhaps it is nice, probably it is nice, because it is probably nice ~tsu!”

???: “Your repetitive speech ends here.”

Roy: “Welp, it's nii-sama's grand return. Scarily, cutely, enviably.”

In front of Alphard, who shook his head, Julius was standing next to Ricardo.

His face was pale, and his knight uniform was dyed in blood. His breath was even faintly stuttering, and it was completely impossible to say that he was in his top shape. Although that cannot be said,

Julius: “Thanks for the help, Ricardo.”

Ricardo: “I sure did help ya. I'll have ya report my efforts properly to miss so that I get that temporary bonus.”

Julius: “About that, I assure you that you can feel absolutely unworried about that from my side.”

Grabbing his knight sword, Julius tapped on Ricardo's shoulder and subsequently glanced at Alphard. Sensing that gaze, the blasphemer smiled, with dyed cheeks, and twisted his lips irritatingly.

His facial expressions, actions, even his way of fighting, were all packed with a sense of creepiness and spook.

Or perhaps, that itself was related to his Authority of [Gluttony].

Julius: “With such prowess in using swords, martial arts, and even magic, why did you align with evil. That power could have had been put to use for something else, something better.”

Roy: “Somewhere else huh. Giving some examples, what would nii-sama consider in that?”

Nii-sama, even his way of addressing was unsettling.

Every time Alphard's tongue touches it, every time he says that with a flamboyant tone and stuck-up attitude, that word loses its value for Julius.

—Even though he has no family members that call him that.

Julius: “For example, a knight. For example, a mercenary. For example, a hero. Unkempt power easily falls into the hands of evil, and strength turns into forceful violence. That’s why…”

Roy: “We thought you'd say so ~tsu! We thought you'd say that, anii-sama! We thought that the nii-sama we know, that the nii-sama we trust, would say that. We thought so ~tsu!”

Abruptly putting a halt onto the conversation, Alphard jumps and approaches Julius.

He holds his knight sword vertically and slashes down that kick. As if he had plates of iron attached onto his heels, the slash fails to do any damage.

Alphard sharply turns and continues his barrage of kicks from a low angle, as he swings and dances on the spot, as he further pushes Julius to make him crash into the scaffold.

At his intense and strong moves, even Ricardo loses the track of his timing and becomes unable to interrupt.

Roy: “Do you remember, when we were kids! When we had gotten sick and broken down, we had asked nii-sama whether we could bring an Appa from the tree in the garden ~tsu!”

Julius: “Saying things on your own accord……! Why would I remember. Stop enforcing your own arbitrary delusions onto others!”

Roy: “Us and nii-sama were still small, and nii-sama first said that it was impossible, told us to give up ~tsu! Do you remember? Don't you remember? But we, just because nii-sama had tried to stop us, ended up wanting that appa even more ~tsu! When we had done what nii-sama said was impossible, we thought that we did an amazing job! Our confidence increased! We really thought tha~t!”

Julius: “What are you, what are you saying!? I am unaware of any such thing… unaware!”

Julius accepts his kicks, his heel, his round kick, his straight kick, his high-jump kick, his somersault, his back-spin kick with his knight sword.

His arms were numb, his internal organs were scarred with pain, and he could feel the taste of blood in his mouth. No, it was different from the taste of pure blood, as this was his blood mixed with vomit. He bit his lips. He, just now, for some reason.

He could not help but listen carefully to Alphard's delusion.

Roy: “Because of what happened afterwards, we are ~tsu! We are ~tsu! Nii-sama is ~tsu!”

Julius: “—hk!”

Roy: “We always, always thought about it ~tsu! We always, always felt it ~tsu! That it was different! That it was just some luggage ~tsu! How that used to be! How's that now! What a nice feeling! So it was such a feeling! A~h, this feels so nice! We finally get it!”

Julius: “I know absolutely nothing, nothing about you!”

Julius got pushed into becoming more and more violent.

Holding back his knight sword with immense strength, he tries to attack whenever he found a gap in Alphard's position. Striking down, piercing into, kicking in, pounding, entangling, dodging.

A slash dyed with anger and hostility cuts through the air, and Alphard's hair, which were too late to avoid it, get slashed off and fall to the ground. Even still, it was not just the slash which should be payed attention to.

Julius: “Ia! Kua! Aro! Ik! Nes! In!”

With the names of the quasi-spirits called out, they started spinning like a magical cast, and they were the spirits contracted with the Spirit Knight.

With their names called out, the six colours of the quasi-spirits increase in radiance, turning the mere affirmation of their existence into a powerful force and pouring it all onto the opponent of their knight.

—The six coloured lights surround Alphard from all six directions, blocking any path to escape.

Julius: “With this, it ends—!”

Julius had firm belief in his victory as Alphard could no longer escape.

The power pushes straight through the middle of Alphard's chest,

Roy: “Palm of the Fist King.”

The dark palm in front of his chest collides with the knight sword in between and crushes it into pieces.

Debris scatters, and the deadly stab loses its effectiveness.

However, there was still the magic that was left—,

Roy: “Magic.”

An unexpected and confusing magical power swells up behind Alphard and slashes down all six of the approaching magic.

The magic of one colour clashes with the magic of that same colour, and all magic gets cancelled out.

Finally, the eyes of Julius, who had supposedly sealed this attack's victory, open.

Roy: “Snake of the Twin Swords.”

Alphard's toes toss up a dagger which he was supposed to have had thrown away.

It got pushed into this place by Julius' attack. Receiving the spinning blades with both of his hands, Alphard's body rotates.

A storm of slashes blew up, and Julius used just his broken knight sword.

“____”

Roy: “Nii-sama threw that appa out. That's why we hate nii-sama.”

An arm sharply cut from the elbow swings into the air and fell onto the cobblestone, making a sound.

Arc 5 – Chapter 55, "The War God's Challenger"

by admin - Thursday, February 14, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/02/14/arc-5-chapter-55-the-war-gods-challenger/

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Translated by :

- Nanashi

Proofread by :

- u/Nobidexx
- u/ReviewR524

Fan Art Source :

- Pixiv (Garfiel)
- Twitter (Kurgan)
- Modified by Furuta

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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—The legends of the War God Kurgan, were widely circulated in the Vollachia Empire.

In the powerful Vollachia Empire, as long as one had the ability, the circumstances of their birth would be disregarded.

In comparison to Lugunica, which has a conscious difference of treatment its demi-humans, and the Holy Kingdom of Gutesko, which barred foreigners, Vollachia adopts a similar system of lack of consideration for blood or appearance to Kararagi.

Therefore, among the four major countries, Vollachia was considered to be the best country of residence non-purebred humans.

But on the other hand, the kind of cruel survival of the fittest meant that there would be severe repression and oppression on those lacking power and wisdom. Of course, personal evaluations and racial evaluations would be different.

In particular, the Multi-Arm Clan had been wandering around for many years, as a nomadic race which never stayed in a single place. The appearance of the Multi-Arm Clan was just as its name, and their adaptability at using magic as a demi-humans were exceptionally low. In terms of a race, it could only be thought of as inferior.

The total number of individuals of the Multi-Arm Clan was not large. If ever a dispute arose, they would be more inclined to relocate than to fight for the protection of their land.

It was inevitable that such a race, driven away from countless places, would came to Vollachia, where it would have only been natural for them to have been swallowed up by the iron-blooded empire and faced with decline.

—In this world of power, shouting out a [Refusal] was a man named Kurgan.

Although the characteristics of the Multi-Arm Clan were that they have had more than the two arms that humans did, that number varied from person to person. Kurgan, who had eight arms where most had four or five, was a peculiar existence.

It had been the then youthful Kurgan, who had, when the local lord moved to recollect land, refused, and waved his eight arms to drive the messenger back. Then, spurring his trembling brethren on, the lord’s private army was driven back and broken through, time and time again, until finally the lord’s mansion was attacked.

Although the barbaric attack had frightened the lord, Kurgan did not offer a violent solution.

He spoke he and his people had proven themselves, and accepted a prized seat on the lord’s private army. After that, throughout various battles, the name of [Kurgan of Eight Arms] was passed down as a legend of the Vollachia Empire.

Garfiel: “——”

His whole body was submerged in cold water, and he could still see the wavering moon through the water that flowed overhead.

The bone that had supported his right eye had broken, and the eyeball enclosed inside the socket seemed on the verge of slipping off. Instantly, he used the left hand to support the treatment of magic and perform minimal healing.

His remaining left eye jumped around, surveying the red sediment flowing along with the water, his body arching back upward where it hit the bottom of the waterway.

Garfiel: “——”

Obviously, he lay submerged in the water, but he could feel no trace of its frigid coolness.

Emancipated from the heavy weight of gravity, strength slowly poured back into his hands and feet in this world that has lost its burden.

If only unloading the yoke of the heart could be as simple as removing the yoke on the body— his heart now, was submerged in darkness.

Or he could just keep sinking in this way, in no way was such a thought completely absent from his heart. However, drawing breath began to grow painful and in the darkness, his eyes hadn't left him completely blinded.

The peach-haired girl, the orange-furred catgirl, and the black-haired boy emerged and ignited his waterlogged heart.

Maybe it was a flame that would disappear immediately. Earlier, that had been precisely the case, even if the bravado of pretending to be brave had been entirely shattered, which proved so. Even so, no matter what.

—That, was no excuse to be immersed in here forever.

Garfiel: "*Fwah*!"

Stretching to straighten his back, slamming hard into the water pushing himself up in one breath, as his head emerged from the water, Garfiel shook his head.

The vision in his right eye was still obstructed, and the lingering aftereffects of the beating had turned into a tinnitus ringing ceaselessly in his head. His entire bloodied, wounded body was flooded with nausea, and the lack of sensation in his mouth had a discordant effect on his teeth.

Garfiel: "Fuckin' shit…"

Grabbing the edge of the waterway to yank himself up, like a wild beast, shaking his entire body to clear the water, Garfiel glanced around.

Earlier, Garfiel had been slammed into the waterway.

Nothing had changed, the war god had remained standing in place.

The position of his outstretched Demon Cleaver was the same, with delay in his slight aura of battle, and of Garfiel's failed attack, there was no doubt, as he maintained his stance.

Kurgan: "——"

Looking at the silent war god, Garfiel began to think.

After all, the inevitability of the collision between Garfiel and Kurgan was small indeed. The task that Garfiel hoped to accomplish was to stop the surprise attack that [Lust] was likely to launch on the city. Even if he fought with Kurgan here, he wouldn't be saving the city of solely non-combatants.

At a glance, all would tell Garfiel to avoid a fight with Kurgan here.

Garfiel: "But… no way, he'd let me escape."

A body so large that heads would crane to see it fully, and an overwhelming amount of muscle. Even if he looked incapable of agility, even if he tried to flee, he couldn't imagine that he could escape the reach of those swords.

From the very instant that this war god had appeared before him, Garfiel had been rendered incapable of escape.

Now, there were only two choices that Garfiel was allowed to make.

—Fight to death. Rebel against that death, these two choices only.

Garfiel: "Fuck… 's ain't th' time t' think so right now!"

Defeatist thoughts flashing through his head, Garfiel gnashed his teeth to drive them away. The fangs that had been urgently regrown to make up for his losses tinged with pain, but that pain drove negative thoughts of loss to deep recesses.

Any notion of the feeling of impending loss, of the harbinger of defeat, would be flattened.

Self-satisfying words to justify his loss, were unnecessary!

—Win, win, win, win, win, win!

Seize victory, prove his own worth!

Garfiel: "UUUUAAAAAAaaaaaaah!"

Roaring loudly, driving away any weakness, Garfiel once again rushed forward. In the previous skirmish, a single blow that'd he'd put his all into had been blocked.

However, if his weight weren't enough, he could use speed to control him.

Using claws, using teeth, opening, tearing, biting, plundering.

Kurgan: "——"

The silent war god, greeted the rushing Garfiel.

A blow from a Demon Cleaver came from his shoulder.

Call it a sniping blow, but the penetrative force was too low, call it a crushing blow, but it moved too sharply. It belonged solely to Kurgan, this combination of swordplay and strength that would leave his opponents crushed.

The suddenly approaching blade of the Demon Cleaver passed over the back of Garfiel's head, as he leaned forward. After that narrow miss, Garfiel's thinking grew steadily more fervent.

If there were only one blow, Garfiel should be able to escape with ease. The speed of his small form, lithe as it was, was quite different from the speed of that enormous body with it's equally enormous arm and weapon.

After avoiding his massive attack, sending slashing paw his chest a parting gift was easy. Or rather, should have been.

Garfiel: "*—guu*"

However, Garfiel, who buried deep in those arms, was forced to dodge on the spot. One of Kurgan's giant side arms swept upward, threatening to send him flying from his chin.

This was also unexpected— no, his body's sense of balance was simply different.

Kurgan, born of the Multi-Arm Clan, had swung his eight arms and trained relentlessly to find a style which suited his own body.

Honing frightening techniques of his flesh, which were entirely different from what manoeuvres Garfiel knew about exercising four limbs.

Once his attack ended, his body would be left open, and weaknesses would be revealed, such common sense applied here.

If one hand were to be used for only defense, then the remaining space could be used to target his opponent's blind spot.

Even if he could block one hand's fatal strike, he'd still have the other seven to contend with.

If he couldn't manage all that, only a single dead end awaited.

Garfiel: "*ngh, gaaaaah*!"

In front of the shuddering Garfiel, the arm of the gods seemed to be enough to shake the world.

The roaring Demon Cleavers struck from all directions, crushing their opponent's body with violent force.

Blocking one blow with his shield, bending over to dodge another, darting backward to reduce the impact of the next, spinning to avoid yet another, offsetting one with all the force from his body, allowing the next to shatter his shoulder to avoid a fatal injury. The beastized handcuffs forced a single blow and a single hit to make it fall on the stone steps.

Garfiel: "*uwa, huu*"

—Eight arms.

Just now, Garfiel had thrown his all against Kurgan, and had only barely survived the counteroffensive which followed.

Such an attack held the deadliness of a tempest, and yet, to Kurgan, he was merely swinging each of his arms.

If this was what it meant to be a war god, if the fight continued, Garfiel would be annihilated in moments. Right now, collapsed on the ground, the blooded Garfiel still drew breath only because the still standing war god had no intent to pursue.

Kurgan: "——"

Assuming the same stance he'd taken when Garfiel's had clambered out of the waterway, he looked down the loser in their struggle.

To be underestimated, no such feelings of frustration surged forth.

The question now was, of even occupying the same dimension.

Competing with each other, warriors on a battlefield.

The name of this god of war, [Kurgan of Eight Arms], was a legend.

Garfiel: "*huu… huu…*"

He couldn't win. To win was impossible.

A legend that had passed away, a man who had become a hero, this war god.

Thriving in the imposing Vollachia, even when his clan had been inferior and despised, was this man who had changed the destiny of his race on his own.

Garfiel was nothing more than a little kid who revered that legend.

Garfiel: "*huu… huu… huu*"

Clearly that was so, but why did his body right itself.

Even his inner self was so shaken, and yet his body stood upright.

Garfiel: “*Haaaah*… noisy, noisy, fuckin’ noisy!”

The rush of his heartbeat, was now unusually loud.

The ringing of drums accompanying his ears, Garfiel stomped on the ground. The stone steps beneath his feet began to split, and the cracks stretched straight below Kurgan’s feet.

The silent Kurgan and the bloodied Garfiel stood in confrontation.

Swaying, Garfiel gathered power in the toes, once again slamming on the ground. Then, Kurgan moved.

No, he had been moved.

Kurgan: “——”

Through the Garfiel’s soles, the [Divine Protection of Earth Spirits] worked its power. That power moved from the newly formed cracks to Kurgan’s feet, and the ground supporting the giant flew toward the heavens.

That enormous body floating in midair, honed though it was by hundreds battles, was still a slave to the laws of physics.

Losing the support of the lower body, he could no longer execute his powerful strikes.

Garfiel: “*Haaaaaaaaaah*!”

This moment was the key.

Taking aim at where Kurgan hovered in midair, Garfiel swung his arm.

Part beast, an arm covered in the fur and muscle of a giant tiger struck Kurgan. Even the war god had no means of resisting if he couldn’t adjust his stance in midair.

With the sound of weapons colliding, and the intercepting Demon Cleaver flew away, pulling Kurgan in its wake.

And then Garfiel’s kick was waiting for him. Taking advantage of the first chink in his armor, his claws pierced those thick abdominal muscles.

Roaring, Garfiel ceaselessly pushed his opponent, pressing his attacks.

Chest, thighs, knees, and stomach, all took constant blows.

Suppressed by the force of the impact, Kurgan’s numerous arms were unable to catch up to defend, and

he could only take each attack in his splayed position.

Garfiel: “Success’s here!”

Garfiel, convinced that victory was in sight, cried out.

The slashing, bestial claws tore into Kurgan’s, spraying Garfiel with dark blood.

Garfiel swiped the blood from his body, continuing to press forward.

Confident that his opponent had been rendered helpless, Garfiel’s eyes found Kurgan, carved in iron— and then cold washed over him as his hairs stood up.

Kurgan: “——”

The god of war’s eyes fixed themselves on Garfiel, his demeanor exactly what it had been at the start, unchanged, not shaken in the slightest.

Garfiel: “—huh?”

It was then, that Garfiel realized.

The war god’s delayed counterattack.

The swing of a Demon Cleaver, slammed into the Garfiel’s pair of hurriedly raised shields, slamming his entire figure down, where he crashed hard into the ground.

Garfiel: “*gh*”

Even a grunt, couldn’t be formed.

In an instant, orientation vanished from his field of vision, Garfiel’s limbs were entirely controlled by the impact that had sent them flying.

All he knew, was what had happened.

In midair, without any grounding point, Kurgan gave a fierce attack with only his upper body.

Simple and straightforward, was this method.

Grabbing the blade of the Demon Cleaver with both hands to increase the weight of the swing, the force would skyrocket.

—That was the principle of a flick to the forehead.

Using two hands as a base to turn the attack into fatal blow.

Sending him flying, to reduce the force of his attacks. This method of combat had been thoroughly resolved by his opponent.

Garfiel: "—*hk*"

Having his chain of counterattacks interrupted, Garfiel was struck by a foot from the huge body directly above him.

Couple the foot with his falling momentum, and Garfiel's body and slammed upward from the ground as soon as it made contact.

His thoughts occupied by pain and loss, what drove him to use his healing magic was solely his survival instinct.

Attaching the broken bones on his upper arm, elbow, and shattered shoulders, to fixing his eviscerated internal organs. His ribs, waist bones, parts his left thigh had also broken, but those would prove too difficult to recover in an emergency.

His gate heating within the body, he drew upon all his magic, exhausting his mana supply.

Taking advantage of being able to draw strength from the ground, with his body pressed against it, he began to treat and repair himself from head to toe.

A few seconds, or tens of seconds, or possibly a few minutes.

Blocking out even the passage of time, Garfiel focused on the restoration of his flesh.

Finally, reaching a point where he could just barely manage to move, he spat the blood from his throat and got up.

Kurgan: "——"

Calmly, the war god regarded the bloodstained Garfiel.

Seeing this gesture, the corners of Garfiel's eyes burned. The heat within had him bowing his head, teeth shaking.

Garfiel: "Th' fuck, 's this…?"

Since the beginning, Kurgan's stance had remained consistent.

He would meet Garfiel's challenges, but he wouldn't take the initiative to attack, nor would he rush at Garfiel with swords drawn.

Garfiel, had been mercilessly defeated three times.

The feeling of defeat and humiliation in his heart had smashed through him, his soldier's conceit and arrogance.

He felt that he had to win against him.

In a similar way, he also thought that it'd be far cleaner to kill himself than to suffer this ridicule.

War god Kurgan, the hero of Vollachia.

Being regarded as the peak of all the soldiers, asking him to understand the frustration in Garfiel's heart would be impossible.

Garfiel: "Might 's well jus'…"

Kill me, he could ask that of him.

Honestly admitting defeat, acknowledging the obvious disparity in power, asking to be allowed to die as a warrior.

Putting down his shields, spreading his arms, and forming an expression of bliss.

To plead with him like this, would he be willing?

To fall on battle against the god of war; to a warrior, this was perhaps the proudest way to die.

Garfiel: "In this place…"

Wouldn't it be so easy, if it were all to end.

Garfiel: "Wouldn't 't be so easy, 'f 'twere all ta end, huh."

Equipped with his shields, tightening his arms to show hostility.

Looking forward, as if intending to struggle.

Garfiel: "'S kinda thinkin' keeps lingerin'."

Someone had said to him once, to not think so much when fighting.

You're pretty strong, when you're not thinking about extraneous things, and just using your instincts to fight.

—Was that, really the case?

Garfiel: "Sound's, lingerin'…"

How annoying was his heartbeat.

Every bones in him twisted and connected, and a sound began to form.

Annoying, annoying, annoying, annoying.

That extraneous sound, all of it, completely, in its entirety, was so annoying.

—The sound, can you not hear?

Garfiel: “Can I hear… always, ‘f fuckin’ course my amazin’ self can hear it.”

Even if he avoided thinking about it, it’d amount to nothing.

In Garfiel ear, or perhaps part of him separate from his tympanic membrane, that voice was still being accepted.

Someone’s voice, an intimate voice, a familiar voice, a heartwarming voice, a choked voice, a proud voice, a voice which couldn’t suppress its rage.

All these voices, refused to let Garfiel go.

Even if he relied on instinct to fight, these incoming waves of sound would not recede at all, and Garfiel would not be alone.

The more he thought about it, the weaker he was, and the him of right now was so weak.

It was different from when he’d been in [Sanctuary], playing at being the lone wolf. Now, he bore more humility, had seen more things.

The more people there were to someone, the weaker they’d become, and they’d spend their entire lives growing weaker.

Garfiel: “How’s… ‘s possible.”

Embracing those unfading voices, swallowing his sense of defeat, stirring up a desire for victory, and inserting his admiration and envy into all that.

—Garfiel, issued a challenge to the god of war.

Garfiel: “—*kuu*”

Kurgan: “——”

Garfiel’s gaze had changed.

Kurgan, witnessing this, quietly moved.

Of his four Demon Cleavers, he sheathed two.

However, this meant in no way that Kurgan's strength had weakened. Instead, it allowed him more focus on just those two Demon Cleavers. Almost as if to explain, the war god adjusted his stance.

The war god who had stood facing forward, balanced on his right foot, leaning in slightly as he faced Garfiel.

This was, a battle stance.

—Evidence, that Kurgan finally regarded Garfiel as an enemy.

Garfiel: "—So jus' now, y' really were jus' treatin' my amazin' self 's a kid. [The osprey's unsuited to child rearing], 's this happen t' be the case here?"

Kurgan: "——"

In silence, Garfiel flew at the war god.

Responding to this brutal offensive was the Demon Cleaver.

Suppressing the horrifying feeling of a wall of despair closing in on him, Garfiel rushed forward, seizing his opportunity with his all.

This was a misjudged tactic from his earlier attack.

It had been caused by the aura that Kurgan gave off, as well as Garfiel's own imagined fearful admiration of the hero.

Garfiel: "*Uuuuuuuaaaa*!"

With a hook, he lashed out at Kurgan.

Although there was a heavy sound of iron on flesh, he'd not hit where he had aimed, but an arm that had been extended to block.

Garfiel: "What kind 'f a joke, 's this!"

Seeing his fist blocked by that palm, Garfiel roared.

Drawing strength from the soles of his feet, he poured that power into his fist which met Kurgan's palm, allowing it to explode forward.

Kurgan twisted his fingers to avoid the sudden punching force, and Garfiel took the opportunity to land

on the war god's waist, and run up his chest ran up, as if he were doing a flip.

Kurgan leaned back, lashing out with his Demon Cleaver at the same time.

Reading the flow of the wind and atmosphere to predict the direction, Garfiel accepted the attack with his pair of shields.

With a thundering sound, Garfiel's body flew backward.

Garfiel: "*Haaaaaah*—"

Slamming his limbs into the slate floor, he forced his body to stay in place. Looking up, the war god's pursuit had already approached.

Kurgan,who had yet to launch his own attack, now rushed forward to stop Garfiel.

Only one instant to predict, only one moment to react, only one second for the result to bear fruit.

Kurgan: "——"

Garfiel strained the arms he had embedded into the slate, lifting the ground before him. The rushing Kurgan shattered that wall launched at shoulder, and lunged with the Demon Cleaver.

A cacophony.

Garfiel, taking a direct hit, was propelled backward. The heel that had tried to stand firm slid across the ground, and shards of teeth flew forward.

But—

Garfiel: "Don't look down on me, fucker!"

He used his teeth to block the spurs of the ghost machete.

From his incisors, blood dripped to cover the Demon Cleaver, but Garfiel did not hesitate.

Kurgan: "——"

He strained the strength in his neck and jaw, and Kurgan's body shook.

He grabbed hold of the bitten Demon Cleaver's handle with another arm, and strained to extract it in one motion, but the tooth piercing it would not give.

Not only that, but the force of his biting teeth yet increased. Garfiel's upper body swelled and began to beastify.

Garfiel: “GHROOOooooooa, GRAAAAAAAAAA!!”

Transforming his head to animal form would lower his capacity for rational thought significantly.

His reasoning would regress to the level of a beast’s, and he’d been told countless times that this was a double-edged sword.

But in this moment, that was Garfiel’s choice.

This enviable power was indispensable.

Faced with the most powerful of the Multi-Arm race, how could he win, if he denied his own fundamental nature?

O tiger, o tiger, o tiger, in this moment, lend me your strength—!

Kurgan: “——”

The instant the golden tiger opened its eyes, the Demon Cleaver was torn.

The blade was shredded, and the force of the destruction moved from blade to hilt, shaking the giant’s form as he suddenly lost his hold and balance.

—This, was truly an opportunity.

Garfiel: “Huu, hah, hah! ”

The beast swung its paws, beating at Kurgan’s head. The giant couldn’t catch his footing under the beast’s repeated strikes.

A slice and a bat arrived at the same time, and Kurgan, dripping blood, was forced back.

Kurgan: “——”

He made to pursue further, but was met with a punch.

The enormous tiger’s face smashed with an elbow, and the bridge of its nose collapsed, and immediately following, from below, was a strike to his mandible.

The tiger caught his collapsing body, and a punch from the front slammed into his face.

Blood splashed into his dimming field of vision.

Orientation, control, vanished from his mind.

Not that it had anything to do with him. What was important, was all contained in his heart.

Even without thinking about it, it wouldn’t vanish, would drive his bloody, battered body on.

The Demon Cleaver approached.

The remaining one of the pair, which hadn’t been shattered.

Only one instant to predict, only one moment to react, only one second for the result to bear fruit.

Garfiel: “*guu, uu*…”

The blade cutting toward his body scraped against his shield and met his stomach.

Even had the impact been dispelled, this blow still had the power to slice through the thick abdominal muscles on his body.

However, faced with the hair stiff as golden needles, and the swelling body of the enormous tiger, bisection was still out of reach.

At Kurgan’s feet, a stomp from Garfiel. This was an effect of the blessing of the [Divine Protection of Earth Spirits].

Garfiel: “Uuuuuuuaaaaaah!”

The blade still lodged in his abdominal muscles, Garfiel fought on thusly.

In a grappling contest, Kurgan would come out ahead, but Garfiel couldn’t sit still.

The lack of teeth, the arm that had been broken several times over, and the instinct overpowering his sensibility, had him catch Kurgan firmly.

Kurgan: “——”

Yanking on his cumbersomely large body, Garfiel threw Kurgan— into the waterway behind.

The instant he was thrown forward, Kurgan’s arm reached out to grab Garfiel, dragging the two of them down together.

Accompanied by a loud splash, the two plummeted into the waterway.

Two huge bodies were scuffed by the current, and the blood straining the water was swept away.

Kurgan: “——”

In the water, the two figures were still continuously attacking and defending.

In the dark, vision-obscuring liquid, Garfiel and Kurgan continued to beat each other without regard to

the resistance of the water.

Fists of a giant shattered his organs, excruciatingly expelling the air from his lungs. Pain unto pain, suffering unto suffering, so the underwater battle continued.

Between that, Garfiel understood his own disadvantage.

For whatever reason, the war god before him didn't seem to breathe. He felt as if his opponent were a resurrected body.

Oxygen starvation brought lethargy, and Garfiel found his every action slow and stagnant.

The flow of the water gradually surged and swelled, and, again and again, the two figures fell from waterfall to waterfall.

As his consciousness faded, his fingertips were sapped of their fighting spirit.

Garfiel: "—*hah*"

—His breaths, weren't enough.

This would become the true cause of his defeat, as Garfiel's consciousness left him. And victory was is—.

Kurgan: "——"

A heavy sound, that the muted, stagnant carried to him.

Returning to his distant consciousness, Garfiel saw it within the murky water.

The Demon Cleaver sheared into the wall and ground level with the canal, and the war god's strike created a divisive gap in the path of the water's flow.

He had neither the chance nor the air to ask what he was doing.

The sound of blades from every which way shook the water's flow, until finally the sound of a breaking metal and a shocking rush echoed in tandem.

In the next moment, a new stream appeared.

Separate from the waterway's true flow, it was another stream of water entirely. Garfiel's body, captured within this stream, was sucked and thrown clear from the waterway.

Garfiel: "—*pua*, *kuu*, *kuu*"

The feeling of water around it disappeared, and Garfiel spat the volumes of water he'd swallowed.

From his eyes, nose, ears, all the holes in his, water poured forth, and Garfiel shook his head.

Just as he was wondering what had happened, he heard it.

???: “—Gorgeous Tiger?”

In the sound of flowing water, someone called out quietly to him.

Arc 5 – Chapter 56, “Signing of A Divorce”

by admin - Thursday, February 21, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/02/21/arc-5-chapter-56-signing-of-a-divorce/

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Translated by :

- Nanashi

Proofread by :

- u/IceOccultism
- u/azeem45

Fan Art Source :

- Artist (Deleted Source)

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—The Authority of [Greed] associated with its star’s name, the true face of its [Invincibility].

The names of the stars that Subaru knew, aligned with the names of the Archbishops.

The etymology of Betelgeuse, [Orion’s Hand] was quite fitting with the madman Petelgeuse Romanee-Conti’s [Unseen Hand].

Therefore, Subaru believed that the stars’ sobriquets were closely related to the authorities of their Archbishops.

And [Greed]’s Archbishop was named Regulus Corneas. The “Regulus” that was his name had the Latin origin of “Leo”, which meant [Small King], as well as— [Lion’s Heart].

Although he had once scoffed at the idea, Subaru realized that this notion was not meaningless and

pursued this train of thought, thus arriving at a hypothesis.

In the first place, how is a [King] defined?

The Kingdom of Lugunica was currently in the middle of the royal election, each candidate striving to show their [Kingship]. Although each vision of [Kingship] would, sooner or later, come to light, Subaru wanted to bring up the topic of [King] here, in this situation where it took a more general meaning.

This so proclaimed [King], was a kingdom's representative, who stood at its top.

Loosening the definition, a nation could be made of anything, but a single individual could become no nation.

The [King] symbolizing the country existed from the [Citizens] within it.

Following this line of thought, bearing the name of [Small King], Regulus Corneas, would probably also correspondingly have [Citizens] who could grant him the title of [King].

Subaru: "Then, the ones who make Regulus king, where are this [Small Kingdom]'s [Citizens]?"

He didn't even have to think about it.

Without bringing any cultists, they'd attacked the city of Pristella.

Although this was a group of independently acting, offputting, malicious devils, the only one of them to bring unnecessary numbers had been Regulus.

Why would he need to do so?

Although, knowing Regulus, the possibility that he was merely flaunting his greed was not nonexistent, but if not, if he were acting out of necessity—

Subaru: "In order for Regulus to be a [Small King], he needed to bring his collective [Citizenship] of wives. Although whether or not the distance has some relation is unknown, it looks like that due to this restriction, even if there were fifty wives, Regulus would still need to bring them."

Was the condition of this [Invincibility] based on number of wives? Or distance from the wives?

If Regulus's identity as a [Small King] was conditional, the scope of what [Greed] could reach would potentially be affected by such limits.

In short, Regulus's wives were in no way irrelevant to his [Invincibility].

Subaru: "But, this isn't quite enough to reveal to me the secret to his trick."

What Subaru had understood with his reasoning, was only [Small King]'s part.

His other name, [Lion's Heart], had yet to be explained, as did the overwhelming power, both offensive and defensive, that accompanied his [Invincibility], as well as the fact that his surroundings had no effect on him, all remained mysteries.

If he'd merely had a strengthened body, it wouldn't have been impossible for Reinhardt to have break through; However, Regulus's [Invincibility] clearly surpassed such a resistance.

Subaru: "It can't be a super-strong barrier. All the measures to stop an [Invincible] enemy have been tried already. On top of that, he definitely lacks a heartbeat and body temperature. Then—"

The name of [Lion's Heart] opened a thought, and the last piece of the puzzle fell in place.

Regulus's Authority of [Greed] was not [Invincibility].

The true face of the murderer's overwhelming power was [Stillness of an Object's Time].

Already supplied, already appraised, without holes.

The words that Regulus always wore at his lips of distorted self-satisfaction, were about how he was a man satisfied with his ideal existence, but at the same time made no attempt to hide the nature of his ability.

Subaru: "The time of his body is frozen, so forget attacks; even the water won't wet him. The time of the sand he he throws is frozen, so it doesn't bounce off, it goes straight through."

Among the superpowers known in manga, there was a similar one of [Space Break].

This power, as its literal name suggested, caused a break with space itself, cutting something off from its surroundings, regardless of whatever may try to affect it; Regulus's existence itself acted thus, on some level.

The Regulus Corneas who could cut himself off from the flow of time, could be said to be the distortion of space itself.

Indeed, he'd said, the dimension was different— [Invincibility] was but a side effect of [Stillness of an Object's Time].

What was to say—

Subaru: "—The secret technique of freezing time's your true ability!"

Regulus: "You say so proudly all you like, I'll have no comment! Are you that type? Who wishfully believing that you know something, so everyone around you should find out as well? Even pride should be measured, show me a little self-awareness, you little brat!"

Subaru's back was pressed against a stone wall, hiding his figure as he yelled, and Regulus rushed at him

with ridicule.

Breaking through walls, cutting through the canal, literally crossing directly in a march of devastation— as a result of this, Regulus caught up with Subaru.

Right now, Subaru met all of this alone. That said, in truth this was not the exciting match the word [combat] implied.

Regulus: “Darting back and forth irritates me to death, you. Not running away, makes you truly a man, did you think I’d say so? You and I can’t compare at all. Though you clearly gawked as I sent the Sword Saint flying, you can’t even understand something like this? No matter how you look at it, isn’t this just looking down on me!?”

Subaru: “When it’s someone you hate, whatever they do, right or wrong, is always irritating. If I ran, I’d only run into a future so hard it’d kill me. In addition… this choice is the right answer, should be it.”

Regulus: “Right answer my ass. Whether it’s personnel selection or strategy, allofallof it! It can only amount to a result that’s twisted to death, isn't that right? If you wanted to continue the fight, wouldn’t it have been much better for that flowering maiden to stay? An adulterer like you, is there anything you can do aside from touching someone else’s wife?

Subaru: “What you’re chattering at me is actually pretty harsh.”

Though it were as Regulus’s bitter words bound him, Subaru wasn’t anxious in the slightest.

Not anxious, not irritated; even his disgust had been watered out, as he relied on only his smart mouth to control the situation.

Now, Subaru had lured Regulus a distance away from the church, separated from Emilia, facing off with the murderer alone.

Facing off, saying so seemed a touch inaccurate. Since Subaru was just trying to hide himself, he maintained his taunting demeanor, striving merely to buy time.

If Regulus noticed this, and made a destructive attack that would rend the space from top to bottom, Subaru’s plans would be shattered in an instant. However, Subaru was sure that Regulus would never do so.

In this short period of time, with the hostile nature of their interactions, he’d very accurately seen through Regulus’s character.

In short, Regulus was scum.

This simple statement could in no way explain all of Regulus’s problems.

More precisely, Regulus was someone who valued himself most highly, and would certainly never be

capable of ignoring the existence of others.

To be frank, calling him the incarnation of desire for approval and desire to show off would be no exaggeration.

Claiming that he has no desire and no demands with sophisticated words, treating his existence as one which had already achieved perfection, Regulus seemed unable to continue living without proclaiming his own value to others.

Repress the feelings of others, imposing his own values onto them, using intimidation and violence to forcefully instate himself as a supreme authority.

This attitude was not how he treated just his brides, but how he treated the entire world.

Therefore, in a certain sense, Regulus truly was attentive and serious to whatever he faced.

His battle with Reinhardt served as perfect proof.

If Regulus had the notion of doing so, he could have completely invalidated Reinhardt’s attacks with his [invincibility], and gone on to kill the somewhat troublesome Subaru and Emilia.

Despite this, he was deliberately eager to accept Reinhardt’s attacks directly, and thus was unable to put this acute plan into action.

Although, this was not to say that Regulus valued any high-handedness of spirit.

Rather, this decidedly further proved the nature that he’d supposedly cast aside.

—This man, Regulus, without using all his power to make everything succumb, could not stop.

Therefore, not crushing the meddlesome Reinhardt or just ignoring the provoking Subaru, were not decisions he could make in battle.

Assured by the premise that he could be neither injured or defeated, he needed to force his opponents to completely surrender, and leave their spirits defeated and broken— a man who knew only this way of battle.

Such a repulsive nature was truly unsightly to behold.

The why of this notion was that, assuredly everyone with no exception, would to some extent hold the same feelings. Even Subaru himself was aware of such ugliness in his own nature.

Precisely because he forced people to gaze into this ugliness, was why the existence of Regulus was so hateful.

However, this exact reason was what allowed a faint glimpse at a tiny chance of victory.

Subaru: “Your secret method of freezing time, fine ignore it, but what about the first part? Was my speculation really completely off? If you would, even if it’s just a rough idea, I hope you can can outline it for me.”

Regulus: “Why would I have to answer the question? It’s nonsensical and not obliged of me. A matter of disclosing my own secrets, isn’t even about rights anymore. To what extent are you planning to look down on me. You fucker, are you incapable of understanding without having your bones ground to dust!?”

Falling for Subaru’s provocation, Regulus stomped hard at the ground.

The tips of his feet pierced the stone road, as easily as if it were made of pudding. The direction of the ammunition it released could be only tracked by sound, randomly destroying the area near Subaru’s hiding place.

Long before the bullets could find him, Subaru, who’d read Regulus’s movements, fled from the wall. During his escape, he also toppled the stone pillars standing at the ends of the street.

And thus, the rope tied to the stone pillar came untied, and a series of slight sounds echoed.

Overtop the head of Regulus, who’d looked up to see what had happened, countless shards of ice flew down. With Emilia’s help, the street had been turned into minefield of carefully lain traps.

Of course, the place where Regulus had been directly struck was unscathed, but—

Regulus: “This kind of thing! Is nothing but the desperate exhaustion of limited ability!”

Regulus, without attempt to dodge the falling ice, spread his arms in order to accept it with his entire body.

Of course, without hope of piercing his [invincibility], the shards of ice shattered into fragments, scattering to disperse into mana particles. Including the parts that had failed to touch his body, as if to show off, Regulus stomped through all the scattered bits of ice, destroying them utterly.

Regulus: “What’s this supposed to be? If your long rambling theory from just now was correct, couldn’t you yourself think of how meaninglessness this attack is? Looking at it this way, isn’t it that that girl’s attacks are much more effective. Winding back and forth, just what do you intend to do!”

Subaru: “What I intend by winding back and forth like this, if I answer your question, you should correspondingly answer mine. These be our exchange conditions is what should be, no?”

Regulus: “And exchange between me and you, what is this but sheer wild arrogance!”

Subaru pulled back quickly at a large angle, putting distance between Regulus.

Refusing to let him go, Regulus chased Subaru persistently, gently bending his knees and leaping in one

motion. Moving forward with that explosive propulsion, in an instant the distance between the two shrank.

Like this, the fingertips of death reached Subaru— nearly, before Regulus lost its foothold.

Regulus: “Wha!?”

Subaru: “Though this was truly outside my expectations, but the weaknesses of you who only knows force on force is practically just pathetic.”

The classic pitfall trap, was also reliant on Emilia’s magic to dig into the ground, a primitive mechanic which used a layer of ice covered with soil.

However, a veteran of hundreds of battles who should have seen through such a simple trap, Regulus in fact completely fell for it. Although ironic, this also served as evidence that Regulus couldn’t do anything but enforce victories with brute force.

Properly and uprightly, using his cheat ability to directly crush his opponent with brute force.

Capable of nothing aside from this, evidently a man who would consider no other battle tactics.

Subaru: “Different from through your power, whatever it takes to defeat you, we’ll do. Repeating such a thing, it’s getting hard to even tell who the antagonist is anymore.”

Taking a shortcut to reach the church first, fighting for every last second to turn this area into a minefield of traps.

Although Emilia had refused to leave Subaru until the last second, with her guileless nature, she could never use these dirty tactics. Chosen for suitability, was this distribution of labor.

Subaru: “——”

In the time that Regulus had yet to climb out of the hole, Subaru surreptitiously glanced down at his right foot. Even after the strenuous parkour of his escape, it was still in excellent condition. Both when it had been turned to bloody ribbons and when it had been enveloped in this mysterious black material, had become something he could never forget.

Perhaps this was the influence of the [Dragon’s Blood], which felt almost as if the blood were speaking to Subaru.

This arrogant false [King] that is your enemy, show him the prestige of the Dragon Kingdom.

Subaru: “In this case, I’ll be asking you for more help. Though I’ll be owing you lots.”

Regulus: “Your whining on, it irritates me to death!”

The ground erupted with fragments of stone steps and lumps of soil, scattering with force.

Backed by Regulus's power, they further caused fierce damage to the streets. Despite this devastation, Subaru was not within its destructive reach.

Having flown out from the ground, Regulus, eyes widened with hate, glowered at Subaru, who'd put distance between them again. Very deliberately, Subaru raised his middle finger at Regulus.

Subaru: "Seems that someone once said 'desperate exhaustion of limited ability', may I ask who said this, again? Though it's often said that [treating others as a mirror can lead to understanding of victory and defeat], but shouldn't you take a long hard look at the mirror first?"

Regulus: "Messing, messing with me, to such an extent, you…!"

After politely having his flaws pointed out, Regulus revealed a look of ferocity.

More than likely, his homicidal feelings toward Subaru had already easily reached a breaking point, and the flames of hatred had consumed his murderous unchanging body.

Regulus seemingly hadn't noticed at all, that this was all more or less within the scope of Subaru's expectations.

Because, without sharpening his murderous intent, his loose and messy rough attacks were ineffective, was a point hadn't been realized by Regulus for even the slightest of moments.

Subaru: "Though that's the case, I can't afford to take this lightly."

Wiping sweat from his neck, Subaru, with a flippant grin, readied himself for death.

What he couldn't let Regulus see, was that his intent was only to buy time. And even if that were to been seen though, he absolutely could not see the reasoning behind it.

This was the condition for victory of this battle, the task that Subaru, who'd sent Emilia away, needed to accomplish.

This was what he and Emilia had sworn to each other, that they would fulfill their respective duties no matter what.

And so—

Subaru: "Leaving it to you, Emilia. —Be sure to bring out the wives' heartfelt feelings."

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

When Emilia arrived at the church, the brides were still where they'd been left.

Emilia: “Excellent, everyone’s still exactly—”

Looking at the faraway wives in attendance, Emilia blurted her feelings.

However, she was struck silent, as the positions of the wives in attendance had remained quite literally unchanged.

If Emilia’s memory served her correctly— they hadn’t moved even the slightest bit since she’d escaped from the church.

Emilia: “Just because Regulus, gave an order to keep still…?”

He had no power of binding, was what Emilia understood from what she’d already been told by Subaru the truth of [Greed]’s authority.

Although he’d stressed repeatedly, “*this is just a hypothesis*”, Emilia had full faith in his answer.

In order to defeat that murderer, what Subaru and Emilia had to accomplish no matter what had yet to be done.

Emilia: “Everyone, all stayed… then, the first issue isn’t a problem.”

The most frightening possibility was that the wives had separated into hiding, or had fled the church in a panic.

Before the point of no return, they would have to take a last resort. The plan that Subaru had so gravely proposed, Emilia wanted to avoid if at all possible.

And so—

Emilia: “Everyone, I beg leave to speak to you.”

There was no time.

Although there was guarantee they’d even listen, Emilia had to overcome this obstacle now.

184: “—Husband-sama, how is he?”

In the half-destroyed church, standing in the middle facing Emilia, the to respond to her, was a blonde-haired woman— 184.

Unlike the other silent wives seated in neat rows, only she sat at the front near the collapsed altar.

Having helped Emilia change, offering her advice, with eyes as cold as when she spoke of the despair her future would hold, 184 questioned the returning Emilia in a voice without inflection.

Emilia: “Regulus is outside… Sorry. We’re still engaged in battle. I couldn’t strike him down.”

184: “That’s so. … Isn’t it.”

The corners of 184’s mouth rose almost imperceptibly.

Such a tiny smile, as if she didn’t know why it was there. In addition, Emilia understood that this smile conveyed neither joy nor sadness, but something resembling ridicule.

Because, a smile like this which existed to bring harm unto others, Emilia had encountered many times in the past.

And so—

Emilia: “Such a cold smile. I don’t think it suits you. This expression.”

184: “… My apologies. Because Husband-sama forbids smiles, I allowed you to see an undignified expression.”

Emilia: “Please don't apologize. What I meant, wasn’t this.”

At 184’s self-deprecating words, Emilia shook her head.

Inside her chest, heat began to concentrate somewhere that wasn’t her heart. It’s just as Subaru said, those words kept rising to the surface of her mind.

Intense to the point of discomfort was a fierce feeling, swelling unbearably in her heart.

Closing her eyes, suppressing the turbulent emotion, Emilia glanced back and forth around the church before she spoke.

Emilia: “We’re planning to take down Regulus. To do so, we need everyone’s help.”

Wives: “——”

Emilia: “I don’t know what treatment you’ve suffered at Regulus’s hand up until now, but even I who was only briefly in contact with him, can see that Regulus is wrong.”

Having been taken by him while unconscious, he had asked for her hand in marriage as soon as she’d woken up. Then, she’d immediately been overwhelmed by the wedding ceremony, and had been told of Regulus’s ideas on marriage and the way he treated his wives.

This was a far cry from the happy marriages that Emilia had been told of.

Emilia: “I don’t want to lose to Regulus. I understand that in battle, success or failure is irrelevant to right and wrong. But right now, right here, I don’t want to lose to Regulus. If I lose… certainly, that which is

important will be trampled upon.”

184: “That which is important… huh.”

Emilia: “——”

184: “If you don’t want to be without life, you should have obeyed Husband-sama from the start, or you should have tried to flee without regard for anything else. Both were possible. Clearly, that would have been best for you.”

With a dark gaze, 184 answered Emilia.

184: “What happened to the the Sword Saint and that knight of yours accompanying you earlier? They met Husband-sama’s counterattack, and fell in battle. And thus, you alone fled here.”

Emilia: “No. Whether Subaru or Reinhardt, both of them are still engaged with Regulus. My return, they trust in and await for.”

184: “What could you accomplish by returning? And then, saying that you need our help and such… I don’t understand what you mean.”

Emilia: “Do you truly not understand what I mean?”

184: “——?”

Faced with Emilia’s interrogation, 184 raised her eyebrow wordlessly.

This natural reaction, didn’t seem forced in the slightest. Although she’d slackened once she’d given up, since the very beginning, 184 had no intention to deceive Emilia which weighed down her words.

In other words, she truly had no idea.

—That Regulus’s [Heart] had been entrusted to his wives, her included.

Emilia: “And everyone else? Everyone, are you truly okay with this? Having wanted do anything at all, having wanted someone else to do something, is there no one who still thinks this way?”

184: “Please stop. I will listen to you. If you have questions, please ask me. My answer is the answer of the collective.”

Facing Emilia who tried to take a read of those around her, with stiff words, 184 interjected.

Stubborn, or maybe brave— Emilia recalled how for her sake, she’d even questioned Regulus, at risk of her own life.

Although that had indeed been a form of altruism—

Emilia: “What matters is, I have a sense of an attitude of having abandoned your own life.”

184: “——”

Emilia: “You were in fact the most important, you just didn’t realize, is that right?”

Recalling that at the start of all this, 184 had been the one to speak with Emilia.

Not merely because Regulus had ordered her to take charge of Emilia. In Emilia’s place, she’d offered her opinions to Regulus, stood on behalf of other brides, and right now intended to accept the words hurled at all of them.

This kind of posturing placed her as Regulus’s confidant— opportunistically manipulating Emilia and the brides, the suspicion of that rose.

Emilia: “But, I don’t think that’s the case. You aren’t Regulus’s [Heart]. I’d like to believe this.”

Emilia had been saved numerous times by 184.

Not sheltering her in a way that was visible to the naked eye, nor taking her hands to guide her.

Instead, in the face of incomprehensible malice, making sure that she would be prepared to proceed on.

Someone so concerned about others—

Emilia: “Being the true bride of someone like that, I can’t picture it.”

184: “… Perhaps it was because I wanted you to believe that, that I spoke to you, you know.”

Emilia: “That’s so. I, my head isn’t all that good, so if you were trying to fool me, I may have been deceived instantly. But,”

Emilia didn’t know whether or not she a gaze with which to regard others.

Currently, Emilia’s comrades stood by her not are not because Emilia had chosen and expected for them to eventually be her comrades.

It had been because all of Emilia’s comrades, had chosen her.

But toward being chosen, she’d never thought anything like “*aren’t I amazing*”.

Rather, she’d always felt uneasy, afraid of having to live up to expectations.

However, she wanted to respond to expectations bestowed upon her, and wanted herself to be able to respond to expectations. Always, she’d prayed thus.

Emilia: “I want to believe in you. This is, a choice I made.”

184: “——”

Emilia: “Why, are you standing up for the silent crowd? Why, despite the surrender in your eyes, would you still help me? Why, are you—”

184: “All questions.”

Interrupting Emilia’s question, 184 shook her head.

Then, for the first time since Emilia had arrived here, she raised her face.

Frozen feelings on a stiff expression.

Such dry eyes, and closed lips.

This sense of sorrow, took the woman’s already beautiful face to another level.

However, what she was thinking was.

184: “Please leave as soon as you can. If Husband-sama sees us, we’ll all die.”

Emilia: “Listen to me—”

184: “I have no reason to respond to these questions. You’re, no longer Husband-sama’s wife. Not like us.”

Emilia: “—I’m a half-elf.”

184: “Eh?”

Faced with Emilia’s confession, the woman was struck silent.

Realizing that she’d done something unexpected, Emilia gave a faint smile. On the other hand, the woman finally understood the meaning of Emilia's confession.

She understood that standing in front of her eyes, was a silver-haired half-devil.

184: “Silver haired… half-elf…”

Emilia: “In truth, up until now, you and I have been different. Different situations, different origins, different even in our most basic qualities. But, I don’t think anything like ‘Everything about us is different, thus we’re without connection’ because of this.”

184: “——”

Emilia: “The things you and I see, are surely the same. When you’re sad, you’ll want to cry, when you meet something you can’t solve, you’ll be angry, when you encounter something happy, you’ll laugh with joy. That’s the same, right?”

184: “What exactly, are you trying to say?”

Emilia, who had been talking in a rush, drew a sigh from 184.

At the question, Emilia found herself confused. What exactly she wanted to say, if she wanted to say it, she herself couldn’t figure it out.

This went to show that she was turning too emotional, but that made her forget the topic and go off track. She should learn from Subaru, and say what she wanted to more directly—

Emilia: “That is, I…”

There were things she wanted to know. There were things she wanted to inquire about.

Things about Regulus’s [Heart]. Things about standing up and taking the lead role of the wives. With her utterly defeated expression, having protected the nearly defeated Emilia.

All of this together, she hoped that she would be told of by her.

And one more thing, that she needed to know first.

That was—

Emilia: “Your name, could you tell it to me?”

184: “——”

Emilia: “My name is Emilia, just Emilia. Although with circumstances different from yours, surely sharing similarities with you, a half-elf.”

184: “Humph…”

Emilia: “If we can see the same things, feel the same things, share the same hopes… Certainly, talking won’t be without meaning.”

Once upon a time, she’d introduced herself like this before.

When her heart had been ridden with unease, when she’d been convinced that she had no one to rely on, when she felt as if endless floods were swallowing her.

Back then, she’d been taken in by the same words.

—Even until today, she thought.

Then, she'd been truly happy.

The boy who she'd never met before recognizing her existence, had made her very happy.

When rejection had been about to come, suddenly being tossed words like those, she'd hopelessly fallen.

184: "——"

Once again, she had to borrow Subaru's strength.

Left and right, she was borrowing, and then desperate piecing it together.

But it was enough.

184: "Don't, kid around… Why is it, until now…"

Before Emilia, 184— the woman held her head, shaking it as she screamed with all her might.

That expression was filled with agony, that voice with resentment, and those eyes with the feelings of gazing upon what she loathed.

This was, since the beginning, the first genuine emotion that Emilia had wrought from her—

184: "Why after all that, are you suddenly saying something like we can be human again!"

As if to release the flow of long repressed emotion, she wailed.

184: "Not that not being human matters, being a doll is just fine. That man, is satisfied if we only act as obedient dolls. If we're played with like dolls, our lives will remain safe and sound. Only because we could believe this, did we last until today… that's the case, so!"

Materializing the strength of her feelings, she clashed with Emilia.

An outsider who knew nothing, what could they know about people like her, desperately struggling to even stay alive.

184: "What do you even know about us!"

Emilia: "I know that you're incredibly kind."

184: "What do you even know about us!"

Emilia: "I also know just how hard you worked to endure."

184: “What do you, even know, about us…!”

Emilia: “I know, that you’re all crying out to be saved.”

Hearing Emilia’s words, the woman raised her face, as if suddenly bouncing back.

With widened, round eyes, with struggling, faintly moving lips.

Even a single word, she could not utter.

Because, up until now, if any of them had said it, their hearts would surely have given out.

The despair known as help, and the seeking of hope known as rescue, were as one.

Holding such hopes, until now, hadn’t been allowed. In order to keep their minds from giving in, those thoughts were suppressed in their hearts.

And the result of this, with even the simplest of cries for help sealed deep within their hearts, were they.

Emilia: “I want to be saved; all of you are saying so. So I will save you. I’ll free you from Regulus’s hands. And to that end—”

184: “——”

Emilia: “Please lend me your strength. Please help help the ones who for me, and you… those who are even now, still engaged in battle.

She lowered her head.

With sincerity, having stated her hopes, Emilia lowered her head.

She stared straight at the ground.

Her heartbeat leapt painfully, and faintly, barely detectable atmosphere surrounding her felt as if it were a hurricane.

She held up her body now on the verge of crumbling, clenching her teeth to steel her heart.

Feeling afraid, was not only her.

Because, certainly for so much longer that she didn’t even know, they had lived with a nightmare that they could not wake from.

Then—

184: “… Please, wait just a moment.”

Emilia: “——”

Toward Emilia, who had been keeping her head down, the woman spoke, biting her lip.

Then with a deep breath, she cast her gaze away from Emilia. There were the gathered wordless wives, who observed the progressing dialogue.

184: “I have a question, that I’d like to ask. One that until now, I have yet to have asked anyone.”

The woman paused for a moment, and the wives soundlessly wore frigid expressions.

Emilia also could not form a single sentence, and like this waited for the result.

In the sea of gazes which could stop breaths, the woman who had always stood up as the leader of the wives, spoke.

184: “Is there anyone, who likes that man?”

The question that the woman gently tilting her head posed, spread throughout the church.

The content shocked Emilia, and the brides who had remained silent, only cast their gazes around at each other. Confusion accompanied the faint emotion that rose in their minds.

Like a ripple, it spread.

Wife: “… Hate him.”

The one who spoke this, was neither Emilia nor the woman acted as the wives’ representative. It was one of the wives seated in the rows, a woman with short hair.

Those words which had barely been squeezed out, shocked not merely Emilia.

“I also, hate him.” “I hate him too.” “I’ve always hated him.” "I hate him, I really hate him.” “What a weirdo.” “Messed up in the head.” “Has he even liked anyone before?” “Only himself.” “I don't know how many times I’ve turned him down in my head.” “I want to cry.” “But I can’t.” “Hate him.” “He should just die.” “Hate him more than anything.” “Hatehatehate, truly hate him.” “His gaze is hateful.” “The way he emphasizes words is hateful.” “The way he walks is hateful.” “His character is hateful.” “Unlovable by nature.” “I hate him more than yesterday.” “I’ll hate him more tomorrow.” “Disgusting.” “Perverted.” “The brain of a child.” “Even a child would be better.” “Even a dragon would be better.” “No one could be a good match for him.” “Physiologically unacceptable.” “Hatehatehate.” “He makes me want to vomit.” “I don’t know how many times I’ve thought about beating him to death.” “The worst.” “Worse than the worst.” “Being near him nauseates me.” “His touch makes me feel like I’m rotting.” “My heart died.” “My family’s enemy.” “How could I like him if he forcibly kidnapped me?” “Is such unrepentant malice even possible?” “It hurts so much I want to die.” “He's long winded and pompous, every time I talk to him I want to die a bit more.” “I hope his intestines rot.” “Give my lover back.” “I want to go home, I want to go home…” “Screw rescuing us, just murder him instead.” “Scum

bastard.” “Truly hateful, I’ll hate him forever!” “A woman who would ever like him doesn’t exist, does she?” “Nor a man.” “No human would ever like him.”

As if a dam had broken, the wives poured out the words that had been suppressed in their hearts until now.

The overflowing words were resentment and disgust that had festered for too long in their hearts, stuffed with years of hatred and suffering, certainly not feelings that could bring joy.

—Even so, their expressions as they spat those words out became joyous and clear.

184: “Such unanimous opinions, which have never once been spoken before.”

Emilia: “You, too, was there anything you wanted to say?”

184: “Ah, there is.”

After hearing the wives’ admissions, the woman turned around to face Emilia.

Caressing her long blonde hair, then with a face full of smiles— casting aside the order that forbade smiling, for the first time she revealed her beautiful smile.

184: “The kind of man, is the most hated. —Please by all means, help us.”

Like this, with a faint smile, the divorce statement was signed.

Arc 5 – Chapter 57, "Where The Heart Lies"

by admin - Thursday, February 28, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/02/28/arc-5-chapter-57-where-the-heart-lies/

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Translated by :

- Nanashi

Proofread by :

- u/IceOccultism
- u/GracedHarperd

Fan Art Source :

- zhukzubast from the Discord Server

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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—Since Subaru had left his life in the hands of fate, about ten minutes had passed.

Regulus: “Come on already! Strive after something for once, how about obediently dying here?”

Subaru: “Uwaaah!”

Regulus kicked at the house, cutting into it with terrifying precision, and the building without its support toppled helplessly.

The cloud of debris accompanying the collapse filled the vicinity, and Regulus, whose own vision would up clouded, clicked his tongue impatiently— listening to these tiny sounds, Subaru returned to the battlefield that had been exhausted of its traps.

Regulus: “Restlessly moving about… do you have no notion of attacking straightforwardly at all? Although I couldn’t care less about your relationship with that whore, but if you’re claiming to be their knight or whatever, is this any way to fight!?”

Subaru: “Say whatever you like, you talk until you’re satisfied!”

Regulus: “There you are!!”

If Subaru had tried to refute Regulus’s malicious mutterings, he’d receive in return a handful of sand that would end his life.

The instant after Subaru had escaped far away, the debris that he’d been hiding behind vaporized.

Being brushed would lead to fatal injury, a single strike would mean instant death.

So far, Regulus’s attacks had all miraculously missed. As contact would instantly mean the end, thanking fortune for this would be a tad inappropriate.

Subaru: “Concentrate! Concentrate! Concentrate!”

Catching his breath, wiping away sweat, he tensed all his attention to prepare for evasion.

The rising dust stained his face, and Subaru spat out a mouthful of saliva that tasted of dirt.

Putting the results of his parkour training into effect.

Unlike the days when his exercise had been without goal, the clear sense of purpose of right now had an enormous impact on the state of Subaru’s mind.

In the forest near the New Roswaal Mansion, repeated every single day, to the point of being sick of it—that time hadn’t been for nothing.

Subaru: “*Hah*, no matter what, *hah*, I’m just a guy who can at most mess around with the skill of an amateur…!”

Even then, he was someone who had stopped a Sin Archbishop of the Witch Cult.

Considering the battlefield situation and Subaru’s personal ability, to say that he was accomplishing something special wouldn’t be much of a stretch.

If Pristella could safely escape from the Witch Cult’s sinister hands, no matter what he’d try to contribute just a bit more—

Subaru: “So……!”

Regulus: “Are you going to keep trying to kill time with this, do you seriously think that someone like

you could be of any threat to me? You're just someone who figured out [Greed]'s secret a bit, but don't mistake that for the ability to stand against me!"

Without even room to catch his breath, the enraged Regulus increased the scope of his destruction. Regulus no longer cared about how much collateral damage he'd cause in order to kill Subaru.

The Pristella which was famed for its beautiful scenery, was gradually losing those sights from the crimes of the Witch Cult.

The stone bridge that spanned the waterway was shattered, the store meticulously decorated with glass was destroyed. Finding a feeling odd beauty in the flashing of shivering glass that was dissonant from the scene, Subaru believed in his right foot, and took the momentum of destruction as a cue to flee.

Ironically, from his right foot came a surge of power.

Pitch black, infected with who knows what, that right foot was currently Subaru's lifeline.

Lashing out with his whip, latching onto the raingutter of the horizontally oriented buildings. Believing in the tension of his whip, Subaru stomped hard on the ground, crossing the streets as if running along the wall— passing by Regulus's side as if to specifically force the evildoer to watch him with widened eyes, he stuck out his tongue for extra provocation.

Regulus: "You!! Have no idea just what you're worth!!"

The stone thrown from his swinging arm, flew far off, completely missing Subaru who fled using the momentum of yanking his whip.

Without even considering an attack, using solely the tactics of escape.

Those who had perished at [Greed]'s hands, had died due to their excessive courage. Weak, fragile, and timidly insisting on escaping. Certainly, such a person could not lose.

Thus, that misfortune could be wiped clean here.

For that goal—

Subaru: "Is it still not ready yet, Emilia? —This guy's, heart!"

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Emilia: "Someone with a clue… isn't there anyone?"

Before the brides who had promised their aid, Emilia accepted the mystery of possibilities and bit her lip.

The fifty-three assembled brides, all glanced back and forth at each other at Emilia's question, before finally shaking their heads weakly.

Sylphy: “My most sincere apologies. Casting that man’s control aside and wanting to help you, is certainly genuine. Only…”

Bowing her head with remorse, this was the representative of the wives, the blonde woman named Sylphy.

Amongst all of Regulus’s wives, she was the one who was most well informed about their current situation, and so she’d become a representative of sorts.

Sylphy: “I can scarcely believe that that man would place something so important with us. Though that man may call us wives and brides and whatnot… but actually acting as if we’re husband and wife, has never once happened.”

Emilia: “Although I’ve been told of Regulus being a suuper problematic person, that shouldn’t be the case. Regulus’s … [Lion’s Heart] is definitely, definitely placed on you.”

Although Sylphy had begun to feel discouraged due to the lack of clues, Emilia would not be so easily disheartened.

At long last, Sylphy and the other wives, of their own will, had found their resolve to escape from Regulus’s grasp. This was only the beginning of their resolve. To become discouraged at this very first step was absolutely unallowable.

And as for Emilia, she believed in Subaru with nary a trace of doubt.

Subaru was amazing. Not only was he aware of so many things Emilia didn’t know, but he could apply knowledge and a lively attitude to a solution, no matter what adversity they’d had to face in the past. And so,

Emilia held no misgivings about his suspicion that Regulus’s authority was [Lion’s Heart].

This was not to say that she was acting thoughtlessly or with blind trust.

Just because it’s Subaru, it’s okay, was not the case. Even Subaru would make mistakes, and on occasion he would fail. However, that mistake would be corrected. Or she’d take his hand and become a force that could help him, this had become a source of Emilia’s trust in him.

Emilia: “Subaru thinks that [Lion’s Heart] must reside within the wives…”

Touching her chin as if lost in thought, Emilia remembered the secret of [Greed]’s power that Subaru had shared with her.

—An authority that could stop the time of an object, that could leave it unable to be changed.

Although she’d initially thought such a power inconceivable, she found that too much fell in place with that explanation.

Could this truly exist in reality? Rather than being an uncertainty, it would be better to say that—

Emilia: “There, a suuuper inconceivable power is at work.”

Apparently, this was something even more irrational than a Divine Protection.

Unfortunately, Emilia, lacking a Divine Protection herself, could not comprehend the power inherent to those who were blessed with Divine Protections.

However, in Regulus, she could sense something similar. Something far more ferocious and ugly than a Divine Protection, were these authorities.

Emilia: “Heart, heart…”

To Emilia, the worst case scenario would be if one of the wives were truly a confidante, connected to Regulus’s true heart. This real bride would then be siding with Regulus, and would be concealing her heart from Emilia.

Emilia: “——”

Leaving the contemplative Emilia aside, the brides congregated around Sylphy, scrutinizing their previous conversations for clues.

Emilia’s amethyst eyes carefully scrutinized their faces as they engaged in a serious discourse.

At the same time, she directed the micro-spirits to look for changes in their bodies. These micro-spirits weren’t particularly sensitive to changes in people, so their behaviour as if to test those who had applied for cooperation was decidedly unpleasant.

However, her misgivings had long exceeded the level that “*I don’t want to doubt*” could curb.

Spirits: “Mmm……”

The micro-spirits gave a response.

Although it could not be said to be certain, the wives had given no obvious reaction. Within the sphere that Emilia could observe, there were clearly no wives who served as Regulus’s confidant.

In that case, the only other possibility that came to mind was—

Emilia: “Eh?”

Suddenly feeling as if her hair were being tugged on, Emilia immediately raised her head.

Before her eyes, dancing in Emilia’s line of sight was a micro-spirit glowing blue. The micro-spirit that should have been tracking one of the brides, swayed in the air as if wanting to convey something to

Emilia.

Her eyes tracing the spirit's line of travel, she found that it now faced Sylphy. She too was currently working hard, as the lead singer of the chorus of the wives' revolt against Regulus.

The micro-spirit was fluttering around her back, as if bobbing up and down.

Emilia: "Hey, do you have a moment to talk?"

At Emilia's greeting, with an expression of surprise Sylphy turned. Emilia walked over to Sylphy, sneaking a glance at the micro-spirit which emphasized its presence near her chest.

Sylphy: "What is it?"

Emilia: "Excuse me for a second."

No one present beside Emilia could see the micro-spirits without physical form. So no matter how hard micro-spirits tried to communicate, they could reach no one but Emilia.

So, when Emilia suddenly reached a hand out toward Sylphy's chest, Sylphy looked back to Emilia as if shocked.

Sylphy?: "Eh? Eheheh?"

Emilia: "Wait a moment, please stay quiet. I'm checking something right now."

Sylphy: "What're you checking, hey, what're you checking…?"

Her cheeks reddening, Sylphy questioned Emilia without being able to mask her surprise.

Emilia then answered Sylphy with a serious expression.

Emilia: "The rhythm, of your heart."

Sylphy: "——!"

Emilia: "It's because I'm a spiritualist. Though my original contracted partner is currently on leave, I can still communicate with the micro-spirits. I asked those micro-spirits to investigate your bodies, and received a response that only your heartbeat was strange."

Sylphy: "My heart……?"

Sylphy swallowed a mouthful of saliva.

Her expression was entirely one of disbelieving surprise. Her shock was merely a matter of course. After all, she'd only just heard a brief summary of [Lion's Heart], before being told that her heartbeat had

changed.

And if things had progressed to this point, there there was only one explanation—

Emilia: “Too much… Regulus combines his heart, together with the heart of someone who he claims to be his wife…!”

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Regulus: “No matter how you look at it, although you’re wearing the image of virtuousness while reciting your respectable rhetoric, where the notion that your battle to buy time would actually bear fruit came from, is a complete mystery to me. And although I don’t know how you could conceive of my power, but now having clearly understood it, you would really want to keep fighting?”

As he glanced down at the bloodied Subaru, Regulus seemed to tilt his face upward in boast of his victory.

Collapsed on the ground, lying by the side of a building as he took pained breaths, half of Subaru’s face was stained with fresh blood.

Subaru: “Ah, guu…”

Regulus: “Although I’ve let you run about here and there, you’re really boring after having fallen. Well, that’s to be expected. It couldn’t be not like that. Considering the difference between you and I, this is merely reaping the crop when the harvest is over. With this, at last, without extraneous unpleasant moods, the end has come.”

Approaching the collapsed Subaru, Regulus’s heels crushed the rocks littering his path. His authority was still active, as if he wanted it to be witnessed.

Regulus: “In summary, don’t you feel that this is the fault of your excessively arrogant self? Up until now, there have been many like you, who wanted to beat me down or rouse a battle against me. But of all those people, not a single one has ever touched me. That is the fate of those whose desires supercede their abilities, an absolute law of nature. Do you understand?”

The Sin Archbishop of [Greed] discussing the nature of desire, asserted his contempt for those who allowed excessive desire to immolate themselves.

To have desire would create struggle without meaning. To have desire would create starvation without boundary. To have desire would create ruthlessness without limit.

For this exact reason, to be without want and without desire was valuable.

Just pray if you are poor, to have your own talent is optimal.

Regulus: “Just being content with the present enough, craving what is beyond own abilities will lead your

own destruction. Gathering together one after another but refusing to learn, you are really a bunch of hopeless creatures."

With a sigh, Regulus slid a hand through his white hair, shaking his head as if he was drunk on the throes of a tragedy.

However, the sorrow in that voice was no act. Regulus was more or less from the bottom of his heart, sighing at the foolishness of Subaru and others who were not himself.

That was the self-righteous, undetectably lonely voice of someone omnipotent.

Subaru: "Before… I die… your… power's…"

Regulus: "Hah? Aah, [a last offering], as the saying goes? Trust you to know something archaic as that. You've bested me in an irrelevant store of knowledge, is that what you're trying to say?"

Regulus laughed as he watched Subaru whose breaths looked on the verge of cutting off, wishing only for that last answer. Without a single route of escape, all that was left for his sorrowful existence was imminent death.

Regulus: "Well, you've already gotten this far. At the very end, I'll give your negligible self a reward for your efforts. I'll tell you, that this time you struggled to your very last to buy, is all completely meaningless."

Subaru: "Meaningless… you mean…"

Regulus: "It's all really rather simple. My heart that you and that woman are searching for is indeed carried by my wives. —But, as to who is carrying it, neither I or any of them know. Equal rights, equally divided love, and the responsibilities and obligations they bear are equal as well."

Toward the astonished Subaru, Regulus shrugged with a "*Well, it's sort of like this*?".

Regulus: "For those who have taken multiple wives, treating all of them equally is a matter of course. In addition to a few clever justifications, only those who practice equality are allowed to exercise their authority. In other words, I'm betting on my life. Constantly, I am manifesting my love for them."

Subaru: "And the wives are unaware of this heart's condition because?"

Regulus: "Not like it's a particularly complicated reason. —Constantly hearing the sound of one's own heartbeat everyday, there isn't anyone out there who would continue to pay it any mind, is there?"

Watching Regulus who laughed with his mouth open, Subaru understood.

The method with which Regulus hid his heart, that vicious method.

Both simple and effective, and more defensive than any other method.

Subaru: “With your heart and your wives’ hearts, you…!”

Regulus: “Managing the husband’s property is indeed one of the wife’s obligations. But you see, since I am a man without desire. In the first place, I don’t have the amount of meaningless possessions that guys like you do. And so, what is entrusted to my wives is my existence itself… what magnificence, isn’t this the very essence of matrimonial love?”

—Disgusting.

Regulus’s consciously ruthless authority. Without malice, without condemnation, he believed that was the natural order and process.

Subaru had come up with a number of theories on [Lion’s Heart]’s hidden methods, before sending Emilia to the church. But no matter how he looked at it, this had not been one of them.

Moreover, if no one could break—.

Subaru: “Something so far beyond reason… Emilia, she couldn’t possibly do anything.”

Just now, if what Regulus had boasted of with a face full of pride was in fact the entirety of [Lion’s Heart], then there should still be a method of breaking through it. If that could be conveyed to Emilia, with her power, she could take care of it with haste.

The question was not one of possibility, but one of correctness.

—That is, the choice of life and death.

Regulus: “Hah? Hey, you…”

As he rose with a disgusted expression, Regulus wore an uncomprehending gaze as he watched the Subaru who stared at him.

Being caught up in the demolition of the city, Subaru who had until now seemed to be on the verge of death, brushed the dust from his knees as he stood, still glaring. After a moment, Subaru raised his eyebrows with an “*aah*” as he noticed Regulus’s incredulousness.

Subaru: “Playing dead… ah, no. Playing the verge of death. Since a flying stone happened to slice my forehead, I just wanted to give it a try, is all.”

Applying blood to his face and pretending to be in agony, had led to now.

With a face full of smiles, Subaru looked at Regulus who had been toyed into the palm of his hand.

Subaru: “I trusted in you. You’re definitely the kind who, if you found a dying enemy, would arrogantly boast of your victory as you rambled on nonstop.”

Regulus: “——!”

Subaru: “Whoa!”

Rising with a jump, Regulus’s body flew forward in a straight line.

With incredibly agile speed, and movements of a dirty casual, he flew in a straight line. In this rare moment, Regulus could achieve an acceleration that could shock even Reinhardt.

However, without being able to see that mechanism, his understanding of it was limited.

Subaru: “*Fuuu*!”

Accelerating with his right foot, without hesitation his body flew toward the left. Regulus’s goal was to slam directly into Subaru, but he was thwarted by the limitation of [linearity].

In summary, the Regulus’s momentary superhuman ability, was the result of an application of freezing his physical form. The time of his body was cut off from the world, and would not be interfered with again, was that man’s power. If he were to attack suddenly in this way, whether gravity, air resistance, or inertia, none could restrain him.

It wasn’t always in effect, which should be because there were restrictions—

Regulus: “—*Guu*, you bastard!”

Subaru: “The one who wants to yell is me…! I have to find a way to reach Emilia…”

The position Regulus’s heart, absolutely needed to be communicated.

To communicate it, and to make choices. What method was there—

In order to save the city, Emilia was needed.

Subaru: “Emilia…”

In contrast to Regulus who gathered momentum, Subaru looked in the direction of the church where Emilia should be.

In the midst of the ruined, collapsed street, a street that could not be crossed in Regulus’s aftermath, was a half-destroyed church.

—And that place in the next moment, was engulfed in a brilliance that shone blue and white.

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The hearts of the wives became one with Regulus’s heart.

Emilia’s conclusions caused tremors in all the surrounding wives who heard it.

Most heavily affected was Sylphy, who found herself the recipient of Regulus’s shared heart.

Sylphy: “My heart… and…?”

After her hand fell back, Sylphy’s face stilled as she backed away step by step. The woman standing behind her, worriedly placed her hand on Sylphy’s back.

Sylphy: “Do not touch me!”

In the next moment, Sylphy reflexively spoke as she swung out an arm.

As if to keep the other wives away from her, holding this posture, she looked at Emilia.

Sylphy: “Are you sure there’s no mistake?”

Emilia: “The micro-spirit says it’s unnatural. I, too, can feel a faint sense of overlap in the sound of your heartbeat.”

Sylphy: “——”

Sylphy placed a hand on her chest, closing her eyes as if to confirm what Emilia had just said. The speed, strength, and interval of her heartbeat resounding in her throat, she gave a deep sigh.

Sylphy: “I see… just how much, just to what extent does he want to trample upon the souls of others, that man!”

Emilia: “Wait a moment, what are you doing!?”

Revealing an incredibly dry smile, Sylphy walked into the depths of the church. Half-destroyed from Reinhardt’s attack, in a corner of the church were scattered shards from the skylight, of exquisitely carved glass.

Sylphy plucked up a shard of glass, and turned back.

Sylphy: “You understand, don’t you, that man’s schemes. Imposing his weaknesses unto others, and then forcing resolutions upon them as well.”

Emilia: “Resolutions… are you saying,”

Sylphy: “In order to stop that man’s heart, stopping my own heart is the only feasible way. As that man says, [‘til death do us part], isn’t this the case?”

As she played with the shard of glass, Sylphy spoke in a flippant voice. Emilia understood what she meant, and at the same time picked up on the underlying message. Sylphy’s epiphany and Regulus’s

malice.

Emilia: “Wait, you can’t! There has to be something, has to be some other way…”

Sylphy: “Such a convenient way, do you truly believe it exists? With our hearts already joined, stopping just that man’s heartbeat without stopping mine, couldn’t possible be, and,”

Emilia: “Don’t give up so easily! If I could allow something like this, for what have I… Why did I leave that forest!”

There was once again about to be a victim.

Because of Emilia’s lack of power and knowledge, a sacrifice was once again about to happen before her. Just like everyone in the forest. Just like Fortuna or Juice. As if to bury what Emilia’s hands could not reach, everyone but Emilia were inclined to use their own lives.

Sylphy: “The days of being taken as that man’s wife were truly arduous.”

Desperately, Emilia considered if there were any other way.

During this time, Sylphy’s heart gradually calmed down, and with the clarity of approaching the condign finale, she slowly began to grow more resolute.

Sylphy: “Merely in order to avoid trigger that man’s imperial wrath, I held the consciousness of death close. Allowing it to slide no matter how brutal that man was, welcoming the new brides… only for those children who were in the same position as me, no matter what, I wanted to protect them. Just as the one I first met, just as the ones before me protected them.”

Acting as the representative of the wives, presenting herself before all the others no matter what, and now her true meaning was clear.

Before her had been others. Triggering Regulus’s temper, someone who had stood at the forefront of all these seized women. And then Sylphy took that will up, because even now these wives remained still.

Sylphy: “Even if our spirits were defiled by that man, because he would never touch our bodies… Certainly, if both had been defiled, we would have long been unable to withstand. So right until today, no matter the language or voice or behavior of that man, endlessly we enduredandenduredandenduredandenduredandendured and yet!”

Having reached this point, Sylphy who had been biting her lips tilted her face upward.

In her eyes were large, large drops of tears, as well as a scorching rage that seemed searing enough to evaporate even those tears.

Sylphy: “That man’s hand, has tainted even my body! I’d thought something like at least I could protect my body, but even something I wanted to protect that much had never been saved in the first place!”

Tears flowed as a roar from the soul tore itself from her, and Sylphy's hand wept blood. The glass that she had been gripping firmly had cut through the palm of her hand, and though she frowned at the pain, the corners of her mouth soon pitifully relaxed.

Sylphy: "Because women bearing injuries are atypical, even the slightest of bruises would mean death by that man. This wound, is my freedom."

Emilia: "——"

Sylphy: "In no way is this your fault. I am incredibly grateful to you. Toward that man, revenge for every single day unto now, a better way could certainly never be found elsewhere."

With a slight smile at Emilia, Sylphy looked toward the other wives— looked toward those who could be called her companions.

Then clutching the glass with her own two hands, she pressed it against her chest.

Sylphy: "If I die, his heart will be transferred to someone. This is a certainty. That man wouldn't use just myself alone as a shield for his heart. Just like that, everyone has no reason not to know that man's stubbornness."

???: "Surely, it will be so."

Which one of the brides who whispered that softly was unknown.

As if assenting to what Sylphy had said, the wife who had answered emerged from the crowd. A woman with long chestnut hair, she too took up one of the shards of glass scattered beneath Sylphy's feet.

Wife: "Something like death, I too have considered it a number of times. Even if I'm living like this, I can't say that I'm truly alive. I'd rather reunite with my family in the afterlife."

Wife: "My reason for not doing so was not wanting to die. Even if I were to be liberated from this pain, I wouldn't have any happy memories from life."

Wife: "But, if dying… If this life, could bring vengeance on that man can to pass… If my death would be something without meaning…"

One after another, the wives came forth and took up shards of glass.

The brides looked at those sharp edges, as if looking upon their hopes. With Emilia's words as an opportunity, the wives found their hopes, found something their lives could be spent on.

Sylphy: "Thank you, we are truly grateful to you. —That man, aside from us, he truly has no other wives present. This is something we can absolutely guarantee. So then, we'll trouble you for what comes after."

Emilia: “——”

Sylphy: “Please be sure to help us speak. Our anger, must absolutely reach that man. —All we can do is trouble you, having been forced by that man, and then rejecting him successfully, there has only been you.”

Sylpy’s request, was said with a voice full of warmth.

The wives all approached the shattered stained glass of the church that was to be witness to a marriage, holding the fragments in their hands as a symbol, chose their end.

Point thing the sharp edges against their pale necks, with a breath they were to suicide—

Emilia: “Wait a moment.”

That action of certain death, was stopped by Emilia’s words.

Emilia, who had fallen into a silence until now. In her words were [power]. Both in physical and metaphorical meaning.

Hands of ice reaching out from the ground sealed the wives’ movements. The slashing movement was successfully hindered, successfully preventing their suicides.

Sylphy watched Emilia’s movement with wide eyes, and then spoke with a trembling voice,

Sylphy: “I beg you, please understand us! Your, your sentiments, I am truly grateful for. But any method other than this…”

Naught but death could serve as repayment.

Naught but death could strike a blow against that man, against Regulus.

That was Sylphy’s, the wives’, conclusion.

Stopping their own hearts, this sorrowful answer, Emilia also understood. So to figure out how to deny it, thinking and thinking, all along she had been thinking of a way.

And so—

Emilia: “I’m sorry. Not like this.”

Sylphy: “Eh……?”

Emilia: “If it were Subaru, he might have thought of another way. But my head is a bit slow, so no matter how hard I thought, I didn’t have a clue… So,”

Surrounding the muttering Emilia, brilliant lights of blue and white began to dance.

Gaining mana, the swaying light, was the micro-spirits which had entered a visible state. As if to engulf the entire collapsed building, the substantial gathering of micro-spirits began to appear— that was, in a sense, a sight as sacred as a dream, and Sylphy and the others held their breaths.

Emilia: “I want, to make your heartbeats stop. —Because if you stab your throats with a weapon like that, you won’t die such easy deaths.”

After Emilia lifted her hand, the micro-spirits seemed to follow that movement as they shone, and a blueish snow began to fall in the church. The snow layered thinly around the brides, and where it brushed their skin, it turned into white crystal.

This magic that Emilia was capable of, was both the gentlest and cruelest.

Emilia: “—Sorry. I can only use this method.”

Sylphy: “Please don't apologize.”

After realizing Emilia’s intentions, Sylphy breathed a sigh of relief. The sentiments of the wives was in alignment. They looked at Emilia, who was unable to form even a single sound, and spoke in unison.

Wives: “Thank you.”

Emilia: “——”

Then, a brilliance that shone blue and white engulfed the church—

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Icicles rising as if an assault from the sky made a complete frozen seal around the church.

Forming a sound so sorrowful as if to roll over the sky, as if the sky itself had turned white and died. Within that structure of ice that had risen, how much sorrow had gathered?

No one, save for the one who was responsible for this scene, could understand.

Subaru: “… Emilia.”

The ice created by the incomparably powerful magical vortex was peerless beyond measure, and could not have been made by anyone but Emilia.

[Lion’s Heart]… truly had been subdued— along with the lives of the gathered brides, his heartbeat had stopped. Subaru had already thought of the method. The only possible method.

Then, that method would have been impossible to actualize.

He'd even made an emotional preparation for Emilia's failure to reach the church.

But, upon seeing this spectacle the answer was clear.

—Chosen by Emilia, that answer.

Regulus: "Heyhey, isn't this a bit…"

Looking in the same direction as Subaru was Regulus, who could imagine the result of this ice structure, and his cheeks began to twitch. The place where the icicles were raised were where his wives currently were, Regulus of course well understood. As well as what that spectacle meant.

And so.

Regulus: "You two! Is this what you set out to do! Is this something that humans are capable of!? Seizing another's beloved, arbitrarily without authorization! Just… just how coldhearted can you be to do such a cruel thing—!?"

Regulus stomped at the ground as he shouted thus at the bloodied Subaru.

His soles shattered the slate, and even distorted the earth enough to create an illusion that the city itself was shattering.

Rushing forward without second thought, Regulus stabbed his fingers at Subaru.

Regulus: "Satisfied? Are you satisfied?! In order to kill me alone, you dared to snatch away the lives of all my faultless wives, and even felt happy to have done so, your humanity—"

His mouth spewing dirty curses, the body of Regulus who spoke of the sorrows of being plundered from was suddenly sent flying.

The reason for that was, the spear of ice sent by the girl who had emerged from the church.

The spear of ice struck Regulus with astonishing momentum, ceaselessly striking the body of the standing Regulus in succession. His body was sent flying like a doll, and in the process several more spears of ice flew at him.

The momentum did not stop there, and like this Regulus's body was slammed straight into the waterway, and with a loud crack the waterway was frozen, becoming an ice sculpture in Regulus's form.

Emilia: "—All that just now, consider it a divorce from your wives."

Striding across the frosted streets, Emilia returned to the battlefield in a flash of silver.

She stood on the collapsed street, looking at the approaching Subaru, whose pitiful sight made her narrow her amethyst eyes.

Emilia: “Subaru, those wounds…”

Subaru: “I’m fine! It’s just a scratch that bled a bit more. More importantly, the church… where are the wives?”

Emilia: “… Everyone, wished to defeat Regulus. So,”

Averting her gaze, Emilia’s attention drifted slightly back to the church.

This reaction was enough, enough to convey that Emilia’s choice did not belong to her alone. And the weight of that choice, Subaru would not have to bear it as well.

Subaru: “But, but the effect of [Lion’s Heart] is interrupted. That man’s invincibility trick should be at an end.”

Emilia: “No. It doesn’t seem to be something that’ll be so easily solved.”

Subaru: “Eh?”

The sacrifices made as a result of our choices, should have been the price paid for the answer, Emilia shook her head slightly toward Subaru who was thinking such thoughts.

As he was astonished by her reaction, the ice filling the waterway behind them began to crack.

The crack began to expand, affecting even the flow of the blocked off waterways. The collapse spreading to where waterway met water flow, Subaru’s soles were already immersed in overflowing water.

Regulus: “Truly a laughably ridiculous arrogance, vulgarity that is incorrigible, incompetence that brings speechlessness, shamelessness that brings disbelief, inferiority that is hopeless…!”

Leaving the canal, the murderer who was drenched but not wet in the slightest approached.

His white suit unstained, his white hair unshaken by the wind, his white face free of wounds, without even a drop of sweat. This existence was practically a daydream—no, better to call it a nightmare that appeared midday.

Regulus: “And now, what will you do? You two, how do you plan to take responsibility? Though you droned on and on like you’d done something great, in the end this was nothing but a failed miscalculation, in the end there were only sacrifices, how do you plan to fix this situation!?”

In the form of this Regulus who was enraged to the point of madness, the effect of the unchanging [Lion’s Heart] yet lingered.

Emilia had made an assault on that level, forget being wounded, even a trace of what had happened could not be seen at all.

Subaru: “How’s this possible! Even just now you were speaking of [Lion’s Heart] unending effects… Presence of mind to bluff in a situation like that, how could someone like you have it!”

Regulus: “Do you think me so kind that I’d turn a deaf ear to that which can’t be ignored? I’ll say this first, isn’t the notion of not infringing on others’ hearts basic etiquette!? Clearly no one’s looking down on the rights of others, so how is it that you two are always doing something so mentally deficient? Conscience aside, do you lack in even basic intelligence?”

Facing these unintentionally provocative lines from Subaru, Regulus looked down with an unimpressed expression, knocking against his head of white hair.

Regulus: “It seems, that that contemptuous prostitute’s counting is wrong, isn’t it? Not remembering the number of lives even though she’s the one who stole them away, that’s a killer’s way of thinking. Certainly there’s something wrong with it.”

Subaru: “Since when did you have the right to say those words…”

Regulus: “Don't surreptitiously try to change the topic. Anything I’ve done to date and such, has absolutely nothing to do with that woman’s ungratefulness. Don’t turn your back on the sins you have committed. Don’t look away. Tossing your own issues aside to blame the other party, don’t you feel ashamed to call yourself a person?”

No matter where he went, carrying a vexing share of rage to impose on others, was Regulus.

Carrying not a single doubt about his way of life, was the foundation of Regulus Corneas.

How many contradictions would appear in his series of speeches before he was satisfied.

Discourse with Regulus was truly damaging to sanity. Facing a Sin Archbishop of the Witch Cult, seemed to create an illusion that normalcy was wrong.

Regulus: “But… look, you miscalculated.”

The substitutes for his heart, would even destroying all the alternatives of those be unable to lift Regulus’s invincibility?

There should have been no problem in theory. During his risky bet with his life, Regulus had proven that he was not so smart as to be able calculate with skillful words the way Subaru could.

Regulus did not have the ability to deceive or rely on his eloquence to mislead.

He was completely unable to change his way of thought. In his world, there was no one but him. Marriage was merely imitation, speeches were merely ideological, battles were merely conducted as an outsider. His way of being was merely pure malice— almost exactly like a [Little King].

Emilia: “Fifty-three people…”

Next to the trembling Subaru, Emilia muttered.

She has not until now, toward Regulus's fallacies, curses, unspeakable complaints, shown no reaction whatsoever. Only one sentence, all she spoke was this one sentence.

Regulus: "Huh? What? Just now, what did you say?"

Emilia: "I said, fifty-three people. The number of women you forcibly brought to your side. Could it be that I'm wrong? That would be absolutely impossible. I could never miscount the number of lives."

Regulus: "Hmm—mm. And? So what? What are you trying to say?"

With a contemptuous attitude, Regulus dismissed Emilia's quiet assertion. Digging a finger into his ear, an attitude full of ridicule.

Even Subaru with sarcasm as his strongest suit wanted to clap in praise for his flippant manner. Just as Subaru was about to accept Regulus's provocation, Emilia looked straight toward him. Then she shook her head slightly at Subaru who held his breath.

Emilia: "It's alright, Subaru. I understand it all now."

Subaru: "By understand, you mean…"

Emilia: "And, because I am incredibly angry right now… No longer, will I forgive him."

Feeling fear squeeze his chest, Subaru saw it.

On that gentle face, feeling quietly vanished, was Emilia with a soft sound. Freezing her feelings like that, was the most furious Emilia that had been seen until now.

A frigid flame rolling across frozen eyes in that manner, Emilia touched her chest.

And then, spoke.

Emilia: "Regulus's heart is here. —Right now, beating inside my chest."

Arc 5 – Chapter 58, “?Faith”

by admin - Thursday, March 07, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/03/07/arc-5-chapter-58-faith/

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Translated by :

- Nanashi

Proofread by :

- PaperLightning
- u/Ringo17
- u/GracedHarperd

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Regulus: “Keheh.”

Placing a hand on his chest after Emilia had spoken.

What rang out was a laugh that could not be hidden. Although what leaked out was at first only a breath, he soon could endure no more, and his voice gradually escalated in volume, until it became cachinnation.

Regulus: “Hahaha! Ahaha! Huu, ahhahahahaha!”

Straightening his back, Regulus laughed loudly as if he’d heard a great joke. Sticking a hand into his white hair and tousling it, the murderer was now immersed in a fit of laughter that no one else could understand.

Subaru could tell from his smug demeanor that Emilia’s speculation was correct.

Subaru: “You bastard, what’s so funny!?”

Regulus: “Of course it’s funny, isn’t it!? Or rather, you are, I really must suggest that, in this desperate situation, you should give up on trying to think and we can all laugh together. On that note, do you understand the current situation? You yourself, with your own hands pushed the most critical of critical points into this calamity!”

Subaru: “Guu…”

No words could be fitting.

Only in this moment, was Regulus’s reply so perfectly reasoned that it could be met with naught but speechlessness.

Subaru turned his head to look to Emilia, confirming with her whether or not her speculation could be proven.

However, toward Subaru’s searing gaze, Emilia shook her head.

Emilia: “There’s no mistake. I had the micro-spirits confirm, and I can feel it myself. Inside me, there’s something extraneous that doesn’t belong to me. It feels, soooo disgusting.”

Emilia asserted thus, a despairing hint that announced the present reality.

The effect of [Lion’s Heart] had moved to Emilia. In other words, the only way to stop Regulus now would be to stop Emilia’s heartbeat as well.

Subaru: “Then again, why is Emilia’s heart… with [Little King], could it be that I made a mistake? The man’s heart, no matter who, as long as he wants…”

If it were that kind of ability, there existed in Regulus’s authority no loopholes. If he could give his heart to even hostiles and strangers, that would mean that as long as the human race lived on, a way to kill Regulus did not exist.

Rather, if it could be that his heart could replace that of any living creature—.

Subaru: “Truly shameless.”

Regulus: “The worthless howls of a retreating dog are pleasant to hear. Hahaha, no matter what I have to say. Just keep running with your temper, searching for some ridiculous excuse for your failure is the right of the loser. And enjoying superiority while hearing them is my right as the winner… Aah, this isn’t bad! Not bad at all!”

Emilia: “I don’t meet your standards for a wife, you yourself were saying so earlier.”

Regulus: “So annoying. Going on and on as if you’re strong enough to speak of your own rights. More importantly, how are planning to take responsibility for killing my wives? My ideal wives… how long do you think it took to gather such a group? How many years do you think it takes? Obviously of age, but

lacking anything like a wife or lover, do you want me to be one of those garbage widowers who no one wants? Before I find a new wife, you have the obligation to join with me!”

Using stern words to smack at Emilia, full of spirit as he voiced his rhetoric was Regulus.

The violent reasoning that the murderer believed in, completely convinced that his heart was indeed within Emilia. If so, the possibility of removing Regulus’s heart from Emilia—.

Regulus: “Would you like to try? To see if there’s a way you can move my heart?”

“____”

Regulus: “The method is simple if you want to try it. Right now, just kill this girl before you. As long as you end her life, you’ll naturally understand whether or not my authority will stop. Very very simple, effective, and reasonable… ahaha! You couldn’t do it, could you? If you do something like that, with the motives and values ??that you’ve challenged me with, won’t you have lost your self-justifying reasons!?”

Although hard to admit, Regulus was right.

Subaru had not the courage to sacrifice Emilia. Call him selfish, call him arrogant, only that could he not do.

In order to defeat Regulus, they had already tossed aside the lives of his wives.

Even with the revelation that there had been no alternatives than letting go those sacrifices, in no way could they compare with the life of Emilia or his other comrades.

Natsuki Subaru’s choices always were, selfish to a disgusting degree.

Regulus: “You see. Someone like him could never. In that case, how about offing yourself in proxy? Simple, isn’t it. Just like what you did to the others. Or what? Can’t you do it? Though you’ve clearly taken the lives of others without consent, but because you treasure your own so much you can’t do it? How amazing, I think I’m going to vomit?”

Emilia: “—Subaru.”

Subaru: “Wait, you can’t. Seriously, this alone is unacceptable.”

At Regulus’s provocation, Emilia too seemed to be calling to Subaru as if in realization. Hearing the unsparing tone of her voice, Subaru hurriedly stopped Emilia in fear.

Even if you giving in to the provocation, surely she wouldn’t immediately make the choice to abandon herself.

However, Emilia had already done a good job of choosing the worst option if she didn’t have the means

to win.

Then Subaru, had only the thought that he would absolutely not choose this path. In that case, they had lost.

Calling Emilia's name had only stopped her, but he could speak no words.

Regulus: "Then, in that case we're about ready to draw this to a close, aren't we. Although keeping a low grade woman like you isn't in my interest, for time being I'll compromise. Before finding my next wife I'll join with you for a bit. Though I'll just have to kill this guy. You've already infringed on my rights to this point… Ah, that's right. So, did you laugh earlier?"

Before Subaru who clenched his teeth, Regulus happily turned the corners of his mouth upward.

A torrent of magic was welled around Emilia, as she planned to make her own decision. At the same time, Regulus, not taking note of the wind, laughed.

Regulus: "You're that guy, aren't you? That loud voice in the city that yammered on right before my wedding? Killing a single Sin Archbishop or whatever...what a joke, right? My condolences if you really thought you could best me just because you killed that disgrace. That man, both before and after becoming an archbishop, has never accomplished anything, he has always been a simpleton."

Regulus, standing and giggling. What his words pointed to, was without doubt the madman Petelgeuse Romanee-Conti who Subaru found abhorrent.

Petelgeuse was the worst kind of lunatic with no redeeming qualities. He felt not a shred of goodwill for the lunatic, instead hating him down to his bone marrow, and would never spare him even were he to come back as a ghost.

But nevertheless, seeing the Sin Archbishop ridicule Petelgeuse who was supposed to be his comrade, in Subaru's heart grew an inherent feeling of unpleasantness.

The possibility of defeating Regulus, and in addition this entangled state of Emilia's life and death didn't even need mention.

Then again, Petelgeuse, he—.

Subaru: "—Ah."

Should have been a loathed lunatic opponent, mad bloodstained laughter appearing in his mind. While thinking back, he lifted his face. Then something felt as if it had begun to stir within his chest, he seized it, swallowing his breath.

Could it be, that something like that, was also possible?

Subaru: "Could it be done…?"

Incomprehensible.

Strictly speaking, no one can guarantee the possibility generated within Subaru's mind. Just like bringing an empty table to a negotiation— or rather, it was closer to being the product of Subaru's delusions. Merely Subaru's own feelings.

But, that was precisely why. That was precisely why, able to arrive at this possibility was only Subaru alone.

That notion now, based just on intuition, even a god wouldn't know if it could succeed— but.

Subaru: "Emilia."

Emilia: "——"

Feeling the magic that seemed to have risen to its limit, Subaru called to her.

Emilia remained silent, only revealing the realization of a tragedy. Nevertheless, deep in her eyes a hint of emotion flashed through. That was, expectation and trust in Subaru who watched her.

As if to lend support to those feelings, Subaru asked.

Subaru: "Emilia."

Emilia: "Mmm."

Subaru: "—Can you completely trust me, and leave everything to me?"

Emilia: "I can."

Toward this question, her response came simply and without hesitation.

Emilia placed a hand on her chest, and for the first time since returning to the battlefield, revealed a smile.

Emilia: "I believe that if it's Subaru, you can do anything."

Aah, damn it, how despicable this was.

A girl who he liked, treating him with unflinching trust, how could he fail!

Whether holding tight with hands or biting tight with teeth, he wasn't allowed to fail here!

Subaru slowly breathed deep, then slowly released the breath.

Then, glanced toward Regulus who watched them in silence. Regulus did not obstruct their conversation,

just rested on his wrists as he waited leisurely.

Subaru: “Aren’t you a bit too relaxed?”

Regulus: “Aren’t I usually relaxed?”

Any trace of failure and the like, not even a speck remained.

Regulus had revealed all his preparations, and wanted to do away with Subaru. In truth, Regulus’s authority [Lion’s Heart] was perfect. After clarifying its key points, victory was still placed somewhere nigh unreachable.

However, precisely because he was convinced of his impending victory, would when confronted with Subaru’s struggles and efforts, watch from aside without intervention.

He had no idea what was happening. That point, was the same for Subaru himself.

Subaru: “——”

If Beatrice had been ??here, there might have been another method. If that intelligent girl had been by his side, there would have certainly have been a less risky way to win.

In the depths of his chest, lay the connection with the girl who was his comrade. Certainly, after all this was over, he’d be in for a scolding from her, not being scolded wouldn’t do.

So now that he was alone, recalling the times when he’d been alone, the memories remaining within his chest— were certainly not ones which brought happiness, awakening only an initial landscape of terror and agony.

Emilia: “Subaru.”

Subaru: “——”

Emilia: “Let go and do it.”

Emilia’s call, became strength for him to make the decision.

Subaru violently seized his own chest, rousing something within him that was truly difficult to consider his, concentrating his consciousness on the center of the whirlpool where this chaotic force swirled, liberating it—.

In this moment, slightly changing the manner in which he called it.

In order to have the murderer who had insulted the lunatic understand what had happened, only this once.

This power, this power inherited from that abhorrent madman!

Subaru: “Come forth… Unseen Haaaand—!!”

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—Invisible Providence. Or rather, [Unseen Hand].

The force that surged through his body, Subaru defined as the power of the witch created by the Witch Factor. He’d heard from Echidna in her dream castle, that he’d gained the Witch Factor since he’d killed Petelgeuse— what detriments it had were yet unclear. However, the power which gave Subaru Unseen Hand undoubtedly came from here.

So until now, Subaru had never sought to use the Witch Factor as his own source of power.

Subaru firmly believed so. The nature of this power being similar to that of the madman’s, was because the witch factor of [Sloth] inherently held this nature.

The possibility of Petelgeuse running amok within him, he didn’t even want to consider.

—But if this is the case, what was this feeling about.

Echoing, lively, silently cheering from inside Subaru.

Cheering for being called upon. Cheering for once again being able to use his power. Cheering for being requisitioned, completing his goal. And then, was only an unspeakable incomprehensible joy.

Accompanying the liberation of that power, that happiness and appreciation, as well as that feeling of gratitude.

The fluctuation of this incomprehensible emotion, was in no way something Subaru’s problems could solve.

Regulus: “Hah!?”

Accompanying Subaru’s loud scream, was Regulus’s own cry as he looked to the sky.

He shouldn’t be able to see it. Because this was, Unseen Hand.

The poisonous hand that was perfect for assassinations due to its invisibility— having been insulted by Regulus as sluggish, a negligible and residual power, something even weaker and more residual than that.

Only one in number, with an incredibly short range, and too many unknown factors.

As the key to breaking through this situation, there should be a limit to unreliability.

Subaru: “——”

The first step of summoning the magical hand, had been passed. Starting now were the unknown second step and the third step that would be the final one.

With his own consciousness, Subaru commanded the fingertips to take action, infusing his own hopes into the magical hand that seemed woven by shadow.

Subaru: “Emilia!”

And once again, confirming whether or not she was aware. Seeking help for herself.

Along with that sound, Emilia closed her eyes, nodding as if she understood what would happen after this.

Emilia: “It’s fine. —You are here, Juice.”

Emilia’s eyes were filled with warmth and understanding as she spread her arms.

Repeatedly preparing for Subaru’s intention, as if already having seen what would happen, she shortened the distance to her heart. Subaru did not hesitate as he brought the magical hand into her chest.

“____”

The invisible hand moved to the center Emilia’s chest. As the fingertips passed through her white skin without resistance, Emilia’s shoulders jumped as if she’d felt something.

However, the hand could not stop. Through the sternum, across the lungs, finally reaching the pulsating core.

—The magical hand, had arrived at Emilia’s heart.

The second step had been accomplished.

When the taboo was triggered, the witch’s magical hand easily passes through Subaru’s body and only hurts his heart. This was an application of that principle. Unseen Hand and the witch’s magical hand sharing that properly, was the only path left to gamble on.

However, the gambling had been successful so far. The problem was that after this, there was no precedent for that power.

If her were to just seize Emilia’s heart, he could do so in an instant. But that would make no sense. This power was not to be used for that.

So, what was this power for. —Right now, in this moment, this power would be used to save.

“____”

Was this really possible, Subaru with his mind in a sea of confusion took a deep breath.

Unseen Hand, could it really be used as a hand which saved? Under the madman named Petelgeuse Romanee-Conti, how many lives had this power stolen?

Although that would depend on the power's use, oftentimes powers were limited in ability. Was Unseen Hand the type of power that could bring naught but destruction?

This power, no matter if existed for the sake of having someone live on, no matter what—.

Emilia: "Subaru."

Hesitating and doubting in that moment, Emilia's voice which he shouldn't have been hearing reached him.

Emilia: "It'll be fine. —Because, I have faith, in the both of you."

Who and what, was she talking about.

Emilia sent her trust to Subaru, and another person he didn't know.

But with ease, he accepted and believed all of it.

—This hand absolutely, absolutely would not hurt Emilia.

Subaru: "Come, my third hand…!"

Within his heart, the undispellable doubts about this power dissipated.

How this power had originated didn't matter anymore. This power right now, was in Subaru's hands, and Subaru had no intent of hurting Emilia, and if anything existed within power itself.

In Emilia's chest, the magical hand weaved by shadow began to close.

Fingertips touched Emilia's heart which was engraved with rhythm, and Emilia gave a slight gasp at the gentle grip on the surface of her heart. Rather than pain, it was akin to a slight itch.

Inside the chest Emilia whose were dyed red, the magical hand that closed its fingers to seize an actual heart.

And that heartbeat different from Emilia's own, that [Little Lion's Heart]—.

Subaru: "Caught, you—!!"

He did not have room to pull it out.

With his magical hand, Subaru crushed the heart that shamelessly still beat within Emilia.

Emilia's heart received not the slightest bit of damage, merely defeating parasitic organ that yet sang odes to love.

Subaru truly did feel sensation from that third hand that did not exist. And then,

Subaru: "Fwah!"

At the same time experienced the cost of using such a degree of concentration on a power which did not belong to him.

Organs feeling a pain as if being carved, rushing forth was a sense of despair as if he'd been tainted, Subaru immediately fell upon the ground with both knees. Harsh coughs that were even tinged with blood wracked him.

Emilia: "Subaru!"

Emilia reached out a hand, toward Subaru who knelt on the submerged ground with blood leaking from the corners of his mouth. He took her outstretched hand and placed it on his face.

Emilia: "Ah…"

Subaru: "Still, alive, right?"

Emilia: "… Mmm, I'm fine. My heart is perfectly fine, still beating inside me."

Subaru used the touch of the hand which yet flowed through with blood to reassure himself of reality, and Emilia used her empty hand to confirm her heartbeat. There was no doubt in this moment, inscribed there was heartbeat that seemed congratulate that happenings of right now.

And then only Regulus alone wore an expression as if he couldn't comprehend what was happening as he looked upon the two.

Regulus: "Hah? What, what happened? Casting aside those around you, for something only those involved with you can understand? What is this repulsive scene? Just what happened, you…"

Subaru: "… You, didn't notice?"

Regulus: "Hah? What are you talking about? Haven't noticed or whatever? When not a single change has…"

Subaru: "Your feet, they're getting wet."

Regulus: "——?"

Subaru pointed to tell Regulus who seemed to have succumbed to his anger. Regulus was shocked to see his feet growing wet and fell momentarily silent, widening his eyes.

Noticed the reality that his white tuxedo—, white shoes and hem of his clothing, were soaked through by the water by his feet.

Regulus: “You people— actually!?”

Noticing this change with a response too slow, Regulus bared his teeth and waved his arm. But, a slender white leg struck out, kicking into Regulus’s face and sending him flying.

Completely unprepared for this direct hit, Regulus gave a wail as he was kicked to the submerged ground filled with water. Half his body was left soaked by the water, and a shoe print remained on the side of his face that had been kicked.

Regulus: “*hk*, *huu*… this, this kind of…!”

As if unable to comprehend this reality in the slightest, Regulus blankly lifted his face. Looking down at such a Regulus, Emilia who had performed the beautiful kick tilted her head slightly.

Emilia: “I did it. I finally landed a hit.”

Regulus: “You, you—!”

From Emilia’s short sentence being filled with a sense of accomplishment, Regulus’s face grew red and agitated. Using the motion of standing to gather water, Regulus scattered droplets of water at Emilia.

However, the pain of taking the kick had his victorious figuring collapse, and the bomb of water flew in a completely wrong direction, instead leaving him wide open.

Emilia: “Ice Brand Arts!”

Regulus: “*hk*”

Creating a hammer of ice in her hands, Emilia then slammed it directly into the center of Regulus’s body.

Receiving a swing that threatened to crush his bones into, the body of the murderer did rolls in the water. With unsuppressed coughs, slamming his fist into the ground without pause, Regulus glared at them with reddened eyes.

Regulus: “Why! Whywhywhywhy? You people, it just had to be you, what did you and why did you, to [Greed]! And to my rights!

Subaru: “To someone like you who saw all the proceedings and yet still hasn’t figured it out, it’d be useless to explain it to you. Well, that’s how it is. Very simple.”

As he pitied the screaming Regulus, Subaru endured internal cries of agony from his organs, revealing a sneer.

Revealing a ferocious smile that would not lose to even Petelgeuse.

Subaru: “You, were played by your opponents because you ridiculed them so much.”

Regulus: “——!”

Even if he didn’t quite understand the meaning of those words, the taunting intent would be clearly conveyed.

Regulus screeched with a sound that couldn’t even be called a sound, ignoring Emilia’s stance to launch himself at Subaru. However, he was cut off by Emilia.

Emilia: “Earlier, the attack I made in the stead of your wives— because it didn’t seem to work, allow me to land one that does.”

Regulus: “Stop, kidding around—!”

Appearing over Regulus’s head, hung countless icicles.

Each one varied in size, but if they all fell together, they would bring instant death. Emilia’s disgust of Regulus, had reached a point that even her gentle self could not stand.

Climbing to his feet with a leap, Regulus struck at the falling icicles with water. Though the icicles shattered, the small shards still had their uses.

Ceaselessly tossing out bullets of water as if in a storm, Regulus cursed loudly as he was bathed by ice and rain that he ran through.

The snow-white crystals of ice turned to fog, and frozen the streets that had been submerged in water. For Subaru too, the water along his knees formed a film of ice around him, scaring him into hurriedly pulling his hands out of the water.

Even with consideration for Subaru, such a rain of destruction had befallen him. Of course, Regulus who was the actual target at hand was simply no match for this.

But,

Subaru: “… Completely unhurt?”

In the frozen scene after the barrage of ice had ended, Regulus remained, standing and alive.

Knees supporting his arms, spitting out uneven breaths, even though his entire body was soaked through with water, he still avoided a final puncture from an icicle.

Regulus: “Absolutely, absolutely, ah, hah…”

Regulus who clutched at his chest looking as if he were dying.

Look at that demeanor, Subaru understand. The invincibility from [Lion’s Heart] could still be used, even with the heart from his own body. Only,

Subaru: “If you stop time to become invincible, it will cause the heart in your body also to stop beating. —Is this the still perfect invincibility, with a time limit?”

Regulus: “*Guu*…!”

It seemed he had struck true, as Regulus endured the pain in his chest to show his rage. If there were a time limit, sooner or later Emilia could land an effective attack.

In that case, Regulus was but a random soldier who had put his everything into attack.

Regulus: “That, that’s… don’t you feel despicable in the slightest!?”

Regulus pointed a fingers at Subaru who was analyzing his opponent’s strength. Additionally he pointed toward Emilia’s direction, looking back and forth between the two of them.

Regulus: “Two people gang up on one person, in an act that’s essentially extortion, do your consciences not ache? Isn’t there something wrong with the your most essentially human part? Do you truly hold no doubts about yourselves who are capable of this. Having doubts should be what’s right, shouldn’t it!?”

Subaru: “… You’re really something else.”

This was in fact the same mouth that had under the advantage of [Lion’s Heart], spoken nonstop, having now lost that effect and falling into a disadvantage, dared to use that disadvantage to ask his opponents for justification.

Subaru had already completely exceeded surprise, to the verge of now wanting to respect him. Such an existence without a shred of human dignity, would perhaps never been seen again from antiquity unto now, from now unto the hereafter.

Subaru: “That is to say, your belief is this? Because the two-on-one is too despicable, you hope to be able to fight an upright one-on-one battle. That’s in fact the way battles should be. Is this the case?”

Regulus: “Exactly! Would that be doing the proper thing the proper way? Who do you take me… who do you think I am! I a Sin Archbishop of the Witch Cult, Regulus Corneas who is charged with [Greed]!? This world’s most satisfied, most resolute existence…”

Regulus spoke thus in a trembling voice, as he looked down at his hands.

Subaru was now completely speechless. So in Subaru’s stead, Emilia spoke.

Emilia: “Going back on your word immediately after saying something, the contents of your speeches entirely devoid of actual meaning. I think you, are the most pitiful person in the world.”

Regulus: “—*hk*! Truly irritating! I… [Greed], will definitely make you regret this!”

Even shallow in his rage at the contempt of others, Regulus repetitively endlessly repeated the drone of his curses.

Looking at the helpless demeanor, Subaru could finally feel fully relieved. Regulus was genuinely, unable to win in any situation where he did not have the highest advantage.

If he could use [Lion’s Heart] for even a brief time, he still had a chance at victory.

Clearly this was the case, but upon seeing a little bit of difficulty, he would immediately give up without even bothering to glance across the setting.

Subaru: “Scorning progress in life, will lead you to fall down in unexpected places.”

Regulus: “Hah…?”

Subaru: “Nothing, talking to myself. More importantly, we can accept your challenge of ship-to-ship combat.”

Regulus: “—! That’s more like it. This is how it should be. Of course, a knight would not let their master step up first?”

As long as it was in line with his mood, Regulus would immediately attach the conditions that gave him an advantage.

Between Subaru and Emilia, their level of combat needed no comparison. As long as he first killed Subaru and caused Emilia to waver, he could see hope in his odds of victory. Straining that mind of his that did not exist in the first place, that conniving result seemed to suit Regulus’s tastes perfectly.

However, if he wanted to best Subaru in terms of unrelenting perseverance, he was hundreds of thousands of years too soon.

Finding a chance to win in a situation where victory was impossible, this was Subaru’s truest way of fighting.

Looking in terms of determining victory or loss, the match between Regulus and Subaru had already begun.

Subaru: “Indeed, having a knight battle is the righteous way.”

Regulus: “In that case—”

Subaru: “So— now that it’s come to this again, I’ll leave the rest to you.”

His feet still submerged in water, Subaru said so after exhaling deeply.

At those words, Regulus tilted his head with a “*hah*?” However, Subaru’s words were meant not for him. But for [him].

???: “Ah, I see. —The one-on-one duel you proposed, I accept it as a knight.”

Responding was a flame.

In these flooded streets, a young man who sent not a single ripple as he strode across the water approached. Unlike the inexplicable mystery that Regulus, he was possessed of protections that had been bestowed by the love of the heavens.

Reinhardt: “Of the Kingdom of Lugunica’s Guardian Knights, from the line of [Sword Saints] —Reinhardt van Astrea.”

Standing before Subaru and Emilia, the knight who reported his name pointed at Regulus with a sheathed sword. That demeanor of denomination, was an invitation to begin a one-on-one duel.

That was something even [Guthunter] Elsa would respond to, the well established declaration of a duel.

In contrast, Regulus stood, stretching his hands before him.

Regulus: “Wait, waitwait! This, this is, this isn’t normal!?”

Defiling the sacred duel, the very definition of a warrior, the [Sword Saint] will not show him any trace of tolerance.

The opening blow started below Regulus’s underarm, vertically slashing across his body— Regulus had not even the chance to cry out before being slammed far into the sky.

Regulus: “——*hk*”

Before his eyes was the demolished city of water— he was suspended so high in the sky that he had a panoramic view of the entire city.

Whether a cry or a curse, a sound incomprehensible to all who heard it, echoed.

Arc 5 – Chapter 59, “Regulus Corneas”

by admin - Tuesday, March 19, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/03/19/arc-5-chapter-59-regulus-corneas/

Translated by :

- Nanashi
- u/Ringo17

Proofread by :

- u/IceOccultism
- u/Jaerek
- u/GracedHarperd
- u/Nobidexx

Dedicated to the Regulus fans and their suggestions for this and previous chapters. Thanks so much for your help, we couldn't have done this without you!

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ALL RIGHTS BELONG TO TAPPEI NAGATSUKI, THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR OF RE:ZERO STARTING A LIFE IN A DIFFERENT WORLD FROM ZERO, THIS IS A TRANSLATION OF THE FREE JAPANESE WEB NOVEL INTO ENGLISH

JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

It can’tbecan’tbecan’tbe. What the hell is this, I don’t get it. Why do I have to go through this. Who do you take me for. I am the Sin Archbishop "Greed" Regulus Corneas. The most satisfied existence in the world! The most indisputably asserted, an existence without any wavering aspects! It’s supposed to be like that, so why do I have to go through this?! Don’t mess around, this is no joke. Each and every one of them, what’s wrong with them that they accept such nonsensical absurdities as if they are a matter of course. That man, that woman, and that knight too, just because I showed a little mercy are getting too ahead of themselves, if I had been serious from the beginning then I could have had torn them apart in bits and pieces, but aren't they misunderstanding their own power? That you can shamelessly make misunderstandings, that are from my point of view, hilariously wrong, is why I hate getting involved with others! Obnoxious, annoying, irritating, infuriating, vexing, dirty, unsightly scum. I’ve always always been doing well, for years, decades, centuries, this way for *all* that time, I have been faithfully serving as a Sin Archbishop more than anyone. When I was first chosen as a sin archbishop and received this witch factor, I killed them all, the father who despite his poor earnings was plagued with bad drinking habits, the mother who prattled on endlessly complaining day and night, and the greedy brothers who used to

ravenously eye the portion that rightfully belonged to me, were all killed by me, the villagers who looked at me like I'm an idiot too, the people of the town who pushed me and my house into that hopeless village too, the inept heads of the country who carelessly abandoned the village and the town to that state in the first place too, I tore them all apart into bits and pieces, and when everything was gone I finally noticed a way I could live! I don't need anything. Everything is just annoying. I am already satisfied. It's not like I didn't have it, I just didn't need it. Unlike the intrusive scum, I've never needed anything. Despite that, giving me something, doesn't that mean that from outside, from your point of view, that you looked at me and thought that I was a pitiful lacking existence. Everyone who wants to impose unneeded things on me should be killed, so only those who will leave the satisfied me alone should be allowed into this world. No matter who, just talking about their selfish nonsense, those shits. Who has the right to pity me. Who has the right to pity me and drive me to despair. As if I would let them. I don't need anything and neither did I ask for anything. A father who despite his poor earnings was plagued with bad drinking habits and yet still occasionally buys gifts for me is scum better off dead. A mother who prattled on endlessly complaining day and night while saying obvious things like "apologies I've troubled you" is scum better off dead. The greedy brothers who despite ravenously eyeing the portion that rightfully belonged to me used to divide my part of their bun when my food got spilled are scum better off dead. Stop you shits, being arbitrarily kind towards me. Being kind, it must mean that you think I'm low, that you're looking down on me. Someone who looks the goddamn down on others, especially someone who looks down family, It's natural that they would be hated. It's natural that they're dead. It's not my fault. I've done nothing wrong. It's your fault, you you pitypitypity me, treat me like I'm pathetic, and leave me all alone. Have a taste of what it's like to be made to feel like the most worthless person in the world. Surrounding me should only be those who do not pity me. Those who do pity me should disappear from the world. I hear laughter. You're looking at me, aren't you. You looked at me and laughed, didn't you. What's so laughable about me. What did you see in me that made you laugh. All of them laughing and laughing. A bunch of powerless scum who are only good at running their mouths. Why does my heart have to break so much because of them. Don't stand in my way don't obstruct me don't pity me I'm not the I'm not the pitiable one, it's you helpless and ignorant but still with "Greed"! You have to crawl throughout your entire life just to satisfy your incomplete selves, you're the pitiable greed! I'm different I'm not like that I don't want anything. The desireless me is better than your incomplete selves. Don't pity me. The truth is that you're jealous of me, envious of me, you admire me and because you can't reach me you're just running your mouth off. That's right that must be right it's obviously right. Wait, wait, just wait. Just stop. Don't look at me don't say my name don't talk about me. Good or bad, just stop it, don't pay attention to me, ignore me and leave me alone. Even though a complete existence has a heart that should not be able to be trampled on how come the likes of you are so insistent on interacting with me. I cannot comprehend it in the slightest. Both you and I are different people. Even thinking of getting a return by taking risks, no matter how you think about it, could never be reasonable would always be a mistake. You're sick in the head. Calm down and think about it and you should be able to understand. All humans except me are just floating in a fever. Asking of others, that very fact that it is understandable is meaningless, useless and irresponsible should be easy to understand. It is all a fantasy of yours which you call it love love is friendship and trust what foolish idiocy reproductive activities themselves are the utmost disgusting acts. I don't understand what it means. For what are you doing this. Whether it's for being a mother or a child, although it makes a family, even if it is decorated with such words, it will be different from myself, whether that thing dies out or not, what does that have to do with me. If they continue to live when I die, I'll be over. If they are dead while I live would only mean my continuation. Love and affection only makes it so that people cannot be independent. A person is independent in the first place. Out of concern for those who operate under such delusions, to be looked down by others is

foolish and so I found companionship by gathering well looking women, and in order to not be betrayed I ask for only virgins, what more do you want of me. Don't skip such a selfish act. Infringing on me to this extent, but you still ask whether you can infringe upon me even more? To think you've hit this point! To think your thoughts could be so twisted! Inflicting all this upon me, what more could you even ask of me. Just what do I have to do to not be pitied. The most pitiful person in the world, or whatever! There is no way anything said by that a lady plagued with such vulgar "Greed" who wants to to connect with one she li~kes is justified!

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Regulus: "Ra—ah!!"

Higher, higher, along with the wind, Regulus's body flew into the night sky.

The instant that his underarm had been struck, Regulus had activated [Lion's Heart] and stopped his heartbeat to enter a state of invincibility. As a result, though the damage from the blow had been counteracted—

Regulus: "Ku, ku— *hk*"

Regulus panted, groaning as his vision blurred with pain.

Regulus's stopping of time, alongside his heart, could last for five seconds maximum. Although during this period, he could hand [Lion's Heart] over to a wife without issue, going any further would mean that Regulus's body would be unable to recover.

In addition, once [Lion's Heart] was lifted, the ever present pain of the sudden release of a stopped heart was inescapable. Anything like pain and suffering, hadn't been tasted in more than a hundred years.

Regulus: "You're, kidding…"

Painfully coughing hatred as if it were blood, the rising Regulus could no longer speak comprehensibly. His flying body was stuck in orbit, infused with who knows how much momentum, reaching a height that offered a bird's eye view of the city of Pristella.

Watergate City Pristella— there, upon seeing the [Gospel]'s writ that the empty wife's seat could be filled, clearly only fortune had been in his heart.

Regulus: "Such a… foolish unfoldingaaaaah!"

Losing those wives which had been collected with such hard work, even his status as [Greed] had been shaken, insulted by a damn kid whose only talent lay in his foul mouth, pitied by a shameful woman who had only just met him.

There was no greater shame. He couldn't remember having ever tasted such humiliation. Wasn't it precisely because he didn't want to taste this loathsome feeling, that he became an archbishop. Clearly

still receiving this kind of treatment, wasn't this different from what had been foretold.

Regulus: "Enough, enough, enough… *hk*!"

No need to think about being merciful. The show of indulgence would end here. This had nothing to do at all with [Lion's Heart] being seen through by an opponent, or with that extraordinary Sword Saint.

As long as he could stop his heart for five seconds, Regulus could kill them many times over. Because he hadn't wanted to see the expressions of despair, hear cries of death, he'd refrained thus far.

Using [Lion's Heart]'s effect of creating a state of invincibility, Regulus could ignore every physical law in the world if he so wished. Reaching speeds that could outpace the wind, in that logic defying moment, with power so overwhelming the denizens of this world could not conceive, he'd turn them into corpses.

If he used the authority of [Greed] to take him higher into the sky, it'd be easy enough to kill them by scattering sand into the city. Although the other Sin Archbishops had also come to the city, he couldn't care less whether they lived or died. At the moment, washing his own humiliation clean was the priority. He would have the faces of those fools who boasted of victory be painted with horror.

Once this pointless momentum came to an end, his fall back to the earth would spell those guys' death. Before that, at best they could be excited about a superficial victory—.

Regulus: "—Aaaaah!?"

Regulus who continuously recited words of hatred, screamed as an attack collided with his back.

Looking from the side would determine that Regulus's rising momentum had come to a sudden stop, having been forcefully nailed into the air. As if something from the heavens… had stepped on him to pin him in place.

Reinhardt: "If this were a normal duel, I'd withdraw my blade once my opponent lost their will to fight."

The owner of the voice was perched on Regulus's back in midair, leisurely saying so.

As to what the existence who stepped on his back in midair was, Regulus understood instantly. Shuddering as he came to this realization. He grasped just how high where he was right now.

Arriving faster than the Regulus he had struck, just how had he managed to reach such heights.

Reinhardt: "Though I have no intention of boasting, I have quite the confidence in my jumping ability. I had once even leapt from the ground, to land on the back of a flying dragon."

Regulus: "Damned, monster…!"

Reinhardt: "Indeed. I am a monster who hunts monsters. —For you too, the time to accept fate has come."

Reinhardt's feet left his back.

As soon as the sound of his voice fell, Regulus felt a fighting spirit. In the course of his life, although he had repeatedly faced strong opponents, Regulus had learned nothing whatsoever.

Even the him who was like this, had greeted those powerful opponents who had come forth to confront him with a yawn, and his conscious memory was limited. Relying on this memory, Regulus tried to react.

—[Lion's Heart] was activated, in the same instant that an attack came.

Regulus: "Aaaaah!!!"

Toward the center of Regulus's back, Reinhardt swung his hand like a blade.

Regulus received an attack even more piercing than an actual blade would deal, but he took the impact with his invincibility, and slammed downward in one motion.

Accelerating toward the ground, Regulus slammed straight into the slate. However, the effect of the [Lion's Heart] persisted, and his body continued to dig into the earth as if being swallowed.

Regulus's body penetrated the paving in a line, crossing a rigid sheet of rock to drill through the earth. While helplessly continuing to drill into the ground, Regulus suddenly noticed.

If this momentum were left untouched, his body would plummet to the lowest level of the earth. He'd never considered whether or not there was a lowest level before. But, the land of this world was not endless. Surrounded as it was by the Great Cascade, at the end of this would be where those falls flowed to.

If he kept falling like so, was that where he would wind up?

Regulus: "Something like this, how could I endure… *guu*!?"

Literally, the limitless horror had made Regulus hold his breath, reaching the limit of his heart.

Five seconds had passed. Sirens began to blare, as Regulus found himself confused over his judgment. Stopping his heart within his own body for more than five seconds wasn't feasible. The number of seconds that he could hold it at maximum, was perhaps less than ten. And even if he could extend it, that was just more distance he dug.

But here, what would happen if he dispelled his ability while drilling into the ground?

—There was no time to debate. Heart stopping or brain dying or whatever, stupidity should have a limit.

Regulus: "Uuuuuuuu—!"

Gritting his teeth in preparation for the shock that was about to meet him, Regulus strengthened his

resolve.

Hearing the sound of his heart which demanded to resume its beat, Regulus lifted the effect of [Lion's Heart], let go of his invincibility, and the laws of physics were restored—

Regulus: "*Bu*, *ue*—!"

His entire body, all his bones, shattered.

Regulus's body was attacked mercilessly upon impact.

That was a matter of course. Regulus's body had hit the ground with a much higher velocity than free falling, and the momentum continued drilled into the earth without loss. The reason his body hadn't shattered in every which way, was that there was no space for it to scatter underground.

However, although it could not spread horizontally, vertically was a different story.

Regulus: "*Aa*, *ue*…"

With a hollow voice, tears of blood flowed from Regulus's ruined eyes. The impact penetrated through Regulus's body, rendering it completely destroyed.

Saying he'd received damage greater than a shattered body would be no exaggeration, even the organs within his stomach had been twisted together. Originally impeccable white hair was covered with blood and mud, and his incontinent lower abdomen had lost its function and freely released waste.

Existing here, was a slab of meat which had lost human form.

And what was most surprising was, that this slab of meat still clung to life.

Regulus: "*Aa*, *au*…"

Peerless persistence in clinging to life— or rather, this transcended persistence into a grudge.

This was not merely some attachment to clinging to life. Remaining was solely, a grudge against those above who remained alive. Still struggling in such a condition, was this empty vanity.

If I were to, get serious, you fuckers— merely this.

Regulus: "*Au*, *uu*."

Yet, this fixation should not be sullied.

Having exhausted a lifetime in pursuit of being that would not be pitied, an evil whose root was unharmed after experiencing more than a century's worth of attacks and beatings, making the most suitable judgements for his own survival.

Wretchedly, repeatedly using [Lion's Heart] in short bursts, Regulus dug at the earth. If he entered a state of invincibility, his injuries became insignificant. In the absence of pain, he could exercise even his injured body without harm. With his empty hands, Regulus dug ceaselessly at the soil.

His body had been buried upside-down, and he adjusted it by digging in a circle. Once his head faced upward, he needed only to slowly work his way aboveground. And perhaps once he made it he would see those self-satisfied maggots, smugly celebrating Regulus's fall.

Unforgivable. Could never be forgiven.

To be mocked, to be scorned, to be pitied, was a pain without parallel. That such injuries were impermissible in life went without saying, and even in death could not be tolerated. Aah, right. Directly acting was all that was needed. Whether those who saw him and those who didn't, if he cleanly did away with them all no one would bully him anymore. If only he'd done so at the very beginning. This time he would certainly not make the same mistake. Returning to the surface, killing all three of them, that would be the end of this.

Regulus: "——"

No longer capable of making sound, Regulus turned his hatred into strength and continued to dig at the ground.

When he made it aboveground, he'd be sure to savor the sight of those guys pleading for their lives. Especially the woman who had continually scorned him, he would be sure to mock her in equal measure. The 79th wife, was the role she'd been meant to fill. Speaking of which, the woman who was originally supposed to fill this vacancy was that elf woman living in that forest, where the hateful Petelgeuse had been as well—.

——.

————.

——————.

Aaaaaaah. Ah, ah, ah, ah. Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah.

He remembered. Now, he remembered.

That woman! Indeed, it was that woman. No, she had been a child then!

The little brat who'd been crying and yelling nonstop, when he'd gone to retrieve No. 79! The little brat from then, had grown into the woman of today!

He now understood, the reason for which he'd felt inclined to fill the vacancy with her the instant he'd laid eyes on her. A simple matter. Serving as a substitute for her mother, it would only be natural that the daughter takes up this position.

That was the the little brat of No. 79 who scorned me, and that fool Petelgeuse. Why hadn't I realized earlier. No, thank goodness I'd realized it now.

If he'd killed them without having noticed, he wouldn't be able to derive proper joy from it. Precisely because he had now clearly realized their sins, would there be value in killing them. Would he feel the accomplishment of avenging his humiliation. Would he experience that long-lost feeling, of the significance of fulfilling a desire.

Watch me tarnish her, No. 79. Watch me snatch her, Petelgeuse.

The one you all cherished, who dared to pity me, that girl.

Regulus: "Aah, hehe."

An impulse surging from deep within his throat, Regulus grew giddy with excitement.

With a mouth missing teeth and cracked lips, he smiled. A hope of survival emerged. Feeling joy, at the idea of brutalizing those who dared to insult him.

Climbing up, climbing up, climbing up, and then—.

Regulus: "——?"

The upward striving Regulus, suddenly felt his fingertips come into contact with something. He withdrew the right hand with fingers no longer in comprehensible positions, and with a blinded eye tried to catch a glimpse. His bloodied and muddied form was faintly wetted by something other than blood.

He tried taking a lick at it. Although tinged with the bitter taste of mud, it seemed to be water.

Water. It was water. After understanding that it was water, Regulus immediately felt a thirst parch his throat. One drop was not enough. He wanted to soothe his throat, to fill his stomach. [Lion's Heart]'s effect had been interrupted, and Regulus's body having returned to the cycle of time, finally had the opportunity to ingest again after a century.

For now, water was fine. It tasted sublime. As he thought so, as if in accordance with his wishes, the water gurgled as it poured down from overhead.

He sipped this slightly muddied water. Even if all his teeth had fallen out, his tongue had been shredded, his blood spurted forth without cessation, this water tasted amazing. So satisfying. That feeling existed here.

—The flow of water pouring in suddenly grew, and Regulus's body once again fell to the bottom.

Regulus: "Aa, uu, waaah?"

Flowing down. Flowing in. In this earth with nowhere to run, the water gradually rushed in.

This was the underground, without any extraneous space. In a blink of an eye, Regulus's body sank into the water where he lost his freedom of movement.

—Perhaps until this moment, Regulus still had not understood what was happening.

This water came from overhead in Pristella, where all the canals gathered.

Due to Reinhardt's attack, Regulus had smashed through the street and into the ground. Between the underground tunnel that he had made with his body, and the path he had dug himself, the four currents of the canal had been blocked. It now rushed to Regulus without pause, submerging the murderer entirely.

As if expressing the fury over the destruction of the streetscape, from the city and its inhabitants.

Regulus: "Kuu, fwah."

Needless to say, Regulus who was busy drowning at the moment naturally did not notice.

Trapped by the soil, Regulus panicked from the pressure of the water that poured directly into his lungs, and began to struggle with desperation. However, he had no room with which to struggle within the earth. All he could do was curl up through the sludge himself and protect himself with [Lion's Heart].

When [Lion's Heart] was active, he would be able to breathe freely. The same held true for the pain of his ruined flesh.

However, [Lion's Heart] could last for only five seconds. Once he felt his heart reaching its limit, fear of death would cause Regulus release the effect and once again be dragged back to hell.

His cause of death alternated.

No matter which, he could choose neither side. No matter which, neither side could not be eliminated. However, Regulus had no choice but to endure. All he could do was resent this unreasonable situation.

The time limit had disappeared.

Even if he could use [Lion's Heart] repeatedly, that wasn't the case for breathing. And to reuse [Lion's Heart], he would need to wait several seconds.

Heart failure.

Drowning.

Heart failure.

Drowning.

Heart failure—.

Drowning—.

As if continuing without end, pain and suffering without end or pause.

Regulus opened his mouth, and water and mud are poured together into open mouth. With this repeated violation of his lungs and internal organs, Regulus cried out. With a voice that could not make sound, he continued to cry out.

No response. Around him, there was no one.

Even so, he continued to cry out. From his cries, spilled a hatred that hoped for all of mankind to die off.

After he died, mocking laughter would be begged leave of.

For that girl, rejoicing over the vengeance of her mother and Petelgeuse would also be begged leave of.

The mere thought of that girl's delight over Regulus's death, growing radiant with excitement, was vomit inducing.

A life's goal, a motivation to keep living, its consummation would certainly bring joy.

Her existence being moved by Regulus's death, giving off radiance, to say this significance was unknown would not be incorrect.

Because this was wrong, completely unexpected, unreasonable joy, the notion of satisfying that girl was unbearable.

His death, would greatly impact to the girl's heart—.

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Regulus Corneas shattered through the stone street, and was buried in the dirt.

Toward the grave dug by the murderer's body, water from the Watergate City gushed voluminously. How deep the murderer had sunk was unknown. However, considering the limits of his authority, crashing through to other side of the world— such a thing was impossible.

In all likelihood, the effect had been exhausted somewhere underground, and like that he had been crushed by the momentum. Even if he hadn't been crushed somehow, the water that poured in would never allow the murderer to escape.

The murderer who indulged in his powerful authority, had finally drowned as a tribute to the city he had destroyed.

Subaru: "… Emilia-tan, you look sorrowful."

Emilia watched the cave where Regulus sunk motionlessly. Seeing a trace of mourning on her face, Subaru spoke in response.

For that murderer, there should have been not a single hint of sympathy. Emilia was supposed to share that feeling, and not feeling badly about his underground demise should have been right—.

Subaru: “Although Emilia-tan’s kindness is wonderful, I don’t think it should be wasted on him. A completely hopeless guy, really does exist.”

Emilia: “… Thank you for worrying about me. But, that’s not it. It’s not like that.”

Subaru: “Nn?”

Toward the concerned Subaru, Emilia slowly shook her head from side to side.

Then she fell silent for a long while, while casting low the eyes from which hung long lashes—

Emilia: “Regulus, seemed… When I first saw him, I felt like I’d met him somewhere before.”

Subaru: “So this wasn’t your first meeting? In that case, when?”

Emilia: “That, I can’t remember.”

Faced with Subaru’s question, tilted her head in doubt.

Miraculously, this coincided with the exact moment the buried Regulus screamed.

With a voice that could not reach, the murderer screamed for Emilia to not cheer for his death.

Her mother’s death and her benefactor’s madness, he’d been closely entwined in both. Toward a young girl this was perhaps a turning point that she could never forget, he did not want for her to find satisfaction upon his death.

Such was the murderer’s dying wish, which had no way of reaching the surface.

Emilia: “—Regulus, just where did you meet me?”

Regulus Corneas, had left no impression on Emilia.

In this ironic manner, it was precisely achieved.

Arc 5 – Chapter 60, ”One Ending, One Battle”

by admin - Friday, March 29, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/03/29/arc-5-chapter-60-one-ending-one-battle/

Translated by :

- Nanashi
- u/Ringo_17

Proofread by :

- PaperLightning
- u/IceOccultism
- u/Ringo_17
- u/GracedHarperd

Art Source

- Owari

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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The sight of a white light.

Warm, soft, a light which reassured one’s heart.

To greet the morning with such a serene mood had been too long absent.

Always waking in despair, in neverending everydays that were as nightmares, there had never been a trace of peace.

Gradually coming to firmly believe that for always and always, this darkness would never usher in the morning sun.

Precisely because of this, was perhaps why this this ray was so refreshing.

???: “—Hey, wake up.”

Hearing someone’s voice.

Beyond the white light, someone was calling for her. Guided by that voice like so, led by the hand like so, departing from this darkness.

That white light glimpsed in the distance, finally engulfed her vision completely.

Emilia: “Good morning. No matter how much of a sleepyhead you are, it’s about time to wake up, you know.”

Opening her eyes and gazing over, a shy silver-haired maiden laughed as she spoke such words.

—Those words made Sylphy’s cheeks, become stained with tears.

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Cerulean light flooded the sky, as the enchantment of ice lifted.

The ice that had engulfed the half-demolished church gradually turned to light, and the scattering mana was circled by the micro-spirits and disappeared.

The sight of one unfathomable fantasy being overtaken by another unfathomable fantasy, engraved an agonizing wound in the hearts of the viewers.

Although it wouldn’t be strange to be moved to tears by such a sight, the reason why they cried and wailed, was certainly something greater than that.

From what overtook their lives, a nightmare which had bound the most brilliant and sparkling time of their lives — from that, they had been freed.

Subaru: “Speaking of which, Emilia-tan is pretty amazing.”

Thoughtlessly loosening his lips, Subaru murmured absentmindedly.

In front of his eyes were Emilia, and the bride clinging onto her in tears — the former brides, in a healthy shape.

The number of women in dresses were precisely fifty, with not a single error in counting.

Subaru: “…… When I informed her that his heart and the brides were integrating, I thought there wouldn't be a way to save the brides without having them die.”

Taking away the lives of the brides, rendering [Lion’s Heart] without a place to be in. Subaru had partly, seriously given up on there being another way to stop that abhorrent man. He had been prepared for

victims.

However, unlike Subaru, Emilia had not given up.

It is true that in the fierce and life risking skirmish against Regulus, his thinking had come to a standstill. However, Emilia did not stop thinking.

With the cards she held, and considering what all would be possible for her, she had made her move.

Which is why,

Subaru: “This time, Emilia-tan completely carried us across, huh.”

Emilia: “It's, not like that.”

Letting out an exhausted sigh, next to the wall, Subaru remarked on his own vanquish. Hearing his relieved exhale, Emilia came back to him. Her white dress was torn, and her silver hair, which overcame the struggle for life and death, was disheveled.

Even still, now after the fight had ended, Emilia looked beautiful.

Inhaling with that in his mind, Subaru jerked his chin.

Subaru: “Those people too, faces full of expressions of dissatisfaction that fail to sufficiently express their gratitude toward Emilia.”

Emilia: “Don’t use me to kid around. And I, am unable to explain some grand ideology to them. Even if only for a brief while… the choice of dying was forced upon them.”

Subaru: “But there isn’t anyone who died. Everyone’s still alive. — This point is more important than anything else.”

This result, was more perfect than anything else.

Having found the answer he was seeking, Subaru felt relieved. Emilia placed her hands on her hips, and raised her voice as she spoke to the Subaru who was still regarding himself too lowly and thus putting himself down.

Emilia: “Wounded all over, forcing yourself even so… if Subaru hadn’t worked so hard, everyone wouldn’t have made it so far. [Lion’s Heart] too, was all thanks to Subaru noticing it.”

Subaru: “Lacking a trump card is the usual thing… That said, all along it’s felt off. But, thank goodness it had been noticed. Freezing the wives, to place them into a death trance.”

Emilia: “I too, was frozen for a bit too long.”

Hehe, Emilia stuck her tongue out with that kind of feeling. Adorable.

Although, for some reason, this didn't seem like content to be discussed while laughing.

Which was to say, Emilia's actions and keenness to strike down Regulus, had yielded the greatest effectiveness without unnecessary sacrifice.

Fifty-three lives, of those precious wives' had been saved.

Emilia: "Though as for whether or not I could do it, I was a bit lacking in confidence."

Subaru: "But it was done even still. Emilia-tan, worked hard in order to improve your own skill and strength."

Emilia: "But, that possibility that they would stay frozen like this also existed. To free everyone perfectly like this is what finally allows me to relax."

And then as if to hide her shy smile, she touched her chest.

Underneath the palm of that hand, was seemingly to confirm that there remained only her pulse and heartbeat.

Emilia: "In addition, if Subaru hadn't removed Regulus's heart from my chest, I would have needed to use the same magic on myself. In that case, whether for Sylphy and the others or for myself, I think it'd be waaay worse than melting like this. Because then it could have taken another hundred years."

Subaru: "That again — isn't that exaggeration no matter how you look at it?"

Emilia: "……"

Subaru: "So this isn't exaggeration!? Or worse, isn't this completely unparalleled extremism!"

Watching the silent bitterly smiling Emilia, Subaru felt a sharp shock.

Due to Regulus's provocation, Emilia had wanted to stop [Lion's Heart]'s effect on her. If an eye hadn't been kept on her, if the situation hadn't been dealt with right then perhaps Emilia would have been parted from this life. Of course, notions of searching everywhere for a way to melt the ice in order to avoid this still existed.

Subaru: "Something like two sleeping beauties, my pestilent demon truly isn't ordinary, please give me your forgiveness."

Although complaining, Subaru's heart had settled down.

In any case, Emilia had been rescued safe and sound, and the wives had been freed without harm. Although the battle against Regulus had yielded a scale of destruction beyond what one opponent seemed

capable of — in summary, their side had sustained more or less no loss.

Even so, Subaru's flesh carried all kinds of burdens, as well as an unnecessary fate shared with the Witch Cult.

And in addition —

Emilia: "Reinhardt, leaving without even treating his wounds, I wonder if he'll be okay."

To Subaru who had been lost in thought, Emilia suddenly spoke thus.

Subaru raised his head, gave a wave with his hand.

Subaru: "It'll be fine, since that guy, even if he leaves his wounds as is micro-spirits'll come along and treat them. He himself said so."

Emilia: "Ah, makes sense. Originally there had been quite the number of micro-spirits here, but as soon as Reinhardt left, everyone went too… Reinhardt, perhaps has the aptitude to potentially be a spirits arts user."

Subaru: "My niche would be completely killed so that can't be!"

And as for Reinhardt's circumstances, even without anything like that, he was strong enough. Although the one who had tossed Regulus to be dealt with by Reinhardt was Subaru himself, Reinhardt's manner of battle in that final indistinguishable duel, to describe coldly in one phrase.

Could a human, leap with such ease above the clouds. Even if they couldn't all be classified as human, they were all knights to a candidate of the king's election.

Subaru: "Emilia-tan, weak though I may be, please don't cast me away."

Emilia: "——? I am, especially dependent on Subaru?"

Subaru: "Is that right! That's right! From now to the future I'll also work my hardest!"

Emilia: "Apologies, your sudden rush forward of hard work is a bit confusing…"

In any case, best to stop comparing this to that. To do so, would be the same as Regulus who couldn't act with the peace of mind without using others as a point of reference.

Though he'd always been thought of as a man without qualities to be admired, but unexpectedly treating him as a frame of negative reference worked out just fine.

Emilia: "… Everyone else, are they getting along fine?"

Subaru: "It's for that reason that Reinhardt was brought along. In all honesty, because everyone else is

stronger than me.”

To entrust to one another, or rather for one to rely on the other, the awkward expression known as Faith would be the most suiting.

Despite differing factions, who would one day meet in conflict in the struggle for the throne, Subaru still believed in them. Even with the variance of personalities, abilities, and beliefs.

At least, he’d believe that he wouldn’t lose to those despicable, hopeless guys of the Witch Cult.

“____”

Moreover, if anyone failed, if the lives of anyone who mattered — was to say that Subaru needed to consider using, [Return by Death]. The contract with Roswaal, even if it hadn’t existed, as long as there remained any slight chance of salvation, they would certainly be saved.

Pain and suffering were worthy of his hatred indeed.

But tragedies were surely, even more worthy of his disgust.

Emilia: “Subaru.”

Subaru: “——”

Unknowing of what the Subaru who was considering death saw, Emilia bent down from beside the sitting Subaru.

Her body rested against his left shoulder, as she gently stroked his lowered head. How itchy. But, it was hard to part with.

Subaru: “Emilia-tan?”

Emilia: “Right now, I share the same sentiments as Subaru. Although I’m worried about everyone, my own strength is spent. Even reaching out a hand is impossible. So me too, allow me to pray with Subaru? In hope, that everyone will be safe and sound.”

Subaru: “——”

Emilia: “Certainly there won’t be any problems. Because everyone compared to us, is suuuper strong, suuuper smart, suuuper hard workers.”

In order to reassure Subaru, carefully considering her choice of words was Emilia. Her use of phrasing sounded especially of her, and Subaru too was able to relax.

Faith. To have faith in everyone. And Reinhardt who had already set off.

Immediately upon defeating Regulus, Reinhardt had left to help their compatriots. A battlefield with him present would not be any cause for concern.

Without losing even a single person, welcoming the coming morning. In that case, capturing Subaru's worry, was only one remaining issue—

"____"

Alongside Subaru who looked toward the sky as if in prayer, Emilia as well looked through the ceiling of the demolished church to regard the night sky. As if to prevent Emilia from seeing, Subaru tightly grasped his chest.

—Alongside the moment of Regulus's death, it had felt as if something formless and black, had slid into his own chest, pulsating.

This must be, the same thing that had happened with Petelgeuse then.

So he would in order keep Emilia from noticing, merely keep quiet.

Pray to the heavens, come to an epiphany, merely keep quiet.

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—Turn back time to just a little before Regulus had been defeated.

When Subaru and the others had left for the control towers, and Otto who had seen them off before leaving in order to recover the [Book of Wisdom], even transpiring about a quarter of an hour after.

That was when Otto and Felt had encountered [Gluttony] and had begun to fight, was when Garfiel and Kurgan had just landed in the canal, was when Wilhelm had unveiled Thearesia's cloak, was when Julius had frowned upon hearing discourse of hatred that he couldn't remember, was when the church where a bride had been on her way to being forced into marriage in a farce of a wedding had been half destroyed, was when the canals to the city's north had suddenly ignited at once — was the instant when the City Hall with only non-combatants left inside were attacked.

???: "Kyaha! Time for this lovely lady's debut~!"

On the topmost floor of the City Hall that stood five stories tall, a tremendous force shattered walls without any room for resistance.

The tremendous vibration shattered the architecture's windows, and combined with the damage to the building's foundations that had happened during the day caused lethal damage. Pristella's City Hall, a building which had once been the city's center had in the space of a mere single day turned to the verge of ruin, becoming unsightly to behold.

However, whether or not the curtain would close on only the verge of ruin, was dependent on what would

happen here — would be decided based on those results.

???: “Four towers corresponding to four gates. No matter which opens the city would indeed be flooded… to not gamble on the possibility of retaking all the towers wouldn’t do. Even if you rotten meats were unwilling you’d still need to disperse your forces, so using your total forces wouldn’t do either.”

Long-windedly, a voice which was an assault to the ears described the immediate circumstances of the city.

And then, echoing were voices opposite to this.

“Everyone! Be certain to survive, to protect this city!”

“Using our strength, let’s take back this beautiful street!”

“We who stand with justice couldn’t possibly lose!”

“Good is paid with good, and evil is paid with evil. This battle, will be the victory we await—!”

The stern voice of a young man.

The brave voice of a young woman.

A cry of a stern voice from a male soldier which had tangibly seen war, a cry of rational naivete from a young woman cheering everyone on.

In any case, only the innocence of these unrelenting and unashamed wills and proved these unyielding lines of discourse — only, the mouth which discussed this was only a single one.

???: “Why~ is it, this unwillingness to just think the slightest bit~?”

Then from the same mouth which spoke these effective words, as if betraying all the preceding remarks, insulting and taunting, a voice so rooted in malice to speak as if without even conscious malicious intent of smearing them away spoke thus.

And then the owner of the voice, hugged her own petite frame as if seeing something disgusting and began to shake back and forth at the shoulders.

???: “Kyahahahaha! Stopstopsto~p, please don’t do this! Why~ does this lovely lady have no choice but to greet thi~s justice that exudes the same stench~ as soil and sweat? Yo~u rotten meats, are you all gathered together so that your brains can boil beau~tifully?

Raising her voice high, producing a laugh piercing as a clamor.

Without capability of hiding, without intent of hiding malice was this sultry voice, and the source of this voice was a young girl who had yet to blossom into maturity.

Wide round eyes and delicate thin lips, blond hair riding to shoulders and faintly reddened cheeks, as if taking the form of the concept of cuteness, that face appeared inconsistent with the young girl's luster and fierceness. Clad in pieces of cloth which were practically just lingerie, forget being a woman, for a young maiden whose human body's characteristics had yet to develop this outfit was far too exposed. Any normal human who saw this would hold a twisting sense of aversion.

The terrifying young girl — or rather, the monster's purpose lay here.

Witch Cult Sin Archbishop representing Lust, Capella Emerada Lugunica, a monster whose purpose was to ridicule morals and dignity of humanity as exceedingly as possible was present.

Capella: "That you would delusionally believe this lovely lady would be following decorum, and obediently wait in the tower is practically incomprehensible! Kind to the point of allowing you~ to pass these days, is already charity! What is called battle is about not allowing the opponent to do as they like, and then to do~ precisely what they don't want you to. This kind of principle is understood even by flowers in a greenhouse~, you trash trash trash trash meats."

In the midst of these coarse words of unbearable ridicule, was the monster that was only cute in appearance that was Capella.

Using fingers to poke at cheeks while twisting her body was this monster, who resumed human form immediately upon successfully infiltrating the city hall and entered a nearby room — meeting Capella there was a cat-eared knight who had been immersed in her abusive words earlier. And the long-haired woman lying on the platform behind him.

Here was the uppermost floor of the hall, the room that the pair of Ferris and Crusch occupied.

Felix: "You are, the Sin Archbishop of [Lust]…!"

Ferris cried out with a voice trembling with rage as he protected the bed while glaring at Capella. Capella tilted her head at the Ferris who glared at her, then looked toward the bed behind him and nodded with an expression of acceptance.

Capella: "Ah~ okayokay, your hatred is understandable. She di~d in fact lose to the blood. From the start it shouldn't have worked. E~ven though that was believed, actually seeing this failure is disappointing indeed. The most noble Lugunica blood~ mislead me to have just the slightest bit of expectation."

Felix: "For what purpose would you force something like this on Crusch-sama!? What has to be done to save Crusch-sama! Answer me!"

Toward Capella who sighed with something more like listlessness than disappointment, Ferris's cute face was dyed red in anger as he screamed. Wielded in his two hands was the soldier's short sword he'd been carrying until now.

That sword was engraved with ornate decorations and the emblem of a lion, more akin to a first-class ornament of favor than a weapon of combat. Aligning with Ferris's own immature skills, it lacked the

ability to make effective attacks.

Capella: “Is that a toy? An important gift? No matter which, using your frail arms to wave something like thi~s is pretty da~ngerous, little girl… no, hmm?”

Capella who had stuck out her tongue to jeer, cut her words off midway with a sudden frown.

Capella: “Uwah, disgusting. Eh? You~ have a pretty unnatural body. Clearly a man but that body… Something that should have been removed wasn’t so how~ did you become like that. From a glance it’s fundamentally different from a simple change by dressing in womens’ clothing, hasn’t this lovely lady ruined your mood now?”

Felix: “*—hk*”

Not only did she see through Ferris’s gender, Capella showed disgust at the unnaturalness. The monster carefully examined Ferris from top to bottom, looking as if it were unintentional.

Capella: “That manner of dress, is it to seduce other men? In any case, all it’s worth is bringing understanding of the pointlessness~ of humans. Men are all fools, women are all sluts, and humankind altogether is utter trash… is what this lovely lady concluded from her preferences.”

Felix: “How noisy! Stop with the useless… answer my question already! What exactly did you do to Crusch-sama!!”

Capella: “Ah~ truly, how truly annoying.”

Toward Capella who hadn’t yet established dialogue, Ferris was unable to bear the insult and once again let out a roar of rage. Capella who heard this relaxed her shoulders, and after a moment the visage of the young girl dissolved away.

Felix: “——!?”

Before the Felix who took a stunned inhale, the young girl’s body began to dissolve and reform.

Short stature elongating as if in a nightmare, bright golden hair beginning to change in color. The tempting sweet face who would provoke in anyone a desire to protect it upon being seen became stern, and the lingerie-like clothing transformed into a blue dress.

Although having heard of it, this process of variation and change was still the first time it had appeared before Ferris. The body which was released conformed not in the slightest to others’ opinions, freely being changed as the architect of this nightmare liked.

And then faced with this scene as if a nightmare, Ferris was frozen with shock.

Felix: “Aa, uu…”

Capella: “—What’s there to be so surprised about?”

Saying so, caressing long green hair was the face that Ferris cherished most.

The figure of Capella who stood before him motionlessly, had become the very appearance of Ferris’s most beloved master. This made Ferris’s face turn stark white, and even the hand holding the short sword had begun to tremble slightly.

Capella: “Look here, the ferocity from earlier has completely vanished. This face, this body, this voice, before your very eyes has become like this now.”

The face of Crusch that he had never seen before laughed, and slowly Capella strode forward.

She reached Ferris’s side, stopping when she reached a distance where she could touch him if she stretched out a hand. As if thinking of something, pointed the short sword Ferris was holding to her own chest.

The tip of the sword rested right at the center of Crusch’s large chest.

Leaning just slightly forward would have it pierce through, was the position it was in.

Capella: “Your despised enemy is right before you. Avenge me. It hurts, it hurts. Even breathing brings me anguish. Eyes unopening. Flowing through my chest isn’t blood. Flowing through my entire body is something that feels like poison. So hurry, avenge me. —She’s saying so, like this you know~.”

Felix: “Huu, huu, huu…!”

Capella: “Plunge the blade in with one breath, stir the wound around as you will and yank it out in one breath as well. Then the heart will be destroyed, the pulse will stop, the blood spurt forth constantly. You can kill her.”

Ferris’s breaths began to grow too rapid, gaze began to wander.

More prized than gold, the life of his master’s enemy was being offered right before his very eyes. Just as she said, like this an attack could truly be effective. Could destroy her heart. Could kill her.

However, precisely because she wore that too familiar face.

Capella: “Stab down, stab down, stab down, stab down, stab down, stab down.”

Felix: “——”

Capella: “Stab down—!”

Felix: “Uu, aaaa!!”

Commanded as if by malediction, Ferris's sword short stabbed toward that chest.

The blade pierced that body with ease, reaching between bones to destroy the heart within. With a twist of the keen blade, came the ruthless sound of muscle being severed, and finally along with blood that spurted forth the short sword was yanked out.

Ferris: "Ha, hah."

Felix trying to avoid being stained by the gushing blood, with uneven breaths backed away. The short sword slipped from his hands to the ground, the floor wetted by the dripping blood.

Capella: "Hah, kah."

And then, Capella who had been stabbed in the chest knelt on the ground, spitting vast quantities of blood from her mouth.

In appearance she still wore Crusch's mien, a pained face stained with blood, amber eyes filled with disbelief fixing on Ferris.

Capella: "Hurts, it hurts… Why, why do something like…"

Felix: "It was you, who made me stab down…! Made me, injure Crusch-sama!"

Capella: "So uncomfortable, so very uncomfortable… Too much, unforgivable. Though clearly speaking of things like liking you, loving you… clearly loving each other…"

Felix: "—! Don't say such ridiculous things! I don't share that kind of relationship with Crusch-sama!"

Capella: "Ah, is that so? In that case, the interpretation of the script itself was off~"

With a frank expression, Capella used a sleeve to wipe the blood from her face while standing.

She casually brushed the wound on her chest, and the freshly made wound disappeared in an instant. The twisted expression of agony from before disappeared as well, leaving only a sigh.

Capella: "Indeed, playing around is meaningless if it doesn't start from the ve~ry beginning, it's something like that. Master and vassal who love each other, forcing one to kill the lovely lady who looks just like the other. And then to unfold the tale of the shaping of a love, was what had been planned on originally… a failure, failure indeed."

Felix: "Putting on such a farce… just what do you intend. What do you want from us!"

Capella: "Nothing much? There i~sn't much intent behind it, nor i~s there anything to really ask of you. Watching a husband kill his wife is something to kill time. Asking an adjutant knight to wear women's clothing, something caused by a preference like that, just think of it that way."

Felix: “My promise with Crusch-sama, isn’t anything superficial like that!”

Capella: “Putting proclivity and sexuality on the surface like that, this lovely lady finds that a rather frivolous performance you know~.”

Regarding the Ferris who couldn’t help but cry out, Capella tilted her head as she said so. Then Capella raised her right hand, and her external form once again changed drastically.

Her palm becoming like a flower’s giant petal, the tentacles that stretched forth sent Ferri’s body flying, before entangling him as they lifted him up, then tightened their grip as they slammed him against a wall.

Felix: “Kah, huu…”

Capella: “Whether seeing or feeling it’s the same, wha~t a body both so slim and so fragile. If you wa~nt to become a woman so badly, how about this lovely lady lends you a hand? In this lovely lady’s hands it’d only be child’s play. How about being given help for removing it and forming your holes in minutes?”

Felix: “My, body is irrelevant… More importantly, that Crusch-sama is…!”

Capella: “How ridiculous. Something like valuing another over yourself, how about you sto~p audaciously saying sweet nothings. And speaking of which you’re asking about how to recover a body infected by Dragon’s Blood to its original state? Hah, if such a method exists it should rather be said that this lovely lady wo~uld be more eager to know.”

The tentacle continued writhe forcefully, causing Ferris’s delicate extremities to begin bleeding. Widening his eyes in agony, the sound of twisting broken bones echoed throughout the room.

In comparison to the right hand which had taken the form of a carnivorous flower, the raised left hand took the shape of the scythe of a mantis. Maintaining Crusch’s mien, she had become a repulsive monster whose left hand was an insect’s and right hand was a flower’s.

Even so, that face bore no trace of change, all the more horrid for remaining adorned in beauty.

Capella: “Directly turning you into mincemeat would also be also pretty entertaining, and this lovely lady do~esn’t have much time to spare anyway. Before any unrelated others can appear, it wo~uldn’t do to not take care o~f you and your master.”

Felix: “—uu, kuu”

Capella: “That said, you really are some guy foolish beyond limit. Without expecting this lovely lady to show up here, even a strategy for counterattack i~s sluggish. Just what point will it come to before…”

Having said this, Capella’s once delighted face was now tinged with a touch of a frown. As if holding doubts toward what she had just said, she dragged the still gasping Ferris before her.

Capella: “No matter what isn’t this a bit too slow? Even given that this lovely lady infiltrated from above, it’s taking too long for any others to arrive on this upper floor.”

Felix: “… a”

Capella: “You have to be planning something, hurrying up and revealing everything is for your own good you know. O~therwise, your most most treasured Master-sama, will undergo an even uglier transformation…”

Capella’s scythe extending from her left wrist reached toward Crusch who lay on the bed, and Ferris faced in incomparably cruel choice. Serving as a response to this question, was Ferris’s shaking voice that he squeezed out,

Felix: “—You,”

Capella: “Ah~? Which way of begging for mercy will you…”

Felix: “You, utterly… useless creature.”

Capella: “Hah?”

Yellow pupils bearing disgust glared at Capella, a sentence uttered as if spat.

Immediately afterward, the tentacles that bound Ferris began to spout smoke, and the petals discolored and rotted away. Regarding her own right arm that had been corroded away, Capella revealed an expression of surprise.

Capella: “A~rara? Just what happened to this lovely lady’s hand…”

Felix: “Well, just think of it as something like a scummy personality isn’t unique to your side.”

The tentacles rotted away, and Ferris’s body was freed.

Another sound overrode that of Capella who turned her head at this. That was a cute voice with a unique cadence. Capella looked in the direction of the bed that had issued the sound — at this very moment, light flooded the entire room.

A white ray which practically created the effect of instantaneously spiking temperature. This energetic beam burned away at Capella’s face, destroying the entire left half of her face.

Accompanying the carbonizing half of her face was the stench of scorched flesh, and Capella retreated a several steps. Then reaching out a serpentine tongue to caress the surface of that wound, smiled.

Capella: “Standing against the face of an ally without even a trace of leniency hu~h… well, not li~ke this had much of an effect. The presence of someone here is well expected, so n~ot a huge surprise to wind up like this.”

???: “Something like ‘n ally is a misunderstandin’. We’re commercial competitors… nah, it’s more like competitive opponents. Moreover not like we’re livin’ such easy lives that we’d hesitate to attack upon seein’ the face ‘f an opponent like that.”

Capella: “A conditional ally will sooner or later become an enemy. In that case, was especially aiming at the face some deliberate~ preemptive scheme? If truly so, your personality might be a little too twisted too.”

???: “Ah’ve already said, there wasn’t any such confusion of private n’ public affairs. Aimin’ at the head was purely to see, ‘f destroyin’ it would prove fatal, hopin’ so for a moment ‘s all.”

Saying so, the person who clambering from the bed gave the sigh of betrayed expectations.

In place of Crusch, lying on the bed had been Anastasia.

She touched her own wavy hair colored with green dye, responding with a slight smile to Capella who had survived with even half her face burnt off.

Anastasia: “Though Ah’d clearly hoped for it, seems no death happened.”

Capella: “Even~ though you might be different from the type of woman who only smiles upon seeing mo~ney. But something like unhesitatingly scorching half the face of a woman, a personality surpassing a reasonable amount of self-interest, truly a female meat that this lovely lady would take an interest in!”

Anastasia: “Being taken interest in by a person like you, even us here would feel a bit of resistance. Y’ see, us here’s somethin’ beloved is with long fur that feels silky to the touch.”

With formality, Anastasia responded frankly to the monster Capella’s words. With a small cough she approached Ferris who was near the bed, taking his wrist and helping him up.

Watching the teary-eyed Ferris, Anastasia with “*isn’t this enough*” as a precursor,

Anastasia: “No information’s been gathered at all. At the very least, let’s set Crusch’s affair aside for now.”

Felix: “… I understand. You’ve accompanied me far already, in such a risky gamble.”

Anastasia: “For this situation, us here’s holds a rather large share of the responsibility, so let’s just call it that.”

Even the ability of Ferris who was the leading healer in the kingdom, could do nothing to heal the current Crusch.

To save her, there was no other way aside from finding the reasoning and a solution from the one who had done this to her.

As for what Ferris had prosed, Anastasia could not refuse.

Welcoming each candidate to the city of Pristella had been Anastasia. And then things had hit this point. Due to holding a share of responsibility for the matter, Anastasia was unable to refute Ferris's plea.

Anastasia: "It's something like this, call this completely fruitless and yet it still managed to betray expectations."

Capella: "To be burdened by expectation like so, my deepest apologies~ but these feelings are truly, completely absent. But, there shouldn't have been any guarantee that I'd show up at all?"

Anastasia: "Wasn't there an announcement from Natsuki-kun? Seems that, you would have acted upon hearin' it."

Sending the main combative force away, leaving the base camp undefended would surely prompt activity from the enemy. In the first place the Witch Cult had no obligation to greet then with integrity. Truly this was just as Capella's earlier speech had said.

Anastasia: "Natsuki-kun there, grew naive at a critical moment."

Although in no way was there a possibility of a guarantee, strictly speaking to consider from the nature of the Witch Cult, showing up to attack could only be one of either [Wrath] or [Lust].

So Anastasia had laid a trap, and allowed the City Hall to be attacked. The real Crusch had of course, fled to a nearby shelter with the other injured.

There would of course be no one who would step into this uppermost floor. People still remaining in this building, aside from those on the this topmost floor—.

Capella: "… Hm~ph, he~h. People whose minds move a little too quickly, are just the slightest bit irritating to others. But then, aren't you underestimating this lovely lady? That cat-ears over there, this little lady over here, nei~ther looks like someone who can hold their own in battle."

Anastasia: "Bein' called a little lady is really rather embarassin'. Though we here look like this, seems that I'm technically still a grown adult."

At Capella's remarks, Anastasia closed one eye in response.

Capella: "It's been decided. That cute face of yours lovely face, is all that'll be when everything below your neck becomes a locust. After turning in to that do try again, to ba~ttle against me using that rude mouth of yours~."

Anastasia: "How rather horrid… in that case, best to bid farewell for now."

Capella: "——"

Anastasia's refusal, surprised Capella who had been the threatening party.

Anastasia tugged on her still green hair, glanced about the room.

Anastasia: "We here should have mentioned already, we've been awaiting you all along — in that case, we couldn't have been waiting without making any preparations."

As soon as the sound of her voice fell, Anastasia rapped gently against the floor with her fingers.

Two ringing sounds, as if some kind of signal — immediately afterward, cracks appeared in the floor by Capella's feet, and the broken body of the young girl plummeted downward.

Capella: "Oh, myyy."

The bottom of the floor falling away, and appearing in the floor she had plummeted to was a similar opening.

In this manner Capella continued to fall floor by floor, falling the height of four stories in one breath, landing directly into an underground chamber beneath the first floor.

Splat, with such a sound, Capella's body exploded.

Defenselessly slamming into the ground, the body of the young girl was completely flattened on the cold surface.

Blood gushed forth from her face, and her limbs were folded over and broken with a miserable appearance. But, the body that become a piece of flesh immediately began sluggishly move in hands and feet, and young girl's body stood in the form of an aqueous amorphous state.

Appearing there was, the figure of a seductive woman.

Clad in extremely revealing clothing, displaying her ample flesh without a trace of shame, the rare sight of black hair was done into a three-stranded braid. Exuding a somewhat dangerous aura, and a beauty that caused restlessness in its wake.

Whether Ferris or Anastasia, both should have no idea who this appearance belonged to. In any case, the two that remained on the fourth floor, shouldn't be able to see her transformation.

And so, there should have been no one who would react with surprise upon seeing this figure.

Capella: "Aah, aah, reallyreally… i~sn't this just going to make me so very delighted so very excited. *Kyahahahaha*!"

With the manner of an agonized death and a manner that couldn't feel agony, Capella let go her voice. That was a light and delicate sound incongruent with her mutated appearance, echoing throughout the entire underground chamber of the city hall.

In shadows, in air both cold and humid. This was not merely the landscape of a basement, it was part of the numerous waterways distributed throughout the city — part of the management facilities used to maintain these waterways.

From somewhere came the sound of rushing water, and from somewhere else overhead a breeze blew by.

Capella: “Receiving such a warm welcome and whatnot, allowing me to freely change the size of my chest is exciting i~sn’t it. To return and embrace them tight, to have them rectify their upbringing from within this lovely lady’s arms, to have them never love anything aside from this lovely lady…”

???: “Can’t return.”

Capella: “——”

Cheeks dyed crimson, Capella who was exhilarated to the point of trembling, was barred by someone unknown.

Sounding out was a deep voice, a man’s voice muffled and sulking.

As she heard this voice Capella raised her head, and from the shadows underground emerged a person’s figure.

The expression of Capella who saw him suddenly twisted. The absentminded expression that had been her face until now, immediately contorted to one of loathing, as she glared at her opponent.

Capella: “By this lovely lady’s aesthetic values, the most intolerable are the ones who try to hide their ugliness are~n’t they?”

???: “I see. Rest easy. By my aesthetic values, your feelings can’t be tolerated either.”

Responding to Capella with an apathetic manner, heaving a sigh as if something were weighing him down.

And then,

???: “Shouldn’t you have heard from above? Your actions have been seen through by that wicked one on our side. Which is to say… in terms of wickedness, how could you hope to triumph against our princess?”

As he spoke, the heaviness that sat in his voice was still present.

The sword attached behind his side was drawn from its sheath, and sluggish light reflected onto it from the empty space above his head.

Standing there was a man with one arm. Was a shadow clad in a black helmet. Was a singularly dressed strange man.

The stranger facing Capella, pointed over with the single arm holding the Blue Dragon Sword.

Al: “Though I’ve only just greeted you, I’m in a terrible mood today. — Before I die, hurry up and leave the hell away from here. Mollusk.”

Arc 5 – Chapter 61, ”Victim of the Territory”

by admin - Wednesday, April 03, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/04/03/arc-5-chapter-61-victim-of-the-territory/

Translated by :

- Nanashi

Proofread by :

- PaperLightning
- u/IceOccultism
- u/Ringo_17
- u/GracedHarperd
- u/Nobidexx

Art Source

- Owari

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Blue Dragon Sword wielded in his one hand, toward the man chattering without rest Capella lightly tilted her head.

Three-plaited braid long and dark spilling upon her white shoulder, with arms folded as if to emphasize her plump chest she bent forward, casting a mesmerizing gaze toward the man wearing the helmet.

Using that mesmerizing gaze to tempt a man’s eyes, even knowing it was a trap, it would still drive a man’s instincts wild.

However, even with such a demonic scheme, whether or not it would be effective would depend on the opponent.

Al: “That erotic pose is indeed a little bit, but if your goal is to seduce me it’s useless y’know. For a

hardcore virgin… to make me thirst after a passerby onee-chan, has such a high difficulty that I'm practically laughing."

Capella: "To demean your own frivolous words as well as moderate restraint… setting aside whether or not this lovely lady's goals apply for you, a man who~ gives the impression of not eating this up, putting on that act of a harlequin to induce carelessness in your opponent, just what is that thick thing meant for?"

Al: "Women shouldn't be spouting dirty jokes like that. It's a real turn-off."

Capella: "——"

Capella's provocative seeming gaze, from this man's response turned into an expression of speechlessness. This measure of surprise quickly dissipated as well, and Capella laughed as if happy from the bottom of her heart.

Capella: "Kyahahahaha! What is that, that remark at that age in that demeanor. That maiden of yo~ur dreams lives on o~nly within your chest. Yo~u too are one of those people whose exterior doesn't conform to your interior, are~n't you without doubt a flower in a greenhouse. Kya~, how di~rty."

Al: "Though I apologize for interrupting your show, don't make me say it so many times. I'm not in the mood today. I couldn't really tell you if you asked me when is it that I'm in the mood, particularly today, so."

Toward the one posturing like so, Capella who was tapping her feet, the man - Al's attitude became extremely complex and irritated.

Rather than posturing, it seemed to be a manner of dissatisfaction with this task from the bottom of his heart. Rather different from the two people from above on this point, this lead Capella to become increasingly incredulous.

Capella: "Not in the mood, finding this a bother, and yet not clearing the way. Your~ words are truly full of contradictions. In that case why the hell are you still in the company of a raucous maniac like myself?"

Al: "The nerve of you to say it yourself, you raucous maniac."

Capella: "Of course it'll be said. From this lovely lady's perspective, in any case absolutely everything that exists in this world is just a way to pass time. You are all in entirety, ultimately objects of this lovely lady. The lovely lady's love is boundless, filled with mercy, because everything aside from seeking love from this lovely lady is unnecessary… Anything else, do with it a~s you like."

Spreading her arms, Capella with an expression as if a poisonous flower laughed sweetly.

Al who was looking at this smile, with a woosh dropped the blade of the Blue Dragon Sword. Twisting his neck so that his bones made a crack, spat out a long sigh with an '*Ah*—'.

Al: “You are. Rather different from the other sins I’ve known.”

Capella: “Oh my, you’ve seen other meats rotted beyond rot? That perverted female meat who resents her own longing? That virgin bastard with miniscule vessel? That low-life brat of Bizarre Eating with vile character? Or was it that sick in the head, sick in consciousness, sick in thought self-proclaimed spirit? No matter which for companions they’re the absolute worst choices! Haven’t your parents taught you? Choose your companions carefully.”

Al: “… Unfortunately, my current friends are types my parents warned me about.”

Capella: “That too still deserves condolences. Even the you~ like that, will embrace this lovely lady’s august love? Remove that helmet and reveal your face, embrace and devote love to this lovely lady!”

No matter how contemned or rebuffed, Capella who carried out the gestures of seeking love was the epitome of a mind which sought love. Excepting the notion of the most extreme one-sided love that had without regard of others forcefully plundered love until now that had been referred to by a misnomer of [Love].

Of course, answering to her love which rather than being called awkward, would be better described as completely disregarding of human nature existed not a single person.

Al raised the Blue Dragon Sword that he had just lowered, slowly shaking his head.

Al: “Apologies. I’m happy you feel that way, but the two of us are still unfamiliar with each other, and it’d be embarrassing if any odd rumors spread amongst my friends. Please accept my refusal.”

Capella: “Something like giving regard to the gazes of outsiders, do~n’t you still have quite the cute aspects. Is this lovely lady lacking here. —And here there had been an impression of taking leave from garbage masochistic male meats who enjoy being ordered about by women.”

Al: “… ah?”

Capella: “Disregarding of others, harsh eyes. A body which could even be said to be filled with sensuality and violence. A stature shorter than this lovely lady currently is, a kind of lovely exposed skin. Although words changing along with mood, an inner character always held up with reason and confidence which never grows meaninglessly arrogant. Handing many tasks over to subordinates, but rarely becoming reliant on them. Not li~kable but not disli~kable, the position and the woman both.”

While chattering on endlessly, Capella’s figure metamorphosed.

Still maintaining ample flesh, shortening her height, clothing transforming into a bold dress which revealed shoulders and back. Eyes on the face changing from sleepy to sharp, from her keen gaze overflowed an atmosphere of confidence. What appeared was a beautiful woman with long golden hair hanging loose.

Associates from within the city, although not the appearance of any particular person — from some

unknown place, exuded an atmosphere similar to that of a woman whom Al associated with.

Al: "——"

Capella: "Oops, not gold? At the very least a Lugunica's characteristics would include golden hair… In that case, hmmhmmhmm, red… n— orange it is."

Observing Al's subtle reactions, Capella's hair color changed bit by bit. Testing black, brown, green, blue, hesitating for a moment when it became red, then becoming orange.

With just this, she had assumed an impression ridiculously similar to a very familiar woman.

Al: "How very hair raising… from where have you met our princess?"

Capella: "Never seen never spoken to her never even realized her existence? Merely, deducing from your reactions the type of woman you like. This lovely lady, is a woman who will give all you know? In order to be liked from a well liked opponent, it's a matter of course to give e~verything."

Al: "Speaking of reactions, my face is…"

Capella: "Voice, movements, speech patterns. Angle of neck and line of sight, attitude. From chatting understanding your attitude, nature, preferences."

Al: "——"

Capella: "One twitch or one movement, not missing a single one. Putting in the entirety of heart and spirit to be loved, this is the way this lovely lady utterly devotes her all. This lovely lady has already utterly devoted her all like this so… look at this lovely lady. Look only at this lovely lady. Don't look at anyone else. This lovely lady's face, body, voice, attitude, gestures allofallofit! Should all be totally completely in line with you~r preferences!"

As she spoke, the voice of Capella - Capella who had assumed Priscilla's appearance, gradually grew rough. Her claims were a straight line of desire to please, but a line too straight would become a love that would pierce right through its target.

It seemed as if Al couldn't even respond with shaking his head or reply with words. Could only ready his entire body's will to fight a response to Capella. At this silent answer, on Capella's face grew discouragement and contempt.

Capella: "You, a selfish scum male meat… which aspect of this lovely lady are you di~ssatisfied with?"

Al: "Don't misunderstand. I neither like you nor dislike you, either way is fine… Sorry, that's a lie. As expected, you're disgusting so I really don't like you."

Capella: "—*hk*! You fickle rotting male meat!!"

The right arm of Capella who was stomping her feet, from her shoulder began to transform into the huge head of a wolf. The ferociously howling beastly head, at speeds beyond what the eye could process flew toward the frozen Al. In a moment the fangs of the head sharp as blades, completely shattered Al's upper body with a bite - in the instant before, Al's flew forward into the gap of approaching canine fangs, flying horizontally to escape.

Capella: "Don't think you can escape with just that!"

Al: "Like I'd think that! The side! And then the back!"

From overhead the rolling Al, a powerful attack from a hand slammed down. A finger of those giant hands could compare to the height of a human, and being caught in its grip would be akin to being caught by a snake.

However, this attack too was evaded by Al through jumping. And then the wolf's head whose fangs seemed to want to crush Al's waist returned, being exactly stopped by the Blue Dragon Sword wielded behind his back.

Al: "Whoaaaaa, Dona!"

Without completely dispelling the momentum of the attacking beast, and maintaining his position of blocking with the Blue Dragon Sword, Al's body slid forward. The half incanted wall of earth rose from the ground, slamming directly from below into the right arm that had become a beast.

The wolf whose lower jaw had been struck gave a wail, and the shift in mass of her right arm led to the collapse of Capella's entire form. Seeing this, Al having dodged the left arm's forceful attack rushed forward.

Al: "Dona! This side too, Dona!"

Capella "—*hk*"

The Dona that Al incessantly launched was the lowest tier of earth magic.

Whether in power or durability as a wall, both were perfectly aligned with its nature as the lowest tier of magic. Even so Al still relied on this magic, as his best tactic in actual combat.

Forming obstacles, blocking field of vision, forming a foothold - exactly like, he was doing in this moment.

Al: "Raaaaaaa!"

A solidly formed wall of earth, hindered the movements of Capella's distant right and left arms. In addition Capella's body itself, was assaulted by a wall of dirt that obscured her frontal vision.

Then, with preparations in place, Al rose into the air — using speed and momentum from earth rising from

the ground, launched forward as if with wings.

In the instant when Capella upon hearing these shouts glanced overhead, a flash appeared upon her slender neck, her head flying away.

A face similar to Priscilla's danced through the air, an exaggerated amount of blood spurting from the wound. Capella's blood had an unidentified effect of something seemingly poisonous, the very reason for Crusch's suffering.

Of course, even with warning to not brush the excess of blood -

Al: "Who do you think you're fooling, you damn liar!"

Stepping into this pool of blood without lenience, Al stuck out his Blue Dragon Sword.

The tip of the blade did not hesitate in the slightest, to reach through the back of the headless Capella, being yanked out from between bones in the chest, adding another fatal injury to an opponent who was supposed to have died. However, it could not stop at this.

Al: "Take this! El Dona!"

Sweeping up the pierced body, Al who flew forward incanted with momentum - a level higher than Dona, an El tier magic using the Blue Dragon Sword as a launch point, to have it begin within Capella's body.

Of course, Capella's body was unable to suppress the mass that swelled from inside, and scattered in an explosion.

Bang, with a foolish sound as if in a joke, Capella's body turned to shreds. Hands and feet scattered and flew away, pink viscera and bright red staining the entire underground space. In the frigid air the pieces of meat even seemed to give off warmth, finally resulting in a result that one could walk away from.

Al: "… How's, that! Hah, hah, at this point it's…"

Shoulders heaving as he caught his breath, Al spoke to Capella who had become pieces of meat.

This, anything like this, a creature able to survive after being destroyed to this point simply could not exist. Toward Al's declaration of victory, an existence that could respond did not exist, or at least that should have been.

Capella: "Ah~ ho~w exce~ssive — ah. No matter what, ordinarily things wouldn't go so~ far."

Al: "Damn it."

The one that had received Al's insults of disgust, responding was that still airy yet wicked voice.

The voice came not from flesh, but from the direction of the head that had been initially severed — in other

words, it came from the place where Capella's head had landed. Capella's head from where it had rolled, remained on the ground as it joyously witnessed Al's reaction.

Al: "Sending your head flying, destroying your heart isn't enough. Isn't that breaking too many rules here…"

Capella: "Head flying and heart destroyed, would pose no problem to this lovely lady… Suddenly becoming so without a trace of tolerance i~s rare indeed. This lovely lady, right now, should be tempting you with you~r favorite face, could it have been a slip of the eye? Or could it be that you're the type who expresses love by inflicting pain?"

Before the Al revealing feelings of helplessness, Capella's head righted itself.

The severed head moved sluggishly, black flesh that couldn't possibly have been present gushing out. Forming a head as a pedestal, quivering flesh became limbs, black surfaces hidden from sight by white skin, turning back to — no, completely transforming into a golden haired maiden.

Al: "… And the pieces of meat scattered here?"

Capella: "Since they're unnecessary, they can dissolve."

Al looked on with amazement, as the scattered pieces of flesh that had formed Capella's body started dissolving with a noise. The organs and limbs became a substance like black mud, bubbling as they disappeared. Even their method of disappearing inspired disgust to the point of aesthetic fatigue.

Capella: "Anyway, without hesitation you severed my head i~ndeed. The one from above… se~ems to have been a fake. Wa~sn't there one whose comrade couldn't fight anymore, after taking this lovely lady's blood? Soaking in it like that, wa~sn't it sca~ry?"

Al: "It wasn't some kind of bluff. Though I didn't know what conditions needed to be filled, knowing that being dripped on wouldn't be the end is something I've already tested. Dodged like mad and it was a waste."

Capella: "—? But you haven't shown even a trace of an attempt to avoid it."

Al: "It's something you couldn't know about. Head, heart, if both don't work, next time that severed head will be crushed. No matter how many tries it takes."

Al's extraordinarily tired sigh, was even more pained than it had been before this battle had begun. This should have been due to the effect of Capella's tricks. Extraneous burden that had been placed upon his shoulders after their meeting.

In any case, not a trace of damage was left on Capella's freshly regenerated body.

In addition to variation and transformation, a regenerative ability to the point of refusing death - with even the typically most fatal attacks on head and heart rendered ineffective, this was truly a genuine

monster.

However, difficult to kill did not equate undefeatable.

Al: “There are also methods like freezing the entire body to seal it, or some method like tossing it into the Great Cascade.”

Capella: “I~sn’t despairing after failing to kill an opponent nice, are~n’t you tru~ly an incorrigible trash meat. But, having motivation is well and good, can you actually do it? Se~ems like you’re good at petty tricks like dodging and escaping, are~n’t you lacking a way to actually kill this lovely lady.”

Al: “Indeed even if I died a hundred times, I wouldn’t be able to kill you. In fact, I’ve already gone half of the way… But, aren’t you forgetting something?”

Al placed the Blue Dragon Sword over his shoulder and gave a knock, his helmet making a clunking noise, he pointed his sword and Capella’s head which had turned at this line swiveled.

He was pointing at the City Hall - somewhere outside of it.

Al: “You originally intended to disrupt our home base. We can also imagine that your control tower is completely deserted. Meaning, that the ones who went to attack [Lust] will rush back shortly. As long as I keep up these time-buying tactics, naturally soon you’ll be done with.”

Capella: “——”

Al: “For your information, my abilities are okay for buying time, no? I’ll try every means to Keep you down, to trap you in here. So, if you’d like to run your chance is now.”

Al locked in battle against Capella in solitude, used the imminent arrival of reinforcements to try to coerce his opponent into retreating. Upon hearing those words Capella raised her eyebrow as if surprised, and toward her questioning attitude Al also responded with a “hmm?”.

Al: "What’s that, your reaction. Even if you have some complaint about my suggestion from just now then…”

Capella: “Do you truly believe that this lovely lady who came alone into enemy territory, wo~uldn’t have prepared measures against the troops you~ sent out?”

Al: “… Huh?”

Capella: “Muscle daruma and swordswoman, were placed along the way. Even amongst our puppets, those two are quite something… Can your reinforcements really get away so easily?”

Al: “*hk*”

The unforeseen development drew a sound from Al, who looked at the large hole overhead. As if seeing

through his helmet to see his expression, Capella continued with a "*by the way*",

Capella: "The Conversation Mirror you had on you is sealed you know? So even if you hurriedly tried to establish contact with anyone else, you wouldn't be able to reach anyone."

Al: "How did you do something like that!?"

Capella: "That magic device, the creator se~ems to have been a [Witch]. Rumors about such legends have long been passed down in the Witch Cult. Including things like disrupting the wavelength of the Conversation Mirror."

Due to the nature of this unorthodox annoyance, the goal that Al had spoken fell empty.

Although Al had no way of ascertaining the truth of Capella's words, in truth, the two who had been sent from the City Hall to take on [Lust] — Wilhelm and Garfiel will sooner or later clash with her minions. The possibility of returning from a battle between monster and man could only be said to be extremely low.

Which was to say,

Capella: "Lacking a means to fight back at a time like this, isn't this about the end?"

Al: "… Not having anything, well I wouldn't go so far as to say that."

At Al's vague answer, Capella revealed a faint trace of a small smile.

And in the moment after, the faint smile melted. Once again, the form of the young girl became an amorphous piece of meat, and like this Capella's mass grew exponentially.

With a gurgling sound, Capella's form broke the limits of a human form, growing huge.

Delicate maiden, seductive woman, stern young man, serious warriors - her flesh grew enormous with a momentum yet unseen, the underground space echoing with laughter.

And then appearing after a moment was, a dragon of black whose body blended into the shadow.

Al: "… I see, you could even turn into a dragon."

Considering the fact that there were no divisions of rooms, the underground was much more spacious than the City Hall had been. However, even a space like this could not accommodate the black dragon's huge body so easily.

Hearing Al's low voice, the dragon narrowed its golden eyes, and Capella opened her mouth as if to respond to Al. From that mouth, came a merciless scorching breath.

"*—hk*"

The breath of flame seemed to ignite the very air of the underground, as a white light forced its way close to Al.

An incantation completely overpowered by the roaring sound, created a wall of earth in the scope of that breath. However, faced with the overwhelming temperature the wall failed to mount even a momentary defense before crumbling under the heat — however, Al's purpose did not lie there.

"Kah, huu—"

The jaw of the black dragon which had released the breath, was hit by a suddenly rising wall of earth. The mouth that generated the breath was forced shut, and instead the black dragon scorched its own throat with its flame.

Even so, the flame that the black dragon had spat out before its interruption continued to burn. On his back which tried to escape the range of the heat, the green flame approached—

Al: "Damn it! Dona! Geh!?"

Incanting alongside the stench of burning, a wall of earth suddenly slammed into Al's side. Using this momentum Al with a backside full of flame was launched into a nearby waterway. Then the instant that his back brushed bottom surface of the waterway, another incantation brought a wall of earth, sending him flying out of the water.

Al: "—Shiii!"

The completely soaked Al flew from the waterway. In an instant, the razor claws of the black dragon had swept across the waterway's bottom. Tossing up foam, the wall which carried Al out of the water burst into pieces. Although an evasive manoeuvre, the ferocious attack on Al continued, as he endlessly avoided, avoided, avoided.

Using miraculous movements to evade in such an extremely small space, withstanding attacks from behind that should have been unforeseen, his body's lack of ability was supplemented by his own magic, as he continually avoided fatal injuries.

"Gyiiiiiiii!"

Al: "Do, Do, Do, Donaaa!"

The now impatient dragon rotated its enormous body, mowing down with its tail.

Faced with this battering wind that drew an arc, Al used multiple incantations to create five earthen walls toward his front — after reducing the threat of this attack as much as possible, used his Blue Dragon Sword to fend against injuries, swept up and hitting the ground to roll several times before staying down.

The dramatic rolling movements lessened the on his body, and Al stood with the Blue Dragon Sword as a crutch. However, the damage had not been completely offset.

Hurriedly through the gap at the bottom of his slanted helmet, a large quantity of vomit spilled.

Al: “Ku, kuu… damn it, on the victim’s side this time… really outta luck here…!”

Capella: “Do~esn’t seem that way though. Considering your abilities, there’s a kind of incomprehensible stupidity in staunchly standing with allies…”

Toward Al who sighed over his current situation, the black dragon Capella gave a rather uncomprehending praise.

Even from her perspective, Al’s desperate defensive battle held an inexplicable sense of bothersome violation. Attacks that should not have been seen through, pursuits that should not have been imagined, Al had all along been using his own ability to survive as long as possible. - As if he’d long known all those choices.

However, neither had the leisure to pursue those idle thoughts for now.

As for why,

Capella: “… Isn’t this rather, a bit too much?”

The reason why Capella who raised her head would say so, were the faint vibrations transmitted from the surface of the ground — and then were, fatal sounds coming from the City Hall that had continually suffered damage.

The foundation of the structure which had seen too many large battles had already suffered a great deal of damage, and then the battle that had taken place underground had given the foundation one final blow. The result was, the gradual widening of the hole that had been the trap to send Capella down, and the cracks spread through not only on the floor but even through the entire building.

The development after this, even a small child could draw a conclusion - collapse.

Al: “Stop kidding around! If this territory comes undone I’ll actually die!”

Seeing part of the floor fall away from above, Al stood through the pain, with laboured steps like this leapt into the flowing waterway.

Along with the sound of water, his body grew distant with the underground waterways. And then Capella seeing him off maintained the form of the black dragon as she gazed upon the gradually collapsing ceiling.

Capella: “Ye~p, interest is wilting. Tired from playing, so forget it.”

With murmured words that seemed listless, the black dragon yawned.

Like this the rarest sight in the world went unseen by anyone, buried under the rubble from the collapsing

architecture.

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“—u”

At the scene of the collapse, echoed a low humming sound.

The sound accompanied the shoving aside of rubble, several slightly larger stones rolling down from a mountain of rubble. Thanks to this impact the mountain collapsed, and from an opening caused by this collapse a white hand protruded.

As if searching for something, that slender arm hurriedly attacked the mountain of rubble and made it cascade bit by bit.

And then several minutes later, finally succeeded in breaking free of the mountain of ruin, was Ferris whose clothing had become ragged.

Felix: “Ku, ku.”

As he coughed, Felix spat out vast quantities of soil and blood.

Was it sand or blood that remain in the gap between his tongue and teeth. No matter which, it didn’t matter at all to Ferris. Right now he just wanted to rinse his mouth.

Ferris: “Didn’t expect the City Hall to collapse. Isn’t this, another death for nothing…!”

Ferris used the inside of his dirtied clothing to scrub the blood from his face. Wiping away what dirtied it like that, would return his face to neat and cute.

In the midst of a ruin that could not have been imagined to be a five-storied building mere minutes ago, that was now in a state of crushing humans to death without any preparation of a defense.

Felix: “Something like that is… that’s right, Anastasia-sama!”

Cat ears pointing upward, Ferris shouted that name as he looked about him.

Volunteering to appear in Crusch’s stead, assisting in this dangerous battle by acting as bait was Anastasia. Having successfully met [Lust]’s ambush as anticipated, although the results could only be described as a tragedy. But, a collaborator was a collaborator.

And in the necessity of determining whether she lived or died, also resided a level of emotional obligation to Julius.

Felix: “If like me, she’d been directly crushed to death…”

Looking around, starting the search among the nearby rubble. In the moment that the building had begun to topple, Anastasia and Felix had been in the same room.

A sudden collapse from beneath their feet, if she'd been caught up in it without any preparation she'd end up the same way. At least if she hadn't died instantaneously, as long as she could be subject to Ferris's healing magic she'd be safe and sound.

Felix: "With just a single reply this search would be that much simpler!"

Anything like search and rescue, was not what Ferris's slender arms were suited for.

Even if helping the injured was Ferris's especial speciality, but Ferris was ill-suited for the work that lay before healing. Even for the lack of information received from [Lust], Ferris felt an unprecedented sense of toil, and precisely at this moment.

Anastasia: "Ah, Ferris, you too are safe and sound."

"____!"

The sound of footsteps that kicked away rubble approached, Ferris who jumped as if startled turned to see a solitary figure. Tugging on the hair that had been dyed green, smiling slightly was the Anastasia he had been searching for all along.

Hem of her clothing which seemed difficult to move in swaying, she approached Ferris with careful steps.

Felix: "Anastasia-sama, are you unhurt?"

Anastasia: "It's as ya can see. In fact, we here should be saying that. You, Ferris, thank goodness you emerged unhurt from that collapse."

Felix: "That's…"

Although strictly speaking he hadn't been unhurt, Ferris suppressed his instinctive reply. There was no obligation to reply, any it would not merit a pleasant topic. Closing his mouth without reply, Ferris across from Anastasia surveyed the rubble and scene of collapse of the City Hall.

Ana: "Telling everyone to leave for the shelters in advance, truly was too correct of a decision. This was, quite the grand happenin'."

Felix: "A grand happening…"

Anastasia frowned as if incredibly troubled, and Ferris as well surveyed his surroundings.

Anastasia calling this a grand happening, was this a circumstance to be able to say so with peace of mind. Although calling it a grand happening wasn't incorrect, it felt as if missing a touch of seriousness.

Not to mention that the cause of this collapse was precisely —

Ana: “Seems to me, that the cause would be the underground battle between Al and [Lust]…”

“____”

Ana: “Being completely buried, digging them out like this would be a bit difficult. If they successfully enter the waterways underground, seems to me there would be a possibility of escaping alive…”

Of course, in that case the possibility of Capella’s survival also needed to be considered.

As Ferris had observed, Capella’s capacity for regeneration surpassed human imagination. Having half her face destroyed by Anastasia’s magic, and not giving any regard to it was truly beyond strange. Just as Ferris’s life continued after fleeing, it shouldn’t have been the result of some unnatural constitution.

Felix: “Speaking of which, where did Anastasia-sama learn such magic?”

Anastasia: “… that, got anythin’ to do with this?”

Felix: “Since I had heard you couldn’t fight, a little bit of surprise can’t be helped.”

During the discussion on how to distribute the combat forces, she herself had been the one who’d said she had no combat ability. Whether Anastasia herself or the artificial spirit accompanying her, had been the case.

However, if that had been the case, what was that magic that had ruined Capella’s face.

Al: “—This topic, I’d also like to hear a bit about it.”

Anastasia: “——”

Anastasia kept silent in response to Ferris’s question, and just at that moment the voice of a third person chimed in.

Before the two who turned their heads, was the soaked Al kicking at rubble. Twisting his head so that water poured poured from the opening in his helmet, he approached.

Anastasia: “Seeing ya safe and sound is nice. A successful leap into the waterway?”

Al: “Though about three times I felt like I was dying. Eh, not like it mattered in the end. More importantly, we’ve got something to talk about.”

Anastasia faced forward to welcome the laborer’s meritorious return, but Al unsheathed his Blue Dragon Sword as he spoke. Pointing the tip of the blade as well, she too frowned.

Al and Anastasia stood facing each other, and Ferris was caught in between the two. The places where the

three stood formed an exact triangle.

Anastasia: “For this, what exactly do you intend? If this is a joke then I ain’t laughin’.”

Al: “Not like I’m in a kidding mood. Setting aside that cat-eared bro for now, I really can’t rest easy at your survival from this destruction. In addition…”

Anastasia: “It’s merely that there were backup plans. Hiding those was indeed my fault, but as for that I can’t exactly explain it forthrightly…”

Al: “Indeed that could be said to be. The problem here is your attitude. Barely managing to escape from the collapsed building, then chatting idly with a familiar face atop the ruins… From your attitude it feels like your expressions and feelings are completely out of place. Do you know what we call people who can chat like that.”

“Anastasia”: “——”

Regarding the Al who persisted with a hail of questions, Anastasia stopped replying. However, her expression now froze into a sly smile.

And then right before Felix, Al spoke a definitive clarifying line.

Al: “Those kinds’a people, we refer to them as [Witches].”

“Anastasia”: “… really now, isn’t that turn of phrase a little excessive.”

An incredibly philosophical tone of response, gave an impression of quite the sense of exhaustion of feeling.

Sly smile falling away, what emerged afterward was an empty smile that was only in appearance. As if that movement of skin was direct not toward another, but toward one’s self in a self-deprecating manner.

“Anastasia”: “In my experience, [Witch] is by no means a term used in good conscience.”

Al: “Could it be that you’re under the impression that I’m lightheartedly dropping a greeting? Your first impression is right, swindler fox.”

Felix: “What is it?”

The impression of two people who had reached an understanding - watching Anastasia who had changed her tone and Al, Ferris sought an opportunity to interject. Al blocked Ferris with that attitude with his armless left shoulder, his gaze still fixed in Anastasia’s direction.

Al: “It’s something like, the miss still looks like the miss but is different on the inside. That fox with wicked character dangling from her neck… Echidna is inside her.”

Echidna: “This is a result that prioritizes Ana’s survival, it’s just that the result ended up like this. This affair being spoken of with such sincerity, as if I have some malicious intent is really rather distressing.”

At Al’s hostile words, Anastasia - Echidna revealed a troubled expression as she replied. Then Al harrumphed into his helmet with a ‘*Hah*!’.

Al: “Someone replacing another shouldn’t speak with such a righteous tone.”

Echidna: “Replacing or whatnot is really quite a misunderstanding. From where did such a notion come from?”

Al: “Right down to that fake Kararagi accent of yours, pretending to that miss should serve as evidence. Unfortunately enough, the nature of a [Witch] that can’t comprehend humans was seen through by me.”

Felix: “Act a bit more properly! Like this no matter how long you talk the topic won’t progress!”

At Al’s systematically detailed responses to Echidna, Ferris finally exploded.

Although for information of the situation at hand Al did have a degree of reliability, what mattered most right now was the affair of Anastasia’s body. Her body right now, had indeed been taken control of by Echidna.

Felix: “First of all, is Anastasia-sama fine? It isn’t something like merely protecting her body, but her consciousness flew off somewhere?”

Echidna: “That’s not the case indeed. Ana not being healthy in body and soul wouldn’t do. Because if that weren’t the case there wouldn’t be a need to use the forbidden technique.”

Felix: “Forbidden technique?”

Echidna: “Refers to this condition here. Since Ana’s gate is a little bit complex. It can’t be used by itself. Even with me acting as a proxy, the burden is still incredibly heavy. It’s like that.”

Stroking her meagre chest, Echidna made Anastasia’s expression turn gloomy.

Although Al still propped up his sword with a demeanor of intolerance, Felix forcibly stepped in front of the tip of the blade as he continued discourse with Echidna.

Felix: “Then why did you pretend to be Anastasia-sama, to converse with us?”

Echidna: “Isn’t it more unnatural to abstain from a greeting when seeing your ally safe and sound? Pretending to be Ana herself, was to keep you from spotting our weaknesses. Exactly as I just said, Ana’s body is quite unstable. So I wanted to hide the fact that she’d become one with me… and then was seen through too.”

Felix: “Julius is also… unaware of this ability. After all he hadn’t even known about your existence before

this. What do you intend to do about this?”

Echidna: “That’s an issue between Ana and Julius, and the [Iron Fang] as well. For your questions, I don’t feel as if I have an obligation to offer speculation.

Everything had been smoothed. The sense of incongruity that Felix had felt from Anastasia atop the mountain of rubble as well, all stemmed from the differing interior of Echidna whose replies were insufficiently intuitive.

In addition to the fact that her magic had been her protection, was the fact that Anastasia’s body had indeed been protected from the collapsing building - with these two points, Ferris’s previous doubts came undone.

Felix: “Although, that one over there still gives an impression of being unwilling to lower their weapon?”

Al: “… tch.”

As Ferris had asked, Al clicked his tongue as he reluctantly replaced the Blue Dragon Sword within its sheathe. Upon seeing this, Ferris once again looked at his bruised and battered body.

Burns and scrapes, gave a look of being truly injured.

Felix: “Alright, let me take a look and it’ll be healed soon. Uwah, caught here is…! Hya, this slash, it’s miraculous you didn’t die from it?”

Al: “With my ability, turning a fatal injury to a serious injury is the limit. Though it’d be better if I hadn’t lost the gamble… well, whatever.”

Felix: “——?”

The palm of Ferris who tilted his head, fixed even the fact that Al had been wounded.

All that could be said was thanks to the healing properties of the blue and white lights, in the blink of an eye the numerous wounds on Al’s body had been healed. Al having confirmed this gave Ferris his thanks.

Al: “Myself, as well as miss too ended up surviving. Without doubt that [Lust] bastard also has to be alive. One can’t rest easy even with how much she’d be buried by rubble.”

Echidna: “About that.”

At Al’s voice which raised a warning, Echidna lifted her hand. The conversation mirror held in its palm, with her other hand she gently knocked on its surface.

Echidna: “As a matter of fact until the building had collapsed, the conversation mirror had stopped

making a single sound.”

Al: “I’d heard. [Lust]… or rather the Witch Cult? Within the Witch Cult there seems to be some way of crippling magic devices. Presumably that suppressed communications with anyone on the outside…”

Echidna: “That’s what I’d thought. It’s just, if it was the Sin Archbishop that caused that she should have fled by now.”

Al: “… Talking in circles.”

Echidna: “Apologies, it’s a habit. That is to say, the function of the conversation mirror has been restored.”

Hearing those words, Al and Felix were simultaneously shocked.

Al was surprised that the conversation mirror could reach others. But Felix was surprised at the cause of the conversation mirror’s malfunction and the elimination of the possibility of the cause.

Felix: “What do you mean? [Lust]’s interference ended… which is to say she’s dead?”

The monster who had ceaselessly boasted of her regenerative ability, dying from being buried by rubble was truly too unbelievable. Just as Al had said, after all the three people present were all still alive.

Toward the undying monster with especial vitality, believing that she’d die like this was truly too difficult. If any possibilities aside from this could be considered —

Echidna: “Receiving a wound to the point of interfering with work. Or the interruption itself is meant to induce carelessness in us…”

Felix: “That, feels a bit incongruent with that awful character…”

Echidna: “Indeed, I think so as well. Should be more daring than just hiding… Such as, taking the form of one of the three of us here? With the original having already died, completely supplanting that existence. That is precisely a tactic that [Lust] would enjoy.”

This speculation of Echidna’s caused Felix to shiver.

Remembering that before the collapse, that monster had assumed a form identical to Crusch. Directly watching that transformation, there was no room for doubt that she had been a fake. Of course, even she’d become Crusch, Ferris was confident he’d be able to see through her, but these two were another matter entirely.

This possibility, made Ferris feel ill at rest. However,

Al: “Don’t get your kicks from saying disorienting stuff, what a wicked nature. The lack of reaction makes it obvious. Of course she turned tail and ran. Leaving after becoming bored of playing, that one is

just like that.”

Echidna: “To say something so without basis or reason…”

Al: “Before being crushed, the monster wore completely a disinterested expression. That would be the reason.”

Facing off against Capella all the way to the end had been Al.

If the opponent had been another human such a conclusion would have been astounding, but if there opponent were a Sin Archbishop standards of common sense couldn’t be upheld. Of course even assuming that cautions couldn’t be dropped.

Al: “More importantly. If the conversation mirror is functional, couldn’t contact with the princess be established? That’s what’s most important. Hurry up and help me connect.”

The teams that had left the City Hall with conversation mirrors had been team Wilhelm-Garfiel and team Priscilla-Liliana group. Originally, Al who should be part of Priscilla’s team had at his master’s order remained with the left-behind team. The thought of wanting to confirm his master’s safety could practically not have been more understood.

Echidna: “I see. You don't need to be in such a hurry… hmm?”

Placating Al like this, Echidna who held the conversation mirror in her hands frowned.

Just as Ferris glanced over intending to ask what had happened upon seeing that reaction, the conversation mirror in Echidna’s hand gradually began to radiate a faint glow. — This was an indication of establishing a connection with another conversation mirror.

And shining from the light within the conversation mirror was —

Arc 5 – Chapter 62, “Commend of The Warrior”

by admin - Friday, April 12, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/04/12/arc-5-chapter-62-commend-of-the-warrior/

Translated by :

- Nanashi
- u/Ringo_17

Proofread by :

- u/Ringo_17

Art Source by:

- youiakamax

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???: “— Gorgeous Tiger?”

Garfiel’s consciousness was shaken harshly the moment he heard that sound.

He coughed out the volumes of water he’d swallowed, shook all the moisture away from his body, sight beginning to return to his brain drowsy from oxygen starvation.

This place was an underground space both dim and frigid.

The rigid stone ground was still submerged by volumes of water flowing in. It seemed that the turbid flow had flooded the room from an indentation in the wall behind him, which had allowed a breath of fresh air.

He was currently showered by a great number of gazes. In them lay unease, vigilance, dread, opposition.

From the number of people before him and the myriad of feelings in their gazes, Garfiel blearily came to

the conclusion that this was one the the city's shelters.

The waterway he had plummeted into connected to the shelter, crashing through the wall led to this place. As a result, he'd been swept in along with the water.

Garfiel: "——"

At that realization, Garfiel's blurred consciousness received a shock.

Jerking his head up with a start, remembering the events that had transpired before he'd been sweat him erected the hairs on his body. He hurriedly spun his head around, rapidly searching for the giant who had plummeted into the water with him in a tangle —

Garfiel: "… ah"

His gaze overlapping with a young blond boy's green eyes.

He remembered this face. This face made his chest tighten, followed by memories which agonized his spirit.

He'd come face to face with him again, that boy who had a connection with Garfiel's mother.

He was a little brother, remaining where he'd wanted to be, accepting the love of a mother—

Garfiel: "——!?"

The sense of being startled away was once again buried under an excess of feeling.

And then, an enormous splash swept the water surrounding Garfiel, the form of a giant who'd a splash flying standing up in the shallow water. This enormous figure waved his arms, mercilessly slamming toward the blankly staring Garfiel.

Facing this attack, Garfiel's reaction was a beat too late.

And this beat, proved fatal.

The momentary carelessly offered the opponent a flaw.

And from the war god facing Garfiel came not an off-color attack.

In total, eight attacks swept toward Garfiel.

One or two were blocked. However, the remaining six slammed straight into Garfiel.

The face was hit and two attacks squirmed the body. Then the floating body was beaten to the ground by the fist, hitting the head of the water and eating the fist from the top.

Taking a blow to the face, two attacks to the side leaving his body in midair. And then his floating body was slammed to smack into the ground, his head which slammed into the water taking another hit from directly overhead. His face slamming through the water into the hard ground, his nose and teeth taking serious damage as well. The surface of the water stained with crimson, a string of blood flowed from Garfiel's mouth and nose as he leapt to his feet.

Garfiel: "Stop, kidding… arouuuuuund!"

A roar coming from the mouth which had teeth knocked loose, shaking away the ringing in his ears from blows to the head. A momentum of anger sweeping through this underground space, the war god positioned directly forward stepped forth as if this were the reason.

Fists overlapping. Garfiel turned his head, using his teeth to scratch at the fist which scraped his head, tearing it from wrist to elbow in one motion. his head and used his teeth to smear his fist across his face and tear it from his wrist to his elbow. Extending his right arm to grab his opponent's neck in the same instant, digging all the way to the lower abdomen.

Fresh blood sprayed from the sharp incision, causing no small amount of damage to the war god's body.

However, the war god's seven remaining hands continued to strike. In order to avoid them all, Garfiel needed to do his utmost to respond.

In one exchange of blows, he needed to use one hand to deal with eight.

Overwhelming disadvantages, overwhelming differences in ability, overwhelming differences in battle – this in fact ignited his will to fight.

Garfiel: "Aaaa, aaaaaaaaaaa!!"

Attack, attack, attack, attack, attack, attack, attack —

Block, deflect, avoid, evade, duck, kick aside, meet head on —!

Fist to fist, generating shock waves that caused evaporated the sweat dripping from the two.

Unyielding and steel facing off in collision, the staggering sound made it difficult to believe that this was flesh on flesh. The pair's bodies were unable to withstand this and flew outward in opposite directions.

Ferocious tiger and the enormous body were both tossed aside to caush giant splashes.

Kurgan's back collided with the wall, and Garfiel once again became intimately acquainted with the water. He immediately raised his head, his gaze overlapping with Kugan's who was looking directly toward him.

Although without a single word spoken, mutual understanding was established in but a moment.

Garfiel stood, stepping into the water that now reached his ankles.

Garfiel could feel the [Divine Protection of Earth Spirits] beneath the soles of his feet, cutting a quadrilateral from the floor beneath his feet, allowing it to float upward. Kicking aside this floating piece of floor, the huge holes caused much of the water in the underground to flow into it all at once, drastically reducing the water level.

As Garfiel conducted the draining of the water, Kurgan approached the hole where the water flowed in.

The holes that had sent the two underground was enormous, vast amounts of water pouring from within. Left alone, the underground space would flood in a matter of minutes.

Kurgan yanked out a Demon Cleaver. Minus the one Garfiel had bitten to pieces, there yet remained three Demon Cleavers. Kurgan removed one to aim above, his target hanging directly overhead of hole - he hefted the exaggerated piece of iron at the ceiling, shattering it.

Using the vision of a warrior to see through the collapse, with roughness he filled the hole in the wall in with rubble. Of course, even blocked water would still leak in, but not the the extent of instantaneously submerging the underground

The hole was plugged, the water was drained, water would no longer flood submerge ankles.

Checking the status of their surroundings wordlessly, the two warriors returned to their original positions. Face to face. Fists lifted with shields, Demon Cleavers drawn. The hero [Eight Arm] Kurgan, the challenger [Golden Tiger] Garfiel.

Subduing an opponent at peak condition. This was the implicit agreement between warriors.

“____”

Garfiel knew that this was not the time for such a thing.

His duty was to return to the high rise City Hall that was likely under attack, to rescue those who could not fight.

However, before any matter of facing or not facing, about what to face, Garfiel had long ago already faced this problem.

— This sentiment was out of place, but Garfiel felt excited.

His pitiful loss against Reinhardt, sealing memories and feelings both for a mother, unable to avenge the kind girl who had protected him, leaving an ally in a dangerous situation when faced with an ambush.

So many important things snatched from his hands, leaving him to feel powerless and empty.

Leaving [Sanctuary], seeing the world, Garfiel had recognized his own weakness.

The him that had remained in [Sanctuary], would certainly have remained strong, for certain. Because then his metric of comparison was only himself, holding no doubts to the martial abilities he'd trained.

Leaving [Sanctuary], seeing the world, Garfiel had recognized far greater strengths.

Compared his time in [Sanctuary], his own power had not decreased. However, the his metric of comparison was no longer the him of his imagination, making him weak in relativity.

In a mere two days, a shift in consciousness made him clearly recognize this conclusion.

Powerlessness and loss had exposed Garfiel's inner self, forcing him to recognize he was merely a bluffing brat. His inner self had created hesitation, doubt, regret, the wavering of his heart turning him weak.

— And injected life into his wilted soul was precisely Kurgan.

The hero [Eight Arm] Kurgan, the Empire of Vollachia's hero. The strongest man of the Multi-Arm Tribe.

He'd readied his Demon Cleavers, regarding Garfiel as a warrior to face. How important this was to the Garfiel who could not find his own value.

The two entangled men plummeted into the waterway, where Garfiel had lost his footing due to his inexperience in aquatic combat. The magically resurrected Kugan had no need to breathe, and if he had wanted to decide the outcome could have merely waited for Garfiel to drown.

However, the war god had shattered the wall of the waterway, connected to a shelter, had let Garfiel survive.

For what purpose.

Garfiel: "Thought initially… that 't was yer show 'f mercy."

Kurgan: "——"

Before Garfiel had determined his epiphany, Kurgan had not regarded him as a warrior.

Flinging aside an attacking child, kicking aside a crybaby was not what a warrior would do. And thus facing Garfiel who had been throwing a tantrum, Kurgan had completely sidestepped him.

But, that was wrong.

Precisely because he'd stood, raised his shields, being regarded as a war god by Garfiel.

That was why he'd seen the famed Demon Cleavers being drawn, had met with the stance of greeting a warrior.

After seeing this demeanor from him, what he had shown to Garfiel was certainly no mere mercy or pity.

What Kurgan sought. Was the result of a decisive battle for victory against Garfiel.

— The battle between warrior and warrior can only accept a mutual blow as a conclusion.

Garfiel: “Yo, ya fuckers… how long ‘re ya goin’ t’ keep starin’?”

Garfiel checked the shields on his two arms, these words directed not toward Kurgan, but meant for the onlooking audience.

The ones who after the two men had been swept in, had silently regarded the battle between warriors — the refugees.

Gathered together though differing in clothing, and, and even race, all they had in common was their in ability to fight, they were a group of of non-combatants who would be sent flying with a single attack.

If Garfiel fell here, there was no one here who could deal effective damage to Kurgan. Although difficult to imagine Kurgan committing atrocities against non-combatants, but likely the only one who knew this was the Garfiel facing him.

And so,

Garfiel: “Should be able t’ tell ‘t a glance. Even ‘f you spectate from over there, ‘s absolutely nowhere that y’ c’n make a move. Hurry n’ take th’ chance to seek shelter outside…”

Fred: “—Gorgeous Tiger—!”

Garfiel: “Ah…?”

Garfiel’s words urged them to leave quickly were overwhelmed by a loud cry.

Calling out to the Garfield whose brows were knitted in pressure, using this phrase to call out to Garfiel happened to be one of those onlookers.

The boy’s eyes filled with tears, both cheeks crimson, gripping the hem of his clothing tighty.

Faced with Garfiel’s astonished sight, the boy’s watery eyes stared back. It held a will strong enough that Garfiel found it difficult to reply.

Garfiel: “Hey, lil’ brat… th’ hell ‘re ya, sayin’…”

Fred: “Gorgeous Tiger—!”

Garfiel: “——”

Fred: “G, gorgeous·tiger—!”

The quavering voice of the boy called so to the silent Garfiel.

As if unaware of how else to express his feelings, calling out this name.

This was the name of the golden tiger. This was the name that Garfiel Tinzel yearned for, the name of the strongest tiger.

Why now, was he calling this name. What did he want to convey.

Tears dripped down the reddened cheeks of the boy.

Spreading through the entire underground audience were the cries of the boy. So everyone shared this share of passion that was injected despite being inexpressible.

Garfiel: “Enough, y’ve said ‘t already now go.”

“Gorgeous Tiger——!”

Garfiel’s sigh, was buried under their cries of calling for the golden tiger.

From behind the boy, a girl with the same blond hair embraced him. That was the boy’s sister. As if to protect her younger brother, her gaze trembled as it found Garfiel.

Her lips also trembled without pause. In a voice without sound of silence, calling the name of the tiger of gold.

“Win for sure!”

Not from the boy, not from the girl, of course not from Garfiel.

Another man in the underground space, called out while raising a fist.

Garfiel: “Wait, told y’ to run…”

“Fight, and then win!”

“Don’t lose!”

“E, even if we can only… watch on!”

Garfiel was speechless.

The voice he used to urge them to flee was repeatedly buried under other voices.

Directing his attention back, the enthusiasm in the boy's voice reached the hearts of everyone underground, not a single person watching Garfiel and Kurgan's duel making a move to flee.

If using common sense, if calming down to think, how could anyone think staying was right. Everyone, was overwhelmed. Solely for the sake of this meaningless determination and faith, reaching a conclusion that was likely to end in self sacrifice.

Garfiel: "——"

The hell does this count for, was what Garfiel thought.

What was the point of staying here. What was making noise, showing support supposed to mean.

It would be much better to hurry to and run. He himself wouldn't have to worry about involving them. The likelihood that they'd be sacrificed even if he himself fell would reduce. This was much more reasonable.

But not a one of them fled, why was this.

Garfiel: "Cap'n… sure 'nough, your speech delivered effects too strong…"

From his mouth Garfiel called out his name for Subaru, remembering the words he'd conveyed to the entire city.

Subaru had touched the hearts of everyone in the city, the powerful broadcast that had been proclaimed as weak pulling together all the people that felt submerged by unease and horror. A flickering candlelight had been lit with the last bit of hope.

And fire burned out to leave heat in the peoples' hearts, waiting for the next change to reignite.

And for them, the moment of ignition, was now.

And the same went for Garfiel in this moment.

"Gorgeous Tiger—!"

The solidarity, did not stop.

The first to call out to the golden tiger was Garfiel's little brother whose birth he had been unaware of. And in order to protect her littlest brother, was the little sister whose birth had been equally unknown to Garfiel.

Little brother, and little sister, were looking directly at Garfiel.

The city that had accepted his mother after she had lost her memory, its residents were looking right at Garfiel.

Garfiel: “F’r a duel between warriors… compared t’ th’ usual, ‘s a bit too noisy.”

Kurgan: “——”

Garfiel: “Really, sorry. Been troubling you all along. Especially most troublesome’re my amazin’ self’s lil’ brother n’ sister. After this, they’ll get a proper scoldin’.”

Kurgan: “——”

Garfiel: “‘N so.”

Wordlessly the war god readied his fighting spirit.

Needless to say, his attitude was one of utmost power.

Garfiel clenched his fists, knocking the shields on hims arms together.

The sound of the steel striking steel lit a spark, through his fangs Garfiel took a deep breath.

Garfiel: “[Shield of Sanctuary]… no,”

Kurgan: “——”

Garfiel: “[Gorgeous Tiger], Garfiel Tinzel.”

The announcement of a name that was meant to initiate a battle.

To Garfiel’s announcement of a name, Kurgan remained silent. Merely scraped his Demon Cleavers, showing his opponent the utmost of will to battle.

This was, enough.

Garfiel: “Haaa, aaaaaaaah!”

Garfiel kicked against the stone floor, rushing forward.

Kurgan greeted him with the same, the distance between the two reducing to zero in a mere instant.

To say hit would be too sharp, to say slash would be blunt, the attacks that Garfiel made without pause leaving little room to breathe.

The air that Demon Cleavers touched was not whistled through or sliced so much as it was killed, every blade only being caught by Garfiel due to his warriors’ instinct for danger.

In one exchange of blows he needed to content with eight hands, and those eight hands only needed to contend with one.

With the number of Garfiel and Kurgan's hands differing, to win against him was to Garfiel as difficult as scaling the sky/reaching the heavens.

However, without acting he could not reach it. And so he initiated this battle, gambling his all.

"____"

Faced with heavy blows which made his body their target, if hit directly even a blunt blow would be enough to sever his blood and flesh. Without the slightest of hesitation Garfiel lifted his foot, shattering a Demon Cleaver speeding toward him with a single step.

From directly overhead the heel broke the body of the Demon Cleaver, the thick body of the blade piercing through the stone floor, the roar of the splitting rocking creating an illusion that the entire city was trembling.

He'd first dealt with one, but couldn't let his guard down.

At the same time that the broken Demon Cleaver had pierced the floor, the second one cut an arc through the air from the direction of his opponent's left shoulder. Upon hearing the whistle of the Demon Cleaver with his right ear, Garfiel immediately defended his head with the shields strapped on his arms. The attack hit exactly in the instant he raised his arms, shaking his attention for an instant.

The impact from his right fractured his elbow, the wrist of upper arm shattering completely. Garfiel gritted his teeth, to the extent that his teeth dripped blood. That was the second hand.

The third fourth hand were empty, striking in the same instant.

The clenched fists of Kurgan with his giant form, were no smaller than the size of a child's skull. Explosive power paired with explosive size, the power of a blow could be said to equate that of a warship's.

Not to mention that one first felt capable of piercing iron plate, approached Garfiel whose mind had blanked after the impact to his head. One toward his body and one toward his head, either with a direct hit was capable of exploding a human.

The blow concentrated on Garfiel's body burned as it scraped across his abdomen.

The fist seared as if scorched in flame, with unnatural power.

Twisting across his body, this fist only scraped away the skin on the surface of his abdomen. The third hand.

A feeling as if having half his body plaguing his consciousness, with his right hand Garfiel blocked the punch headed toward his face. The already broken and shattered right arm, completely burst open under this tremendous force.

Elbow to wrist to tips of fingers, this hand no longer looked like a hand. The shield affixed to the wrist was sent flying as well. But losing a hand was hardly a fatal wound. Garfiel arched his body to meet the first with his forehead. Smashing Kurgan's fist with his headbutt, he avoided the blow from the fourth hand.

Remaining were the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth. Still distant. Too distant. Distant enough to make one laugh. To make one shiver to their teeth.

Garfiel: "—Aaaaaaaaaa!"

The fifth, the sixth hands were empty as well. One Demon Cleaver yet remained, and a fatal wound had not yet been made.

Both these hands were left hands, each protruding from under the shoulder and side of the body attacking at the same time. The right hand that he'd blocked with was now useless. His left hand couldn't make it in time. Garfiel unhesitatingly stuck his right foot forward.

Soles of his shoes drawing a splash, at the same time conveying his will to the earth.

On occasion the earth lent him strength, on occasion aligned with his whims, and this time too offered him its own power.

From a tilt under his feet, Kurgan's lower body lost its balance.

Even so, without pause the war god righted himself. His movements were without a trace of hesitation. However, in his unwavering attention there appeared a break.

In the instant that Kurgan's attention had shifted below to his feet, seizing this break Garfiel rushed forward.

Lifting his foot, with a twist of his body, shoving his head between the two approaching fists. As if in the eye of a storm, the two fists both swept behind his body.

The instant his feet were in place, Garfiel felt a shudder for his own judgements.

He himself unsure of why he would have made that judgment, a thought and a decision accomplished in a fraction of a measure of time. Brain scorching. Heart scorching. Life on the verge of bursting.

The fifth and sixth hands were thus dealt with. Afterward, the seventh and the eighth hands —.

"____"

Suddenly, Garfiel's hair stood on end at a chill.

Kurgan whose six hands had been dodged would want to use the remaining two to finish Garfiel. — A fatal blow approached.

— Skipping over the seventh hand, the eighth and last hand attacked.

He stopped an attack with one hand, using it to wield the Demon Cleaver.

Right hand holding the pommel of the Demon Cleaver, right shoulder's hand tightly gripping the body of the Demon Cleaver. A blow that surpassed powerful was about to welcome Garfiel from the ground.

Surrounded on all sides, such overwhelming presence that one would believe that they would die no matter they tried to hide.

This was a sight that made the wretched attacks of the previous six hands seem almost a waste.

Avoiding was unimaginable.

Backing away, leaping aside, or rushing forward, would all result in a direct hit.

An image of being turned into a slab of meat as the result of this attack appeared before his eyes.

Escape was impossible. Attacking would be even more reckless. — There was only one option, and so.

Garfiel placed his unbroken left hand on his head, dropping his waist.

In this moment, there was a voice that still remained audible. The sound of little brother and little sister, and a large crowd of people cheering.

Estimating was only in a moment, moving was only in an instant, the result was right there.

"____"

The instant when the Demon Cleaver moved, Garfiel had entirely left this world.

All encompassing silence, all encompassing formlessness. Extraneous surroundings vanished in an instant. In the attention of Garfiel whose focus was sharpened to its absolute limit, remained only Kurgan.

With abnormal sluggishness, with the Demon Cleaver he slashed downward at Garfiel.

Garfiel raised his head, the movements he met the attack with equally slow. In a world so stagnant as to induce anxiousness, all Garfiel could do was tightly clench his teeth.

Wrong, there was still time to revolve around.

He saw Subaru. Saw Ram. Saw Mimi. Saw Frederica. Remembered Lewes, and Emilia, Otto appeared too, thought of that bastard Roswaal, saw Beatrice and Petra and everyone in [Sanctuary], and then his mother Reshia and his little brother and little sister.

The battle that had happened at [Sanctuary], had allowed Garfiel to realize his own weakness.

Realizing the breadth of the world, when he'd lost to Reinhardt, Garfiel had adopted the wrong impression that he was weaker than he'd been before leaving Sanctuary.

— That was impossible.

If embracing more meant more weakness, then for what did people live on.

Being strong enough to protect everything you embraced was enough.

Garfiel: "Ah — feel refreshed."

Suddenly, the irritation plaguing his heart fell away.

That instant, the Demon Cleaver struck the shield on his left arm, sending a jolt which felt like lightning throughout his entire body.

"——*hk*!!"

The defense mounted by his left arm, was in an instant cut through by the Demon Cleaver.

Just like his right arm, wrist, elbow, bicep, even shoulder were all twisted beyond repair.

Feeling the familiar pain of a shattered arm as if in a nightmare, agony dyed his vision red, thoughts sinking into complete blankness. Garfiel opened his mouth to form a howl.

The fangs that had been clenched all along loosened, beginning a chorus of despair for each accumulated wound.

The Demon Cleaver's assault did not end.

After shattering his left hand, the momentum that remained slashed at Garfiel's head. Such power would be enough to shatter Garfiel's small body, leaving him nothing but minced meat.

Just how did the war god regard this young warrior who keened agonized wails as if dying.

In his heart was compassion, or pity — was neither.

Unless one side stopped drawing breath, the principle of a warrior pitying a warrior existed not.

"—Aaaaaaaa!"

Garfiel howled from agony as he lowered his head. The sound of that heartrending sound persisted for a long time, and then.

Garfiel: “—aaaa, gah.”

The howl stopped, Garfiel clenched his jaw. On the teeth that he clenched down on again, shone a radiance of silver.

That was the silver shield that had fallen from his ruined right arm, which Garfiel had caught in his teeth.

Garfiel: “Gaaaaah, aaaaaaah—!”

Whipping his head around, biting the shield Garfiel had met the Demon Cleaver slashing toward his face, biting the shield had mounted his second defense, slamming it into the side of his face the instant the attack had reached. Blood sprayed from Garfiel’s nose, his teeth sent flying, but, his knees did not kneel.

He supported the weight of the Demon Cleaver with biting strength and the strong neck.

The spark of the collision between steel and steel — created a flame, causing Garfiel’s consciousness to flicker.

“____”

Even though the whites of his eyes had begun to show, just what kind of willpower was still even now supporting his neck.

Was it fighting instinct, or rather a beast’s vitality and survival.

Suddenly, blood spurted out. Vast volumes of blood poured forth, crimson flowers of blood pooling in this underground space.

It sprayed from Kurgan’s right hand, that last right hand that clutched the Demon Cleaver.

On it was a wound persisting from the last time he’d attacked Garfiel, deep enough that bone was visible from hand to upper arm. From this blow just now the wound had completely split open.

Kurgan’s face bore no shock. Nor did his expression change due to the pain.

That was a matter of course. He was a corpse. Pain existed for the sake of urging people to live, to ensure that the candlelight of life still existed beyond the minimum limit — the deceased did not need such a tool.

And thus, Kurgan had ignored the effect of the injury on his right arm.

If truly wishing to perform the most perfect attack, the last blow should have been given up to his still functioning left hand.

Success or failure determined here at once — was not the right place to say.

However,

Garfiel: “—ah.”

Withstanding attacks from eight hands, Garfiel heaved a sigh with a bloodied face.

The shield clenched between his teeth clattered to the ground. Kurgan’s front was wide open. Yet Garfiel’s left and right were completely useless, muscle in both legs torn from insufficiently withstanding heavy blows. Even so, he could still leap one step.

After leaping over, what to do. Hands, could not be made use of. Then remaining was—.

Garfiel: “Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

Garfiel let out a cry, opened his bleeding mouth wide, rushed toward Kurgan.

Garfiel’s teeth sank into the neck of the stationary war god. Teeth piercing through tight muscles with easy, severing at the base those organs so vital to life.

Biting down like this Garfiel twisted his body, teeth shredding through muscle and sinew, tearing away a large chunk of neck, crunching with force.

Garfiel: “Hah, ah.”

Utterly defenselessly Garfiel collapsed on the ground, spitting out shredded flesh. He turned his head as he vomited, watching Kurgan’s figure as blood gushed from its neck.

Garfiel’s hands were gone, several teeth were missing, body remained stained in blood.

Having been mortally injured by the Garfiel covered in wounds, heroically Kurgan’s body remained yet standing with chest upright. This was a hero’s spirit, so moving as it was of the human heart.

“____”

Finally, Kurgan turned slowly, facing Garfiel.

Facing the warrior who lay on the ground gazing up at him, the war god crossed his arms over his chest with calmness.

And then,

Kurgan. “— Magnificent.”

In a baritone low and heavy, commended the victor.

Garfiel: “Aah…”

Without, even allowing him time to reply.

Kurgan’s body collapsed right before Garfiel’s own two widened eyes.

Collapsing like sand was the figure so large one needed to crane their neck to see, alien face becoming stone and ash. Such an end inspired such grief, the deceased dying once more — this was the result.

This is ultimately the sadness of the people, the deceased once again changed back to the dead - this is the result.

Garfiel: “… What pleasant words.”

Watching the war god crumble to ash as he died, Garfiel sighed discontentedly.

Not that he wished for him to live on so unnaturally, but after a mutual duel to the death, a feeling of emptiness at the end was natural.

And so, this was merely a grief that Garfiel had nowhere else to express.

Garfiel: “Ah, damn it… fuck, screw it…”

The flow of blood was too much.

Laying on the ground, Garfiel used his entire body to channel the [Divine Protection of Earth Spirits], into turning his gathered mana into healing magic to repair his body. His hands especially, and his face was a disaster too.

Wounds that had yet to be healed aboveground, immediately followed by such a number of attacks. Being left with heavy injuries was not such a surprise.

???: “Gorgeous Tiger!”

Garfiel who had been putting his all into healing heard a sobbing cry.

Treading puddles to approach were the figures of little brother and little sister. Others approached as well, but in Garfiel’s eyes were only those two.

Both looked to be on the verge of tears — no, they were already crying.

It couldn’t be helped. Even as seen by others, Garfiel’s condition was disastrous. And to someone familiar with this sight that he remained alive was practically unimaginable. If looked at by a healing expert their faces would surely be a terrified white, determining that emergency treatment would be needed.

This also served as proof of just how many hellish trials he’d overcome.

Of course, although he wanted to feel proud of it —,

Garfiel: “Survived… but, couldn’t buy a bit ‘f time.”

Even having defeated [Eight Arm] Kurgan did not mean he’d succeeding in delaying.

This had been Garfiel’s battle, but it was not solely his battle. Right when he’d been dragged into battle, perhaps an ally had sunk into danger.

Needing to return to the city hall, Garfiel sat up.

Hearing his words and seeing his movements, the expressions of the little brother and little sister who had rushed over changed. Little sister especially wore a look of rage.

Sister: “Are, are you stupid!? Alright lie down already! Right away… yes, right away, right away I’ll go call a doctor over…”

Garfiel: “There’re other guys needin’ doctors. My amazin’ self’s got other things t’ do, kiddo.”

Garfiel nodded at the little sister whose face had turned bright red. But his face full of fresh blood perhaps didn’t look very convincing. Little sister ceaselessly wept anguished tears.

During this time, wretchedly broken bones in his arms reconnected. Although the flesh had yet to recover fully, running a few steps wouldn’t have him passing out. Garfiel stood after having reached this conclusion.

Sister: “Wai, wait a minute… Are, are you really going to go?”

Garfiel: “… Th’ broadcast, d’ya hear it too?”

Sister: “Eh… mm, mm.”

Garfiel with fingertips still dripping with blood, Garfiel’s words received a response.

The voice on the broadcast had given little brother and little sister courage, giving Garfiel his last shove here. And so, Garfiel needed to repay that voice on the broadcast.

He said it would be fine, Subaru said it would be fine, and so he had to make it so.

Garfiel: “‘N so, my amazin’ self—”

Sister: “Ah!”

With a stagger his blood deprived body knelt to the ground. Little sister hurriedly supported the body that appeared as if it would fall any second, and Garfiel clicked his tongue.

And then, standing before Garfiel now was little brother.

Fred: “Gorgeous Tiger.”

Garfiel: “… What’s up, but sorry, ‘f you’ll say t’ stop ‘t won’t work.”

Fred: “That, that’s not it. Gorgeous Tiger, your clothes are glowing.”

Hearing little brother’s allegation, Garfiel looked down and finally noticed.

At the waist of his own ragged clothing, a piece of cloth gave a gentle glow.

Stowed there was the conversation mirror. Because it hadn’t been able to connect with the city hall, he’d shoved it there determining it was useless. Its shining right now meant,

Garfiel: “‘d thought, ‘t was broken!”

Sister: “I, I’ll pick up.”

Garfiel’s breath came quickly. Little sister reached toward his waist, pulled the conversation mirror out before she could be stopped. The surface of the mirror shined, which allegedly meant that another conversation mirror from elsewhere was calling here.

In other words, this was either the city hall, or the other group calling his side.

Sister: “What, what should I do…?”

Garfiel: “Bring ‘t here. — Who’s ‘t?”

Little sister carefully brought the mirror close to Garfiel. Garfiel looked at the mirror’s surface, called out.

The conversation mirror, slowly began to flash.

Arc 5 – Chapter 63, “The Passion of Liliana Masquerade”

by admin - Friday, April 19, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/04/19/arc-5-chapter-63-the-passion-of-liliana-masquerade/

Translated by :

- Nanashi

Proofread by :

- u/GracedHarperd

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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Priscilla: “There seems to be some sort of unrest… not following will certainly bring regret.”

Emilia: “Huh?”

Tugging on Beatrice’s hand, Subaru-sama for some reason left the park in a hurry while muttering something.

The opening words were said by Priscilla-sama who saw them off with her gaze. Because they were so sudden, Emilia-sama too widened her eyes. Beautiful woman and beautiful woman meeting gazes, created a beautiful sight.

Allow us to savor the atmosphere, as we admire the aura they give off with levity.

In their clashing gazes grew sparking petals of flame!

Red eyes slim and elegant, and gently sloped eyes of pale amethyst.

Immersed in Emilia-sama’s gaze, Priscilla-sama’s graceful nose gave a huff, crossing her arms. Her chest, her chest was emphasized. At the sight of that large chest bouncing aggressively, I quietly stroked my own chest. Flat.

Emilia: “What does that mean?”

Priscilla: “Nothing, the meaning is literal. Something inconsequential to this degree you should be able to see though. Or is your intent truly to question? In that case, it’s laughable to the point of hurting one’s sides.”

Emilia: “——”

Priscilla: “Even between master and servant, secrets are natural… to believe so is comedic. Servants need only hands and feet, if something like this is permitted, they will reveal attitudes unbefitting of the desires of their master. Which is precisely the situation you are in.”

Razor tongue lashing out without pause, faced with that Emilia-sama revealed a pensive expression. That dismayed gaze and silver hair swaying with the wind together, inspired a truly indescribable emotion… In truth, although rather shameful, this was beyond comforting.

Liliana: “Ehehe…”

Anyway, Emilia-sama’s thoughts were in accord. She nodded toward Priscilla-sama with ‘*understood*’ as a response.

Emilia: “Right, though that’s true… although I believe what you’ve said is correct, my thoughts on being a master and servant are a little different.”

Priscilla: “How truly presumptuous to raise objection to mine decree. And dullness and foolishness are of equal demerit. Leisure for disagreement does not remain. With haste, take your leave.”

Emilia: “Thank you. I’ll be after him at one… Though, sorry to leave Liliana behind.”

Liliana: “Hehehe… uwah!?”

In the middle of quietly listening to this story, Emilia-sama gave me an apologetic blink. Pondering what it meant, I raised a fist at Emilia.

Liliana: “Please don’t worry, Emilia-sama. Songstress Liliana here! Believes in Emilia-sama and Subaru-sama’s return, so relax and leave protecting this park from harm to me!”

Although energetically saying words about being a songstress, naming myself in this manner was truly embarrassing! More embarrassing then had been previously expected!

Emilia: “Although unsure of what exactly you mean, but I’ll leave it to you. Priscilla, don’t bully Liliana.”

Priscilla: “Refrain from carelessly calling out mine name. Mine intent is all conveyed. Leave at once, find that clown to play with.”

Emilia: “Really.”

Rather unfriendly terms, but Priscilla-sama seemed unbothered. Right until vanishing from the range of gaze, Emilia-sama continued to watch me with concern.

Ah, farewell, Emilia-sama. Although there were many more words that should have been said, merely being able to survey you from all angles was enough.

Liliana: “A flash. Please listen. — To look up from under your feet.”

Priscilla: “You fool, if there remains time for levity, use it to seek the supreme melody. This world cannot match your talent, but the limit of one’s lifespan is equal amongst everyone… The value of one identical second differs greatly between you and one of the masses. The leisure of squandering as one pleases is the prerogative of wealth. But lacking the discipline to better yourself, is the equivalent of flinging yourself into a sewer.”

Liliana: “Shamed by your praise, my spirits are rising rapidly, falling rapidly, too much for me to keep up with!”

Was it praise? Was it scolding? Smart people are always disorientingly exceedingly incomprehensible when they speak.

I’m a wandering bard, rarely do I feel shame, without education without family and without grave! Wandering without end and without boundary on this earth is my ideal! The path of song!

Priscilla: “Others being incapable of understanding your quirks, living in another world entirely, cannot be helped. Even so, to be ignorant is undeserving of pride. This affects the quality of your beloved song.”

Liliana: “Nonono! Not in the slightest?”

Priscilla: “— Oh?”

Liliana: “Eek!”

At the instinctive retort, Priscilla’s voice lowered in pitch. Her narrowed eyes beautiful and terrifying, either one would have this Liliana immediately yield.

Liliana: “P, please stop, Priscilla-sama… Defying Priscilla-sama wasn’t my intent…”

Priscilla: “Refrain from acting in a deplorable manner unbefitting of your talent. To have your value decrease, would be an insult to mine self who has praised your song. You are forgiven.”

As with lines on one’s palm, paths to happiness are not shared!

Uncertain of why Priscilla-sama would care about something like this, eh… asking a little shouldn’t be such a big deal, right?

Liliana: “So… to Priscilla-sama, wisdom and song are related?”

Priscilla: “Indeed.”

Liliana: “But, what I want to learn is at its root unrelated to song.”

Priscilla: “Oh, and why would you think so?”

Liliana: “- Because in my song, the condition for shaking hearts has not been met.”

Songs, were powerful.

The I who cannot determine the power of my song, is still immature. As of now only height of aim and the rightness of effort had been affirmed, but ahead still lay a long path of struggle.

Immature song, immature performance, but the heart that had been full of passion since youth was mature indeed.

Liliana: “Using song to express joy, doesn’t require much learning, using song to express sorrow, merely a heart is enough, using song to express rage, naked rage is enough… it’s like this.”

The lu-lyre, and this tiny body are more than enough for use in song.

Complicated words were unnecessary. Desire to learn is precious, but being unable enjoy song without it, was not the chosen path of a bard.

A bard lives for song. But the song does not choose an audience. And so, neither should the bard.

Liliana: “To have my song contain my my feelings is enough, I don’t intend for it to express anything complicated. As for what’s left in the heart of audience, is for the audience to determine — that which is called a song, brings joy in such a way. Lingering in the heart, from time to time, unconsciously giving a sudden hum… if something like that were to happen in my song, then this life was not lived for naught.”

Priscilla: “Hmm.”

Liliana: “Hah!”

Pure bard full of energy, king candidate whose aura could strike a flying bird down in midair.

Between them Priscilla-sama was especially famed for her troublesome character. With only a relationship of singing and dancing together, to attempt to get closer to her was too arrogant!

Liliana: “Eh, it’s fine, at this moment today I’ll agree with you… this is an exception, mm, an exception. Hehe, although sorry for intending to ignore…”

Priscilla: “Excellent, you (*kisama*)… rather, thou (*sonata*) art truly a good child.”

Liliana: “Huh?”

The legs that had been intending to apologize and run, were caught by Priscilla-sama’s words.

On that note, did Priscilla-sama smile just now? In other words, just Priscilla smiled? A pure smile without hostility, something like this, somehow felt cute.

Priscilla: “Mineself was the unreasonable one, thou merely follow’st thy steps forward. Approach mineself should thou find’st trouble, for you have value enough to receive mine regard.”

Liliana: “Eeeeeeeeh!?”

For some reason, this was a evaluation far higher than imagined!

Priscilla-sama then unexpectedly and unhesitatingly, sat on the edge of the park’s fountain with leisure. Boldly crossing her legs, and what long legs! Or not.

Liliana: “I, can keep my life?”

Priscilla: “Even should this world come to meet its end, mineself will guarantee thy survival until the very last.”

Liliana: “To live on with confidence even should the world be completely destroyed! Inspirate has come, please listen - The Woman of Utter Despair.”

Priscilla: “If this song is dedicated to mineself, surely it must be noble?”

Liliana: “… Bringing forth, a classic called the [Record of the Evil Dragon Conquest]!”

This refreshing atmosphere of being killed amongst the joyful sounds and laughing words, how lovely it felt.

Priscilla-sama sat before the rushing water, before a fountain that seemed as if it could swallow her up, as I tried my hardest, as if stepping on hot coals. Playing the strings of the lu-lyre, focusing to the extreme of that well memorized piece.

Raising focus to the limit, this feeling of casting the world aside — I call it [Singer’s Realm], come, be immersed in it!

Come, immersion! Forget unrest and terror, along with every trouble!

Hyahya, all those troubles!

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Priscilla: “— Stop the performance.”

Liliana: “Ehehe, can’t be done… Eh? What did you say?”

If there were too many troubles, [Singer’s Realm] could not be relaxedly entered, but just now the immersion had come without issue.

Then, even though the song had been been executed perfectly, Priscilla-sama stood with a serious expression, why? Did the song sound unpolished?

Liliana: “Priscilla-sama?”

Priscilla: “Has’t thou yet to notice? Something about the streets is strange… As mineself relaxed, something malicious began to foolishly stir.”

Liliana: “Eh…”

The words that had left Priscilla-sama’s mouth were confusing.

What exactly, had just happened?

Priscilla: “Seems that Pristella is facing a disaster. If it goes on like this… that clown’s intuition surprisingly accurate. How unpleasant.”

The one called “clown”, was probably Subaru-sama. But what about intuition, what did it have to do with leading Beatrice away, and with Emilia-sama who chased after them…?

Subaru = [Lolimancer]

Beatrice = [Loli]

Emilia = [Amazing Lovely Girl With Magic]

Liliana: “Oh no! What happened to Pristella?”

Priscilla: “Truly, unless thou art in the midst of song, blood isn’t circulating within thy head whatsoever. Unlike mineself who is exceptional in all regards, thou art only exceptional in one. But mineself does find it likable.”

Priscilla-sama who was closed with eyes, with the fan she’d taken out at some point began to fan herself as if she had a headache.

Truly to exchange more words with that Priscilla-sama, but this wasn’t the right time.

Liliana: “Indeed, everyone who was in the park vanished…”

Priscilla: “That was because thou revealed’st an uncouth attitude during thy performance.”

Eh… I do hope you can forgive me for lying on the ground and playing with my teeth.

Liliana: “However, should any incident occur, the magic radio in the city hall should immediately broadcast through the entire city. Kiritaka-san reminded me too, this morning I…”

Priscilla: “Is that that which can spread sound to an exaggerated degree? Indeed, listening to thy song throughout the city is enjoyable… but what about it?”

Liliana: “——?”

A broadcast every morning had become commonplace, Watergate City Pristella contained a large watergate, so it was a place with high attention to safety. Shelters were located all throughout the city, the citizens should have been well aware of this.

So why —

Liliana: “Ah… what’s this?”

Chest, for what did it suddenly start to ache.

How strange. On my chest was nothing so dashing as an old wound.

So, this feeling —

Priscilla: “… Don’t approach.”

My smile tight, I gave an “eh?” of consternation. Priscilla-sama sudden raised her head to look toward the sky.

— Following immediately, was the sound of the of the city’s broadcast.

Capella: “Well then, all you trash rotting meats, please take care to pitiably die off rot away, kyahahaha! Deigning to make this broadcast here, is Witch Cult Sin Archbishop representing [Lust]! Capella Emerada Lugunica-sama! Kyahahaha!”

Sharp piercing voice cutting off all of a sudden, quietness coming afterward. Leaving only the sound of water flowing from the fountain. That appearance of that sound was far too sudden, filled with unreality as if a dream.

Priscilla: “Really now, quite the conceited words.”

Ah, that wasn’t a dream. Seems that wasn’t a dream.

The nearby Priscilla-sama’s tone grew terrifying, scaring me into turning my head to confirm her words. My keen survival instincts were informing me, ‘*this turn of events is no good!*’.

Liliana: “Um, so, Priscilla-sama… so, perhaps it’s simply just activites… or maybe a malicious prank, that possibility exists as well. That’s what I think, but…”

Priscilla: “Desire and speculation are from their nature different. If this were a malicious prank, who would call upon the infamy of the Witch Cult’s name? And in addition the opponent claims to be a Sin Archbishop. Know that those lunatics a group who give no thought to time, place, or means.”

Liliana: “Uuu…”

Priscilla: “And within this city, is that clown who could kill that lunatic. With that, that they would grow more frantic is a matter of course. Who knows how many people are completely hopeless like thee.”

Priscilla-sama’s words were difficult to comprehend as ever, but right now she seemed to be taking great pains for me to be able to understand.

With that, even someone like me with holes in their brain could understand.

The attack of the Witch Cult led by the Sin Archbishops had already become reality, and in addition the city hall had been captured already.

In that case…

Liliana: “Is, is Kiritaka-san okay?”

Priscilla: “Well, that’s an unknown name. If he’s someone relevant to the city and furthermore dwells in the city hall, there is no way to assure his safety. Seems that now is no longer the time to remain here and enjoy music.”

As soon as Priscilla-sama finished speaking, she took up her fan, marching forward with unflinching will. Eh, but, that was in the opposite direction of the shelter.

Liliana: “Then, then, don’t you want to find a shelter!? Like this, choosing a path differing from what’s expected in an emergency will lead to disaster!”

Priscilla: “Hiding in a shelter with head bowed, waiting for the trouble to pass as if a stream is indeed fine. But the issue this time is a different matter, for if mineself does not act this situation will not come to an end.”

Liliana: “Which is to say, intent to kill an archbishop!?”

This king candidate who intended to slaughter her way into the city hall —!

Looking at it from any angle revealed as a matter of course, to allow her to throw herself into a battlefield like this without calculations of victory would end only in tragedy.

Speaking of which, with Priscilla-sama so full of confidence, could it be that she was capable of engaging

in battle?

Responding to my words full of doubt, Priscilla-sama covered her mouth with a fan as she looked back, tilting her head slightly.

Priscilla: “No, first Schult must be retrieved. Al is fine either way, it doesn’t matter what becomes of that fool. But Schult’s adorableness is without substitute. If mineself does not take care to retrieve him, surely he will be crying somewhere.”

Liliana: “Eh? Eh?”

Priscilla: “As for the other one, presumably he followed mine decree of this morning, and is wasting his time at a tavern. A stroll in that area would perhaps locate him. Truly, what a troublesome man.”

As she rambled on, Priscilla-sama strode toward the park’s exit without hesitation. Though clearly occuring before my eyes, dazzling as it was, what to do, was all in a fog.

Then, Priscilla-sama turned back,

Priscilla: “Though mine request was not for thee to follow, if thou stray’st too far, the [Sun Disk]’s range will no longer reach. If wishing to refrain from mingling with frantic fools, thou would do well to follow mineself.”

What is this, it’s terrifying! Just what had happened?

Liliana: “I say, Priscilla-sama, what’s happening after finding the ones that need to be found!? Wait, Priscilla-sama!”

Hurriedly chasing the silent shadow of her back, paying no mind to those who fled for the shelters, with dignity we walked about the city.

The shadow of her back gave off such a sense of security, that perhaps even Sin Archbishops didn’t need to be feared…

— Thinking so was a mistake, was that I realized soon after.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Moving forward through the city according to Priscilla-sama’s words.

What was miraculous was, despite being unaware of where exactly her destination was, at every amongst the canals and streets Priscilla-sama chose her path without hesitation.

Because of those correct choices, the I who should have been guiding her had no chance to give my performance!

Liliana: “Isn’t this Priscilla-sama’s first time in Pristella? Moving with such ease, is startling…”

Priscilla: “No, this is the first time. Because its name is similar to mine own, and the sights of the Capital of Water are famed, mine decree was to visit one day. This development was not expected in the slightest.”

Liliana: “Is that so, this really is a shame. It was supposed to have been a much more tranquil, lovely city, without need to rush like this.”

Watergate City Pristella, was certainly a place worth touring. For a bard, a long stay, a leisurely stroll through the city was happiness.

Even the Muse Company Headquarters that had been built here, the likes of Kiritaka-san were quite inclined in this direction.

Well, rather than to say Kiritaka-san is troubling me, it should rather be said that I’m the troublesome one. Kiritaka-san, please be fine.

Liliana: “Speaking of which, there’s no one! A city where people on the streets, where water dragons visible on every street with a canal, where singing lead to meeting Kiritaka-san, is in such a strange situation!”

Ever since the Witch Cult had first made a broadcast, nothing had stirred. In addition to the people and water dragons all going missing, the only sounds that stirred were the flow of water and wind.

How quiet. But, it felt like more than just quietness. This stillness, wasn’t it too ominous?

Priscilla: “Don’t wander off, it should be a right turn here. Do you understand, follow mine directions.”

Liliana: “Eh, don’t you want to take this path? It’s clearly a shortcut… really, how scatterbrained of Priscilla-sama.”

Priscilla: “Hoh—?”

Liliana: “Eep! Apologies, I misspoke!”

Wanting to decrease the distance by telling her of a shortcut, but it was a failure! Speaking of which that “hoh” was too scary! The gaze of a beast… no, the gaze of a carnivore!”

Priscilla: “Follow mine instructions, and nothing will go wrong.”

Liliana: “Hehe, this lowly one will now completely obey Priscilla-sama!”

Following Priscilla-sama’s directions, after this we took several winding routes. For some reason, during this not a single person was encountered. Time was running out!

Liliana: “Let’s be cheery as we walk and sing?”

Priscilla: “Thou has’t no sense of a stage. Even if thou choosest a partner to listen, that person has the right to choose otherwise.”

Liliana: “——?”

Priscilla: “About time to allow thy throat rest as well… it won’t be long until thy opportunity to sing arrives.”

Liliana: “Haaah.”

Like that, Priscilla-sama’s eyes held a hint of having predicted something. That twisting and turning manner of talking, to the me who took straightforwardness as a duty, felt suffocating, closing my mouth and keeping silent.

And so, this odd and silent tour through the city -

Priscilla: “Here.”

What Priscilla-sama who’d paused her footsteps was regarding, was one of the shelters in the city — the convention center of 2nd Street.

If the city hall at the center served as a place of assembly for the entire city, then the convention center of each numbered street was where each of their standpoints would be discussed.

Kiritaka-san was not only the manager of the 3rd Street convention center, he also had influence in the stirrings of the city hall.

Liliana: “Oh, being unexpectedly taken somewhere safe! Where all the people went, quite honestly, I was even a bit scared!”

Priscilla: “Hm? What sayest thou? Hurry and get inside, scaredy-cat.”

Since this was a convention center, inside were probably several extraordinary people, and was at the same time a shelter close by, so as if the reunion of lovers long separated, this was soothing for the heart —

???: “You, the fuck are you saying, dieee!”

This lovely daydream, dissipated like fog after being met by a cry of rage.

An enraged roar filled with the scent of blood, contained in those sharp words, was a keen sense of killing intent.

Those uncouth men had cast aside their usual frivolity, to exude genuine killing intent - I’d say I was still

a bard, having wandered through so many places, taking not only safe paths, but having travelled dangerous ones as well… this was what was known as [rage].

That which could not remain unfaced, the [Wrath] that accompanied violence and murder.

Liliana: “P, Priscilla-sama…? This is…”

Without realizing, I fell onto Priscilla-sama from beside me, but she avoided my outstretched hand, glancing around the convention chamber with an extremely listless gaze.

My kneeling self, with disbelief surveyed the scene that Priscilla-sama had examined.

— The sound, of a scream.

In this convention chamber, the shoving crowd flung insults, making sounds of disgust as they jostled each other.

They must have numbered fifty… no, a hundred? Two hundred?

In summary, a mass of people bowled over those beside them indiscriminately, male and female and old and young together.

Insulting each other… those insults tinged with hostility and malice, violent mannerisms full of intent to wound and kill. Those who had fallen to bleed were many, in the corner of the convention chamber were the quivering forms of children.

What on earth was happening?

Priscilla: “Hmph… in the midst of such a mass of random people, finding just Schult is indeed difficult.”

Casting aside the confused me, Priscilla harrumphed, face calm as ever.

… No, but, this situation was a disaster? Why that unaffectedness?

Priscilla: “Discord to this degree, has certainly permeated the city by now. The slow thee has perhaps not realized, as we did avoid a path of trouble.”

Liliana: “Avoid…!?”

Finally understanding, the meaning of those words.

The reason that Priscilla-sama had gone out of her way to take a winding path — was to avoid any discordant ones.

I alone had failed to notice, leisurely complaining about things like the lack of people…!

Liliana: “Writhing and fighting like this… does this have to do with the Witch Cult?”

Priscilla: “Were this a mere disagreement, to go to this extreme would be utter foolishness, isn’t it. These people… no, the perimeter of this entire city has been overcome by foolishness. This is the result.”

The most important parts of Priscilla-sama’s words were incomprehensible.

But at least it was understood, that the people hurting each other right now, were not doing so of their own intent.

Liliana: “Why, why am I untouched? To uniquely have the ability to fight something like this off… or rather, did I awaken in this moment!?”

Priscilla: “‘Tis the majesty of mine [Sun Disk], but, thee alone should be able to escape it… more importantly,”

Priscilla-sama narrowed her eyes, surveying those who shoved at each other. With the same gaze that she’d given me a “Hoh—?” with. Which was to say it was terrifying. Looking at those two eyes, her next words will presumably be equally terrifying.

Guessed right.

Priscilla: “To find someone in this commotion, is practically the dream of a madman. With a small display, they will shut their mouths.”

Liliana: “…Eh?”

As her words fell, Priscilla-sama casually [drew a sword from the air]. No, to say it like that was wrong.

To be more precise, the light became a sword?

Priscilla: “Fall into the light of *mine* Yang Blade —”

The sword which Priscilla-sama held aloft, was decorated with a beautiful floral pattern, dyed in red from pommel to blade, a sword of crimson. Radiating sunlight from within Priscilla-sama’s hands, illuminating the entire convention chamber… how dazzling! how wondrous! A degree that regular light was incapable of reaching, scorching the eyes as if the sun. Ky, kyaaaa!

From up close, how damaging to my two eyes!

Ducking away to keep my the distance, planning to make some retort against Priscilla-sama — before noticing it.

The convention center had grown quiet, those fighting people focusing on Priscilla-sama. But of course, if such a blinding light appeared, it was only natural that everyone’s quarrel would end.

And just when that hand fell, and everyone's voice stopped.

???: "Priscilla-sama!!"

A sobbing boy approached at a run from the wall, with cheeks reddened, as he flew toward Priscilla-sama. Priscilla-sama caught the boy directly from the front, stroking his peach colored hair with gentleness.

Priscilla: "To be so troublesome, only you alone could receive mine attention like this. Schult, have you realized what a fool you've been?"

Schult: "I, I… I had thought I wouldn't make it…! But, Priscilla-sama… Priscilla-sama…"

Priscilla: "Well, crying easily is as expected of children, they shouldn't be blamed for it."

The sight of the boy whose hair had so gently been stroked made me jump.

Rather, because Priscilla-sama had come especially for this child, so I'd assumed she cared very much for him, but witnessing this showed that it was not so. The sense of violation was keen. Because Priscilla-sama's attitude was frigid. Thinking about it nearly made my neck twist.

However, it couldn't be assumed that with such a spectacle, it would be easy to escape. After all we'd become the target of the attention of this convention center!

The spearhead of the enraged crowd had been directed toward the radiant Priscilla-sama. And in addition it had just been noticed, that the shining blade had disappeared.

Liliana: "Priscilla-sama, where did the sword from just now go?"

Priscilla: "It's consumption is high. So when not it use it must fade back into sunlight. Hmph."

Responding to my question, Priscilla-sama looked toward the ones who gazed at her. That gaze was calm as always… which was to say, apathetic.

Priscilla: "What are you lot staring for, you fools without reason. Worshipping mine beauty is human nature, but understand time and place and your own position. First, kneel."

Liliana: "Why are you provoking them —!?"

Pressing Schult into her chest, with a fierce expression Priscilla-sama pointed at the ground, ordering everyone present to kneel. Although as expected, the crowd who was more irschible than usual moved with violence, and rushed forward.

A ripple of insults echoed together, and I hurriedly dropped my bottom to the ground as I tried to curl up… However, Priscilla-sama remained standing there. No, wait.

“This woman! What kind of joke…”

Priscilla: “First of all is you. At least soar with more grace.”

The large man, in a fit of rage attempted to grab Priscilla-sama, but she immediately dodged aside, shoving his broad chest away.

A man whose weight is double mine, flew away like a leaf. Truly, this ease was without exaggeration.

“——*hk*!?”

The body of the man that flew away, collided direction with the mass of people, causing a dramatic pitiful sight. One after another, being knocked over, rolling over like dominos.

And so, due to that initial loss, the crowd’s momentum came to a halt. The one lined in front, trembled upon seeing Priscilla-sama’s power.

Priscilla: “As you can see, were it mine will, all of you could be cut down with ease. Although ‘twould be bothersome. If desiring to attacked, approach in turn. Today mineself will spare the time, to thoroughly respond to your desires.”

“____”

Priscilla-sama spoke in a regal voice, glaring at those surrounding her.

That said, there was no one who would approach after hearing those words. The enraged demeanor of before went who knows where… or rather, the rage lingered on in everyone’s hearts. It was merely that its spearhead was not directed toward Priscilla-sama.

Priscilla: “Seems there are none. Where then, there’s no longer meaning in remaining here. Mine attendant has been found safe and sound. You lot are free to enjoy yourselves, once mineself has departed.”

Liliana: “Eh!?”

As soon as Priscilla-sama finished speaking, she took the hand of the crying Schult, striding toward the exterior of the convention center with lavish steps.

Liliana: “Ah, but! Just leaving everyone here like this…”

Priscilla: “After mine departure, the quarrel will start anew… ‘twould be surprising if it became slaughter in the end. However, does minself have reason to terminate it?”

Liliana: “In that case…”

That was so, but was it really fine like this?

No matter how you look at it, just leaving them behind was going too far.

Liliana: “Pr, Priscilla-sama is a candidate for the royal election…”

Priscilla: “Even for mineself, there is that which cannot be accomplished. Without question, mineself is indeed immersed in that annoying position, but to use it as an excuse is too forced.”

Liliana: “Guu…”

Forcibly having my mouth blocked, no longer able to raise voice to any retorts!

But, but, if we left, the quarrel would start. Escaping, could I really do something so ruthless?

Something like this, I —

Priscilla: “Or is that to say, you’ll solve it?”

Liliana: “Eh!?”

Just as I was hesitating, Priscilla-sama murmured in a low voice.

What was that to say, that, rather appealing proposal.

Priscilla: “Thou has’t said to mineself before. To enjoy song requires no qualification. Not selecting place or audience is the essence of what thou call’st song. If so, why does thou not use thy miraculous song to save that lot?”

Liliana: “……”

Priscilla: “Thou art immersed within mineself’s [Sun Disk]. In addition, as previously said, thou art to approach mineself should thou find’st trouble. Although perhaps ‘tis early to play this card… but this is still a pleasure. To be able to hear thy song, remaining here a moment is acceptable.”

As if provoking, Priscilla-sama folded her arms over her chest. Was it a quirk, to raise her chest like this.

That violent cleavage could be seen with ease. Brushing hand over chest. I stared down at the hand that had just touched my chest.

On that palm, lay cold sweat.

Liliana: “Is it… possible?”

Priscilla: “It matters not even if it is done. — If approaching it like this, then it will merely be wasted effort.”

If thinking that songs had no power, such a line of thinking was not wrong.

Although saying that, this was not the case.

Taking up the lu-lyre from my back, gripping it tightly with both hands.

Those had yet to become my audience, who had stored all their rage in their core, were truly without reason! When clearly from now, I would say as I sang!

— To hope that when everyone savored the sound of song together joyously, that they wouldn’t fight!

Priscilla: “Schult, wait for a little. You will see an entertaining sight.”

Schult: “Understood.”

Priscilla-sama and Schult stood behind the back of my figure with the lu-lyre.

With what kind of expressions, ugh, despicable, obvious without looking!

Liliana! Wandering the world with only a lu-lyre, a bard who forever held heroes in her heart!

Liliana: “Inspiration flashes! Please listen — Ripples on the Surface of, the Watergate City!”

Return to your senses, then show me a frenzy!

If this takes away time that would be spent fighting, it’s all the more meaningful!

Arc 5, Chapter 64: “The Despondence of Liliana Masquerade”

by admin - Thursday, April 25, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/04/25/arc-5-chapter-64-the-despondence-of-liliana-masquerade/

Translated by :

- Nanashi

Proofread by :

- u/GracedHarperd
- PaperLightning

Art Source :

- Forged by Gracedharperd
    - Priscilla Art

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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“____”

Fingers sliding across the lu-lyre, fingertips tightening with familiarity. Having been for many years for many tens of thousands of times, fingertips which played these notes for as long as they can remember.

For me, to sing, was as natural as drawing breath, as natural as exhaling laughter when encountering amusement…

Throat opening, diaphragm inhaling, intertwining rhythm with the sound of the melody.

Trilling out all the words emerging in my mind in this moment, all the feelings.

And equally, giving voice to the the melody that surfaced in my mind along with the song.

“____”

When creating a new song, although I would say ‘inspiration flashes’, to truly say that it was inspiration flashing, was rather absurd.

In other words, it wasn’t a sudden flash, but a discovery. To call it that would perhaps be more suitable. In this instant, melody and words emerging in my mind, were from their origin things hidden within this world.

Discovering a melody forgotten by the world.

Stumbling across by serendipity, taking up by fortuity, as if a gift descended from the skies - a tune concealed in the corners of the world. I, have all along viewed it like this.

And thus I had told Priscilla-sama, even without learning anything whatsoever, music could be enjoyed. To completely give up all wisdom, all knowledge, would be the same.

Because it was the song rather than the human which sang.

Ever heard birdsong? Ever heard a chorus of cicadas? Ever quietly listened to the wind sweeping across a stream, felt it raise a murmured voice?

Did they also have humanity? Perhaps, or rather, no they shouldn’t have. At the very least I think they don’t! Don’t!

From the sun that illuminates all, the moon that waxes and wanes, the earth that diffuses its aroma, the firewood that crackles, have you ever felt music? I have! I’ve felt it — proof that music permeates this world.

The world is constructed by music, this world is filled with music, this world is connected by music, this is the proof.

“____”

Us bards, merely borrow songs from this world filled with music. Music that is in itself present everywhere, which with just a little attention can become visible, that we capture in song, is in fact unnecessary.

Without shyness, without apology, we enjoy this exquisite melody alone.

To do so is fine. That we think so is fine.

However, isn’t music something lovely?

To share something lovely with others brings greater joy.

And with greater joy, ringing laughter has greater elation.

Music is as such, if it’s music, it can be done.

Since the entire world is singing, who would scold those who sing?

Come, devote, devote, devote all.

Come, immerse, immerse, immerse.

Submerge in joy, fill with glee, be imprisoned by happiness!

Ears, eyes, nose, skin, spirit, soul, present all, [join] with the [music]!

Frenzy swallowed audience, washing away the extreme [Wrath] in one wave.

Swaying in dance, their sound became one with the performance. Should their gazes overlap with those around them, the phenomenon of sharing feelings would be felt.

Of course. Music has always been by your side, a ever present comrade from birth to death.

Seen it, heard it, felt it.

We are always here, calling for such music—!

Liliana: “So, hell yeah! Not at all quiet, thanks for the attention—!”

Singing on, uwaaaah!

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Eh~, so how to put it, sorry for gleefully forgetting myself.

After the end an extensive performance like this, recalling the passionate demeanor I’d worn, my cheeks reddened.

Schult: “Um, onee-san was amazing! I was very moved!”

Teehee! How cute was Schult-kun’s cluelessly pure gaze! Heart itching, aching! Undirtied, wholesome, watery red eyes, made blood drip drip in my heart!

Riiight, this kid was completely without malice, nor was it sarcasm. He merely expressed with earnestness his childish feelings. Though aware of this, but because he was too cute his praise couldn’t be accepted comfortably!

What a pity, Schult… as an adult, this purity would be dirtied.

Schult: “——? Some of it couldn’t be understood, apologies over my lack of studying.”

Hya! That dejected expression was unfairly cute!

Is this some kind of malicious prank against me, this child!? A little, just a little touch… Ehehe…

Priscilla: “Liliana, that performance just now wasn’t bad, you deserve praise.”

Liliana: “Gyobih!”

Priscilla: “What was that horrendous sound just now? A girl… especially you, shouldn’t be making such noises.”

Just about to reach out an adult’s sinful demonic grasp, I was caught up with a trickster like Priscilla-sama. No, I had no plans to do anything deplorable, really, none whatsoever.

By the way, the moment Schult saw Priscilla-sama, his demeanor became open, sticking close to her waist. Though saying so, it wasn’t tight clinging, merely lightly holding part of her red dress… the modest demeanor of an angel.

And next, to welcome this precious Schult-kun, attempting to turn this brutalized convention center into a festival…

Liliana: “This result was unexpected… at some point when I wasn’t paying attention, it seems I reached the heights of music. Indeed, a goddess of music without parallel!”

Priscilla: “Foolishness. To be aware of your own worldliness and caliber is imperative. But to evaluate one’s self so highly lacks elegance. Your song was indeed worth enjoying, but ‘tis not yet time to call yourself without parallel. You were merely lucky, that they immersed so early was solely because they were suggestible.”

Liliana: “Suggestible?”

What did that mean?

With a listless expression Priscilla-sama fanned herself, as she scanned the faces in the convention center. I hurriedly followed her gaze, seeing a great many people.

People who had finally been freed from an air of insulting, attacking, fighting, had recovered their cool. Some extended their hands to those who had been shoved over, some offered apologies, some responded constantly with ‘it’s fine it’s fine’, some silently gave treatment to those who had been injured.

Oh, well then, my song was pretty amazing! The ones who had been arguing such earlier, had in fact sunk into such a warm state… practically the talent of a master!

Priscilla: “Do not forget yourself with glee. The influence of unrest which played these commoners as if marionettes still persists. The sound of your song alleviated the commoners’ distrust and fear. However, without solving the root of the cause, the situation will devolve to what had just been.”

Liliana: “Pff!? Ah, no, but, think about it, every time they’re pulled into the same act, I’ll wash it away with my fervent unpappa…”

Priscilla: “In theoretical terms, that works. However, the root of the problem remains. Not only here, this commotion, is not occurring merely at this convention center.”

Liliana: “Wha-wha-wha-, what!?”

This was the first time hearing of… no, earlier on the way here Priscilla-sama had that such a disruption had been avoided. Could it be that such disruption was occurring all throughout the city!?

Liliana: “P, P, Pristella, should it have something be done about it?”

Priscilla: “Well, that’s how it is. To be frank, mine mood does not align with saving the city…”

Schult: “Priscilla-sama…”

Fickle emotions, cold blood, iron expression! With trembling gaze Schult looked toward Priscilla-sama as she spoke. How to put it, obvious upon a glance, was that Schult-kun next to Priscilla-sama seemed so normal, perfect wholesomeness.

Ah, this child is hopeless, completely in line with my preferences.

Not receiving a response from Schult-kun, not knowing whether or not he shared my feelings counted as my loss. Priscilla-sama shrugged helplessly, breasts bouncing with violence, as she place her hands on her waist.

Liliana: “How old is Priscilla-sama?”

Priscilla: “Nineteen.”

Liliana: “I see. By the way just to mention, I’m twenty-two."

Priscilla: “No one asked.”

I just wanted to mention it. What was this difference, something in diet? Is this merely what wandering bard must be resigned to? What suffering.

Priscilla: “Without even mentioning having Schult be trapped here, daring to display such disrespect during mine stay, mineself is hardly such a forgiving coward. Without regard of which Witch Cultist is involved, their heads will roll.”

As my hands tightened, Priscilla-sama’s decree seemed to have been determined.

Although much remained to be said to, I well understood that Schult-kun’s feelings needed to be respected.

Liliana: “Really, toward Schult-kun Priscilla-sama is truly, too, overprotective? …”

Priscilla: “――”

Liliana: “Gyah!? Burning, burning, it’s all burning!?”

On fire!? Caught on fire just now!?

In the instant that I’d jabbed Priscilla-sama in the side with my elbow, fire burned over my head!? The tips of my hair curled from burning!? Without even an incantation!?

Sudden brutality! Genuine panic! Unforgettable nightmare!

Schult: “O-Onee-san, are you okay…!?”

Toward me with my head on fire, Schult ran over in a shock. Perhaps to try to extinguish the flame immediately, he withdrew a bottle from the parcel he head, intending to tip its contents into me, removing the hardships forced upon my body. In the instant, my head had once again been surrounded by flame.

Priscilla: “Halt, Schult.”

Schult: “But, Priscilla-sama…!”

Priscilla: “This is mine evening wine. As it belongs to mineself, even a slight drop, would turn a spark into a fireball. These sound like joking words, but this is the reality.”

Liliana: “Ooowooo!”

Before I could be ignited, I rolled back and forth on the frigid ground. Schult tilted his tiny neck to ask, ‘Can wine catch on fire?’.

Despicable, master and servant who collaborated to have me perish in flame… but! Even were I to die here, the soul of a bard would not rest, performing a nightly song by your bedside… because, song was everywhere in this world!

Priscilla: “If you wouldn’t mind, doing so is fine as well. Speaking of which, kicking up such a fuss over singed hair, hurry and stand!”

Liliana: “Eh? Where’d the cursed flame go? I should be enclosed in scorching flame and turned to ash?”

Ah, for real, there hadn’t been any burns. What was that, scared me to death.

Laughing with embarrassment while removing clothing, while the stares of everyone nearby, walking to Priscilla-sama’s side, to begin negotiations.

Liliana: “Well then, Priscilla-sama! In order to save Pristella, please attack with a bang, gracefully giving

your regards to the Sin Archbishop! I'll offer support to the best of my ability!"

Priscilla: "Do not speak as if it were another's affair. Mineself has already decided to take you as well."

Liliana: "Ueeeeee—!?"

Earth shattering! Sky overturning! Beauty stealing life! Why point toward me at this moment!?

Liliana: "Someone like me who's a bard, only knows how to be cute, sing, and be cute. A bard without any specialties… taking me, could only satisfy your eyes and ears, you know."

Priscilla: "That candidness is not unappealing. As said before. Mineself is fond of you. That song, 'twould be a shame to lose it. Not to mention casting you aside in the masses, would perhaps lead to misfortune. Since you would have left mine [Sun Disk].

Liliana: "Which is to say… I'm so cute you want to protect me?"

Priscilla: "Hoh?"

Liliana: "Wah! Having thrown a tantrum Priscilla-sama is truly kind!"

Compared with the attack of setting my hair aflame without indication, how kind was the Priscilla-sama who only set me on fire after giving warning. Huh, chest tingling. What kind of feeling was this… heartbeat quickening, sweat dripping, breaths toiling, blood vanishing from face…

Priscilla: "There are other reasons to take you. That irritating foolish commoner's declaration… was it to say that there is a magic device in the governing building?"

Liliana: "Huh? Ah, right, it's in the city hall. Every morning, getting early, rubbing sleep from eyes to do as duty asks… Ah! That isn't to say, I wouldn't sing because I wanted to sleep in. Indeed, rather than to call it collapsing from exhaustion halfway through a song, it's sleeping for more than half. As soon as I sing it wakes me up! Rousing immediately!"

Priscilla: "Knowing the location is enough. Mineself requires that magical device… and you."

Liliana: "You want me…"

Priscilla: "Your throat."

A change in phrase.

However, thanks to this, I finally realized exactly what Priscilla-sama meant to say. That was, she wanted to say,

Liliana: "To have what happened just now in this convention center, spread across the city from the magical device's broadcast…"

Priscilla: “——”

Liliana: “Eh, um, Priscilla-sama? What is it?”

Priscilla: “Daring to be so ostentatious before mineself, you fool, what have you done with the real Liliana. That person couldn’t possibly be so intelligent.”

Liliana: “A clever and cute me being treated as an illusion!”

What kind of impression she had of me, in truth, was very disappointing.

However, I understand Priscilla-sama’s thoughts. If commotions similar to the one of this convention center were occurring all throughout the city, then it would perhaps be my turn to take the stage.

To be able to tour the city to give performances would be something wonderful, but there wasn’t enough time to travel around like this! it’s too late to tour around like this! In that case, my mind was made!

Liliana: “Alright, understood! In this case, I do indeed agree that thoughts of Priscilla-sama who wanted me to accompany her were authentic! In addition, to approach the city hall - the place where the thinking power in the city would be concentrated! Surely Kiritaka-san would be there, in an emergency like this, he could be counted on!”

Priscilla: “Of course, within the city hall there certainly await Sin Archbishops. Exterminating those pests is unavoidable. You would do well to avoid being caught in it.”

Liliana: “I’d forgotten!”

Right. Right now, [Lust] occupied the city hall. Which meant, if the city hall were serving as a base, the battle plan could be imagined.

Liliana: “Nobutnobutnobut! That Sin Archbishop, might have emptied out the city hall already! There are lots of rooms in there which are inaccessible for secrecy, so maybe they unexpectedly took no time, and [Lust] is long gone!”

Fufun, indeed, a burst of divine reasoning. This was, an idea belonging to the me who was left every morning from work.

In truth, that place, was where everyone hurriedly rushed to work, so there was no one who would acknowledge me. Children who don’t understand numbers will be told to leave, was what it felt like!

And thus, certainly the city hall would be completely empty…

Capella: “Yaho. Yaho~. Yahoho~.”

At this moment, the broadcast sounded a second time.

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After listening to the second broadcast, we left the convention center feeling depressed (Priscilla and Schult did not look depressed).

Leaving the convention center took a little time, since after the second broadcast, the people became anxious again, and I had to calm them with my song.

Frankly, this performance could only be called unintentional.

No matter what was sung, any behavior lacking reason could not be included. However, at its basis, adding extraneous impurity to the song was not permissible.

Become intoxicated by the song, become immersed in the song, to sing with these feelings, was what I intended. But to use song as a counter to this psychological attack which unsettled people, was something I was unwilling to do. But in the end singing did become this kind of measure, if I had wanted to sing like this, if authenticity for the song had been lost, the song could still reach the hearts of others… perhaps these thoughts would not be there.

Priscilla: “Taking over the control towers and the main watergate, and then listing a series of requests…”

After leaving the convention center, with steps which were as always self-assured, only I shakily followed behind. Rather than calling it a loss of assurance, perhaps it was a loss of identity?

Without doubt I exist for singing, but in these circumstances was it myself asking me to sing, or the song, to sing, or is it a song, or the result.

Although all three were given by me, I didn’t understand a single one of the three.

Couldn’t figure out which it was.

Priscilla: “A third broadcast has to happen, before we retake the city hall and the magical device.”

Schult: “Why is that?”

Priscilla: “The Witch Cult needs use of the magical device, and they’ll send out a third request. Afterward, it’ll only be a matter of overseeing the four control towers, far away from any situation in which they may lose their advantage by revealing their location. However, for the sake of playing their twisted game, there’s a possibility of being able to seize the magical device.”

Schult: “Can’t we use it?”

Priscilla: “As long as the one operating that magical device is [Lust], there’s this kind of feeling… Although she wears quite the vicious skin, what lies beneath is quite cunning. What a clever lunatic will become given the opportunity, looks exactly like that.”

While my expression was still heavy, Schult took the lead in asking Priscilla-questions. Schult had instantaneously figured out the secret behind not enraging Priscilla-sama (perhaps the person himself was unaware!). And because he was so genuine, Priscilla-sama seriously answered everything she'd been asked.

Because it was an explanation meant for a child, I understood it easily as well.

Which was to say, would the situation progress as the Witch Cult willed?

Priscilla: "And so after the third broadcast, when their requests have been made. If the magical device is operable, your song will join the playing field. Should the city be in a state of unrest, who knows where the pests among the lions will gather."

Schult: "Before something that complicated happens, is there no chance Priscilla-sama use that glorious sword to finish off the Witch Cult?"

Priscilla: "The control towers from all four sides, should any of them open a single watergate, the city would be flooded. Even mineself is a lone person. To raise a hand in counterattack is ineffective. In this city are a few capable others… they too will try to recover the magical device."

The capable others Priscilla-sama had mentioned were those capable of meeting the Witch Cult in battle.

As far as I knew, people who had experience in defeating the Witch Cult did reside in the city. Indeed, [Lolimancer] Natsuki Subaru-sama, and [Silver Haired Witch] Emilia-sama who accompanied him!

Liliana: "Oh, I get it! We're waiting until the third broadcast, before going to the city hall."

Fists clenched, breaths involuntarily growing wild.

In all honesty, to be unable to protest against this was a bit despiriting. However, not going to the city hall, would mean being unable to assure Kiritaka-san's safety… or rather, even being assured of Kiritaka-san's safety, would not yield usefulness to the battle…

However, if only for the sake of that person alone, I couldn't help but sing.

Liliana: "So then, before that…"

Schult: "Go with Liliana-sama, and get to a shelter!"

Liliana: "Yes yes, take me to the shelter and- wait, ueeeeeeh!?"

Schult answered with frenzied enthusiasm, what was this about!?

Priscilla-sama nodded with satisfaction. Seeing this, with his entire face bright red Schult grew happy, although clearly I had been named, leaving me to go by himself.

Clearly by my side, but somehow still feeling lonely.

Priscilla: “Although aware of how your song has an effect on this unsettling wave, but first your mood should be calmed, before asking you to perform… although just then you had been at a loss, the you of right now has no leeway for such troubles.”

Liliana: “But, does this have anything to do with the shelters!?”

Priscilla: “Although using the magical device to dispel the curse is your duty, before retaking the city hall, that time will be cleared out for you, and during that same time, the commoners’ hearts will be set aside, during which, they will sway with unease.”

Liliana: “Ah…”

Priscilla: “Before you can take your place before the magical device, those who need your song are countless. To prevent this, you must meet their needs.”

Priscilla-sama’s proposal, could finally be easily understood.

Before my songs could reach, countless cases of people hurting each other as they had in the convention center would occur. By then, perhaps the delivery most valuable saving grace of song might be too late.

Certainly they could not all be saved. But, to extend a hand to those who could be would prove to be no futile task.

Priscilla: “In mine regard, you have no small amount of courage on the stage. However, that wavering just now is dangerous. Perhaps it will show its face at a critical moment. Thus, you must increase the number of times you experience upon the stage.”

Liliana: “Times on the stage… is it?”

Times on the stage, were already at a number that was countless. Although the phrase “courage upon the stage” had never been used, never before had the stage brought any feelings of shame.

What Priscilla-sama actually meant was —

Priscilla: “Your troubles are unknown. However, what is needed is not a song for yourself, but one for others. Understand that your songs are for the sake of others. And thus, you must increase your number of times on the stage.”

Liliana: “——”

Priscilla: “To be prompted by mineself to such a degree truly is arrogant. Repent with the results you will bring.”

Saying so, as if having made a decision, Priscilla-sama folded her two hands over her chest, vigorously

sticking out her chest — those large breasts bounced violently, her hands moving to be placed on her waist.

Song, was a presence different from the self. To sing in such a way—.

Schult: “Priscilla-sama is as gentle as expected! I truly understand!”

Priscilla: “Too noisy, Schult.”

An exchange that couldn’t help but feel a bit facetious, but, with this I’ll make up my bind, beginning a battle of touring every shelter to perform.

Foremost, to live up to Priscilla-sama’s words, second most, to live up to a bard of song and dance — Liliana’s future! ———

—.

————.

——————.

Well, while visiting the shelters with this passion, checking up on those who had succumbed to frustration and despair, there would be a third broadcast…

Priscilla: “Hmm… someone else went first. How annoying.”

Priscilla-sama lifted her head to regard the pale sky, murmuring to herself like this.

As for what those feelings were directed toward, I had of course heard as well.

Natsuki Subaru-sama had made a broadcast with the magical device.

Although those words had not been clumsy, they could not be called inspiring, but perhaps in the hearts of the people within the city, aside from unrest and fear, something else could be drawn.

The same thing, as our desire to sing.

In this case, whoever did it was fine.

Liliana: “Even if someone else went first, just as he said, the city hall seems to be clear. For now let’s meet up with everyone, and begin the battle to retake the city! I! Will sing my best!”

Priscilla: “Don’t display such an insouciant attitude.”

Liliana: “No, no, no, this isn’t anything like arrogance.”

To some degree there was a sense of assurance, but what was greater was a sense of a shame.

A chance being taken away, missing an opportunity to be the [Songstress].

But taking its place was, to be able to stand in this place where a [Hero] was born, gave me such a satisfaction.

— This satisfaction, where this hero mindlessly decided to engage with Priscilla-sama, was it going to dissipate like this!

Yay! There would still be a chance to sing! Well then!

Arc 5, Chapter 65: The Regret of Liliana Masquerade

by admin - Friday, May 10, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/05/10/arc-5-chapter-65-the-regret-of-liliana-masquerade/

Translated by :

- Nanashi

Proofread by :

- PaperLightning
- u/GracedHarperd
- u/IceOccultism

Art :

- Twitter Link

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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Hey — this is Liliana live on the scene—!

Yesyes, currently we’re in the north part of the City of Pristella! Engaging in a battle to take one of the control towers—!

The four control towers taken over by the Witch Cult! In order to recapture the tower, the most capable ones in the city have made their move, conducting a large scale battle which hit all four at once!

Amongst forces who each did not pale in the slightest, for some reason a mere cute musician like me properly joined the battle as well, how unexpected! However, retreat wasn’t to even be considered!

Well then, next is to introduce the crazy face, who is going to be participating in this operation together

with me, Liliana Masquerade!!

Priscilla: “That face is just about sickening already. Present your neck beneath mineself. Once that head has been severed, that skull will serve nicely as a candleholder.”

Alright it’s here~! Merciless words and vicious tactics! But if that’s used we’ll be finished too! I’ll die so please have mercy!

Light dancing in those slender red eyes, figure turning back akin to a flame! Even that difficult character was like the ever changing form of flame, obviously dangerous to the touch!

Wielding the Yang Sword in one hand was the champion of our offensive! Priscilla Bariel-sama!

Priscilla-sama crossed the ignited waterway by the side, in one breath waving the dazzling Yang Sword! Waving! Wavewavewaving!

Impact! Radiance! Sound! The one receiving it, was knocked back greatly~!

But then! Catching their step! And then glaring at Priscilla-sama!

???: “Aah, aah, aaaaaaaaah! Really, really, really! Why is it that whether this one or that or all of them are all bunched and coming together! Do you mean to prevent me from meeting that person! Agonizing, agonizing, how agonized I am! Heartbreak rends my chest! Shaking those desperate feelings within the heart! Such agony can’t be held back—!”

Appearing was—! One who cried out while tears flowed free, a sobbing enraged lunatic wrapped in bandages!

Face covered in white bandages which looped and looped and looped and looped to cover eyes! Body completely covered in a cloak! In all honesty their gender was indistinguishable though from the voice was probably female! With that manner of dress which gave up the identity of the woman, with dangerous thoughts swinging chains that looped and looped and looped around her arms! Was one who whether I or anyone else had already lost track of what she was saying,

Witch Cult Sin Archbishop representing [Wrath] Sirius Romanee-Conti! Who had announced herself just now!

The covered face of the lunatic Sirius flowed with tears! Those tears were as if on fire, allowing tongues of flame to tumble in the courtyard beneath the control tower! Such a connection! Was inexplicable!

In addition to this there was the presence of a white hand of flame in the waterway, clinging to the people, people, people outside who found themselves unconcerned! People who should have been hiding in the shelters of the north, a majority of them had in order to see this battle gone out of their way to rush here — but not really! Since right now everyone was tumbling about on the ground and crying out sobbing! With the same feeling as the lunatic Sirius! This was the power of the [Wrath] that had spread chaos throughout the entire city—!

In the eyes of everyone who was sobbing and screaming remained not a trace of awareness! Should they be said to have been poisoned by feeling, or intoxicated by feelings, or manipulated by feelings, or tormented by feelings as playthings, well it was this kind of feeling! It's incredibly clear, water, crystal what would happen if they're left alone, so trying a little harder here would be good wouldn't it!

Liliana: "Ui, uii… Come, come, this certainly constitutes a large stage!"

Atop a high platform! From above I surveyed the what lay burning below below this stage, and the still sobbing audience, and the actor who spread flames as if driven mad, raising her voice to take the stage as well.

In all honesty, due to leaving Priscilla-sama's very powerful feeling vicinity, from just now my chest had been pierced endlessly as if attacked with sorrow and despondency and loneliness, but don't think that due to that kind of reason I'd stop my steps, smooth my fingers, or lose my breath to the burning flames!

If you are forced to feel something like agony, if a song were to be directly experienced at least something would be done, so if the light came at a greater wavelength I would not be defeated!

In the end, I would introduce every last one of these people who had lost their senses, to the one who played a leading role~!

Liliana: "Come, come, those far away listen to the sound! Those close by watch the dance! Those even further away I'll raise my voice so you can hear! Liliana Masquerade, is here to sing and dance and perform for you, so listen well! — Come, sky which transcends the break of day!"

Placing delicate yet bold force into the fingers which played the lu-lyre, throat opening to reach as far as possible, to have echoes reverberate close by, borrowing from the world sounds and rhythms, beginning to play—!

But well before that! Let's take only a little flicker of time, to recall how this situation came to be!

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Liliana: "So, sosososo, Priscilla-sama! So, is this really fine?"

Priscilla: "To what do you refer?"

Priscilla-sama's steps did not slow in the slightest.

Chasing that figure, I hurriedly tossed my words forth.

Well then, it was obvious. When clearly the next step was to contend with a Sin Archbishop, the only one who had been brought alongside was in fact me!

Wasn't it? At the beginning of the beginning of the beginning, this wasn't what I had planned on.

After the Witch Cult's third broadcast, Natsuki Subaru-sama had made a, how to describe it, not firm but leaving imprints in the heart, well anyway a broadcast with that kind of feeling. And we had regrouped with those in the City Hall!

Around then, hearing that Kiritaka-san was perhaps in a state of unrest, something resembling worry had formed in my heart, but at that moment a shocking reality had surfaced!

Somehow or other, the Sin Archbishops who'd come to Pristella wasn't just [Lust] alone. Sin Archbishops where one would have been enough of a disaster, there were in fact four! And the the four would each occupy on tower, was already strange enough.

Who was it that had spread some news like the Witch Cult was a group of deviants without commander couldn't function as a group. Wasn't this a perfect example of teamwork. And wasn't this the result of doing so.

Was the only part in accordance with this the part about them being deviants. It can't be — that leaves only fear—!

Butbut, gathered on our side were candidates of the Royal Election!

Though some of those valuable people present had suffered injuries in a prior battle, but no cloudedness lay in the eyes of those who were faced with the prospect of retaking the city! No matter how you looked at it at this time, all that remained was to send all those people filled with energy off.

Priscilla: "—There is nothing to fear so long as mineself and that musician are there."

Suddenlysuddenly, with ears that flashed with Kiritaka-san's requiem, I heard a decree which came from Priscilla-sama!

The midst of the battle against the Sin Archbishop of Wrath, wasn't that in fact where I'd be brought.

Nono, isn't that too forced please reconsider — although I'd bravely argued thus, with a frigid attitude as if she'd forgotten those hours we'd just spent together, Priscilla-sama stabbed at me with provoking words.

To receive words to such an extent, how could this be, I am merely a woman. A bard.

And then hearing that this [Wrath] had been the one who had sent the agitation throughout the city, with that shrinking back wasn't an option.

Originally, Priscilla-sama had brought me to use the magical device in the city hall to spread my song to all those in the city. But since that goal had been overtaken by Subaru-sama's speech, I hadn't taken the stage and had been left with a feeling of defeat…

Should there be another chance to face [Wrath], that would make the perfect opportunity to do battle once again.

Rather, this was the re-opening of a war that had ended without battle, a battle of revenge that the opponent was unaware of.

Something like that, wouldn't it practically make someone ignite.

Liliana: "Excellent! Miss Liliana! On the stage under Priscilla-sama's order, with the lu-lyre and this throat, will sing with beauty!"

Tada! Done with grace.

As Priscilla-sama and Al-sama focused on the battle with [Wrath], I would, from behind, wreathe those who had been affected by [Wrath's] incomprehensible power in song. A perfect setup!

That was, what I thought. Alright, with that the scene returns to the exchange from earlier. To Priscilla-sama responding to my shameful voice with 'To what do you refer'.

Rightright, of course that would be said.

Liliana: "Why did you leave Al-sama back at the hall? With only two women, one being the adorable me and the other being the beautiful Priscilla-sama, isn't this a bit uneasy?"

Priscilla: "It isn't. From the start, mineself alone would already be surplus. After all, this is a state of affairs so lacking in personnel that even mineself must act. When mineself is pressed into making a casual effort, those of the Witch Cult must have believed themselves to be on the verge of victory."

Liliana: "…? I really don't understand what you're saaaaaaaaa—! Priscilla-sama is amazing!"

Having only received a sideways glare from Priscilla-sama, the place that was glared at seared with pain! An optical illusion? Was it an optical illusion!? Was it from being too close and feeling Priscilla-sama's burning passion, and my body thus having been conditioned by her!?

Priscilla: "It should be as thou heard'st. As long as a signal is sent to the control tower, certainly a cultist will take the empty base as a target and act. And when that happens, those left there will be free to be toyed with. Although that merchant seems to have realized so."

Liliana: "Ah, and so you spoke to Anastasia-sama before leaving."

Priscilla: "Although it seems that the option of taking only the magical device, and hiding in a shelter with the other non-combatants was considered… since the Witch Cult is coming either way, to choose to greet them with battle would be positively satisfying. The one to return will presumably be [Lust], but if it's Al who is there he can manage something."

Liliana: "Ah, so that's how it is… Al-sama does indeed seem trusted eeeeeek!"

Hearing Priscilla-sama's words, after nodding while trying to follow another glare was given!

But just then I hadn't done any wrong! Becausebecause, something like leaving an ally at a place where the enemy would try to force their way in, that was certainly something that couldn't be done without trust.

Priscilla: "Do not carelessly speak of trust and reliance. Although mineself will not deny being supported by Al and Schult. Although that man does indeed play the part of a fool, he is in fact a useful man. Although he is a card drawn for his exterior particularity, placing him beside mineself does not serve as an impediment."

With a derisive sound, Priscilla-sama spoke so in a low voice as if bored.

In truth, such words should not have been directed toward one's foremost knight-sama, and in the end the degree of warmth in the evaluation of a trusted partner was zero, why was this.

Those words clearly containing only its superficial meaning and feelings, but for what reason would it have felt as if just that were enough.

Liliana: "Because evaluations for others are beyond low, so those evaluated as normal feels like they're evaluated well, an issue of distribution…?"

Priscilla: "For thou to understand'st mine mannerisms is unnecessary. Regarding solely the results is fine. Nor does mineself expect thou to understand'st such. What mineself expects of thee, is solely what mineself acknowledges."

Liliana: "S, something of mine can be regarded as useful to the point of acknowledgement?"

Priscilla: "It can be said to be useful to the point of having value of being brought alongside minself. Thou has't an obligation to respond to mine expectations."

Uhi, merely being regarded as such makes this duty heavy indeed!

Or, well, that is, in any case, setting that aside, I had just noticed something.

In the meeting in the City Hall just now, Priscilla-sama had indeed been referring to me as you there you there you there (kisama), leading to a feeling of distance suddenly being drawn, but now her referral had changed back to thou (sonata). Could this be…?

Liliana: "A special side you show only to those you deem amiable, juuust kidding… uhiiii!"

I clutched at my head, hiding from Priscilla-sama's searing gaze. Huu, I had learned from these past several hours. How should it be put, that it was Priscilla-sama's, or something like the atmosphere? Such subtle changes in Priscilla-sama, were all keenly caught by my sensitive ears, skin, et cetera…

Liliana: "Hmm? The anticipated sharp rebuke did not strike? How is it possible, for this Liliana's expectation to be off…"

Priscilla: “Despite still being in the middle of this small play, interest in your farce extends only so far.”

Liliana: “Ah, back to calling me you…”

Had distance, once again been created with that? As I held such slightly despondent feelings I raised my head to understand. Ah understood, this wasn’t a time to play around with me.

At some point, we had reached our destination of the control tower. Well then, that control tower that had become a problem, had some slight conflict with what I knew—.

Liliana: “Did you know, Priscilla-sama. According to my report on Pristella, the control tower shouldn’t be something that would randomly go up in flames.”

Priscilla: “Indeed. Despite being a decoration mineself approves of, the design of this hopeless performance is beyond crude. This burning scorching searing would indeed raise spirits, but enjoyment cannot be derived from relying on foolishness.”

Although Priscilla-sama was the very picture of composure, I could not regard this so cooly.

The northern control tower, that stalwart tower surrounded by various waterways, the entire structure was at this moment engulfed in flame. Since the tower was built of stone, this material wasn’t supposed to be something that could be so easily set aflame. Ah, seems a flash is about to come.

Liliana: “A flash. [Baked stone tower and baked yams]. Would you like to hear it?”

Priscilla: “If you would like to have only your footprints remain in this world then by all means sing it. If there is one slip up that will become reality. Mediocrity, banality, commonness, if mine glory is being relied upon then treat it with proper care, a group of fools can accomplish nothing. Do not expect mineself to be so merciful as to treat fools who harm themselves with mercy.”

Suddenly showing a mien of severity! Was this an indication that Priscilla-sama had entered a state of preparing for battle?

That’s right that’s right. Watching the burning control tower made the pressure increase as it grew. And then and then, welcoming the two of us, the one welcoming us, was a freak who stood before the tower consumed in flame with arms spread open! With this there was no possibility of having the wrong person.

Sirius: “Apologies, but would you mind perhaps being troubled to step forward? Thank you.”

The bandaged freak’s first sentence was unexpectedly placid, as if being considerate of us.

That combined with hands that had been spread from the beginning, and the manner of bowed head for some reason gave off a rather cute air. Was it due to the contrast with that appearance? Perhaps it came from that feeling.

Sirius: “Although this is perhaps a little too much for a landmark, but since the functions of the city were halted tonight, it feels as if there’s a lack of light, doesn’t it? To become lost in the dark, or to slip into a waterway by losing your footing, would be quite dangerous, and thus I tried to light a fire for light.”

As if considering this to be an excellent idea, the bandaged freak, nono, that was rude. Let’s go with bandage-san. Bandage-san informed us of the reason for that fire.

Mmm, so that was it. Feeling touched couldn’t be helped. The city known as the Watergate City of Pristella was certainly filled with waterways. And to be reminded to be careful when making nighttime expeditions was common. Especially when leaving to go to somewhere like a back alley. The main roads were for this reason of nighttime travels kept with backup illumination, but even so the waterways held a high degree of danger.

Huu, that a master from elsewhere could in fact recognize and take into considering something about Pristella like this, would lead to some lingering feeling of happiness.

Ah, no, it’s not at all that Pristella is some kind of hometown to me, but to stand as a representative of Pristella and feel grateful would be rather strange indeed.

Eh, since I’d seen Kiritaka-san do a lot of things related to the operations of the city, seeing the efforts of someone you’re familiar with pay off wasn’t dissatisfying in the least. Mhm.

Sirius: “But, everyone within this city is pretty amazing. Although this perhaps sounds like an arbitrary opinion, but the reaction to an emergency situation arising was truly excellent. Adults helping children, men helping women, husbands helping wives, elder brothers helping younger sisters, elder sisters helping younger brothers, even strangers helping those weaker than them. This spirit of mutual aid is ingrained deep in the bones. Upon seeing those figures rushing into shelters, I couldn’t help but felt that sight of mutual support truly is excellent.”

Clangclang. Upon closer inspection, those were sounds made by chains wrapped around Bandage-san’s two arms. According to Subaru-sama, those seemed to be Bandage-san’s weapons, but look, looking it at like this aren’t they rather fashionable?

The oversized coat that Bandage-san wore over her body… Think of it as a deliberate dress sense and it wasn’t bad… mmm, wasn’t bad at all!

Bandage-san’s tone was very polite, but that voice was a little, what was it, discomfiting? High though it was, there was a subtle feeling of fakeness that someone who worked with voices for a living couldn’t overlook, but that didn’t detract very much at all!

Looking at it holistically, well, couldn’t it be said that saying more was unnecessary!

Liliana: “This is a relief, Priscilla-sama. Seems that this is an opponent who can be communicated with smoothly. Regarding the situation if this goes poorly Priscilla-sama would have a harder time aaaaa, my eyes aaaaa!?”

My eyes were burning! Aaaaaa, fire spun into my eyes!

My eyes, my eyes would melt! Would melt and become incapable of seeing the lovely sights of this world!

Liliana: “Aah, damn it… if I’d known, that this would happen, I would’ve burned the look of those beauties in the city hall thoroughly into my eyes…!”

Priscilla: “Fool. Raise your head. Do not become so casually engulfed and lead mineself to disappointment.”

Hearing Priscilla’s warm that was not warm at all, I tightened my face blinked and raised my head. Ah, wonderful, eyes were still intact. I could still see the world, could see it all. Could see the red Priscilla-sama, and the white Bandage-san.

Really now Priscilla-sama, giving her usual severe expression toward Bandage-san. Bandage-san with gentle movements tilted her head toward that gaze.

Come now, in this case Priscilla-sama was absolutely in the wrong.

Liliana: “Priscilla-sama, you can’t. You can’t treat everyone no matter who with that manner of regarding them as if they were an ill-bred dog. So on account of my flat chest and face, on account, of, my flat chest… put on a manner of negotiation…”

Eeeh, why was this. For some reason tears felt on the verge of falling.

But it was fine. If I use this attitude of facing the reality of my flat chest, becoming a bridge which connected Priscilla-sama and Bandage-san’s spirits was possible, those tears would be swallowed down!

Liliana: “Come, on behalf of my flat chest, reach out your hands…!”

Sirius: “Indeed, this is something lovely. I am in accord with that miss’s warmth. People and people are able to mutually communicate, mutually understand, mutually experience. Face warmth with warmth, kindness with kindness, love with love! Doing precisely that, will yield happiness.”

Liliana: “Iiii! That’s what I was thinking too! Indeed, this is in fact love isn’t it. Priscilla-sama, it’s love! Even though I can’t deny that going along with it was due to influence, but going with the flow has its own flavor! Hey, this is the Watergate City, a city filled with flowing waterways! Hey, hey!”

Priscilla: “——”

Bandage-san’s speech word by word moved the heart. Uwu, it would pierce into the spirit, would pierce into it—.

Seeing that Bandage-san and I shared the same thoughts, Priscilla-sama’s stubborn determination accordingly disintegrated, revealing to us… a taut expression?

Priscilla: “To reach such an extent, mineself must admit that ‘twas an underestimation. There’s no other way.”

Liliana: “Huh—? Priscilla-sama, why would you have that expression…”

Priscilla-sama who had placed a hand on her brow as if thinking sighed. That sighing figure could have made a lovely portrait, but she immediately moved in front of me as if having figured something out.

Since my stature could be considered rather petite, so after Priscilla-sama who wore tall heels stood before me, I could only gaze upward at her. Annoying, why this sudden closeness.

Liliana: “Priscilla-sama fuuuu.”

Priscilla: “——”

After feeling Priscilla-sama’s chest shoving from the front, those white fingers firmly grasped my neck and chin. Then, Priscilla-sama’s face which drew closer met mine. Or rather, lips met lips eeeeeh—!?

Liliana: “Nnn—! Nnnnnnn—! Nnnmmmnnnh—!”

Slapslap, beatbeat, with face bright red I resisted with all my might. But the approaching force was overwhelming, and the pressing lips were too soft really what was this!!

Ah, huh, waitasec, flowing in from Priscilla-sama’s lips was something searingly lewd, ahi, hiii, ahu.

Liliana: “… Haaah.”

The heat ceaselessly flowing forth led to dizziness, once noticed I had already collapsed to the ground in exhaustion. Priscilla-sama gave that me not a second glance, as she her crimson tongue ran over her lips.

Priscilla: “Well, that should be sufficient.”

Like this, like this, like this, speaking to to provokeprovokeprovokeprovoke!

I forcefully rubbed my moist eyelids, placing force onto my waist that had been stripped of all forcefulness to stand. Really now Priscilla-sama just now, aaaa, I’d express mutiny!

Liliana: “P, Priscilla-sama, just now, what was that! Please, please take responsibility. To have been forced into such a thing, I can’t be wedded off now—!”

Priscilla: “Allowing mouths to touch, didn’t mineself concede this as well. Although using the first time as an excuse is your prerogative, but isn’t it thanks to this that you could restore your sense of reason.”

Liliana: “Eh? Restoring reason referring to?”

After, after trampling upon the purity of another, Priscilla-sama truly still wore an unrepentant

expression. Did she think that doing whatever to a bard was fine. Sob sob.

Priscilla: “How poorly behaved. Well, raise your head, look at that person.”

Liliana: “Sobsobsob-, eh?”

With the weakness of a woman who would obey those words I raised my head, and saw in their original positions Priscilla-sama and Bandage-san, no, huh, Bandage-san?

Nonono, how was this possible. Why would I have felt no discomfort, so kindly calling that person Bandage-san? Inexplicable, utterly inexplicable!

Sirius: “Both women and yet they… although, there are those of that form. Although the form of everyone’s love differs, even if they take different directions they will still love the same amount. That in fact better expresses the beauty of humans loving humans…”

Priscilla: “—Cease this ridiculous farce. How unseemly.”

Watching Priscilla-sama and I was that bandaged freak who pressed her hands to her face as she droned on, but those words rapidly made me feel discontent.

Up until now seeming to be trustworthy without condition were those words, that attitude, that manner, upon becoming able to accept with normalcy the conditions imposed by the bandaged freak, suddenly this reversed.

No, setting the tower alight due to the darkness to serve as a light couldn’t have been, to regard those lightly red dark and dirtied chains as fashionable was entirely in error, and at the end, the evaluation of those in the shelters truly evoked disgust! Just who was it do you think had made this happen!?

Priscilla: “Although in this world, extreme love and diffused superficiality aside those immersed in pleasure are many, but even amongst those your self-absorption is extreme. To call you a clown wouldn't fit your overpowering repulsiveness, to call you a fool grants you too much power… value in your continued survival is impossible to find.”

Sirius: “Oh my, oh my my, oh my my my, is that so? Thank you for your consideration, apologies? With gratitude, apologies. My words seem difficult to communicate to you… but, this does happen.”

Priscilla: “My, rather reasonable. Willing to hurry and present your neck yet.”

Sirius: “Indeed, of course. To exhaust speech for the sake of mutual understanding, this too is an important ceremony in relationships between humans. Similarly, not long after hearts will soften, and merge into one. Love will thus become one, will become as one, will work hard to become as one. Love is exalted, all along I have been taught thus, and all along have lived as thus!”

Liliana: “Uwaaah! Although the realization was a bit delay I just realized, but for the first time I shared a kiss with someone else!”

Priscilla: “Solely the existence of this burning tower to welcome mineself, is deserving of the merit of praise.”

Wow! Although to me it was a little bit eh, but now, dialogue hadn’t been established in the slightest bit!

Calling to the bandaged freak who all along felt as if incapable of listening to reason, Priscilla-sama who strode forth to make her own way, and I who had been disoriented from the attack on my lips! Hey, wasn’t I completely unnecessary?

Priscilla: “Where thou art needed is after this. The mouth to mouth was for that reason.”

Liliana: “Please stop reminding me of it! Also, please try not to glance this way. It kinda feels like when Priscilla-sama looks over, my chest goes badump...”

Priscilla: “That the result was too effective can also be considered a problem. Mine beauty is indeed as sin.”

From beside me who tried to endure the thumping, Priscilla-sama sighed as if plagued by worries. That profile felt lovely to the point of being painful… eeeeeeh, it’s not the time to say such things. Priscilla-sama had from the start been filled with tenacity, yet the opposing bandaged freak showed no signs of backing down, and thus a battle was certain! And were I to stay here I’d be a liability!

Liliana: “Is, isn’t it best if I back away a little?”

Priscilla:”Well then, ”

Hey, why are you messing with someone to such an extent.

And then, as soon as I’d thought that this happened. My keen and sightly ears caught sounds. Were those footsteps. Those were footsteps, without doubt. And not only without doubt, those footsteps were not only one pair, they were many… no, they went beyond many to excessive! Excessively excessive!

Priscilla: “So that’s it, gathering all the humans nearby and converging them here.”

Sirius: “All those people are ones that are in accord with my love. Although sometimes there are stubborn people like you present, but as the saying goes [once rainwater falls into a waterway all differences vanish]. If your hearts were to be consigned, the perspectives will change as well?”

Were something like rainwater were to be mixed in, unexpectedly there would be contamination — although the proverb meant something like this, now was not the time for such idle leisure!

The burning control tower! Surrounded on all sides by the waterways! Us in the courtyard facing the control tower! And the large crowd peering over at us from the other side of the waterway!

It truly was very large. Certainly not like the likes of the convention center which had one or two hundred people! This was a thousand, or perhaps even more? Indeed that many people did surround us, and

although saying this is very impolite they glared at us with disastrous gazes!

Was this to say, this was the state of having one's soul completely overtaken by [Wrath] that Subaru-sama had described!?

Priscilla: "It should first be mentioned, that the you of just now was wearing the same expression as those over there."

Liliana: "Uweeeh, really!? How terrifying! Ah! Butbut, in that case if Priscilla-sama were to kiss each one of them, everyone would recover their consciousness isn't that right!? If Priscilla-sama's lips aren't taken care of they'll swell aaaa!"

Priscilla: "Who would give charity without regard to who is receiving. Would you like to be burned away starting with your rear, you."

A turn of events that resulted in burning from the rear! To choose the wrong response would mean death! This condition was ridiculously unsympathetic to someone like me who often spoke without thinking!

Priscilla: "In any case, that's your role. For what did you think mineself brought you here. To forsake your own duties and beg assistance from mineself should yield shame."

Liliana: "No but, this is, I understand the reason but—"

What with this volume of people who have lost their sensibility, without sufficient preparation a song cannot be sung. And if the performance took place before her, that bandaged freak would presumably try to put an end to it.

Priscilla: "Thus, mineself will take the stage."

As I retreated while squirming, Priscilla-sama spoke as if showing disgust.

No, although I would admit that Priscilla-sama was incredible, against such a crowd… huh wait, until now I had bore the idea of [Priscilla-sama is incredible!], but was Priscilla-sama truly so incredible?

Although I had seen the sight of her palm slamming away a fairly fit young man with a pow, but aside from that there weren't any such memories of such feats! Eeeh, on that note even if [Wrath] were the only opponent, had following along truly been the right decision?

Sirius: "You mustn't. Clearly the relationship between the two of you is close to the point of sharing a kiss, efforts should be extended to reach mutual understanding to achieve greater closeness. As long as desires become one, thoughts will be able to connect. Just like those surrounding this courtyard, like the majority, become one!"

As the bandaged freak took a step back, so did everyone surrounding the courtyard. Behavior that a thousand people repeated without a sliver of of disorder, could only have been described as resounding.

That was a force which made the courtyard tremor, the surface of the water sway, the already ignited tower seem to tilt… although whether or not this was love could be contested, but this was without doubt certainly a threat!

If that large gathering, were to approach to attempt to capture us as one—

Sirius: “Come, you too, will be enveloped by love, experience the ecstasy of becoming one—!”

Eh, gya! As soon as it had been said it was actually happening! It’s over!

A thousand against two, this was a disparity in numbers that even a true hero would be unable to overlook!

With a sound as if a roar of rage, as one the crowd swarmed forth. Ignoring anything like the waterway, like a horde of corpses they came for our virgin bodies—!

Uwah! Father-sama Mother-sama Kiritaka-san, apologies! Places aside from Liliana’s lips would be deflowered as well!

Liliana: “If I’d known this would happen then unrestrainedly with Kiritaka-san…”

Priscilla: “Whether the pessimistic you, or that optimistic crowd, each and every one of you just who do you think mineself is?”

Liliana: “Eh?”

Before my despairing self, Priscilla-sama moved. Before it had even been noticed, wielded in Priscilla-sama’s hand was a crimson blade — the Yang Sword. That which had already been radiant enough when seen at the convention center during the day, in this nighttime with the sun extinguished exuded a shiver-inducing beauty.

Almost as if it had revived the sun that should have fallen—.

Priscilla: “To tremble from mine arresting blade is right. This is the flame of the origin, the flame which first lit the seat of the emperor — although mine belief is that this scarlet radiance, is the same as what you lot recognize.”

“____”

Priscilla-sama solemnly dictating thus, flew upward while wielding the Yang Sword.

That was an action which could only be described as flight. Although clearly appearing as if only a light leap, yet with such agility as if becoming the wind. Seeming to approach the edge of the waterway before the crowd that surged wildly forward, Priscilla-sama directed the tip of the Yang Sword to the water’s surface.

And following right afterward.

“____!?”

Before my eyes, the wall of crimson which rose — no, that was flame, a wall of flame.

Ascendant flames traversed the barrier of crimson, appearing even as white. As if to reject any description of ‘wavering’, mournful light scattered forth, a testament to the terror of that heat.

Scorching was the waterway, even the water itself. Water which should have been effective against fire, water which was fire’s natural opposing enemy — this was a sight which overturned such natural notions.

The flame of Priscilla-sama’s Yang Sword, could ignite even water.

And in addition — all of everything which surrounded the waterways around the courtyard!

Sirius: “This is…”

Before the sight which belonged not of this world, the bandaged freak — no, let’s stop that after all. [Wrath], indeed, even [Wrath] was lost for words.

This couldn’t be described by words like smouldering, a flame which but existed. Stopping the steps of the crowd attempting to cross the waterway, nailing them in place.

That was a matter of course. Although moths crowding around a flame was nature’s decree, humans bore a wisdom and instinct yet capable of resisting thus.

Priscilla: “Even if solely in form, your use of love as an excuse to name this not as dominance became a critical weakness. If this is a force that even obedience of instinct can overcome, something of this degree could never stop someone in their steps.”

Taking anew a stance with the Yang Sword, Priscilla-sama ridiculed the silent [Wrath] thus.

Ridicule, mockery, desirion, contempt — this was that which could only be termed, a malicious expression of beauty.

Aah, something so important, that I had overlooked.

I had all along only been watching Priscilla-sama’s dashing expression of severity, although that was beautiful in its own right, indeed it could not compare.

When clearly there could be nothing more beautiful than this malice that yielded only a beauty which caused shivers.

Priscilla: “Even if free will is curbed, if instinct is not restrained as well this is precisely what it will look like. Seems as if no one is willing to go to the extent of being consumed by flame, a testament to the love

that you speak of.”

Sirius: “——”

Priscilla: “This is the result of your cheap love that you cried of. Such a scene is precisely what ridiculous defines, Sin Archbishop. How truly incapable of measuring up to that exaggerated title.”

Yet revealing ridicule, with momentum Priscilla-sama continuously chastised the silent [Wrath].

My hands couldn’t help but moisten with sweat, gaze flicking over to the scene. The thought of whether or not Priscilla-sama was truly so incredible that had persisted until now had been completely swept away.

Priscilla-sama is incredible! Priscilla-sama is powerful!

Priscilla: “In the end, words like love becomes one is merely superficiality. Mine peerless self is at the very peak, and thus no matter how much you struggle commoners like you could never become one with mineself.”

Waa, Priscilla-sama is amazing! Although she was amazing, but huh, wasn’t this situation weird?

Priscilla: “Even if capable of approaching mineself, to catch up with mineself is absolutely impossible. The love that you speak of is already defeated, isn’t it. And thus, speaking of to become one is naught but wild words.”

Liliana: “Uhm, Priscilla-sama, it’s about time…”

Priscilla: “Even as a misconception to become one is too erroneous. Born as something else, and wanting to become one is a denial of the self. Why would something you yourself lack have any value in proximity. What is flawed is the entire premise, and to act upon this incorrectness is to exist in commonness. — Something, so vulgar.”

Liliana: “Uwaaah! Why such an absolute rejection!?”

Something like this! Clearly due to blood rushing to the head! Clearly!

Although even if Priscilla-sama’s blood had rushed to her head perhaps there was still some margin of movement, but for someone insignificant like me the preference would be for your venerated self to refrain from doing so and end it as quickly as possible!

Perhaps she saw it, for [Wrath] who faced Priscilla-sama’s words had wordlessly bowed her head and was immersed in silence. Well, to have been met with so many arrogant words, anyone would be infuriated. Because to talk back felt like it would bring a multitude of words in response, so even infuriated silence would be kept.

It could be said to have been turned entirely uncomfortable, so if possible if Priscilla-sama could just beat

down on [Wrath]-san and call it a victory that'd be a relief.

Priscilla: "Fool. To do so, would mean everyone but mineself would be bisected, isn't that right. Although the sight of a city stained red with blood would be appealing, but there is no need to bring it about in mine country. Well then this opportunity should first be delayed, and you should fulfill your use as well."

Ah — right that was the case. In the end my duty was just this.

To receive the influence of [Wrath], would be sharing the pain and even wounds inflicted on that person. Precisely for being rid of such a condition was why my song was required.

Liliana: "After seeing the actual scene, I've actually become quite unsettled so who knows if my song will actually work!"

Priscilla: "If unwilling, your head and those of that crowd are free to fall alongside that creature's. If that scene is best avoided, without fail place your heart into song."

I continued to clutch the lu-lyre, shrinking back now that such heights of responsibility had been cast upon me.

The burning waterway kept the crowd away, yet the crowd remained as hostages, and the method to free them was my song! Priscilla-sama's duty was—?

Liliana: "So that's to say that's to say, until I've used my song to sway the captivated crowd, Priscilla-sama's duty is to keep me from dying isn't that how it feels!?"

Priscilla: "If you die, well, all that's left is to sever their heads as soon as possible. Best to think of it as all their lives being wrapped around your throat."

Liliana: "Ukya—!"

Priscilla: "Such slow understanding. Now then… mm."

After I had covered my face with a sharp cry, Priscilla-sama's expression changed. Priscilla-sama regarded the [Wrath] that had maintained her silence until now, frowning her brows.

With an uneasy premonition, I snuck a peek in that direction through the gaps in my fingers.

Sirius: "—How, amusing."

Liliana: "Eh?"

Sirius: "How amusing, such joy. Perhaps this should be called delight. No, perhaps it isn't possible to name this ascendant feeling in my heart."

Saying so with a low voice, languidly [Wrath] raised her face. On that face obscured by bandages, impassioned declaring eyes swept back and forth.

Gazing at Priscilla-sama, at the wall of flame, at me, wait no please don't look at me.

Sirius: "Apologies, I was scattered for a moment there. However, thank you. I have awoken. It's like this, words such as to desire to effortlessly achieve understanding were far too selfish."

Was that a laugh.

The monster's mouth split open horizontally, revealing a smile which showed white teeth, the monster laughed.

Intimately, as if welcoming a friend or family, to be denied as such and even so!

Sirius: "Please allow me to once more introduce myself. I am the Witch Cult's Sin Archbishop representing Wrath, Sirius Romanee-Conti. I do hope my affairs can be taken to heart."

She bowed, politely giving a greeting.

And then the bandaged freak — the monster Sirius, undid the chains on her arm. Rotating wrists, untying bondage, lengthening the reach of the chain, the chains rotating, slashing through air, sound layer upon layer of metal becoming malice itself, cutting through the atmosphere.

Even so, the monster wore a smile.

Sirius: "This is [Trial]! Indeed, is without doubt [Trial]! For this city in which my husband was encountered once again, to meet him once more, to express love in words, [Trial] descending upon me! A testimony of my love which was fated to meet that person once more! You are such a [Trial] which stands in my way!!"

With a ringing voice, with the flourish of a maiden in love, the monster ceaselessly waved her chains, shortening the distance to here in one breath. Oh no oh no, just being brushed would mean death for me.

Priscilla: "After quelling the crowd, that creature's opponent will be mineself. Do not make any unreasonable movements."

Liliana: "Uweh? Priscilla-sama!?"

Priscilla: "You are to prepare your song. — Should a shadow fall across the Yang Sword, mineself will no matter what sever that abomination's head. Before that happens, then."

Even being given an arbitrary limit by you is—!

As if not hearing a trace of my words, Priscilla-sama and the monster Sirius exchanged opening blows, beginning their battle!

Listening to the fierce collision of chain and sword, I thought that I had to at least do something.

Rather than calling it a sense of responsibility, more like being urged onward by some indistinct feeling, I began to run toward the wall of flame on the waterway. Hopelessly.

Run faster! Damn it, wasn't this being unable to think of anything!

Liliana: "And so for now, please listen for a moment. —Hoshin of the Wasteland huuuh hot!?"

Nearing the boundary of the waterway, I had prepared to whisk those in hearing range into a whirl of song, but immediately upon drawing close my face had been destroyed by flame!

It can't! Really can't! Although forcefully trying to put on the air of a performance, Priscilla-sama's wall of flame was beyond hot! Extremely hot! Hotter than was normal!

But without drawing close to this extent, in truth no one would be able to see!

Liliana: "Uuuooo, hothothot—! My hands will be scorched! If my throat or lungs are burned, this will be a battle lost… wait, huh?"

Being licked by a tongue of flame, while cursing my precipitousness for the face that must have been scorched beyond repair, I discovered that the hands which should have been swallowed by the flame were unharmed… or rather, even the wooden lu-lyre hadn't been destroyed by the flame, which was to say?

Liliana: "This is no, ordinary fire…?"

Nono, from the start it had been evident that this was no ordinary fire, but this seemed to be one which did not ignite? Although of scorching heat, it would not burn?

In that case then this! Would be crossed through in no time wouldn't it! The hell was this! This was a bluffing imitation of a fire meant to scare people off!?

Following along was indeed a failure of a decision!

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Link to Art

Arc 5, Chapter 66: The Stage of Liliana Masquerade

by admin - Wednesday, July 03, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/07/03/arc-5-chapter-66-the-stage-of-liliana-masquerade/

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Translated by :

- u/Nanashi-tan

Art Source:

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Liliana: “Gah! What a disaster! This fire is way too hot! Way too way too hot! Seven times hotter than normal fire! Being burnt by this will mean dying with seven times the agony!”

The white wall of flame erected before my eyes! Since it was a flame that would not burn if touched, but seemingly only miraculously give heat waves, in truth being able to withstand the pain would mean that it was not impossible to breach.

Thus, in order to keep the truth hidden from everyone who were too scared to rush forth, with desperation I pretended to be someone who suffered from having been suffered a fire blast, which meant I conveyed everyone surrounding the waterway of the dangers of the flame!

Well, even with everyone’s mental state being a tad risky, it seemed that instinct had left them with the notion that the flames were dangerous. So my desperate act was perhaps not of much use, but even so not performing it was something I couldn’t justify.

Liliana: “Although it was easy for Priscilla-sama to say to sing and dance to snatch the peoples’ spirits back.”

In all honesty, taking snatching spirits back raaaaaa! As a mood to sing with, would entirely serve as an

obstacle, and from its basis goes against the principle of song.

As a result of frantic singing, to say that something airy was left within the hearts of those who listened was a natural intent of the heavens. And to feel something in that intent of the heavens, and giving a tip because of that would be such a gentle world!

To begin with the attitude of wanting to earn a tip, in that case such a desire would make its way into the song. But a song with such a desire contained within was not what I wanted.

And so couldn't this plan be said to be a losing battle from the very start!

Liliana: "Recalling back although this life was short-lived, but days filled with tumultuousness had been experienced. Father-sama and Mother-sama, although there had been resentment when being casted off into the cruel world at thirteen after declaring independence, but now remaining is only gratefulness that I was born so cute. Although I have all along been quite the unfilial daughter, the gratitude and wrath I felt toward the two of you (respectful) was something integral to my every way… Gu! Aaaaa, hothothot, a neverending summer!"

While speaking of gratitude toward parents and various other whims, I felt as if those on the opposite the wall of flame were about to approach and once more put on an act of overheating. Really hoping you'll react appropriately you bunch who can't read the atmosphere!

Butbut, now matter how realistic my performance was it would fall through sooner or later. And then if it were exposed, there would be no way to continue suppressing Priscilla-sama's extreme endurance tactics.

And there we go it's done! It's over!

Sirius: "Oh my oh my, do you have the leisure to see? That the child who you have expectations of, is wearing an expression as if there is no path forward. I can with clarity feel the sorrow and exhaustion plaguing that child's spirit. Aching back and forth, isn't it rather pitiful?"

Priscilla: "Not in the slightest."

Without regard to the me who had begun to clutch my head and count down the seconds to the end, in the center of the courtyard surrounded by waterways that had been set alight, and exchange of dialogue between Priscilla-sama and that freak Sirius was in progress.

That said, the dialogue was entirely composed of Priscilla-sama mercilessly striking Sirius's steady tone with a deaf ear! And setting aside Sirius's manner of speech for now, that figure that rotated chains with both arms could not be called steady in the slightest.

Air being slashed, atmosphere being sliced, the path of metal chains being swung through the air meandered freely! Tumbling, prancing, front back left right it struck toward Priscilla-sama as if a metal snake!

The extending and retracting chain made an ear-piercing level of sound, continuous to the point that it seemed to me Priscilla-sama had been enclosed in a cage of iron. To the point of becoming a prison.

The stone steps that took direct hits from the chain exploded mercilessly, caved in, the paring speaking volumes of that power. If direct contact with the skin were made, the result would be unsightliness caused as if by a snake's fangs and tongue! If the recipient were someone like Priscilla-sama whose skin was white and delicate, to call the torment the most extreme would not be enough!

But but, Priscilla-sama in fact ferociously attacked that metal chain—!

Priscilla: "Tumultuous and yet tasteless noise, heedlessly exerting every which way without the slightest trace of release, a base weapon from which even a hint of elegance cannot be felt, superficial and yet unseemly idle talk… how truly fortunate that such a number of measures to diminish mine anger were prepared that mercy may be shown. Toward this profanity, there in fact remains only admiration."

Liliana: "Priscilla-sama is awesomeeeeeee!!"

Priscilla-sama yet wore an expression which spoke of listlessness, waving the Yang Blade to welcome the chain that forced its way close from every direction. Forget front up down side, how could a blow from somewhere unseen like the back possibly be intercepted.

In addition perhaps this power was unique to the Yang Blade, but whenever the Yang Blade deflected the chain, the point of contact would be scorched white, with firepower that seemed not negligible, and yet the chain would burn and become gradually shorter and shorter! If this were repeated the chain would certainly lose its volume!

Liliana: "Heheheh—! Priscilla-sama, please be rid of rid of rid of it—!"

Priscilla: "Regard thus, 'tis what is known as candid thoughts which forget to cover eyes. Although exposure of this level for a commoner is presumably difficult, it certainly inspires more pleasure than boring theory which ceaselessly contorts. Well, although merely one person in this world would be enough."

Liliana: "Eh!? Just now was a praise for me, a praise right!? To consider that praise would be fine right? I'm about to feel happy you know!! Amazing truly amazing. Yay!"

Even if I were to be told that that hadn't been praise, I'd already felt happy so it was too late!

Accepting my support, Priscilla-sama also accordingly raised her dignity. She continued to advance, ceaselessly burning the chain away. The imposing atmosphere seemed to overwhelm even the Sin Archbishop freak, and was now entirely just waiting! Was a yam on the oven!

Liliana: "No wait a second, Priscilla can't solve this so effortlessly! If it's done like this, we're also be offed effortlessly eeeeeeh!?"

Priscilla: "Mmm, that's indeed the case. Too fun a time was being had."

How dangerous! If just now I hadn't stopped her, that person would have been offed so effortlessly! The overwhelmed Sirius took this chance of Priscilla-sama stopping to leap far backward.

Perhaps it was better to say, although Priscilla-sama's noncompliant attitude was rather difficult, but the opponent who could match her was fortunately none other than a Sin Archbishop, perhaps it should be asked whether or not humans could move in such a way?

Sirius: "Mouth clearly having been worked so hard, and yet a master so stubbornly refusing to open their heart is rare indeed. For what reason is your soul so tightly closed."

After gaining some distance, Sirius flickered her gaze to her two arms as she spoke thus. That chain had already been shorn completely short, but as the freak spoke she rotated her wrists to restore its length. It seemed that many chains were wound firmly on her arms, whether or not they were cutting off circulation was unknown.

Sirius: "All hearts regardless of whose have a space. To live means to have feelings, yet no matter the color of the feeling that peeks out from there it's something every person has… even to say a feeling you've staunchly bore all along, as long as its revealed it can be understood?"

Priscilla: "——"

Sirius: "You too have a soul that can anguish, feelings that disorient, although unwaveringly keeping weaknesses hidden from others is a condition to living strongly… but that is not merely a destination to reach on one's lonesome. What one person can achieve on their lonesome has a limit. After becoming one with other people, there are occurrences that can be discovered for the first time. In order to allow other people to see that place, mutual understanding and shared feelings are necessary."

Sirius swayed her body, saying thus to the silent Priscilla-sama.

That voice was as if wanting bleed into the soul. That attitude was dear as if flesh and bone. That manner was tender as if dissolving the guards of others. The content of those words was as if enticing others.

Clearly as if a sweet poison melting with languor, yet even my extremities felt numb.

Sirius: "Could you allow me to help you reach understanding with others? Truly your love is so deep, and loving of the world. Looking forward to being able to be loved. I can understand this. And hope that those other than me can come to understand. In order to keep you from spending a lonely night on your lonesome."

Priscilla: "Truly a shame to rely only on delusion and conjecture and prattle on without rest. If no doubts are held toward your own words, you are precisely what is known as a lunatic."

Sirius: "Oh my, thank you very much. That is a title commensurate with my husband's. A criminal who cannot comprehend in the slightest how outstanding that person is, toward that person spits wild words of admiration envy jealousy."

Priscilla: “Not worth a mention. What belongs to mineself belongs to mineself. The narrative-like manner of your soliloquy are the wild words. For people like you, even the surface of mine enigma cannot be skimmed.”

Priscilla-sama with self-assurance rejected that sweet enticing proposal with clarity. However, in terms of self-assurance Sirius did not lose. The freak’s head tilted as if having expected Priscilla-sama’s rejection,

Sirius: “To say that even the surface cannot be skimmed, this is the epitome of stubborness… isn’t it. In that case, how does such an significance sound? [Iris and the King of Thorns].”

Priscilla: “——”

Sirius: “Or perhaps [The Rose Knight of Tieros]? [Maglitza’s Guillotine].”

I didn’t understand the significance of Sirius’s words. Same with the intent behind the freak saying such words.

However, it prompted an immediate effect.

Priscilla: “—Better off dead.”

As I thought I’d heard a low murmur, Priscilla-sama’s figure vanished from sight.

As I expressed my confusion, the distance that had once existed between Priscilla-sama and Sirius became zero. Priscilla-sama swung the Yang Blade from above, arc mercilessly tracing toward Sirius’s neck. In an instant the world slowed to an extent that yielded incredulousness, and even I was able to see the path that Priscilla-sama’s blade followed.

Just aiming it, would be as if caressing Sirius’s slender neck.

If that were to happen, my neck, and the necks of everyone nearby would break in the same way.

Could it be, that it was because I understood this that it seemed to happen so slowly? Say, if a life-threatening danger were to approach, humans would, with an intense focus slow their perception of the world down.

Although, even with that, when the celestial scales of my own life were being tilted by others, what could I and the many people around me do about it.

The crimson radiance of the Yang Blade, just like that with imposing manner which sliced through the atmosphere—

Liliana: “—Eh?”

Due to being unable to understand the sight before me, I couldn’t help but let out the voice of a dazed

fool.

The neck of I who had had made that noise was still firmly anchored upon this small body.

That was a matter of course. My neck had not been severed. Whether my own, or Sirius's.

In substitution, Priscilla-sama's body which should have leapt at Sirius was flung backward forcefully.

Enduring Sirius's metal chains from the front whose attack had served as a welcome, in a dangerous manner was flung backward.

Liliana: "Priscilla-sama!?"

I let out a cry toward that figure which had obviously not leapt of its own will.

If Priscilla-sama were to be killed the the situation would become an irreparable wreck — I could scarcely even think of such a notion, crying out solely because a sense of disaster dawned. And yet, Priscilla-sama from midair suddenly spun back, halting the impact by stabbing the Yang Blade into the cobblestones.

Priscilla: "Cease the racket, the true damage is yet to come."

Replying thus to my wail, with a resounding step Priscilla-sama landed. However, immediately following that Priscilla-sama's necklace began to change. It had originally been a necklace with three jewels of green, but one of the jewels had disintegrated into ash.

Almost as if taking Priscilla-sama's stead in the attack from just before.

Priscilla: "The repayment of mine necklace, has a rather high cost you know."

Sirius: "So that's how it is. Is it that wounds you suffer transfer onto what is valuable to you. That is truly a manner befitting of [Pride]… nono, couldn't be couldn't possibly be."

Priscilla: "A deliberately demeaning speculation, is malicious to the extreme, a crime of ludicrosity reaching this extent cannot be redeemed with even ten thousand deaths. The manner of your death, is best fitting as a scorching heat that burns and burns yet never dies out."

Toward Sirius whose manner of accordance had not wavered in the slightest, Priscilla-sama's rage shone. Rather than to say that the Yang Blade in her hand had increased its radiance, perhaps it should be said that the heat was increasing? Priscilla-sama's regal attire even to me, appeared as if it swayed under the sweltering sunny day.

Though gazing at it, there truly was no way to think that Priscilla-sama could stand at a disadvantage… but there was also that incomprehensible happening from just now.

Sirius with her inexplicable words appeared as if meant to taunt Priscilla-sama.

Although Priscilla-sama had seemed to rush forward as if falling for that provocation, since that movement had been so predictable it had been welcomed from the front — was not the case.

Rather, this was the opinion of an outsider like me, in my regard Priscilla-sama's movements had appeared fast to the point of disappearing from sight, but perhaps to Sirius this was not the case. Although this possibility could not be denied, but that shouldn't have been.

Because when the Yang Blade had struck out, Priscilla-sama's movements had stopped.

Appearing as if suspended, although such words did exist to convey the general idea, but this was on a different level of meaning from that, more precisely it was as if it had been completely frozen.

Freezing in such an unnatural position, I did not assume to be Priscilla-sama's desire, nor that humans could consciously do as such. In that case, that stopping should have been connected to some kind of incomprehensible ability, but what could it have been?

Sirius: "Please do not rage like that. Although you appear as if constantly raising your temper over something, but such a thing yields exhaustion, and will only parch the soul? Something like [Wrath], is the tomb of the feeling that should be most shunned in this world… if that's the case constantly welling in the heart should be feelings of ecstasy and joy."

Liliana: "C, clearly holding such a philosophy, everyone outside doesn't look very happy do, do, do they?"

Sirius: "Hmm?"

Huh!? Just now, could it be a voice had been audible!?

The freak Sirius looked directly at me, eyes that were visible from a gap in the bandages coiling tightly around my body. Uhiii, what a disaster, to have done to myself!

Sirius: "Indeed, within the hearts of everyone who is outside, unease and lament reigns. Although this too is something tragic, this is merely the result of human hearts overflowing with tenderness and compassion."

Liliana: "Wha, what are you saying?"

Sirius: "Once within my sphere of influence, people become capable of opening their hearts to one another and resonating. And so, feelings that cannot be condensed into words can come to light. To be human is to be able to empathize, a precious existence which from which feelings can come to be. If tender love is felt for the hearts of others, when sorrow is witnessed, in one's own heart sorrow will also bloom. And sorrow will also sprout in the hearts of those who witness that sorrow. As the cycle repeats, the drops of sorrow will become a pond, become a lake, become a river."

This person began to speak of such heavy things.

This was to say, the more people gathered, to be by this person's side would yield increasingly disastrous results.

Such a thing which could rile up and spread suffering to everyone in the city… and it didn't stop at creating unrest.

This person referred to it as a connection of the heart.

Priscilla: "If this seems a tragedy, by all means take the lead in saving everyone. Choosing not to do so and only sighing, is but an irritating noise for the commoners you know."

Sirius: "Mm, I can understand those words. I'm merely a victim of a onesided attack on my helplessness. However, I possess a means to save all those enveloped by sorrow!"

Sirius clapped her palms together with a demeanor of going as far as to declare 'what a wonderful idea!'.

Although it was doubtful that the freak's notion of a good idea could make the situation take a turn for the better, but neither I nor Priscilla-sama spoke up. Although I didn't know about Priscilla-sama, rage boiled in my heart.

A feeling that could not be described with words surging within my chest was - was igniting.

Sirius: "A means to offer salvation to all those enveloped in sorrow… is to use delight, use joy to sweep away that sorrow. Which is to say that the I who is to be a conduit for such salvation must find happiness!"

"____"

Sirius: "My my my. Within this city is the husband whom I've been separated with for quite some time. To confirm that love with my husband, with that person, to have it returned. A happily married couple is the emblem of happiness. If my heart is filled to the brim with such joy, all those who cry out in lament will be saved. By mutually enjoying happiness, the hearts of everyone will be saved—"

Sirius spoke her discourse, Priscilla-sama wore a completely disinterested expression, and I who flickered glances at her was thinking of a great number of things.

I could understand that this was the one time, when I could not escape reality by wearing a pretense of a disconnect in understanding. Or rather it could be said, I understood. Thoroughly and completely understood, the fact that this freak Sirius Romanee-Conti was our enemy.

"____"

I raised my head, gazed across the surrounding waterways engulfed in flame.

On the other side of the white tinged wall of flame, were the figures of people who stood in place without

a means to cross the waterway. They had all fallen under a charm of feelings, lost their awareness of self.

I could hear the sound of their corpse-like voices.

Thanks to my peculiar ears, which as a bard, only sound and hearing were my specialties, to me those voices seem to echo without cease.

— So terrifying, so sorrowful, save me, how painful, why, why, don't.

Resentment swept up as if in a vortex, wails drawn out as if for eternity, I could hear those kinds of voices.

Was this to be the result of that so called empathy then. Was this to be the result of that so called becoming one, then. That so called unity, was it something like this.

Liliana: "Have to, free…"

To become one, and to have everything of everything become identical couldn't be the same.

Men, women, adults, children, infants, elderly, humans, beastkin alike, were clearly all different.

To condense all that together, whisk into disarray, and call it 'like this everyone will understand each other and become one—' such words, were certainly no joke.

No joke at all!

Priscilla: "No need for you to be happy. Shut that pettily clever mouth of yours while you can, and die on your lonesome."

Sirius: "Don't. Don't insist on using the loneliness of disconnect to comfort yourself. If you are one who cannot recognize the form of happiness, taking a look at my happiness and giving it a chance isn't so bad, is it? Or perhaps if you understand the joy of connecting with the one in your heart, then you'll come to understand the joy of being a bride, isn't that so."

Priscilla: "Unfortunately, mineself has already walked the aisle seven times. And each was nowhere approaching something like happiness. Apply not your paltry standards to minself, 'tis nauseating."

Sirius: "Seven times… heeeh…"

Priscilla-sama treated Sirius's words as a jest, and brought the Yang Blade down from above. However, Sirius also commenced her own ferocious attack with chains of steel. Sparks ignited and scattered, the severed chain flew away, and the figures of the two were pushed away from the center of the courtyard by the clash.

Cleft in two, the chain. Tinged with white, the inextinguishable flame. In a state of being unable to give voice, the people who wailed in agony.

Within me, slowly it came together. Could it, be accomplished.

If the theorized situation was indeed reality, was correct, in that case, it shouldn't be unachievable.

Sirius: "Even though I've clearly expended so much time on this for only the sake of that reaching the heart of that one person… you had seven chances, and wasted all of them."

Priscilla: "Don't pin the blame for your own lack of allure on mineself. In this situation, even that pitiful man who has been imprinted on by you, would refuse to meet you—"

Sirius: "I am intimately connected with that person, and thus are deeply in love—!!"

This was fury that inspired a jolt of terror.

Immediately after, bisecting the courtyard was a snake of flame which burned red! In the instant that Pricsilla-sama blocked chains striking from Sirius's arms, the flames followed the chains to race up Sirius's arms, and the surging flame swallowed Priscilla-sama's body.

The snake of flame reared open its maw, consuming Priscilla-sama's slim body headfirst. Without a means to counter that fiery tactic, Priscilla-sama was swallowed, and tossed outside of the courtyard now seeped with flame. Just as she was about to plummet, she suddenly breathtakingly stabilized herself with her sword. And yet, after being submerged in such flames Priscilla-sama's body remained — completely unhurt.

But with a sound, the necklace's jewel once again shattered. The two clasps of the necklace came undone simultaneously, landing on the ground with a resounding noise.

Sirius: "I share a deep love with that person! That just and sincere person just can't help that he hasn't yet finished what he began! To misconstrue that person's sincerity as pure love is just too obscene! Aaaah! Aaaaaaah! How irritating!"

Priscilla-sama had once again survived at the cost of the necklace, but her demeanor toward facing Sirius had changed completely. The freak opened her mouth as if baring fangs, spitting ugly words as she violently expressed her temper. Her arms had swept up a vortex of red flame.

Sirius: "Why is it that you so inconsiderately shake my heart to this degree! These violent shakes of the heart, another way of naming [Wrath] is passion! The trembles will give way to heat, scorching those who are sinners! Is this what you want for yourself as well, you pretentious lonely wench aaaaaaa!"

Priscilla: "With that mouth, with those eyes, such fabrication…"

The seething [Wrath] was igniting herself, a vortex of flame building overhead the Sirius who was slowly raising her arms. What had struck just now emanated from her arms, a pair of slim twin snakes. And as those arms crossed, the forms merged into one powerful snake.

The arm struck vertically downward, and the enormous snake of flame rushed at Priscilla-sama. Rather

than evade it, Priscilla-sama took a stance of meeting the attack.

The Yang Blade flew from down to up, tip lodging in the head of that giant snake.

With a sound that was not one of chain meeting sword, the snake missed its target by a wide arc!

However, Priscilla-sama was sent flying by the impact and could not make a follow-up!

After Sirius had summoned the snake in a fit of agitation, the flow of offense and defense had swerved sharply.

Priscilla-sama had been forced on the defensive, and the metal chain and flame chased her retreating figure.

Why was that? Although it was clear at a glance that Sirius's abilities couldn't be underestimated, but analyzing the fight would not point to Priscilla-sama being at a disadvantage. She had said that the Yang Blade consumed mana quickly, but was it that which was pressing her so?

Or could it be, that perhaps, merely as a speculation.

It wasn't that Priscilla-sama couldn't attack—

Liliana: "Is it me!"

A quick end, not just for me but for everyone in the vicinity as well.

In order to avoid such a result, was this a battle for buying time!?

Wait no hang on how could it be, that the arrogant Priscilla-sama who thought the highest of only herself would do something like that!?

"You are to prepare your song. — Should a shadow fall across the Yang Sword, mineself will no matter what sever that abomination's head. Before that happens, then."

At that time, something had shook in my brain!

Right before the battlefield had truly opened, Priscilla-sama had told me.

Before the Yang Blade met its limit, I was to prepare a song. And she had added that if that time were to approach, Sirius's head would be mercilessly severed and everyone else along with her.

But that was to say, before that time had arrived, to just wait for it— indicated that there was more to it than was initially suspected.

In that case, Priscilla-sama was waiting. Waiting for me to ready a song.

At the very least, to take responsibility for the time before those words.

Liliana: “Guu, guuuu! Mmmm! Mmmmmmm!”

How bothersome! That person, so damn bothersome! If there are feelings just confess to the feelings already! That person, absolutely has feelings for me. No, because I had been told I was liked, it had definitely been said before. Aaah what a pain, screw this, this was terrifying, was there no other way—!

Liliana: “Priscilla-sama—!”

If the situation was as I suspected, then to be fighting at a bothersome disadvantage, she must have understood what I was thinking right now.

I pointed toward the stone tower that had been ignited by Sirius’s flames.

Priscilla-sama turned her head at the sound of my voice, looked toward where I was pointing—

“—Hoh”

She wore that terrifying expression with terrifying gaze, but with such a terrifying mien it inspired a feeling of reliability, she laughed.

Too wicked, an expression which left it difficult to figure out just who the archbishop was here!

Sirius: “Stop looking away—!!”

Priscilla: “With the likes of you as an opponent, looking away is no distraction. Do not lecture mineself’s actions.”

Priscilla-sama leapt back, while at the same time parrying an approaching chain with her sword. Her body gathering momentum, with speed that seemed fast than one motion would allow, she landed by the burning tower.

Priscilla-sama gazed up at the burning tower as she directed the tip of the Yang Blade at its base,

Priscilla: “Such an unsightly flame. Truly beautiful lights, are dazzling like this.”

Differences in aesthetic between the lights of flame and such, were incomprehensible to an outsider like me.

Although incomprehensible, even an outsider’s eye could clearly make out, a decidedly different sort of flame now surrounded the control tower!

The white-tinged flames that swayed there were of the same type that surrounded the waterways.

Even though the snakes originating from Sirius’s chains also burned crimson and scorched with a bright

staggering heat, the flames emitted from the Yang Blade held a sort of sanctity that gave the impression of being untouchable.

Priscilla: “The stage is prepared. —Ensure, that you perform your utmost.”

Liliana: “Right right! Understood!”

After smothering the burning control tower with another layer of flame, Priscilla-sama spoke one sentence. I replied with fervent confidence, rushing over to the control tower.

With an air of being set off by anything that happened, Sirius who flickered her gaze toward this scene extended both her hands in our direction!

Sirius: “The hell are you doing to the flame that I lit as an emblem of my love for that person!”

Liliana: “Something like setting an entire building on fire to flirt, I think it’s best you don’t say such outlandish ridiculous things!”

I said it said it said it! Wah ~hyahya!

Rushing toward my back as I spoke while running, I felt that Sirius freak’s chain descending in one smooth motion! Burning chains! A heat wave, heat wave!

In the instant of being attacked, I’d known from before the flame had been ignited that my head could be sent flying, but heedless of what was behind me I ran! And the reason is!

Priscilla: “Whatever that one will come up with, this is a situation where mineself will not hold back until the very end.”

Liliana: “Chiiiiiii!”

As if taking the place of my fleeing self, Priscilla-sama landed where the chain would strike. The Yang Blade sliced downward as if licking, deflecting the entire tongue of flame!

Hearing the intermittent sounds of Priscilla-sama and that freak clashing anew, I finally reached my destination of the burning tower of stone.

Liliana: “Haah, haaaah…”

Although the distance covered hadn’t been too long, drawing breath grew laborious, and my body felt fatigued! In all honesty, right now nothing would feel better than a drink of ice water before collapsing on a bed. Although this was something not meant for a travelling bard, but after spending so long in greenhouse-like surroundings, anything but a soft bed wouldn’t work!

Liliana: “Aah, really… isn’t this all Kiritaka-san and everyone else’s fault—”

Allowing me to reside in this city, offering me warm hospitality besides. Whether the [White Dragon's Scales] or the citizens of the city, all expressed their love, and the likes of Kiritaka-san with such enthusiasm that even I was taken aback, it was all their fault! The fault of remaining in this city, that my ability to stay on the path of a travelling bard had been dispelled!

Well then, just a bit of extra effort here — recall the ruthless determination of your waist and legs from before!

Liliana: "Hi, iiiiiii!"

Epiphany realized, teeth clenched, I held my steady lu-lyre in my arms, and rushed toward the flaming tower! So hot, so hot, so hot, so damn hot—!

Anticipation of the scorching pain sent a sharp jolt through me.

However, although clearly enduring an overwhelming heat wave, between skin and hair and lu-lyre, none of them had been burnt by the scorching flame. Although the heat of the flame could be clearly felt, nothing had caught fire.

As with the flames over the waterways, there was painful heat but no burning. And thus I recognized this flame as the Yang Blade's fake.

However, it was different. Different indeed.

The Yang Blade wielded by Priscilla-sama had indeed burnt through the metal chains. A sword clearly using the same flames, but burning only select things.

Priscilla-sama's flame, could choose what to burn. Which meant, that it could also choose what not to burn.

Liliana: "Oooh—!"

Well then! The white flame enveloping this control tower, would definitely not burn me!

Even though it was so hot as to be disintegrating, so agonizing as to seem fatal, a pain that made whoever experienced it want to collapse and roll on the ground, it would not burn, it would not injure, it would not be deadly!

Eyeballs melting, tongue withering, hair alight, skin festering, lu-lyre scorched, bones cracking, flesh burnt, consciousness eroding to nothing, was all an illusion—!

Not hot, so hot, so hot, so hot, not hot, not hot, so hot, craving death, not wanting to die, so hot, not hot, hothothot even though it was so hot—!

Sprinting up the stairs of the control tower, first floor, second floor, just how many floors were there!? Where was the roof!? The fire crept outward and extended its reach, looking left and right yielded only the sight of white fire, sohotsohot, how could such agony be, so hot, heat beyond heat, I—.

“____!”

I wanted to wail about the intensity of the heat, wanted to shriek until my throat split right this instant.

Absolutely not. If this agony were given voice to, it would desecrate my throat in one cry. This throat could absolutely not be spent. These fingers as well. Wanting to scratch, want to express the suffering no matter how. But no, absolutely not, if these fingers were to be spent, they could not strum a melody.

Whether eyes, or skin, or hair, if they melted, it couldn’t be helped.

But not this throat, not these fingers, and these ears as well, were not allowed, because they were all indispensable for what would come next.

Forcefully ascending the steps, slamming open the incredibly heavy door with a kick, appearing now was the night sky — the wind howling in frenzy, heat continuing to flow from beneath my feet, but there were no more walls, and sprinting to the highest point to glance down.

The wind rose and fell, and below were a red figure and white figure waving dangerous objects, white flames surrounded by a wailing crowd.

Although I was so hot, so hot, I felt as if I would die at any instant.

Right now, the heat had not completely fled, the soles of my feet were still burning, and the white flames swaying in the wind were still slowly intensifying, sorrow suddenly rose in my heart, and tears threatened to flow—.

Liliana: “Eek, eeep, alright, this is a once-in-a-lifetime stage!”

Reaching the place I had dashed for even through heat and agony that inspired a craving for death, from here everything was visible, sound could be heard from everywhere.

Even feeling drained to a deathly point, before I died there was still something left to do, and so.

Liliana: “Come come, gather around, everyone far away make sure you listen! Everyone close by make sure you watch the dance! For everyone even farther away I’ll be even louder so just listen!! Liliana Masquerade, is here to sing dance perform for you! So listen well! —Sky transcending the light of dawn!!”

—Just gather all those scorching feelings, and spit them all out at once!

Arc 5, Chapter 67: Liliana Masquerade

by admin - Wednesday, July 03, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/07/03/arc-5-chapter-67-liliana-masquerade/

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Translated by :

- u/Nanashi-tan

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- Art Source

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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It turned out, that Liliana did not remember the words she had wanted to sing.

Liliana’s bloodline, from the time of her mother, mother’s mother, and even mothers beyond that, was a bloodline which had all along not settled in one place and instead travelled the earth.

The lifeless profession of a bard, would of course inspire irritation. Not remaining in any one place, but along with the winds, along with the hearts’ whims, continuously travelling with only two feet.

Amongst the bards, it seemed that many of them would gather together, band together for performances. However, Liliana was not particularly fond of this nature of banding together. Although not disliking of being with others, their interests were different. There was a palpable difference in sense of music.

Just like her line of mothers, Liliana trod alone onto a journey. However, even amongst this group of bards with such variance in personality, this independence could not be denied to have appeared rather early with her. She had been thirteen when she had left her parents’ nest.

“Hey, little brat! How could you have such an idea! Wouldn’t your parents agreeing with you be enough.”

Although not over a trivial matter, but fleeing without question as a result of the argument was she. Starting from her tens, Liliana had always wanted to live independently. Those were the too heedless opinions of a daughter too deeply submerged in chasing dreams, and her parents and especially mother forcibly kept her.

At around the age of ten, the feelings of the young Liliana were already a tad more mature than those of other girls of her age. That was more or less the result of her father's performances, her mother's poems, and the intimate influence of her relatives.

To the young Liliana, the characters appearing in the music her mother sang were dashing. Following how their adventures, struggles, battles, romances, intrigues interacted with her, Liliana was forever unable to bear that her feet could not make their way forward.

— The people that had been come to known through her own songs, could clearly so freely choose their way of living.

To the ten year old Liliana, the heroes that had appeared in the songs were friends. Walking the same path, seeing the same sights, underneath the same sky they raised their heads to see, she too wanted to savor the same taste.

Clinging to such a feeling, in those three years, she could in fact bear it.

Liliana burned up the single-minded passion and single-minded sense of companionship, and from her father stole the skill of performing with a lu-lyre, from her mother stole the sound of that song and several famed songs.

On the eve of turning thirteen, mother had personally given her the traditionally passed down lu-lyre, and after the grand parent-child argument, she sprinted away from her parents' sides, journeying away from home alone.

Hahahaha! Wait and see, old lady! I'll be the ruler of bards!…

Completely evading the pursuit of her parents, the her who had become alone made a vow to the night sky.

Liliana Masquerade's grand adventure, would from now on begin.

Since the age of ten, her parents had deplored Liliana's recklessness.

Complaining that her skills had yet to mature, that she treated not learning melodies as a joke, occasionally refusing her food afterward.

"Heheheh! A little girl like you thinking she can live independently, is ten years too early! An arrogant child like this, leave it to her to take care of the meat of the rabbits who've fallen into the trap!"

"Oh my oh my, you poor thing! How undercooked today's rabbit meat seems, but it's still being eaten?

A child who doesn’t listen to her parents really is pitiful!”

For better or for worse, parents with a nature of chasing their dreams.

For a pair such as them, how heartrending the departure of their only daughter must be. Surely leading up to the departure, arguments would have been aplenty.

“This lowers the consumption of meals! Three meals a day from now!”

“If Liliana’s gone, we’ll just have another child!”

Surely, there must have been arguments. Surely it was painful. Indeed.

And a parental argument was the last gift she received from them.

If Liliana’s dreams were crushed, to return to her parents, was not what she would do.

In order to cut off a way out for Liliana, they spoke such words.

To weaken at the thought of an escape route, was human nature. As long as there existed a way out, the flames of determination could not burn until the very last.

Especially for a travelling bard, who had no home of their own.

Family and hometown, were typically notions that were merged into one. Reliance on family was a subconsciously overwhelming tendency. The greatest obstacle standing in the way of independence was the act of cutting it off.

Thanks to her youthful recklessness and her parent’s shrewd manipulation, she had defeated such an obstacle.

Liliana, sipping muddied water, munching roots of grass, overwhelmed by starvation and weakness, thought of “returning” … it was as she thought of “this”, that she noticed their consideration.

If her resolve had shattered then, perhaps she would have cast down her lu-lyre. She thanked her parents. To part had been the best way.

“Eeeh!?”

Years later, having encountered them in another town, they had yet to settle their differences.

On top of that, held in her parents’ arms was an unfamiliar infant.

Liliana had initially assumed it to be her younger sister, but rather than speak to her parents, she merely stuck out her chest, straightened her back and returned the way she had come.

Years later, if she had achievements more worthy of pride, perhaps a reunion with her parents, could even be one of smiles and happy talks.

However, the her of today was sorely lacking. So for not it should be left at that.

Of course, after this meeting today perhaps she would never encounter her parents again. And there was an even higher chance that she would never be able to introduce herself as an elder sister to the little sister whose name she had yet to learn.

However, this was what Liliana had chosen, a way of life which relied on song.

In coming days, when Liliana had become a world-renowned bard, doubtlessly her parents would irresponsibly comment to everyone who would listen. The first to fall victim would no doubt be her little sister. And thus, to gain another petty ambition was completely natural.

Heheh, what a heart-pounding vision of a future! Which shouldn't have been too much to ask for…

When Liliana was seventeen, she found her resolve anew.

Liliana who was now twenty-two, had lived independently for nine years - it was a given that it was an atypical life, riddled with tribulation.

Most notably was at the age of thirteen right after she'd begun her journey, when her declaration of intent to be the master of bards, had been trampled upon the following day. If she hadn't been picked up by passerby merchants, and as a maiden hadn't needed to negotiate, surely she would actually have pitifully died alone.

It had been a been a group of merchants, travelling across the lands to make their living.

Liliana had been picked up and taken care of, acting as a serving girl. It was a way of travel much safer, much more comfortable, than a true journey alone, as long as there would be meals and a bed.

Reaching cities, Liliana would also take up the lu-lyre, singing at the side of the road for coin. Having left her parents, the first instance of having her performance recognized was unforgettable.

The merchants took care of her for around a year, but when their spokesperson settled in a town, acquiring his own store, the group disbanded. Amongst the scattered merchants, several groups invited Liliana to come along, but solemnly she decline, continuing on alone.

Letting go of a safer and more comfortable journey, renewing herself as a person.

The lukewarm days of the beginning had ended, and Liliana Masquerade's tale began. This was without question a tale of such vigor.

Afterward, several years of toil were committed. As part of a group of merchants, or a respected house of bards, and forget that she carried a sign with her, the ruthless world had no consideration for a little girl

separated from her family of musicians.

It had been then, that she fully understood the consideration had shown before she'd left.

This was when Liliana had realized, there was another great truth of this world.

It was that the world she lived in and the worlds the characters of her beloved stories lived in, were absolutely different, and she was in no way one of their companions.

A beginning was hardly anything so unique.

As always she munched on roots of grass, consumed red fruits that she could not find in the mountains, and on her lonesome suffered the agony of a stomach ache and fever, and on that night, she realized.

"Aaaah."

The heroes of the thrilling stories she knew shouldn't have been like this.

Because those tales were done and over with. The everydays where they spat fresh blood, spoke their aspirations, cried out their hopes, and swung their blades were of the distant past.

Liliana tread through their footsteps, wove their tales for others to witness. Only did merely that.

Liliana loved them, but they had never loved Liliana.

Her own thoughts had been completely onesided, and were in fact akin to something which had stumbled into an old dead and lost their way.

— Then, just who was a bard?

"To become the master of bards!", saying so, Liliana had taken up the mantle of bard for many a year, before finally realizing how useless she was.

"Aaaaaah!"

For three days and three nights, Liliana's pains, fever, and vomiting continued without cease.

As she lowered her head, Liliana wondered whether this was a cruel dream or reality.

After the fourth day, Liliana awoke recovered, splashed her face in the stream, drank its water.

The self reflected there, wore a different mien than the self of before.

Wind rustling the foliage, refreshing calls of insects and birds flowed across the stream.

And there she had felt the song, for the first time.

Tears seeping out, Liliana couldn't help but leap into the stream.

The insects, birds, fish were all startled, their music flowing to the water's surface, where Liliana's head emerged, laughing heartily. She cried, laughed, cried out.

Liliana descended the mountain, body caked in dried mud and dirtied water, and stood on the streets.

Everyone found themselves disgusted by the young girl clutching an instrument, wearing a dirtied dress. The storeowner's expression revealed disgust, and passersby on the streets seemed uneasy as well.

Merely standing like that for a few seconds, would perhaps result in being knocked over by some thoughtless passerby.

However, the Liliana standing upon the streets moved with agility. It wasn't that she was thinking she'd be knocked over if she didn't start soon. In this moment, she desired only to sing as soon as she could.

"____"

As the lu-lyre was plucked, a handful of people noticed.

A dirty muddy girl, the aged and withered lu-lyre in her hands, the hands that were touching the lu-lyre had become breathtaking.

It was a question how many people had recognized it.

If something were truly happening, surely the people who noticed would have left immediately.

Liliana's performance began, and in the instant that those graceful charming hands wove music, the footsteps of everyone on the streets paused, as did their breathing.

In an instant, everyone realized there had been some sort of vital shift, awaiting a tremendous wave to sweep through their hearts.

The source of the sound stood upon the street, a dirtied young girl, every gaze focused upon her.

Liliana felt the weight of gazes upon her, and at the same time understood her elevated self. The stage had been prepared, and she dashed on it in one breath.

As applause for her performance reached its zenith, Liliana's song began.

[Song] flowed from her throat, to the extent of making everyone believe, that the songs they had sung in the past, was of the same substance.

Their own knowledge, thoughts of famous melodies wavered back and forth, piercing.

The pair who had lived for each other, friends who had thought themselves inseparable, with a clear heart

watched them rise toward the sky.

— Song was a gift, and to the friends of the past whose tales she sang of, she was nothing at all.

Liliana understood such that her own existence, was one of a bard.

With this foundation of understanding, from hereafter she could continue to sing by herself.

Flaunt, that in this world such exemplary people existed.

With such exemplary people, who she had once thought of as friends, flaunt that they had been amiable.

Certainly there would come a day, when amazing people would be befriended, and to be friends with such amazing people, to proudly do something like this…

— Finishing her song, Liliana shed tears.

The people struck speechless, shed tears just as she did, wiping their noses.

Applause echoing like thunder across the street, Liliana Masquerade became a bard.

Since then, Liliana's acquaintanceship with music had persisted.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Atop the burning control lower, Liliana recalled the first time she'd sung, the first time she had sung along, the first time she had sung as a bard.

A feeling similar to the one from then danced in her heart.

What she wanted to sing, wanted to express with words, wanted to voice, was too much. Equally so when in the midst of song. To the point that it could be called an obsession.

Choosing to burn to the end, still burning even now without heed of circumstance.

Perhaps Liliana did not feel the scorching heat, but the consuming heat yet tormented her.

Even now, consuming heat agonized her back, body that had scaled the control tower wreathed in flame continually letting out cries of pain. A pain that drove her to her knees, ached until she wanted to cry out immediately.

However, something like wailing, was just too unseemly.

Before her eyes, was an audience who wanted a song. This throat was not for crying.

"____"

The song that emerged, was not one that had been passed down by her mother or family.

A bard's obligation was an obligation to inherit stories, and perhaps for a bard this was a misstep, but this was the song that Liliana had received, as a gift when she had first come to understand the world.

When the next dawn arrived, the sky would be dyed red.

Chasing off the night, was that morning sky that Liliana loved to see.

The break of day stained red and yellow, bringing a true morning to all.

A sky which surpassed dawn.

No matter what the night held, morning would always dawn.

A blue sky transcending dawn, was the start of a new day.

"____"

Right now, mayhem gradually permeated the city, and a great number of people had been overtaken by unease and sorrow, leaving them immobile.

In the midst of a night where neither looking forward nor backward was an option, every single one of them was struggling, struggling, was the reality.

But, Liliana wanted to sing, even so.

Because she wanted to sing, she wanted to sing.

She herself would not survive the agony of holding back her song when she wanted to sing.

And thus, right now was the perfect time to use song to convey what she wanted to.

Liliana loosened the trembling throat that had been carefully tightened and continued to sing.

Fingers moving across the lu-lyre as if in dance, in truth, she sang simultaneously as she danced. Atop the peak of the control tower, wanting everyone surrounding to be able to hear.

And yet how deplorable, that her voice had no way of reaching everyone's eardrums.

The problem was not merely one of volume. There was an issue of distance. The hearts of her audience were troubled. No matter how hard Liliana tried, the existence of physical and mental barriers was an undeniable reality.

Liliana believed in the power of song.

However, only devotedly spreading melody, could be considered to become a true song.

Spread every which way, just how many people had been overcome by unease and sorrow?

Perhaps there were hundreds, even thousands. Liliana had never had the experience of reaching such a wide audience without the aid of the magical device.

Whether a means of diffusing sound, or a means of spreading such sound simultaneously, a normal person would not be able to find it.

Liliana's battle was too hopeless, her aspiration too distant.

The Liliana who had once been ten years old, had been considered by her wicked parents to be too reckless.

And right now, was it just as back then, still repeating the same things?

The power of song was real, so was the her transferring it the fake?

"____!"

At such doubt, her throat faltered helplessly.

At that moment,

"Liliana— lovely songstress. With that singing voice, I want to keep you by side forever."

A silly man, with silly sophistry, lingered in Liliana's mind.

An odd man. Doubtlessly strange. Perverted might be more accurate.

Upon hearing Liliana's song, those who had been touched by malice yet remained.

Liliana remained distant from it all. Something untrue to song, an attempt at wholeheartedness that could not be lent to others. That was the dedication of a bard.

"I fell in love with your beauty. Please stay by my side!"

And so, he was the first to try to become close to her from his heart.

Awareness that Liliana was a bard, was something that came after his declaration of love to her upon seeing her. When she had first performed in front of him, rather than her song, his eyes raked over her face, chest, feet, honestly rather uncomfortably.

However, that wasn't to say that he didn't find himself touched by Liliana's song. And his feelings toward Liliana weren't covered with a layer of dishonesty.

Showing attraction to her appearing, and understanding of her song, knowing that as a person leaving was impossible.

“The city of Pristella has four large gates. So, within the city are a number of shelters as an emergency measure. This purpose of this magic device is so that citizens will be more aware of their safety on a day to day basis, and in the event of an emergency be prepared.”

“Eh… what’s what for…?”

“Let’s try playing Liliana’s song through that radio. Within this city are many people who have yet to understand your song, this is the perfect chance.”

Song amplified by the magical device, was for Liliana a shortcut.

A song should indeed be sung before an audience. Liliana had grudgingly refused. But, he only laughed heedlessly.

“I want to monopolize your figure. However, your song absolutely cannot become something restrained. Songstress to everyone else, Liliana to me. Is that something that can’t be?”

The weirdo had in fact laughed with such wicked intent. If he wanted to convince her like this, she wanted to snort.

Liliana knew that many love stories of this world had been chronicled.

In those love stories, their hearts swayed, became infatuated with love. He knew her. Knew which words would be charming, which attitudes were exciting…

And thus, Liliana would not be fall lightly for such words.

Perhaps they weren’t sweet, but, but they appreciated the voice of the Songstress.

So exaggerated, that she couldn’t straighten her chest, and say it suited her.

Because he had always been looking forward for Liliana to become the [Songstress].

Because that person had turned her into the songstress of this city.

“____”

To communicate, reverberate, tremble, this longing—

No matter how dark the night, so pitch black that seeing forward was impossible.

Even then, morning would still arrive, as always.

More resolute than anyone, believing in it more than anyway to sing for it.

Songstress of the Watergate City of Pristella, Liliana Masquerade.

“____”

From that sort of feeling, no pain could be gleaned.

Everything of herself, all began from the wrists that strummed the lu-lyre, feet that danced in synchronicity, throat that sang without rest, immersed only in this feeling.

Singing, singing, singing, Liliana had not noticed.

The lament of those whose spirits had been controlled no longer echoed by her ears.

On the opposite side of the flaming waterways, those who had been sighing in lament gazed upward toward the empty sky.

No, not empty. A sound was audible, from the control tower wreathed in flame.

A miniature figure from the peak, continue to cry out from a great distance.

Eyes that could not leave her. Focus directed completely toward the ears, everyone held their breath to listen in rapt attention.

A song that should not have been heard, was heard clearly by everyone.

This was no miracle, nor was it a simultaneous hallucination. Nor was it the archbishop’s power, indeed there was no shared emotion at all.

A gift Liliana had been granted by the heavens, the true blooming of the [Divine Protection of Telepathy].

A divine protection that had until now been subconscious, only when it reached this moment could it exert the influence it was supposed to. Between her ability as a singer, and the realization of casting everything aside in this hopeless moment to help, she had become a tremendous force, flowing into the city.

Of course, Liliana was unaware of this.

In addition, there was no one there to inform her of what the situation was.

Liliana only sang with all her heart and soul.

Becoming a bard, putting her all into singing, turning everything over to this instant.

Echoing here was the voice of Pristella’s Songstress.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Priscilla: “—As expected, the arrangement mineself had prepared came to pass.”

Within was a flaming crimson sword, and Priscilla who held that sun laughed out loud.

The song had also reached Priscilla’s ears.

Liliana had taken center stage on the burning control, producing the most brilliant of songs.

Although the flame was under the Yang Blade’s control, the heat emitted by the it was no fake. The heat of the control was at a critical level, and the stone tower would feel scorching. Even at this instant, certainly it was so hot that she would want to leap off.

Even so, from this song that transmitted all of Liliana’s feelings, cries or complaints of pain were practically undetectable.

It wasn’t that the feelings weren’t there. Rather, undiluted pain had attained the purity of song.

What a foolish conclusion. One which only a fool could reach, the height of a fool.

The zenith of a brilliant fool that could yield a result which transcended reason.

Priscilla: “That one’s idiocy is truly fascinating. Foolish is as foolishness. A fool does not deserve a life, but a fool has a unique joy. And even more, she has demonstrated a worth beyond joy. Thus, she deserves mine reward.”

Before allowing Priscilla to finish her soliloquy, from overhead and from the left burning chains pressed close. The snake’s jaw bore a flame, moving directing to target Priscilla’s steps.

Before listening to Priscilla's narrative, the chain of burning on the head and left was approaching. The iron snake's chin has a flame, and it is in a straight line toward the Priscilla that stops.

The pinnacle of unsightliness, Priscilla snorted.

Raising the Yang Blade, the crimson blade flashed from a slant.

From above, from the left, simultaneous orbiting of the approaching chains were forcibly severed. The crisp sound seemed to ring twice simultaneously, and the freak growled wickedly at the sparks.

Sirius: “Both you and that girl are so damn annoying! What’s so different about me and her! The methods are different but the core is the same! It just goes to show that it’s reason!”

Sirius shrieked loudly, drawing the burnt off chains close.

Twisting her arms, angrily generating fire, the eyes of the freak whose black cloak swayed violently, pointed directly at Liliana dancing atop the burning control tower.

Liliana's [Divine Protection of Telepathy] was incredibly powerful, enough that it could affect the freak's perception.

To the freak who was so perceptive to changes in the emotions of others, the effects of that song radiated without limit.

The citizens had been freed from the [Wrath] that had taken root inside their hearts.

On the other side of the waterways still burning with white flame, within the eyes of the people who stood there were no traces of frenzy. What filled their eyes was not fervor, but the gentle fall of tears.

It was unclear from which emotion the tears stemmed, and the freak was incapable of taking up the formless feeling. Because rather than condensing into one feeling, it kept swaying.

Sirius: "That person, as long as that person is, it can be proven…! Why are you appearing before me to intercept my path! Humans want to pursue, to become one indeed! The world continues on this way! And yet!"

Priscilla: "As is the nature of song, the accompanying feelings vary. Classic songs are charming, and each description of "lovely" differs. Crying out about the noisy feelings, but such a shallow understanding of what is most vital… this is what is referred to as 'foolish'."

Sirius: "That's enough already!!"

Sirius widened her eyes at Priscilla's merciless speech, and with a howl, her arms folded. The colliding palms rattled the chains, and each arm violently unraveling the curled chains.

Skin on arms peeling, flesh being scraped, acting as if she were in pain, Sirius spread her arms, forcefully swinging the split chains.

The flame revolves around the orbit of the swinging chains, swelling to where the vortex reached the peak of its arc.

The scorching flame became a round disk, burning in the wake of Sirius's heat.

Priscilla: "Could it be, that the bandages are for such wounds?"

The bandages were for burn wounds. If the reason was as what had just been witnessed, then truly it was mere foolishness.

Faced with this greatest force, this greatest danger, Priscilla's did not waver.

Two snakes of flame, merged into a their powerful flame.

Priscilla gazed upon the vortex of flame with an expression of listlessness.

Sirius: “The trembling of feelings… consuming emotions, this intensity, this [Wrath]!”

Inspiring disgust, feelings of disgust, turned Sirius’s flames into waves of heat.

The flame spun as it approached.

It had stopped being a metal chain. In the instant that the flame had blossomed, the role of the implements as chains had come to an end.

The chain that done its job vanished in a flash, and only fire flew at Priscilla. A mass of heat as if enveloping the entire world, practically a cloud fallen from the sky, attacks without pause.

Utterly impossible to dodge, the only defense was to be swallowed thus.

As for the flame itself, there was only one option.

Priscilla: “—Should *mine* decree be the decree of heaven, the light of the Yang Blade will follow as one.”

Faced with the wave of flame pressing close, Priscilla lifted the Yang Blade.

Not as if feeling uncomfortable with the situation, merely raising the blade high.

Sirius: “Disappear—!!”

Priscilla: “——”

In the instant of the collision, Sirius spat venomous hatred at Priscilla.

Priscilla did not regard her fury. The only sound that reached her was the song.

The instant when heat wave should have consumed her body, the Yang Blade changed.

Previously, on a sword where all the jewels shone had with light, the shine suddenly vanished. Only crimson light and crimson blade remain in Priscilla’s grip.

It was thus, that the sword without its light met the flame.

“____”

Without the radiance of the jewels, the sword became one of ordinary steel — and thus was unable to repel the approaching flame. If there had been an onlooker at the moment, perhaps they would have reported thus.

But the result was the precise opposite.

Priscilla: “— Utterly pointless.”

Priscilla, sweeping the Yang Blade to the side, murmured.

She should have been consumed by the flames and vanished.

And yet, her existence had yet to vanish. Not only that, her body bore no traces of the heat wave’s aftereffects, beautiful and constituted as always.

Waves of fire renowned for their power, were swept away without trace.

Almost as if the only Yang Blade glinting with reclaimed light knew were the flames had gone.

Priscilla: “Mm—”

Grip tight on the Yang Blade, Priscilla’s expression shifted.

Where once there had been a confident smile, now cheeks stiffened as she hastened her steps.

Right in her line of sight was Sirius, sprinting quickly.

The freaks violent sprint pulled her far from Priscilla. Clearly having run without checking the result of the flame.

Meaning that from the very start Sirius’s target hadn’t been Priscilla.

Sirius: “Stop with that piercing song—! The [Wrath] I share with that person, don’t arbitrarily deny it—!”

Eyes bloodied.

Sirius rushed straight toward the control tower where Liliana sang.

The white flame surrounding the control tower, was a flame which would allow Liliana to be free. When Sirius rushed in, she would surely be burnt by the fire.

Something of this degree, even the freak would understand. Then, the target was,

Priscilla: “Reprobate, forcing mineself to—”

Propelled with momentum, Priscilla’s form tore through the courtyard. Although Sirius was fast indeed, Priscilla was superior.

Sirius’s initial advantage gone to waste, Priscilla swung the Yang Blade at the freak. Even if she had wanted to, the freak no longer had a means to defend. Without the chains on her arms, she had no way to

meet Priscilla's sword.

Priscilla: "Stop, commoner—!"

Sirius: "So annoying, just stop already!!"

Priscilla: "——!?"

Before the Yang Sword could slash at Sirius, Priscilla's body had stilled in midair. Her entire body frozen as if forcibly fixed in place, Priscilla's throat was caught by a sudden force.

Sirius lifted her legs, and from the hem of her pants, came the sound of the chain that was so familiar in this battle—.

Priscilla: "Tch!"

Rather than the arm, a strike from the chain wrapped around her legs had struck Priscilla and frozen her in her tracks.

An attack after her entire body had been frozen in place, was impossible to defend against.

Accompanying the ferocious attack from the chain several times faster than the one from the arm, Priscilla's dignified face burst from the front. The sound of steel on flesh rang out, and Priscilla's bound orange hair came loose, beautiful hair scattering.

Her face was left unmarred. However, her pride had been wounded.

Although the power of the chain had been reduced, Sirius had pulled further away.

During this time, Sirius had approached the control tower, using movements outside natural boundaries to shift her strength and body weight to the chain, and then released strength from her entire body.

The serpent of flame swept the control tower with a violent momentum, and the foundation of stone tower collapsed with a howl. Fragmenting, collapsing, the stone tower's foundation was consumed by waves of fire, tilting from the impact of the huge flame.

— Liliana was in that stone tower.

In one motion, the stone tower tilted and collapsed.

Priscilla with orange hair scattered across her shoulders, watched the tower collapse with widened eyes.

Sirius's silhouette was visible. But atop the tilting tower, Liliana's silhouette was absent.

And yet,

Liliana’s song continued. Even if the ground collapsed, even if she had been caught up in the destruction.

Liliana fulfilled her duties, continuing to offer the peoples’ hearts comfort.

“—Which means!”

And so, Priscilla strode toward Sirius without hesitation.

If Liliana’s voice were interrupted, sway over the peoples’ hearts would return to Sirius.

Making a split second decision, the Yang Blade shone, and Priscilla split the ground with one kick.

Sirius: “Merciless egoist! Don’t empathize using such arrogance! You who have no connections with people, are defective, mutual understanding, merging is the natural state of humans!”

Sirius who had destroyed the control tower, was caught in Priscilla’s anger.

The chain jumped, rearing head knocked back. Rushing, the moving flames created a burst, reaching explosively for Priscilla’s body and bounding her backward. A pause, and then continued steps.

Bathed in the heat, Priscilla’s eyes were unwavering.

The same could be said of Sirius’s frenzy. The freak could no longer hear any other voice.

It would end here.

Of the two who mixed like fire and water, there could only be one.

“____”

The tilting control tower made a splitting noise, broken stones scattered, smoke curled and flames scattered, and the courtyard became a flaming hellscape.

Those standing at the waterway where the tower had fallen, shrieked with tears in their eyes, as they fled. But not tears of sorrow.

For something else,

For the sound of song.

Sirius: “Love is as one—”

"No. —Tolerantly accepting love allows for differences. For everyone to the same person, feel the same way, share the same feelings, if what is nauseating and disgusting.”

She bent down to sweep aside the chain, leaning to meet the rushing attack.

The distance is shrank, and the sound striking chain rang.

The sound of steel colliding with steel was swallowed by the roar of the collapsing control tower.

Priscilla's voice reached Sirius's ears.

Priscilla: "It's over."

Sirius: "Did you think I wouldn't have known better?"

At the moment when Priscilla waved the Yang Blade, Sirius opened his coat.

Around the freak's waise, were tightly bound chains like her hands and feet, and wrapped around her body by chains was,

A young girl with curled blonde hair.

What Priscilla did not know, was that her name was Tina. Since the beginning of this turmoil, she had been held hostage by Sirius.

Although Subaru had mentioned her during the strategy about [Wrath], this matter had not been remembered by Priscilla.

"Mmm!"

However, without hesitation Priscilla swung the Yang Blade at the hostage before her.

The Yang Blade did not hesitate in momentum, and slanted toward Tina and toward Sirius's body. The sword's blade, renowned for its fearsome heat, soundlessly cut through the protective chains around her body, severed in half.

Sirius: "Oh my oh my?"

Priscilla: "Mind Yang Blade can easily cleave through whatever it so chooses."

The body of the bound girl was freed. The fallen girl lifted her face, which was stained with tears, meeting the touch of the sword that passed through her body, she could not help but collapse from surprise in the moment.

But the result was, upon the body of the young girl, no cruel wound from a blade could be seen.

Instead, Sirius was attacked and retreated.

The freak looked down at her wound, and slowly shook her while looking back to Priscilla.

Sirius: “This agony… you…”

Priscilla: “What cause is there to speak of your pain? Mineself cares nothing about becoming as one. As long as you die alone, you will always always carry your prattle.”

Priscilla waved the sword again.

With the startling sound and momentum, Sirius's body convulsed on the cobblestones, spilled fresh blood, was swept toward the waterway, and fell in.

The sound of the water rang, and Priscilla looked at the Yang Blade.

Priscilla: “Is it finally over? It’s too troublesome.”

After she spoke, the collapsing control tower fell apart completely. Most of it became rubble, and the rooftop where Liliana had been, also felt the collapse, becoming rubble.

From the collapsed control tower — of course, no song echoed.

Looking at the pile of rubble, a youthful voice called toward the squinting Priscilla.

Tina. Her expression was still one of disbelief, and Priscilla lowered her head, only to see Tina’s eyes tremble, as tears began to drip down.

Priscilla released a sigh.

The Yang Blade had already disappeared.

As had white flame that lit the waterways, and many people were approaching. A few headed toward the collapsed rubble, searching for the buried songstress, Liliana.

Priscilla: “On a night such as this, are only a group of noisy commoners. What should be a songstress’s debut, has nothing but the vulgarity of commoners. How tiresome.”

At a glance was the same listlessness as always, but some emotion peeked through that listlessness.

Priscilla gazed at the sobbing Tina, then simultaneously at the waterway.

Priscilla: “But, not bad. Have praises.”

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Slowly flowing along with the water.

A sore body, brimming with vitality, how to put it, a body covered in wounds? How can I say it, full of trauma? In other words, it was a feeling of being unable to even move.

“—Oh, —ah.”

Completely out of energy to make any sound, even fingertips were unable to budge.

Luckily, the outfit of a bard exposed much, with very little fabric, so even falling into a wouldn’t spell weightiness from absorbing water, increasing odds of survival.

But for the me of right now who had no energy to swim, just floating along was barely managed.

Well, just floating along like this, sooner or later would mean growing cold, wouldn’t that be quite troublesome!?

A voice from within cried out loudly.

If I were to fall asleep like this. I’d die.

No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

“—Ah, —eh.”

Burning tower, a flame.

Entire body in a state of being baked, at first falling into the waterway had been pleasantly cool, but now it was growing cold… eh, this is bad news.

Speaking of which, the attitude of not escaping, but staying in the collapsing tower to sing until it fell in the water was probably more disastrous…

Because it felt nice. To the point of thinking I’d lived for that moment.

In fact, she had hoped for such a smooth development.

It seemed, that it was over, so as long as Priscilla-sama hadn’t been killed, everything would probably go smoothly. That was nice.

Right, well then.

To be a bard.

To be a bard, wishes that had to be attained, in a sense it could be said, that something that should have been realized had been.

Perhaps the goal of leaving classical songs in history had not been met, but, if everyone who had been there had been saved, to have been part of helping them, would be a nice thing to be brought up as a family dinner… to have left a favorable imprint in peoples’ hearts, in this world, was something small that I had been looking forward to.

By the way, from just now a strange cry has been sounding, probably a signal that I'm still living in this world.

There's a feeling that absolutely everything is about to feel exhausting…

A voice, that's the proof of life. Ah, faced with death, how am I managing to be so nonchalant? Although, it feels like it's about time for it to end.

Although very much had, overall it was a happy life.

Well, thank you for so far — thank you so much!

"Ow! Ow! My head hurts!"

"Aah! What was that just now? Liliana?"

Head feeling as if violently struck, as if having collided with a boat floating on the waterway or something. Yeah, that's probably what it was.

And coming from that boat, was the familiar voice of a man.

"Liliana! So glad to see you again! But why are you in the waterway? No, we'll pull back first. Wait for me!"

Even though it was horribly painful, I was so shocked I forgot to cry out.

Ack, speaking of which, it seems Kiritaka-san picked me up.

"Alright, almost… alright, caught!"

Kiritaka-san stretched his heads to the water, pulling my floating form up.

In that moment, ah, his hand touched my best!

But, eh, there's no strength to be mad with right now. So it's fine.

Being pulled onto the boat, I still couldn't move.

Kiritaka: "Your body's become so cold. Wait for me, Liliana. I'll use a fire stone. And I'll wipe you off. The you who I cherish can't be soaked."

With a towel, he wiped my hair and face.

His movements were unexpectedly gentle, almost gentlemanly.

Suddenly a sense of relief rushed up.

I released a breath, suddenly sighing.

Liliana: “Kiritaka… what have you been up to?”

Kiritaka: “Me… you mean me? Well, there was a lot, right, in order to retake the city!”

Pushing back that fringe he was proud of, perhaps his teeth were shining.

Since I didn’t have the strength to open my eyes, I couldn’t see it, but it seemed to surface to my mind’s eye.

I couldn’t help but laugh, which seemed to shock Kiritaka.

I want to hear all sorts of Kiritaka-san’s problems, and I have a few things I want to say to you. Right now I’m really sleepy, but I want to tell you.

Liliana: “I’m really sleepy, from now on, I’m going to sleep, I…”

Kiritaka: “Ah, ah, alright. I’ll take you somewhere safe, don’t worry.”

Liliana: “The sleeping me, if you don’t do anything mean… then from now on, we’ll talk afterward…”

Kiritaka: “Ueee!?”

No, then maybe I’ll say it first.

But opening eyes, would maybe… no, definitely some embarrassing words would be exchanged, that you be troublesome.

— To be your [Songstress] is wonderful, preparing to say that much is fine.

Arc 5, Chapter 68: “Name Eating Gourmet”

by admin - Sunday, June 30, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/06/30/arc-5-chapter-68-name-eating-gourmet/

Translated by :

- u/Ringo_17

Proofread by :

- u/Nanashi-tan

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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??The ruthless skirmish, which had broken out in the Watergate City of Priestella against the Witch Cult was, at last, approaching its finale.

In the east of the city, stood a single church covered in ice, where stabbing pillars of ice, tall enough to make one raise his eyes, had been erected.
In the north of the city, the waterways flared up at once, and the incandescent stone monument roared up and crumbled down.
In the west of the city, a part of the waterway got destroyed?, and the water, flowing into the underground, resulted in flooding.
In the core of the city, the nucleus of the city's faculty, the city hall lost its foundation, and subsequently lost its shape.

The opening up of hostilities caused severe damage in various areas, and etched the menace of the existence known as the Witch Cult in the city. However, there were those who resisted and repelled away the malice, fighting a defensive battle with confined war potential, and tried to fulfill their purpose.
And, amidst the fight for the watergate city, if there was a battlefield to be named where things were not proceeding favourably, which one was it? That could perhaps, be said for this battlefield.

??Yes. Breaking out unanticipated and unforeseen, was the face-off and battle with the Witch Cult Sin

Archbishop representing ?Gluttony?, Ley Batenkaitos.

Ley: "Haha~! That, won'tdowon'tdowon'tdowon'tdowon'tdowon'tdowo~n'tdo~! What went wrong with you, what do you want to do, what are you going to do, what happened to you!?"

This place was commonly known as the ?Waterway Street?, surrounded by slender and convoluted waterways.
In the open plaza of the Waterway Street, was a single petite phantom laughing loudly and jumping about quickly and keenly.

Using his short limbs and waving about his long, dark brown hair was a young boy.
The boy, in his mid-teens, had put on only pieces of rags on his body, such that it would not be strange to confuse him with a vagrant child at sight.
However, it could not be said that it was not difficult to dismiss his outward appearance as just a trait of his, but instead, that impression carried onto his true self as well.

On top of that, the very existence of the loudly laughing boy was heterogeneous, distorted, and abominable.
At a single glance, the sense oppressive pressure his entire body exerting could be understood. It was the fatal insanity calling upon parts of instinct which are chipped off and neglected in normal daily life by humans.

By just that, everyone carefully observed the abnormality of his existence.
He was a blasphemer who trampled upon the human realm, human wishes, and the human society.
He was a Sin Archbishop of the Witch Cult, the great evil who kicked the human heart and humanity itself.

???: "The opponent is just one child! Surround him and don't let him escape! Bring him down!"

???: "Yeah, it's just lone brat! Catch him and tear him apa~rt!"

The commanding loud voice overlapped with the infuriating laughter of the youth.
While glaring at the men approaching him, Ley Batenkaitos of ?Gluttony? stepped ahead and shortened the distance rather lightheartedly, instead of stepping down.

Ley: "??~tsu."

Putting a halt to their words, the white robed men leapt upon Batenkaitos.
Each one of the white robed men were mercenaries of the organisation ?White Dragon's Scales? which had been left by Kiritaka. Holding short swords in their hands, they struck ?Gluttony? with their blades from all directions.
Against the synchronous offensive, which had no disorder in its cooperation, Batenkaitos,

Ley: "There are some frayed spots, that won't do."

Sliding into the gap of the "perfectly ordered" attack, he evaded four of the swords with minimal

movement.
Positioning his body away and dodging the blades, he slashed one blade down using the dagger tied up to his right arm, and kicking one person's torso, he broke through the enclosure. In front of him, was standing someone with a huge figure, with his arms crossed.

???: "O-O~h! Such desperation, huh, yo~u!"

He was Felt's attendant, Gaston.
Having robbed away one of the Sin Archbishop's daggers using his secret technique, he now, with his physique, dashed towards Batenkaitos and tried to slam into him.
Seeing him, Batenkaitos rounded his eyes, and smiled shortly afterwards. It was a smile befitting his age, however, the sharp canines in his mouth induced uneasiness and anxiety.

Ley: "It seems you're doing well, uncle. Not so bad!"

Gaston: "I've still not reached the age to he called an uncle..... bo~y!?"

Batenkaitos jumped, and his right leg thrust into the side of Gaston's face, who had come plunging onto him.
Receiving the blow on his cheeks, Gaston flinched, and gave a hateful look to Batenkaitos?.
Just like the blow of the dagger, this attack did not pierce through Gaston either. Though the principle was ambiguous, Gaston's body had been completely killing off? the impacts of the attacks.
At the same pace, Gaston stretched his arms, grabbing the continuously moving ?Gluttony???,

Ley: "Palm of the Fist King??"

Keeping his legs raised, Batenkaitos muttered something. His palm came in contact with Gaston's torso.
Compared to a kick, it had no might or velocity, it was a mere action of touching.
However, the moment he lightly pushed in his arm, his body curled and broke down.

Gaston: "Ugh, ghu~e!?"

Kneeling down, Gaston vomited out gastrointestinal fluids.
Walking by the side of the body who had broken down in front of him, Batenkaitos, who had broken through the enclosure, turned back and tilted his neck.
That's all you've got? is what his gesture suggested, and the ?White Dragon's Scales? could not hide their severe expression seeing their pride get damaged.

White Dragon's Scales: "You monster.....!"

The word that had leaked out of someone's mouth, was the clear proof of Batenkaitos's ability.
The agonizing voice may have had dim jealousy mixed into it, or it was simply misheard.

???: ".....We have much lower chances of being able to strike a decisive blow, than what I had earlier conjectured."

Observing the battlefield, which could not be called a competition even when painted under favourable light, Otto licked his dry lips and desperately rotated his head.
In the face-off with ?Gluttony?, their war potential, which was directly conflicting with the enemy, was in no way dependable?? of course, it was true that all of them were risking their lives, but it was also a fact that it was still lacking.

Otto: "I do not trust my luck enough to be expecting such good fortune to shower upon me."

The life of Otto Suwen, went hand in hand with hardship and unfairness. Otto believed that nothing known as good fortune existed, and the result could be derived only through one's own hard work, preparation and actions.
For him, good fortune would be having a nuisance Divine Protection and being born into an understanding home, and having his life saved by Subaru, who had killed a Sin Archbishop.
As he believed he already ran out of it, he did not get unnecessarily negative regarding his bad luck.

???: "That Water Dragon brought by nii-chan can't be used anymore, right?"

Standing beside Otto, who was sunk in his own thoughts, called out Felt who was also watching the same situation.
What her crimson eyes were glaring at, was at the other side of the sword fighting ?Gluttony? and the others?? lying abandoned on the stone pavement, with its long neck twitching, was the form of a dying Water Dragon.
The pitiable Water Dragons, who had been summoned by Otto but thrashed away by Batenkaitos, unfortunately, were unlikely to return to the front lines.

Otto: "Sadly, I don't think they can be pushed any further. These were all of the water dragons I had spoken to before coming here..... I could speak to other water dragons and have them do the same thing but, would you like to use them and escape?"

Felt: "That joke hurt. Just that delusional diva escaping is fine, and our trump card isn't just one, it's in two parts. The second one is, well, I'm preparing it."

Saying that, Felt glanced at the long and slender package her petite body had grasped.
Wrapped in a white cloth, her ?Trump Card? seemed to be the magic weapon her attendant had brought.
She had stated that even Reinhardt could not evade it, but a burdensome mechanism was required for its usage, and until that was fulfilled, it could not be put to use.

Felt: "On top of that, that delusional diva aside, nii-chan or I can't escape even if tried to. Because it seems that bastard is targeting us."

Otto: "If I may be honest, that's the thing I want to be excused from the most."

Otto dejectedly lowered his shoulders, at the words of Felt, who inhaled with her nose.
But, he was unable to deny her words, because he was able to sense the strength of the warm looks being given to them, even amidst the fierce battling.

Batenkaitos leaked out warm sighs, with moist eyes and blushing cheeks, and frequently turned towards Otto.
Though it was a gaze with the colour suggesting a desire to harvest, but the true meaning behind it was only the lurking appetite of a hungry ferocious beast.
As per the taste of the beast of prey, drops of blood had realized into top-class flesh, was all there was to it. Though it was not honouring in the least, three people here had realized in the aesthetic-appreciating eyes of Batenkaitos.

Otto and Felt, along with a man with an unkempt beard, who was leading the ?White Dragon's Scales?. Giving orders to his men, he repeatedly clashed with Batenkaitos and quickly returned back to his position here.
The man, with a serious face, jumped out of battle and gave thought to the fight's circumstance, all while taking swift steps around,

White Dragon's Scales: "It's Dynas. It's thanks to him our young master's escape was successful."

Otto: "Being successful in that is Felt-sama's group's achievement. On top of that, having Kiritaka-san escape was also to aid us for our victory. With this....."

If Kiritaka, who had escaped from this place, was to move according to Otto's instructions, a different possibility would rise. Unfortunately?, though it was something more like a prayer and had no proof, but in any case, it should not go unfavourably.
Having more ways to win, to reach victory, can never be something negative. Once any of those ways are put to use, what is left is to simply wait for how it turns out.

"????"

Seeing Otto, quiet and shaking his head, the man?? Dynas, made an astonished expression, but then changed it. It was the colour of being convinced.

Dynas: "I see, it seems like it's just as how I had heard. As expected of the internal affairs official of Emilia-sama's place, who had sent one of the Witch Cult's higher-ups to its death. It seems I can expect you to have your own dish for this Sin Archbishop to taste as well."

Otto: "Thank you for such an inflated evaluation. Um, I'm sorry, by the way everyone, do you happen to know what kind of work the internal affairs official is supposed to do? I believe it is somewhat different from what I am doing.....?"

Dynas: "Such politeness too, huh. Also, our internal affairs officials are going around visiting shelters and taking care of the victims. Isn't that kind of work internal affairs officials are supposed to do?"

The damage he had done to the image of internal affairs officials was immense.
In the past one year, he had decided to give up on the post of internal affairs official, but he never came to terms with the changes that will result due to that.
Whose fault was it. Was it perhaps because such situations, like natural disasters, kept repeating? It was Subaru's fault. Once everything was back to normal, he would do it right away. That's what he had

decided.

Otto: "Well then??"

Let's put things of post battle for later, and focus on the current situation.

Ahead of Otto's sight, Batenkaitos repeatedly intermingled with the ?White Dragon's Scales? and Gaston, and making clear his extraordinary combat strength, he swept his feet.
However, what was utmost perplexing was him not even trying to swing his right arm's dagger.

Ley: "Even though such nice adults are all ganging up, you ca~n't even catch a single brat!? That won't do, that wouldn't do, will that do, can that do, that could never do!"

Unraveling his fangs, Batenkaitos dodged the men with just the handling of his feet. His free paced movements, with strikingly swaying movements of the upper body, and the swords eventually cut through the sky.
The movements of his upper and lower body were totally different, as if two separate systems entirely. As that eccentricity reflected in Otto's eyes, Dynas unintentionally gulped down his threat.

Otto: "Dynas-san?"

Dynas: "Ah, no..... sorry. His movements are just a bit..... O~h!?"

Felt: "Don't you get scared with such a huge figure!"

With his mouth shut, Dynas tried to deny the thoughts that were coming up in his mind. Standing behind him, Felt gave a kick to his back.
Dynas turned back, and Felt, who puffed up and reddened her cheeks, raised up her eyes at him.

Felt: "Once you put your hands in pocket, all that's left to do is to choose what to take and what to leave. If you'll be chased after either way, then it's better to just use whatever you got. You get it?"

Dynas: "Why are you using the point of view of a thief?"

Otto tilted his head at Felt's advice, while Dynas, who was right next to him, shook his head. He initiated his words by saying "I guess so", and looked back at Felt,

Dynas: "It's just how miss said. You just have to say whatever comes up in your mind, and find a lead out of it. For the moment, what I feel is just that all this is just odd but....."

Miss, which is how Dynas referred to Felt as, it seemed as if he had not noticed her being a Royal Candidate. But, though he judged the mistake here, Otto decided not to mention it. Subsequently, he carefully listened to Dynas' words.

Dynas: "That Sin Archbishop..... he may just look like a brat, but his fighting is good, his movements are good, he has too much expertise, frankly. Leaving it to just our physical abilities..... would, again, still

not be the correct answer."

Felt: "??? Isn't that like being born with good fighting skills? Like how Reinhardt was?"

Otto: "I would like to simply give up if he is comparable to Reinhardt-san."

Felt's knight, the kingdom's strongest sword, Reinhardt.
Currently, he had accompanied Subaru and was supposed to have had been clashing against ?Greed?, but his power was something Otto, who was only on the level of being capable of self-defence, had only felt upon his skin.
Just being beside him could make one feel a sense of absolute safety, and amazement at the same time.
Kingdom's strongest was no understatement. In fact, it would not be wrong to call him the world's strongest.

On the other hand, a strong sense of revulsion? and an unnerving feeling boiled up by simply coming in contact with Batenkaitos. It was unlike from what could be sensed by Reinhardt.
Of course, his unnatural fighting strength was unquestionably undeniable.

Dynas : "It's not like that either. I've lived enough, and faced enough battles to say..... that brat's fighting technique can't be explained by just talent. His movements are that of someone who's stacked them up for years and years."

At Dynas' words, Otto and Felt glanced at Batenkaitos once again.
At just that moment, Batenkaitos had received a short sword's attack with his arm. Gripping the wrist of the one holding the sword, Batenkaitos gyrated his body, and turning him upside down, he threw his body to the ground.
Furthermore, as the men commenced their pursuit, ?Gluttony's? feet glided on the cobblestone drawing a circle, and freely using his limbs, he destroyed their balance and made them fall.

Unquestionably, that fluent and elegant movement had the power to draw a line between being refreshing and the violent ambience Batenkaitos wore. His undeniable art of having a system of a variety of martial arts, had been cultivated into himself.
The young boy, who looked fourteen, had perfected such techniques which would take years and years to master???

Dynas: "I suppose, someone called a martial arts genius may be able to do this but..... I don't want to think that such a brat was blessed with that talent."

Batenkaitos' mastery was such that Dynas had to say that much. At that moment, Otto realised what the jealousy in the leaked words of one of the white robed men, who were fighting ?Gluttony?, meant. They, who were fighting the battle, had realised this truth before Otto and the rest. That is why, they were??.

Otto: "Dagger handling, unarmed fighting skills, perfect martial arts techniques.....?"

Saying that, Otto resumed to doubt the reason behind it once again. "Is that even possible?" was the only thought that came up in his mind.

"????"

He had heard of people being sent to colosseum at a very young age, and the ones who become swordsmen are taught and trained fighting techniques in the southern empire of Vollachia. If Batenkaitos was to be in such an environment, it may not have had been impossible for him to acquire such skills at this age, but those skills in fighting techniques would again, be different.
The only way for him to learn and cultivate those would be to train under an equally and appropriately apt trainer.
Otherwise??,

Otto: "To steal it away..... No, to eat it like food?"

Otto had already heard Subaru mention that ?Gluttony? was an existence who ate the ?Name? and ?Memories? of its opponents. The truth is, Otto had the knowledge of the form of two young girls who had been eaten, and had gone into a state of not being present in anyone's memories. Hard to believe, but he surely did not eat something which was visible to the eyes. However, till now, what happens to that which gets eaten, was a thought that did not dawn upon him.

Possibly, ?Gluttony? had been storing the eaten memories of his opponents and using them.
The techniques of a martial artist who had trained for over ten years, or the fighting skills of a warrior well acquainted with the battlefield, or even emulating the attack of a young girl, who had been by Subaru's side and supporting? him??.

Otto: "He's using magic!!"
Felt: "Gaston!"

Ley: "El Huma."

As the shocking attack commenced, Otto's shout and Batenkaitos' chant echoed at the same time.
A sound resonated in the area as the air crystallized, and the icicles subsequently produced, swiftly moving, aimed for the startled ?White Dragon's Scales?.
However, against the rain of ice, Gaston stood firm, with his arms spread. The giant, with his normal defense, smashed all of the ice that came in contact with him with his body. Against the destruction, the ?White Dragon's Scales? dove behind his back, in order to reduce the impairment being inflicted upon them. However, they were still unable to prevent the damage.

Ley: "Onii-san's judgement was good. It seems it couldn't become any more of a surprise attack than what we had thought."

Watching the torment, Batenkaitos, who was behind the magic, raised the edge of his mouth.
Gaston, who had acted as a firm wall, sighed out a hoarse exhale, and the six of the ?White Dragon's Scales? behind his back lay injured. With one bleeding heavily, and two crouching, who had been wounded on their legs. The other three could not be described as uninjured either. Their war potential had been halved, and on top of that??,

Ley: "You saying this means, could it be that our trick became clear?"

Otto: "......Well, I wonder."

Ley: "Onii-san, we won't be fooled. Before suffering in pain, can't you stop acting like a merchant."

Responding to Otto, and threatening to make him suffer, Batenkaitos' form disappeared the next instant.
No, he dashed with his swift natural movements, fast enough to make one think he had disappeared.
His petite frame glided by Gaston, onto the side of the immobile ?White Dragon's Scales?.
In the blink of an eye, the mobile three flew away from the spot, but the wounded three were unable to flee.

Ley: "Asta. Lookfelt. Hicks."

Leaking out a whisper, Batenkaitos softly caressed the shoulders of the three.
In front of everyone observing with widened eyes, wondering what he was doing, the bodies of three jumped, once they had been touched by Batenkaitos. And, Batenkaitos turned back, and raised his left hand,

Ley: "Lick."

And, he licked his empty left palm. At his action, Otto was immediately swallowed by discomfort.
What had happened, something had unquestionably happened. However, he was unaware of what had happened, and that was not all he was unaware of.

Otto: "The ones who are lying at his feet..... Who are they?"

What Otto's fingers were pointing at, were the feet of Batenkaitos, who had his lengthy tongue stretched out.
At the feet of the malice which had taken the form of the young boy, lay the figures of three people.
Though they were lying there, their identities were unknown. Possibly, based on their clothing, they could be members of the ?White Dragon's Scales?, but when did they appear, and when did they get defeated?

Ley: "Sad, how sad, so sad, quite sad, pretty sad, because it is sad. Even if our reunion turns only unilateral, we can't help bu~t want satisfaction!"

Otto: "Dynas-san! Those three are?"

Dynas: "I don't know! I haven't even seen them before! But??!"

Even if it was told that the ones wearing the same clothes were unknown allies, it was still not convincing. Even so, neither did Dynas' voice have any deceit, nor did it have any composure. Charging ahead as if flying, he raised the short swords in both of his hands and slashed into Batenkaitos.

Ley: "Stop it, Dynas. It's an old relationship. Hometown's purification is one step ahead, so crossing swords with comrades like this is foolish."

Dynas: "??!? You, from where did you, about that??!"

Carelessly trampling upon Dynas' circumstances, Batenkaitos raised the edge of his right dagger.
Lightening the blow of the two short swords with his dagger, ?Gluttony? struck Dynas' chest with his knees, and at the same pace, he leapt backwards due to the resultant force.
Dynas coughed as he gripped to his chest, but managed to retrieve the collapsed three strangers.
Seeing Dynas in that shape, Batenkaitos let out a sigh.

Ley: "Don't stubbornly stick to the vessels. What is important is the heart and the inside, no? What lets a person be like that person isn't the outside, but the inside. We know about your hard work, Dynas. It wasn't your fault you couldn't protect Milian and Meili. Your luck was bad."

Dynas: "Shutupshutupshutupshutu~p! What do you! Know about me! Stop saying things per your own wishes! You rotten demo~n!"

Raising an enraged voice, and forgetting the damage's pain, Dynas charged at the enemy again. He angled his two short swords and aimed for Batenkaitos' face, but making a face as if he was acquainted with the attack, Batenkaitos dodged it with ease. At the same pace, Batenkaitos stretched his hand for Dynas' back.

Ley: "Woh?"

Gaston: "How long will you go ignoring us"
Felt: "Is what we're saying, you idiot!"

Gaston aimed directly for Batenkaitos' slim waist from behind. Batenkaitos' elbow thrashed into his nose, but Gaston did not fall back because of the hit's impact.
Furthermore, while Gaston stalled Batenkaitos, Felt jumped in. She crashed her long and slim package which she had gripped in her hands into the susceptible back of his head.

Ley: "Idiot huh, how hurtful. Perhaps we, actually know much more than you do, you know?"
Felt: "Argh!"

But, Batenkaitos bent forward at Felt's attack, and then subsequently received it with his right arm's dagger by raising it. The vigorous strike gave rise to a crushing sound, however, its aim mostly missed, and Felt's stance came to be unguarded.
Seeing Felt and Dynas could leave together, his hands could also reach Gaston?? so Batenkaitos' devilish hand, at the same pace, touched the three,

Otto: "I will not let you, though!"

Just when he was about to reach, the cast red hot magic stone reached Batenkaitos' feet. The moment he

saw that, Batenkaitos' movement stopped, and Felt and Dynas withdrew with urgency.

Felt: "Don't let go, Gaston!"
Ley: "Don't forget this, you demon girl.....!"

Gaston, standing firm, was unable to escape from Batenkaitos and was caught up in the magic stone's range. As the magic stone's glowing intensified, and the next instant, it gave rise to an explosion powerful enough to tear off the stone pavement.
Red and white light illuminated, and Felt rolled away from the explosion to the other side. Otto somehow grabbed her, and then glanced at the explosion's span.

These magic stones are what Otto constantly carried "just in case". Ever since the fight with Garfiel in the ?Sanctuary?, he determined it would be better do so for his own safety.
It may be a means painful on his wallet, but its strength was nothing to laugh at.

Otto: "Is your companion alright!?"

Felt: "Hah, don't underestimate my giant. He's my armour. He won't be hurt by a meagre and soft attack. But....."

Just when she said that much, a giant figure emerged out of the smoke. It was Gaston. With his body having taken a sooty colour, he smacked his body making a desperate face.

Gaston: "Gha~a~a~! Hot! Hot! Hot hot! I'll die!"

Otto: "Even if you may be able to take explosions, I guess you can't stop your body from warming or cooling."

Felt sighed, seeing the form of her attendant agonizing in high fever. Though he had bathed in the might of the fire magic stone from close proximity, Gaston's life did not appear to be in a serious condition.
Confirming that much, Otto turned his eyes back towards to smoke. The black fumes were rising at a reasonably good scale, so there was no way Batenkaitos, who was at its heart, had managed to defend himself. On the other side of the black smoke, was Dynas, knelt down, but he seemed to be safe.
And,

Ley: "Bennett. Calcifs. August."

Otto: "??!?"

A whisper was heard, and all eyes turned away from the hypocentre.
There were visible the forms of three collapsed white clothes, and Batenkaitos in perfectly good health. The youth, once again, raised his left hand's palm saying "lick", and inched it closer to his mouth and licked it.

What followed was beyond understanding. Once again, three more unidentified white robed people appeared.

The way he had escaped from the hypocentre, and the unanticipated appearance of three more victims, all of it was beyond comprehension.

Felt: "Shit! What's with them! From where..... no, when.....?"

Standing beside Otto, Felt violently scratched her beautiful blonde hair. She also, once again, was beginning to lose understanding what was the meaning of what she was seeing.
What must be considered urgent, even that was something Felt, right now, did not know. However, Otto understood. This, mysterious state.

Otto: "This is, what it means when the ?Name? is eaten??!"

Disappearing from everyone's memory, and bode only within Subaru and no one else, was a young girl named ?Rem?. That very same phenomenon, was transpiring in front of his eyes right now.
Possibly, the collapsed men, who are supposedly members of ?White Dragon's Scales?, had gotten their names eaten by Batenkaitos. The result of that, was the disappearance of the memories of them being ?Present? from the minds of Otto and the others.
That was why, it appeared as if they had appeared suddenly, and they did not know who they were either.

"????"

Fright rose within him. Once again, he comprehended the viciousness of the monster in front of his eyes. If he straddled into the hands of ?Gluttony? Ley Batenkaitos, in the worse case scenario, if Otto and the others were to face complete annihilation here, all traces of this battle, along with the existing evidences, will all disappear.
Of course, all memories of the resistance put up by them, and the fact that they were here itself as well.

The possibility of oneself disappearing, and the disappearance of all people who would look back upon oneself?? in other words, isn't it the greatest fear in this world, far greater than any other fears.

Otto turned pallid. Even though they had not reached the same conclusion, Felt and Dynas' face complexions were equally bad. He realised how ignorant they had been, and how recklessly they were acting.
It made him believe, that the real choice here was to escape caring for themselves or not??.

Felt: "Damn it, he pisses me off. Should we try the same way, one more time?"

"????"

Otto sighed weakly, while Felt leaked out those words. Without thinking, Otto turned his eyes towards her face.
Felt's complexion was that of utter stupefaction, in front of the aberrant situation. However, she was not lamenting. As if continuing to strengthen her heart, until she is completely driven into a corner.

Feeling moisture upon his entire body, Otto slapped his cheek.
Just what, was he doing by becoming such a weakling. Even if he went bankrupt, he wouldn't name it as

defeat until he is kicked out of the job. This was the crucial moment, when his future would be determined. There is still hope.

Seeing the form of two, Dynas and Gaston also stood up, making expressions of readiness and determination. And seeing the four stand up with the fighting spirit of steel, Batenkaitos made a satisfied expression,

Ley: "How nice, so nice, very nice, possibly it is nice, isn't it nice, perhaps it is nice, because it is probably nice! Gluttonous drinking ~tsu! Gluttony ~tsu! You all are worthy of our dinner table! Even if it's only among the starters, we'll elevate you to first-class, Gaston. Mo~reover, we'll pe~rfectly savour Felt and Dynas."

Clasping his hands, Batenkaitos awarded the three with an unpleasant evaluation. Afterwards, Batenkaitos, with the same look in his eyes, glared towards Otto. Inclining his neck, the blasphemer commenced to give his comments on Otto with the same flow, and contrary to expectations, he made a dissatisfied expression.

Ley: "Seems intelligent, bad at giving up, seemingly mellow onii-san..... but even then, huh."

Otto: "What are you..... No."

Saying that much, Otto understood the reason for Batenkaitos' dissatisfaction.
As if admiring, Batenkaitos had tenderly voiced the names of Felt and the others. His unique trait of eating ?Names?, and the content of his speech made him realise it.

Batenkaitos, could not eat the ?Name? of an opponent whose ?Name? he did not know.
Henceforth, ?Gluttony? could not eat the ?Name? of Otto, whose name had not been mentioned here even once. His dissatisfaction, was due to that.

Otto: "I have a request for all three of you. Please, absolutely do not call my name."

If his name is not mentioned, then at the very least, Batenkaitos' goal will not be achieved.
Or, in fact, the number of casualties at the hands of Batenkaitos till now may have had been his way to try and know his name.
Him allowing Otto and the others such free discussion, may have had been him waiting for them to call each others' names, and henceforth prepare for his meal??.

Felt: "My bad, nii-chan."

Hearing Otto's remarks once he had reasoned, said Felt with a somewhat apologetic tone.
She made an awkward expression, something which had not been witnessed by anyone in the situation yet.

Felt: "I, don't know nii-chan's name in the first place....."

Dynas: "Sorry, not-on-first-list-official-dono. Your position aside, your name has slipped from my

mind....."

Otto: "Yes yes, indeed! It's not as if, I'm particularly close to everyone, and neither am I major personality! God, da~mn it."

Of course, Gaston too, made an expression suggesting his own ignorance, and shrugged his shoulders. With relief made of both happiness and sadness, at the very least, his fright of his name being revealed to Batenkaitos had been diminished immensely, with this. That alone was unmistakable.

Ley: "Dynas aside, aren't you two just covering for onii-san. If that isn't so then we~ll..... it seems asking it out would become quite a bother."

Otto: "Giving up for today and falling back, is also something you can do, you know? Come sometime in the future, one day again..... I suppose so. By that time, we can also prepare to give you a warm welcome in Reinhardt-san's presence."

Ley: "To turn away in front of a feast, don't make us do something so outrageous. Until our belly is satisfied, we will we will not go back. That'd make Louis a~ngry."

Of course, Batenkaitos could not be convinced. The battle could not be terminated.

Felt: "Gaston, absolutely don't let go next time."

Gaston: "Just because I don't get hurt, using me how you like....."

Felt: "I'll go with you next time, for sure."

Gaston, who tried? to state his discontentment for the order, widened his eyes hearing Felt's words. He then proceeded to laugh rudely, and roughly rubbed Felt's head and disheveled her hair.

Gaston: "Stop joking around. If that geezer got to know that I made master push herself, who knows what he'll do to me.

Felt: "Don't touch my head. The only one who can do that is grandpa Rom."

Gaston: "That's why I'm doing it."

Felt snorted her nose, with her hair disheveled, and standing next to her was Gaston. Next to him was Dynas wielding his two short swords, and Otto counted the number of magic stones in his sleeves. Three on his left sleeve, two on his right. They must be used carefully?.

Otto: "He touches with his left hand, and then eats is what I think. If you get touched, please think that it's all over."

Gaston: "That's?, way too difficult even by just the sound of it, no?"

Dynas: "Even one slash at his any of his vitals with a sword should be enough. If we can do that, then it's no big deal."

Felt: "When you say it like that, I agree."

With Felt's statement conveying that she was convinced, their preparations were complete.
Courteously, watching their preparations end was Batenkaitos. Seeing his politeness, Otto narrowed his eyes, and the blasphemer subsequently laughed.

Ley: "Isn't it common mannerism to await the finishing of setting up of the table? Roy of Bizarre Eating aside, we a~re Gourmet. We are particular abou~t meals."

Saying that, Batenkaitos respectfully gestured and bowed.
That gesture, which seemed to put on airs, also seemed frightfully familiar.

Ley: "Well the~n, once again. Witch Cult Sin Archbishop, Ley Batenkaitos of representing ?Gluttony?."

"????"

Ley: "Isn't it common mannerism, to return your own name when you are given the same?"

Felt: "After everything we've discussed, he'd be an idiot to return his name to you, you bastard."

Among warriors, it is a commonly obeyed custom, to return your own name when someone gives you their own name.
However, Batenkaitos may have had possibly utilised this method, and till now, gotten out the names of countless people, and proceeded to subsequently eat them.
They had no reason to abide by that custom right now. With that being rejected, ?Gluttony? laughed,

Ley: "That's that. ??Well the~n, let's eat!"

Signaling his meal, the petite frame leapt ahead, as if flying, and shortened the distance in between. This movement had not been seen before, it was like a strong gale flowing by. Batenkaitos, who had vanquished the offensive and defensive being put up against him till now by mere handling of his feet and dodging, now actually demonstrated his ability to hunt down his opponents.

Otto, a non-combatant, was unable to follow his movement, and respond accordingly.
The other three, however, were different.

Felt: "Don't think you can win in a race, against me."

Against Batenkaitos, who was racing like wind, only Felt was able to catch up comfortably. The moment she had lightly kicked the cobblestone and leapt ahead, she showed mobility, as if she was being carried by the wind at once.
Surprised by at least that movement, Batenkaitos' first slash swept through the air.

Ley: "??~tsu!"

At that point, Gaston and Dynas commenced their attack at the same time.
Dynas' two single edged katanas, and the short sword which Gaston held, both of then clutched onto their respective weapons. Against the attack of the two, the vulnerable Batenkaitos opened his legs wide and dropped his stance.
With his arms on the ground, Batenkaitos' body whirled with his legs stretched. The spinning kick swept the legs of the two men, and destroyed Dynas' balance.
And there??,

Otto: "Ua~a~a~??!"

Dynas: "Wa~h?"

Raising his voice, the fourth player, Otto grabbed him.
By coming there, Otto set himself up perfectly for close combat, and without anticipating this turn of events, Batenkaitos raised an astonished call, and successfully managed to wrestle with Otto's body.
Bind him at this same pace?? the very next moment he thought that, forceful pain assailed upon Otto's guts. Batenkaitos' left fist pierced in, and sent Otto's body rolling.

Otto: "Ghue ~hk, gohogh ~hk!”

Ley: "At the right place, with the menu for your strong flavours and blandness available, the appropriate place for that, we must a~bsolutely find out about it, onii-san. Later, we'll pro~perly partner you....."

When Batenkaitos blurted that out, the two, whose stances had collapsed, moved.
Dynas carried the tumbling Otto in his arms, and the one protecting the two was Gaston. Batenkaitos tilted his neck at that battle formation, and looked down upon what had come upon his tattered clothes.

??At the point where he had wrestled with Otto, two magic stones were dangling.

Ley: "Well we~ll."

His movements for absconding were slow.
The very next moment of Batenkaitos noticing the magic stones, the two magic stones exploded immensely.

It was the collegiality of a fire magic stone and a water magic stone.
The red and yellow light, and the blue and white light proliferated, and Batenkaitos' body was enveloped in the light and a shockwave was released.

Ley: "??~hk!!"

Receiving the light from a close distance, Otto also was subjected to harm.

Though Gaston, who was acting as a wall, shielded the majority of it, its impact could still be felt upon Otto's skin. His skin scorched to the point of freezing, and chilled to the point of burning.
Once the shockwave came to a halt, the second hypocentre was a truly terrible sight to witness. The cobblestone had been torn off, the soil underneath was wide open, and scorched fragments of stone had been scattered? across.

Ley: "A~h, that's so cruel. Our only good dress got spoilt."

And, once again, Batenkaitos had placed himself at a point away from the hypocentre.
However, it seems this time, at least, he was not undamaged.
The youth's long hair had suffered the attack heaped upon themselves as an aftermath of the blast, and he had a somewhat sullen voice.
It seems the youth had unmistakably gotten caught up in the hypocentre. He lost the rag that covered his entire body till now, and the skin beneath was now unconcealed.

Otto: "??Ugh."

Blurting that out thoughtlessly and reflexively, was Otto.
Gaston and Dynas were also speechless, grimacing while witnessing the same.

??The newly exposed skin of the young boy, was covered with wounds and scars.

Scars of a whip, scars of hot iron, scars carved by an edged tool, scars inflicted by a rough surface, scars of the skin being gouged out, scars of a beast's fangs, scars of repeated hits that had turned the skin bluish black, scars of an innumerable amount.

The youth who wore rags, now wearing only a waistcloth, turned around with his wounded body, and seeing Otto and the others grimace at him, he made a displeased face.

Ley: "Forcibly taking away a child's clothes, and then reacting like that is quite hurtful. Adults like all this, don't they?"

Otto: "......I don't know about the adults you are close to, but normally they do not."

Ley: "Hm~. So, you'll be all compassionate again. Changing your heart and attitude like this, it's because of things like that we can't trust you peo~ple!"

Spreading his arms as if showing his body covered with wounds, Batenkaitos yelled that.
Otto made a wry face at his words, and Dynas made a disgusted expression. Only the two of Felt and Gaston had no alteration in their expressions.
They gazed at the frowning Otto, and sighed.

Felt: "Heyhey, don't go about thinking strange things. Those things can be anywhere, they're just not on mine or your body, but can be anywhere."

Gripping to the package in her hands, confessed Felt. Her eyes did not have even a fraction of compassion. Of course, Otto knew that their opponent was undeserving of that, but it's not as if he was a Sin Archbishop and insane by birth.
At least, that was the impression Batenkaitos' body gave??.

???: "??Just boring imagination will be fruitless, in fact. You'll end up regretting it, I suppose."

"????"

Out of nowhere, echoed the voice who had not been in the open plaza.
Everyone, including Batenkaitos, raised their heads at the sudden happening.
Everyone's line of sight turned towards the waterway surrounding this large plaza-- and lightly fluttering about midair, was a lone young girl, who then descended and stood.

In a frilled, spread out dress, with beautiful, round eyes and coiled, cream hair. Her clearly stinging attitude had become normal now, as she observed the situation with her large, circular eyes.
And once her eyes met with Otto's, she sighed suggesting she did not have a choice.

???: "Subaru alone is sufficient for perverted games and sweetness, I suppose. The only one Betty will help is also just Subaru..... This time is a special exception, at maximum, in fact."

Otto: "Yes yes, my apologies, for making trouble for you like this. But, thank you so much."

At the young girl's harsh sounding response, Otto, however, tasted a sense of relief, so much so that he wanted to lie down in exhaustion.
The very existence of the girl was one of Otto's "ways to win".

???: "Well then, let's clean up this fuss, and ask Subaru for a hug, I suppose."

Saying this with a listless face, raising her hand, was the young girl.
No, the Spirit. That too, a Great Spirit among Spirits.

Natsuki Subaru's Contract Spirit, Beatrice?? finally entered the battle as backup.

Arc 5, Chapter 69: “A Repulsive Dinner Banquet”

by admin - Monday, July 01, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/07/01/arc-5-chapter-69-a-repulsive-dinner-banquet/

Translated by :

- u/Ringo_17

Proofread by :

- u/Nanashi-tan

Art Source

- Link

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Everyone laid their eyes on the young girl who snorted her nose, as her dress' hem danced in the breeze. The girl?? Beatrice, looked around with her eyes, observing the situation. In this large plaza of the Waterway Street, present was the heavily scarred ?Gluttony? Ley Batenkaitos, and Otto and the rest, opposing him.
Looking at Otto and Felt and the others, Beatrice blatantly let out a tired sigh.

Beatrice: "Those are rather pitifully poor faces, I suppose."

Everyone was too worn out to argue back Beatrice's comments, who let out a sigh. However, Beatrice partaking in the fight would surely be a turning point in this progressively worsening battle.
Naturally, feelings of relief were given rise to within Otto's chest.

Otto: "Bea?? ~hk."

As soon as he was about to call her name, Otto shut his mouth.
Batenkaitos was an existence who ate ?Names?. He had just used to ploy of having Felt and the others not call his name by requesting them. There is no way he could go against that himself.

Batenkaitos' attitude for Otto, who was hiding the name. He was clearly irritated by him being an obstruction in his ?Meal?. In other words, Batenkaitos, in order to eat his opponent's name, must know their ?Name?.
Henceforth, he could not be allowed to perceive Beatrice's name. He positioned his hand, and suppressed his words.

However, Otto's such forethought ended being futile.
For some reason??.

Ley: "??Beatrice-sama? Wha~t, are you doing outdoors?"

Because that was what Batenkaitos articulated, leaning his neck forward and eyes fixed on Beatrice.
Continuing to observe Beatrice, ?Gluttony? continued his mysterious words.

"????"

Ley: "Even after disliking going outside so much. Aside from the times of meals, or when you were accompanied by the Great Spirit-sama..... a~h, so there were so~me exceptions?"

Batenkaitos continued his words, against the quiet Beatrice.
Those seemed like words suggesting closeness, which would be inaccurate to say, but they were unquestionably words of a person having a sense of distance and relationship in the past.

Otto: "That means he's your acquaintance from the past..... Beatrice-sa?? ~hk."

The relationship of the past, between Batenkaitos and Beatrice.
Losing understanding before being able to call her name, Otto's throat choked midway. This time he unconsciously glanced at Beatrice's face.

Biting her lips, and fury swirling in her large, round eyes, was Beatrice.
It had been rare for this Spirit girl, to show rage. In front of the astonished Otto, Beatrice inhaled very deeply, and scowled at Batenkaitos.

Beatrice: "??Your trick has been understood, in fact. So that's how it is, I suppose."

Muttered Beatrice, in a deep and heavy voice.
Her voice was not conveying hostility, but instead it was one suppressing her own emotions.

Hiding her rage from showing on her face, Beatrice locked her gaze into the interior of Batenkaitos' corrupted and muddy eyes, and distorted her lips due to the revulsion resulting from what she had laid her eyes upon.
And,

Beatrice: "You, how many people will you stockpile within yourself until you grow sick of it, in fact?"

Ley: "Who kno~ws? But, the quantity we eat is still better than compared to Roy. Roy is Bizarre Eating so he eats anything, but since we select carefully, the quantities are different ~tsu! We consider the quality of the lives we eat, and that's what conflicts us with Roy."

Eating ?Names? and ?Memories?, stating it to be his ?Meal? was Batenkaitos.
Naming himself Gourmet, and calling someone close to him Bizarre Eating had a peculiar aesthetic sense, both of which were things Otto could never comprehend.

"????"

And, what Otto could not come to understand, was also Beatrice's attitude at that moment.
The young girl's revulsion did not seem to result from simply evaluating the confronting Batenkaitos. It seemed to stem a different from a negative conception, of a different root.

Perhaps that linked to Batenkaitos treating Beatrice like an existence he already knew?? and, thinking that far, Otto noticed.
The possible reason, behind why Batenkaitos unilaterally knew Beatrice.

Otto: "......It can't be."

Batenkaitos' combat power, lay in a territory which could be entered by only those who have trained tough and long. Otto had made a hypothesis based on Dynas' factual remarks.

Otto: "I had anticipated the experiences of the body of an opponent whose ?Name? and ?Memory? had been eaten to be taken over. Your unarmed martial arts and dagger skills, attaining such an extreme level of prowess in them at your age would be difficult. If that's how it is, then....."

Even the skills of an eaten opponent would serve as food for him.
If that is how it is, then it became conceivable how Batenkaitos had managed to learn abilities rivalling that of a master martial artist in a great number of spheres.
If that hypothesis was correct, not just correct, but held further meaning to it??.

Otto: "However, if what is taken over is not just experiences of the body."

It meant that it was, something which was even further vicious, different from the threat of fighting strength.
After all, Batenkaitos had said.

??That he was, *looking for the one whose speech echoed across the city.*

That person, who was weak and fragile, unable to help anything unless someone stood by his side and supported him.
You could sense that and sympathise with that by being with the character of Natsuki Subaru for a long time. That youth had that mysterious part for him, which made those around him think this.

However, those thoughts were of that of someone who had dealt affectionately with him.

The fact that he was aware of Subaru's brittle strength and weak courage, was the proof of him having been close to him.
And if that proof was something which had been stolen by ?Gluttony? at this time, then only one possible candidate, a single young girl came to mind??.

Otto: "??~hk!"

Finally, Otto arrived at the same revulsion which Beatrice was feeling.
Subjected to the changed colour in Otto's eyes glaring directly at him, Batenkaitos smiled, and unveiled his fangs.

Ley: "The head maid of the? household of Margrave Roswaal L. Mathers..... wait wait wait, that's wrong."

Oscillating his neck while pronouncing that, Batenkaitos widened his arms.
On his scarred body, he caressed a single white scar lovingly. That scar, suspended on his shoulder, looked like it had received a sharp iron picket, and was painful to even look at.

Ley: "Now just a lone loved person. ??Oneself's beloved person, who will be a hero someday, Natsuki Subaru's supporter, Rem..... was it?"

"????"

Ley: "Let us meet him, tha~t beloved hero-sama! Our hero must have had come to cast his judgement upon us, till all the wa~y here!"

Stretching out his tongue, licking that wound, Batenkaitos guffawed.
Without thinking, Otto's blood rose up to his head. As he gnashed his teeth as they made a crackling sound, he was filled with rage enough that he wanted to punch him.

?Gluttony's? attitude, tone, smile, everything was ridiculing the feelings of that lone young girl.

Without knowing how much that young girl must have had pleaded for returning safely, now she was only being trampled upon by mockery and scorn. That is what set ablaze within Otto's heart.
This ?Gluttony?, was an opponent who could never be forgiven??.

Otto: "Beatrice-san.....?"

Beatrice stepped lightly and stood in front of Otto, who was counting the number of magic stones left in his sleeves with his finger. Otto was unable to understand why she had shifted towards him. And,

Beatrice: "Get your ideas corrected, I suppose. Good job calling Betty here, in fact."

"????"

Beatrice: "He is..... Only he is someone Subaru must not meet, I suppose. If Subaru meets him, he will be

hurt. Certainly, to the point that wound will never heal. That's why"

Otto: "Let's stop him here, by just ourselves."

Pronouncing the end of Beatrice's words, Otto declared.
Though Beatrice did not turn back, her stance made it clear that she agreed. She was Subaru's partner, who committed himself to oneself and others. Otto painfully understood how unpleasant it would be for him if the viciousness in front of his eyes was to get close to him.

Felt: "Waitwaitwaitwait, I'm telling you to wait!"

And, the one calling out to the two with a revitalised desire for taking their opponent down?? was not Batenkaitos. It was Felt, who had been quietly listening to the dialogue till now beside Otto. She gripped her package, and pointed it towards Beatrice,

Felt: "I heard you talk like some big shot, but what can this little girl do in the first place. Though I've heard you were a companion of that nii-chan."

Otto: "Ah, um, I see. First, explaining that would be a bit tricky....."

Felt suggested her own doubts, to which Otto was unable to give a proper explanation.
She possibly already knew about Beatrice being a Spirit and being contracted with Subaru, since that was common knowledge. It was also true that Beatrice's battle strength was uncertain in Subaru's absence??.

Beatrice: "A pipsqueak should not call others little girls, in fact. If you have the free time to worry about Betty's ability, you should better use it for worrying about that futureless deficient body, I suppose."

Felt: "Quite a harsh brat you are, hey. Let me tell you, I've been eating and sleeping properly now, so both my back and my chest are growing. You should be the one worrying over your future."

Beatrice: "Unfortunately, Betty's mein is set firm to this design. So..... Hmph."

A conversation befitting the situation started, but Beatrice put a halt to it by pausing her words. What her eyes had caught onto, was the slender package in Felt's hands.
Felt's ?Trump Card? was a magic tool, but Beatrice made a surprised expression upon laying her eyes on it,

Beatrice: "No way, is that ?Meteor?, I suppose?"

Felt: "Meteor?"

Beatrice: "Mother..... A revered magician a long time ago, used it to pester the Dragon, in fact. It's whereabouts were supposed to be unknown, but this is fate, I suppose."

Felt found Beatrice's explanation, who had corrected a crucial part of it, debatable.
But from Otto's point of view, stating that the ?Mother? Beatrice had mentioned and corrected later on,

was a ?Witch? who had disappeared from legends would make for a truly outrageous claim.
He still held his own doubts he wanted to ask about, but if the ?Witch? had truly used it to pester the Dragon, the reliability of its potential was high.

Otto: "I had heard of its convolution in usage, but what can we expect in terms of its strength?"

Beatrice: "It is a staff which boasts having an anecdote of having made the Dragon halfway cry, in fact?. It's guaranteed, I suppose."

Her claim was still difficult to believe. However, she had conveyed the authenticity of the weapon.
Though Otto had been swayed by Beatrice's words, Felt was yet unconvinced.

Felt: "I'll teach you about what the hell you're blabbering about later. Rather than that, this little....."

Beatrice: "Your conscience cannot rise above that level, in fact. But, your concern is futile, I suppose. After all"

Felt: "Ah?"

Beatrice: "The attack has already been set up."

In front of Felt, who tilted her neck, Beatrice sketched an enchanting smile upon her face. Her softly upraised right hand pointed towards Batenkaitos, and the throats of everyone were subsequently frozen.

??Violet crystals crystallised, and surrounded Batenkaitos' environs.

Ley: "Ah, Beatrice-sama is so merciless."

Beatrice: "Just holding back and mercy are things which do not exist anywhere in this world for you, I suppose."

El Minya.
A rare offensive magic even within Yin magic, was the reason behind him showing his fangs.

The moment Batenkaitos let out his complaint, the violet crystals did a boisterous dance, and aimed and rushed at his petite body.
The tough and pointed attack struck the thin body standing upright?? the crystals shattered, the stone pavement fissured, and smoke was given rise to. This disastrous scene in this huge open plaza, had proved her might.

Beatrice: "Well, what do you think, I suppose."

Showing her magical power, Beatrice turned to Felt with a victorious expression. Though it was an immature gesture for a four hundred year old Great Spirit, but Felt was too speechless to point anything like that out.

Felt: "W-Well, not so ba~d, I guess."

However, despite her speechlessness, Felt refused to admit her loss and mistakes.

Gaston: "Y-Your voice, i~s trembling, Miss Felt."

Felt: "That goes for you too! Stop saying idiotic nonsense, and keep looking ahead!"

Yelled Felt at Gaston, whose voice was trembling, in order to hide the trembling of her own voice. But, not all what she said was deceptive.
After all, the figure of the defenseless Batenkaitos, who should have had received Beatrice's magical attack and had been caught up in its subsequent explosion, was not present where it should have been.

Dynas: "He's coming??!"

Dynas shouted, and everyone raised their eyes and looked in the direction he had his eyes fixed upon.
There present was the form of ?Gluttony?, with all four of his limbs on the ground, moving like a spider.
?Gluttony? smiled, displayed his fangs, as blood streamed down from his eyes.

Ley: "Haha~! As expecte~d of Beatrice-sama?! How nice, so nice, quite nice, perhaps it is nice, certainly it is nice, isn't it nice, surely it is nice, as it is surely nice ~tsu!"

Shaking his head about, disheveling his hair, Batenkaitos leapt from the ground and pounced, charging ahead once again.

Beatrice: "??Five shots, left."

In response to his charge, Otto heard Beatrice mutter something unsettling whilst licking her lips.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

The moment El Minya was used, and the attack commenced upon Batenkaitos, Beatrice felt a large Magic Stone shatter in her pocket.
The number of Magic Stones now left with her were six?? in terms of Beatrice's usage, only five could be deployed in the battle.

??In this battle in the city, the preliminary encounter with the Sin Archbishops of ?Wrath? and ?Greed? and the subsequent incidental fight against them in the square.
As a result of that battle, Beatrice had spent her Mana for healing Subaru and the people of the city, to the point that it disrupted her physical capabilities.

The Spirit Beatrice, is an Artificial Spirit created by the ?Witch? Echidna.
Her strength is far greater than those of normal Spirits, but in return for that she has some troublesome downsides.
Her being mobile right now, is the result of a card being played which normally cannot be put to use.

??As of this situation, Beatrice held seven Magic Stones.

A large Magic Stone is one with Mana having been stockpiled within it over several years. Among them, one had already been shattered, and only six of them were left now. They had been given to Beatrice, who had plunged into a deep slumber, by Kiritaka?? who was aware of the progressions in this large plaza, and his actions were for the purpose of providing aid to them.

Kiritaka: "Please, I request you from the bottom of my heart, Great Spirit-sama. Please lend me your strength, and use it to fight for protecting this city. In this city, there are those whom I love."

All messed up and almost crying, but detachedly pleading to her was Kiritaka. Beatrice responded with no choice to Kiritaka, who had used an immeasurably priceless Magic Stone with no second thoughts in order to awaken from her slumber.

If she were to say the truth, Beatrice wanted to hurriedly reach where Subaru was.
The city's situation had revolved, and Subaru, too, was under threat. If her self not by his side, Subaru is a hopelessly worrying guy, after all.
That's why, now that her self was awake, she shall dedicate herself to Subaru??.

Beatrice: "Stupid, I suppose. No, stupid, in fact."

Beatrice gave up on that desire of hers, once she felt the guilt after realising her indulgence under the name of concern.
If Subaru had chosen to fight, that too without the presence of her self, then that means he has a way to fight without her.
Subaru does not overestimate himself. Rather, he tends to underestimate himself too much.
He would not recklessly get into a confrontation with an opponent he could not win against, and if he could win against the opponent using Beatrice, he would somehow or other wake her up.

That's why in this battle, Subaru did not need her self, who had been left alone.
That is why, once Subaru has returned after the battle, she must also have a victorious record under her belt so that she can match up to him.

For Beatrice, who now stood as backup, Kiritaka had offered up seven large Magic Stones.
Unable to use the Mana from her surroundings, Beatrice now, was utilising the mana of the Magic Stones like an inefficient conductor as a last resort.

In her dress' pocket, the seven Magic Stones were capable of miracles, but their potential was now being wasted on usage of mere magic.
You would normally believe that their strength could be used to invoke not ten, but even a thousand magic moves. However, though there are no limitations to the extent of the magic, but no matter how low scale the magic was, the Magic Stone will shatter at a single invocation.
As one of the six needed to be reserved, only five could be utilised.

??In other words, she must wrap it up in five moves.

Beatrice: "The reunion will Bubby will have to wait, I suppose. Instead of that, you will be seeing hell, in fact."

One of the large Magic Stones Kiritaka gave to Beatrice, was originally intended to be occupied by Puck. That was the original purpose of their trip, but now, that being shattered for the purpose of battle is nothing but ironic.

Ley: "We're tired of seeing hell ~tsu! After all, the ones that got eaten by us, eve~ry one of them tasted tha~t in the end!"

Shouting that, Batenkaitos leapt towards them.
His movement was casual, but his cutting gaze was utmost cautious regarding Beatrice.

He was unaware of the fact that Beatrice would run out of gas after five moves, that she would run out of Mana. In order to give him that impression, she had commenced an attack of a powerful range in exchange of one Magic Stone, that strategy was the best faculty available, and it had passed its exam.
Beatrice raised up her left hand, and pointed its palm towards the mid-air Batenkaitos.

Beatrice: "Al Minya!"

Ley: "??~tsu!"

Beatrice: "Just kidding, in fact."

At that moment, expecting the extremely high level magic, Batenkaitos toughened up his body. In front? of him, Beatrice stuck out her tongue, and flew backwards.
At that point, Gaston and Dynas plunged onto the curled-up Batenkaitos.

Gaston: "U~o~o~o~h!"
Dynas: "Eat this too!"

The shouting two men launch their counterattack attack upon Batenkaitos, with two blades and a fist.
The weighty and sharp hit struck ?Gluttony?, but Batenkaitos dodged it with preeminent body handling, and in reverse, turned his own dagger towards the dominated two.
The edge of the oscillating steel, took a path which aimed straight for Dynas' neck.

Gaston: "It's dangerous..... ghue!"
Dynas: "Sorry!"

Gaston obstructed into the dagger's path, shielding Dynas and taking the strike himself.
A wooden report echoed and the dagger's power was weakened, but Gaston, while drawing back, coughed violently, and red blood seeped out of those lips.

??It was the limit of his Mana-utilising battle ability, otherwise called ?Flow Method?.

Bearing his tough body, Gaston's way of fighting against blades and blows was his skill known as ?Flow

Method?, an alternate method of the utilisation of Mana, which is otherwise used for magic.
It is a skill involving far less talent than compared to magic?? only training and the amount of training mattered, and the user was required to shed blood for its usage.

Beatrice: "But, it seems he pushed himself far too much, in fact."

In Beatrice's eyes, Gaston's facets and talents were nothing beyond mediocrity.
Him being able to, somehow or the other, take the Sin Archbishop's spears with his partial Flow Method, could only be because Batenkaitos had been going very easy on Gaston.

Ley: "Ta~ke, this ~tsu!"

Gaston: "Ghou, agh!?"

Kneeling down, he kicked right into Gaston's jaw in the upward direction.
Bleeding from his nose, and collapsing down, immobile, the giant was now unable to battle. With this, their war potential had been reduced by one more.

Ley: "You rea~lly worked hard, Gaston! Pre~tty bravely you fought. ??You worked and you worked, but you fai~led! We evaluate such a guy to be worthy ~tsu!"

Felt: "??You, bastard!'

Seeing the form of Batenkaitos mocking Gaston, Felt's blood rose up to her head, and she aimed the Meteor she held in her hand straight for his head.
If it was put to use the way it should rightfully be, its might was surely that one would expect of a ?Witch?. But, if it were to be used as a mere slapstick, it could not possibly utilise its complete potential.

Ley: "Uh, o~h! Geez Felt-chan, yo~u're do~ing i~t ~tsu!"

Felt: "Shut, up! Get away, you shit!"

While scuffling to handle the cane, Felt continued to use her physical abilities to try and land a sharp blow upon Batenkaitos. Batenkaitos dodged all of it, with just the elegant handling of his feet, as if doing a magnificent dance.
The Meteor did indeed come in contact with ?Gluttony's? hair, but it was not sufficient enough to cause any damage to him. There was an overwhelming gap of skill between them. He was completely treating her as a plaything.

Beatrice: "You! Get away now, I suppose! Our merchant has already recovered the big guy, in fact!"

Felt: "Do you think I came here just to mislead!"

The difference in their physical capabilities was evident, and it was certain that she would lose if she was counterattacked.
While Felt attacked Batenkaitos, Otto hurriedly drew the fainted Gaston out of the theater. Dynas too,

confirmed the texture of his two katanas, was searching for a gap to break into Felt and Batenkaitos' fight but, there was no certain opportunity.

Even if an alteration arises, Batenkaitos fills in that gap completely. The approach of watching vigilantly for an opportunity and awaiting an alteration, signalled the reality to them that ?Gluttony?, who was outnumbered and should have been at a disadvantage, was the one ruling this place.

Ley: "What, what is it, what is this, what could it be, why could it be, what could it perhaps be ~tsu! Even after jumping in for helping, will Felt-chan abandon this so pathetically?"

Felt: “So noisy! You too, you bastard, just stay put and get hit....."

Ley: "Is that so. ??But we're getting bored no~w."

Felt: "Uh, ky~a~a!?"

As Felt yelled while swinging the Meteor, at that moment, Batenkaitos stepped ahead. The distance between the two of them became zero, and ?Gluttony's? palm caressed Felt's svelte chest.
At that moment, the shock impacted the young girl's body and threw her backwards gently, and giving rise to a high pitched shriek, Felt rolled down the stone pavement.
The attack had strength enough to simply throw her body backwards, but that was not the problem here.

Otto: "Oh no! She has been directly touched!"

Otto raised his voice, seeing the coughing Felt, who had received the impact on her chest. Seeing the agony on his face, Beatrice understood the reason for his concern.
?Gluttony's?? meal, had been prepared.

Ley: "Felt-cha~n. ??Let's eat."

Following the unknown principle, Batenkaitos' left hand, which had touched Felt, he licked its palm with his elongated tongue.
As if, there was something vital, like the young girl named ?Felt?, present on it.

Placed it on his tongue as if loving it, caressed its rough texture, tasted each and every part of it as if harvesting it, and dropped it down to his breadbasket and mercilessly digested it.
At the moment that was completed, ?Gluttony's?? meal came to an end, and the ?Name? settled within the blasphemer.

And, all traces of the young girl named Felt disappeared from the world??.

Ley: "Ugh, ghue~..... ~tsu."

Felt: "Hu~h? What is it, you bastard. Just how rude can this guy get."

Felt, shaking her head, was looking at Batenkaitos, knelt down and vomiting.

Of course, her existence had not disappeared, she only tilted her neck in rage.

??That was the moment, when ?Gluttony's? meal had failed unsightly.

Arc 5, Chapter 70: "Eclipsing"

by admin - Tuesday, July 02, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/07/02/arc-5-chapter-70-eclipsing/

Translated by :

- u/Ringo_17

Proofread by :

- u/Nanashi-tan

Art Source

- Link

TL note: The Japanese title for this chapter is “?”, which can be translated as both “Eating” and “Eclipse”, both of which are equally correct under the context of this chapter.

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? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Batenkaitos, who should have had abraded away Felt's name and commenced? with his ?Meal?, vomited.
Moaning in agony, spitting out his gastric juices, ?Gluttony's? attitude held no dishonesty. So, though he did not put something with a real form in his mouth, he still squeezed his stomach when vomiting.
It was a mysterious spectacle, which gave rise to that impression, which had no absurdity in itself.

Felt: "Shit, that hurt..... Playing around with me....."

Caressing her scoured chest, Felt stood up in a grazed shape.
The ones she could see from the corner of her eyes, Beatrice and the others, too, had not forgotten about Felt.

?Gluttony's? meal had failed.

Ley: "Gha ~hk, ghehough ~hk, oghe~e~ ~tsu!"

Dynas: "Don't know the reason for it but..... it's a nice chance!"

Dynas waged a raid against Batenkaitos, whose consciousness was completely outside of the battlefield, as he spilled out gastric juices from the edge of his mouth.
Two swords swiped across, and mercilessly plunged into Batenkaitos.
Towards the defenseless neck, the silver blade of the katana proceeded??.

Ley: "Gh, o~o~h!"

Raising the voice of a beast, Batenkaitos sidestepped the blade.
His dodge was slightly late and some of his hair was subjected to the slash, but it wasn't enough to pierce his skin. Rotating his petite body at an extremely fast speed, ?Gluttony? escaped the attack's span with nightmarish behaviour.

Beatrice: "Merchant!"

Otto: "I, know!!"

Responding to Beatrice's call, Otto swung his right arm. The two Magic Stones cast from his sleeves, came in contact with Batenkaitos, who had escaped the former attack.
At that moment, light burst through, and the current of magical energy it wielded blew off that body?? however, Batenkaitos responded to it with miraculous nerve reflex.

Ley: "Huma~!"

As the rising light, amassed Batenkaitos within itself and its destructive might, at that moment, Batenkaitos cast magic, encasing the magical explosion within ice.
The explosion, resulting from the Magic Stones, lost its area to proceed, and ended up becoming a mere stack of shattered ice, falling down to the ground, giving rise to a noise. It was an extremely high class skill of obstructing colourless magical waves rapidly.

Perhaps even this, would be the ability of someone who was among those whose ?Names? have been eaten by Batenkaitos till now. The mere thought of that ?Someone?, who must have had learnt that ability, was now amassed within his stomach without remaining in anyone's memory was nauseating.

However, this was not the time for such feelings.
What was crucial here was??.

Ley: "Wa~h ~tsu! Dangerous dangerous..... but we pulled through ~tsu!"

Kicking the ice that had trapped the Magic Stones, and dropping them straight into the waterway was the laughing Batenkaitos. He swayed around his stomach, as if adjusting the contents inside, and wiping his mouth with his hands, angled his neck forward.
What those corrupted eyes were observing, was Felt, who was swinging around her hands and legs to confirm the extent of her injuries. Noticing Batenkaitos look at her, Felt snorted her nose.

Felt: "What. Just like you, I'm also feeling angry, you bastard."

Ley: "Nothing like anger at all ~tsu, instead i~t's impressive. We're so~rry, to have thought of you not being so capable of intelligence, by just looks."

Felt: "Hu~h? What are you say....."

Ley: "We never thought, that you'd have the cleverness to use only an alias against us. We got completely deceived. We had intended to avoid devouring greedily until the ?Name? got disclosed but..... to~ thi~n~k, this unexpected twist would be harvested."

"????"

Alias, hearing Batenkaitos say that, Felt went silent.
The reaction of Felt, furrowing her eyebrows, was one which suggested how much had she not expected to hear what she had heard. It could be understood at a glance, that she had no idea what Batenkaitos' words meant.

Whereas Beatrice, after hearing this conversation, understood the reason behind the earlier failure of Batenkaitos' ?Meal?.
Batenkaitos held the Authority of being able to eat the ?Name? of a person, whose name he already knew or had gained its knowledge, by touching them?? however, it needs to be the person's real name.

Alias, or nicknames, they do not suffice for its usage.
As just Felt's name did not fulfill the conditions for the ?Meal?, Batenkaitos, who had tasted it, suffered.
With that being said,

Ley: "The onii-san over there and Felt-chan?..... there are two whose names are unknown, and both were determined to be eaten, how troublesome."

Otto, whose name was purely unknown, and Felt, who seemed to be utilising an alias.
Dynas, whose name had immediately come to light, and Beatrice, who was known through Rem's memories no longer had any impediments, is what the conduct of ?Gluttony? suggested, which was infuriating but, naming himself Gourmet and being fixated over eating ?Names?, had its own disadvantageous gaps.

Felt: "Hey! I've had enough of listening to you, now shut up and listen, the hell are you saying?"

Beatrice, who was in her own thoughts, and Batenkaitos, who was continuing his torment. While Otto and Dynas were observing the situation, raising a loud and rough voice was Felt.
She had been irritated by the repeated conclusions passed regarding her, and aimed for Batenkaitos with the Meteor, trying to strike him.

Felt: "An alias or whatever, don't kid with me. I've already lived, for fifteen years, with the name Felt given to me by Grandpa Rom. Saying that's a lie is no joke."

Ley: "The type who is unaware of their own alias hu~h. That, means the parents that raised you up did a pretty good job, isn't it ~tsu. For us, it's a boundless nuisance but..... In other words, a name before that one had been pro~perly given, to you."

Felt: "The name given by those shit parents who abandoned me in the back alley? Then I must be a "burden" or a "wasteful? meal" or "garbage". With that being said, do you still want to stick out your tongue and eat and see it?"

Ley: "Don't contradict Gourmet's consciousness by calling it guesswork or something. ??A~h, that's it."

Showing his protruding teeth, Batenkaitos raised his hand towards Felt, who expressed? an enraged smile.

Ley: "After eating the rest beside you, we'll take careful custody of you. And, how about we go to meet the one who gave you a fake name, Grandpa Rom? Grandpa Rom might know your true name. We are good at making people spell out what they know. You ca~n leave it to us."

Otto: "......Taking your time out for even that. Do you not have the choice to give up?"

Otto thoughtlessly pronounced, at ?Gluttony?, who spoke of an offensive schedule. Hearing that, Batenkaitos put his hands on his mouth, and ringed his throat, as if enjoying,

Ley: "If the number of lives in the world is finite, then the number of worthy gourmet delicacies is a~lso finite. Then, we won't? miss any chance of meeting these limited gourmet delicacies ~tsu. Gluttonous drinking ~tsu! Gluttony ~tsu! Licking it chewing it slurping it, we will lick and taste unti~l the sauce on the plate lasts. Oops, of course onii-san is no exception either so why don't you ju~st relax?"

Batenkaitos' glare made it clear, that he had no intention of missing the four present.
?Gluttony's? fixation over meals, was out of understanding for Beatrice and the others, who had been evaluated worthy of ?Gourmet?. However, his look for vindictive impediments had no meaning more to it.
And, that blasphemer's desire for eating continued to increase, and it brought Felt's pique to itself.

Felt: "Is that so. I'll? have to do something here, otherwise you'll ta~ke me to Grandpa Rom, huh."

Saying that in a quiet voice, Felt swung her feet.
The shoes that she was wearing came off completely, and Felt was just like the other party now. Stepping ahead on the cobblestone with both her feet barefoot, she left the Meteor lying horizontally and drew out her dagger.

Ley: "??? That doesn't? make sense, Felt-chan. That, isn't that the trump card?"

Felt: "Instead of devices that I'm not used to, this is much easier to use. There isn't that much difference, in the first place. Instead of devices troublesome to use, it's better to use those which are easy to use,

okay!"

Her bare feet curled as if gripping to the ground, and the next instant, Felt's body launched forward. She had gained such speed? in the blink of an eye, like wind.
At this, even Batenkaitos widened his eyes, and forgetting the attitude of this just being another blade being held aloft, responded. He fought back by pulling out a physical ability of swinging the arms, handling his body, which had been submerged in memories.

Felt: "Ra~!"

The barefooted Felt's speed was, surpassing any energetic dash by some agile young girl.
It was the support of a power beyond human intellect?? unmistakably, it was a Divine Protection. She swung the dagger several times, but it was met by Batenkaitos' own dagger techniques.
Of course, Batenkaitos' tactics in that technique were overwhelmingly superior, but, what had prevented Felt from being overcome was only because Dynas was also backing her.

Dynas: "Don't push yourself too hard, with that vital body!"
Felt: "You too, uncle, just shut up, don't be tardy!"

Skillfully handling two swords, Dynas somehow filled the gap of ?Gluttony's? counterattack. Within that time frame, Felt quickly positioned herself into ?Gluttony's? blind spot, reports of steels clashing echoed, as the shadows of the three intermingled, as sparks danced across.

An exchange where, again, the decisive blow could not be delivered.
However, this time, the decisive blow had been formulated outside of the battlefield???.

Beatrice: "The attack..... has passed, this will hit hard, I suppose!"

Otto: "Both of you, please get away!"

While being left out of the event, they had been composing an attack, taking all the time they required. The operation, which would normally be unnecessary, lengthened their work schedule because of its requirement of meticulous caution, thanks to the attachment of an extra filter.
The result of that labour, was finally going to take form.

"????"

Hearing what Otto had shouted, Felt and Dynas got away from Batenkaitos' position.
?Gluttony? instantly reached for Felt, but even after touching her, he was not prepared to be able to eat Felt's ?Name?.

Felt: "Let, go!"

Fiercely swinging? her ankle, which had been gripped onto violently, and using a single foot, Felt flew

backwards to a great distance. Dynas too, as if rolling, left the place, leaving only ?Gluttony? in Beatrice's line of sight.
Aiming there, Beatrice invoked a magic which required the power of a "thousand", and completed it while respecting the power of a "thousand".

Beatrice: "This time it's not a joke, really..... Ul Minya!!"

Subsequent to the chant, a torrent of violet radiance glowed, and the light drew a circle with Batenkaitos at its core. Batenkaitos raised his face, to see what was coming up, but that reaction was late.
Not preparing, but escaping regardless of its form was the correct answer.

Ley: "??~tsu!"

In a single breath, the light converged, and shut Batenkaitos down by forming a ring around Batenkaitos' torso and arms. The ring of light acted like a chain and continued to further lock ?Gluttony?, whose movements of the upper body were in a bind.
At the same pace, if the entire body got encased by ring of light, he would no longer be able to escape Ul Minya's might.

The crystallising violet light continued to tighten its grip on Batenkaitos' upper body. At the same pace, the ring's control reached out to even his lower body, and ?Gluttony?, who had been rendered immobile, collapsed on the spot.
And, the atmosphere made a noise, as if creaking, as humongous bluish purple radiance emerged overhead of the collapsed blasphemer, with its sharp tips pointing towards Batenkaitos.

Ul Minya's might, to bind, and lash upon.
The attack Beatrice possessed slapped down in urgency, and the materialised destruction rained incessantly upon Batenkaitos.

Ley: "????!"

A roar could be heard, but in front of the destructive violet light, it had been muted.
The overwhelming light's might tore away the cobblestone, the wind produced by the blast engulfed the plaza in light and smoke, with the skirt of Beatrice's dress waving immensely.

Felt: "Did it do it!?"
Otto: "Did it manage to do it!?"
Dynas: "Did it really do it!?"

In the face of the explosion, the three, lying down, raised their voices at the same time.
Batenkaitos, at the very core of the hypocentre, had no ways of evasion. If he had truly taken the attack right now, then his body's traces will all disappear, not even leaving behind a fragment of his bones??.

Beatrice: "It isn't over yet, I suppose!"

With a loud voice, Beatrice warned them to be cautious, and the colour of the faces of the delighted three

changed. Beatrice noticing the fault that had occurred, before the other three, was nothing difficult to conceive.
She could sense it.

Beatrice: "??Four, left."

The large Magic Stone, which had been stocked over a long period of time, was unable to withstand the current Ul Minya, and shattered right before Batenkaitos could be crushed.
Although it had provided for the invocation, it had been incapable of its fullest utilisation. The radiance had been unable to erode away Batenkaitos, and the body of ?Gluttony? was??.

Ley: "The one right now has probably made us a bit impatient ~tsu!"

"??!"

Piercing through the plume, Batenkaitos flew towards Beatrice from a low angle. It must be the result of him judging who should be taken care of the first, based on the might of the magic just now.
Beatrice had exceptional ability as a magic user, but her physical abilities?? just as how it appeared, they were nothing beyond those of a young girl.

She did not have the skills, only for fighting at a close range with Batenkaitos, whose abilities were those of geniuses.
Henceforth, against his charge, Beatrice instantly utilised her third magic stone.

Beatrice: "??Murak!"

Ley: "Another trick??"

Beatrice's chant barely preceded Batenkaitos' hands, who were on the verge of reaching her.
His upraised fingers only had one intention, to not let Beatrice escape, now that all obstacles were clear.
However, it got missed yet again.

The instant he thought he had reached Beatrice's dress, Beatrice's body flew backwards, like a leaf floating in the breeze.

"????"

What Beatrice had chanted was ?Murak?, a Yin magic which obstructed with gravity. It was a magic which hindered with the power which attracts one's body to the ground, or one's own body weight, however Beatrice utilised it to reduce her body weight to zero at that instant.
Thanks to that, she was able to levitate in the wind, and greatly avoid the fingers trying to touch her.

Ley: “This, little??!?"

As per she had intended, Beatrice's body distanced from Batenkaitos and jumped to the edge of the large plaza instantly.
Batenkaitos tried to follow her, but he then heard loud footsteps from the direction opposite to the one he was facing, and turned towards them immediately.

Swiping his dagger behind, he tried to slash down the inelegant intruders. However, that strike cut through the sky. For some reason, there stood nobody who could have had made a sound of footsteps.

Otto: "Garfiel or the ?Bowel Hunter?, such people would totally get struck down!"

With the use of Wind magic, Otto had "sent footsteps flying" in an attempt to make Batenkaitos turn around, and he subsequently cast even more Magic Stones.
The exploding wave of heat produced by the Magic Stones was directed straight towards his exposed back, and unable to evade this time, Batenkaitos received an impact.

Dynas: "This time for sure, it's the end!"

Rolling down the plaza, with all of his limbs stretched straight, Batenkaitos collapsed. Swooping down upon that form, Dynas, who had prepared beforehand by tightening his grip onto his two katanas, intended to deliver the finishing blow??,

"????"

In a scruffy shape, the collapsed youth whispered something.
Whether that was him pleading for his life, or words of regret, Dynas shall not hesitate. For him, who had lived through the life of being a mercenary, the scramble for life is the result of fierce competition.
There, the problem of being an adult or a child was trifle, and emotions of mourn and repent were feelings one could afford only after surviving, that was all.

Henceforth, it was clear. But, even though the movements of Dynas, who had that clear thought seated within him, held no hesitation, even still, he was unable to keep that mystery, which harboured in his chest, folded within it.
Because what Batenkaitos had whispered just now, sounded like this.

??*Lunar Eclipse*, and.

???: "??Oh?"

The moment subsequent to that sound's echo reaching its righteous place, a voice, which had not been present in this interval, echoed.
The moment afterwards, the limbs of Dynas, who had been holding the two short swords aloft, spouted out blood all at once. On each of his limbs, a respective dagger was stabbing through extremely deeply, inflicting wounds, and the tendons had been accurately gauged.

Namely, it meant that the functionality of his limbs had been lost completely, and he was unable to prevent his body from crumbling down and falling.

Dynas: "Kuu, ah!?

Falling onto the cobblestone from his face was Dynas, with his head being stomped upon from above with all of its strength. With his nose crushed by the cobblestone, the consciousness of Dynas, who had gulped down the blow, was blown off.
Dynas was cut down and destroyed, and kicking his body, Batenkaitos stood up, and slowly, turned towards Otto's position

Otto: "......Ah."

It was not his first time, exchanging glances with those corrupted eyes.
However, in a single moment, Otto's spirit had been entwined and eaten up within those corrupted eyes.

Because the whirling insanity and resentment, had considerable difference from those which were previously present, and was now even more dusky.

"????"

It was a single moment.
The distance between them was diminishing in the blink of an eye, and when he came to notice, scorching heat pierced through both of Otto's legs. When he looked at it, at the frontage of both of his legs' thighs, were daggers, as if gouging out cruciform wounds.

Like peeling of the skin of a fruit, with his tongue sticking out, he exposed the skin underneath his trousers. The red cross-section and the pink sinews undersurface the skin, and the white nerves and bones creeping within, all of the green blood vessels, had all been exposed, unwounded, and Otto's throat became packed with out-of-place strong feelings.

He was dumbfounded. Till now he had never seen, a technique so beautiful.
The bleeding was minimal?? no, there was no bleeding at all. This truly transcendent handling of the blade's edge, destroyed the human flesh with such aesthetical manoeuvre.

"????"

Crouching down, Batenkaitos kissed that wound. The rough sensation of that tongue underneath, licked all of the vital parts of Otto's leg which lied inside of the skin.
Sinews, bones, blood vessels, nerves, he shivered as he felt all of them get licked, and at the next moment, both, in terms of his sense of vision and his sense of touch, Otto felt a repugnance difficult to bear and violent pain boil up in his brain.

Otto: "Ah, gya~a~a~a~a~?? ~hk!"

No blood, was being shed. It was incomprehensible.

He could just feel the pain. That too, instead of blood gushing out, the naked bones or nerves were being brushed by the moist wind, and the extreme pain because of it, it felt as if his muscles were being peeled off violently by needles.
His vision flickered, and his brain burst open. The organ that was supposed to comprehend pain refused to comprehend it. The screaming throat trembled violently, as if vomiting blood, and with immobile limbs, he was unable to even agonize.

And, while Otto screamed, Batenkaitos, overlooking him, tilted his neck. With long, dark brown hair sliding down his shoulders?, ?Gluttony? sighed, as if tired.

Ley: "Just when we thought it was rest after the meal, this circumstance. Even though gourmet and bizarre eating don't even matter..... Really, nobody understands what eating is aside from us."

Bringing a close to the insane smile and attitude, which had been there till now, it a voice terribly farsighted.
Batenkaitos? slowly rotated his neck, and behaved as if he was mocking himself?? just when that impression arose, he nimbly changed his expression,

Ley: "Don't talk like tha~t. It certainly did get a bit problematic in playing around but, even still, a treat of Louis' taste ha~s been found."

Showing his fangs, Batenkaitos turned his neck around, and his line of sight was directed towards Beatrice. At that gaze, and Otto's terrible spectacle, the two young girls thoughtlessly inhaled. But, seeing the reaction of the two, Batenkaitos' expression, once again, changed into one that was empty and listless.

Ley: "Certainly it doesn't look bad but..... the vessel would be more guaranteeing than the insides, isn't it. On top of that, the Gospel's description hasn't been read either."
Ley: "Louis may not be able to see it but, the child inside us i~s informing us. The one over there, Beatrice-sama, is that, probably. If it's done then both the mind and body will fill, isn't she just the ideal opportunity ~tsu!"

Turning towards the right and speaking, turning towards the left and speaking, Batenkaitos exchanged words as if he was not talking within his self's own chest, but with someone as if he could clearly see outside.
It seemed, as if he was conversing with someone else present within himself.

No, the truth is, that was possible.
Within the ?Name? eating blasphemer, Ley Batenkaitos, present were an innumerable amount of souls.
Then, it may be possible for him to converse with them, or even properly discuss.
If that was so, only then could his conversation with himself be somehow understood.

Beatrice: "Can you move, I suppose, pipsqueak?"

Felt: "Ah? Right back at you, I hope you aren't scared, little girl."

Calling each other out, Beatrice and Felt exchanged a few words. Glancing into the eyes of each other, they confirmed? that the fighting? spirit of neither of them had been shattered.
Felt slightly snorted her nose, and then glanced towards the edge of the open plaza. Beatrice confirmed the presence there, and reckoned their intents.

Beatrice: "......Now on, they will be coming after Betty, I suppose. They'll be confined, in fact."

Felt: "You'll be stopping them? If it's hurdling then I'd be....."

Beatrice: "You cannot have an idiotic expectation like making him vomit twice, I suppose. On top of that, regardless of determination, it's something Betty cannot use. You must do it."

Upon Beatrice's proposal, Felt showed an expression drowned in thought. But, the next moment, she raised her eyebrows and rotated her neck, swiping through her blonde hair, she let out a voice saying "Ah!".
And, she pointed her fist towards Beatrice.

Felt: "Don't fall through, little girl."

Beatrice: "You too, I suppose, pipsqueak."

Nothing in particular was returned to the pointed fist, they only exchanged insults preceding the accepted decisive battle.
While Beatrice and the other's conversation met its end, almost at the same time, Batenkaitos' self-discussion came to an end. Beatrice did not have the confidence, to collide head-on with the combat power that had slashed down and defeated Dynas and Otto.

Ley: "Well, have your preparations been complete~d, Beatrice-sama~?"

Beatrice: "If the answer is they haven't and you'll offer deferment for that, then that is the answer, in fact. But, if that isn't the case, then there's no point in that question, I suppose."

Ley: "That's exactly how it is. Hm, well then, once again?? let's eat!"

From the other corner, with his eyes locked with Beatrice's, Batenkaitos flew straight towards Beatrice. His velocity, was not of the level of the nightmarish threat that had been witnessed earlier. Regardless, it was sufficiently threatening to Beatrice. Her disadvantage at close combat remained unchanged.
That's why, as an expert of Yin magic, it was a convention to not clash head-on.

Ley: "Ta~ke, thi~s??!"

Right before Beatrice, the body of Batenkaitos, who had his hands on ground, rotated vertically. The swinging launched heel drew close to right overhead of Beatrice, and the sharp strike pierced into the crown of her head.

Beatrice: "That won't happen, in fact."

??Right beforehand, Beatrice's body, once again, tilted backwards thanks to the aerial force of the kick. It was the result of letting the effect of ?Murak?, which had been invoked earlier, to continue.
With her body angled backwards, Beatrice then jumped straight up at that point. Freed from the effect of gravity, freed from the effect of weight, the young girl softly levitated.
Folding her dress' skirt adroitly, Beatrice's body floated in the wind, moving about.

Ley: "Magnificently done! Howeve~r, the coping is sweet!"

Batenkaitos, with his tongue stretched out, reached the spot of landing, and without waiting for her descent, went towards the mid-air Beatrice and tried to catch her.
With the vigour and accuracy of a bird of prey capturing its prey, those fingers reached? for Beatrice. However, at the same time, it was also the proof of the opponent having ascent to mid-air, where there was no way to escape.

Above the remaining count of exercising magic being possible, this was an illustrious focus for striking. Beatrice pointed her palm towards Batenkaitos, who was advancing from below, and invoked the magic she had been utmost accustomed to, throughout her life of four hundred years, and this one year. Namely??,

Beatrice: "Shamak!!"

Magic Stone shattered in her pocket, while following Beatrice's chant, black haze effused?? the leaping Batenkaitos met with it straight with his head, and got caged within a world of incomprehension.

Ley: "A~rgh??!?"

The black haze reached through, and Batenkaitos' body fell onto the cobblestone, defenseless. He was supposed to be in a state where he was incapable of doing anything till it shook off but, Shamak's effect was not so lasting.
The card left with Beatrice now?? with the remaining one Magic Stone that could be utilised, if she were to land a fatal blow, he would not be able to take it. That is why, this was the moment of choice for Beatrice.

Ley: "A~h! Aren't you doing it, Beatrice-sama ~tsu. As if, you are fighting just like that person..... Did you receive influence or somethi~ng!?"

Shaking off Shamak, Batenkaitos showed his fangs, turning his body. Looking through the plaza, his eyes were directly upon Beatrice, as if fixed.
That is why, even after seeing his influence upon her tough fighting form, he did not realise how immense of a meaning it held.

Beatrice: "Here, lavishly feast upon the last Magic Stone, in fact!"

Shaking free from her sentiment, Beatrice pointed her palm towards Otto, who was lying down, with his

legs rolling up. Using the magical power of the final Magic Stone, a healing wave was directed towards the wounds of Otto's legs.
It was far from healing it completely, but still, it just had receded the hopeless pain. The rolled down Otto, who was in tears, coughed violently mingled with sobs and groans.

Ley: "So useless, now, what will happen by reviving?"

Beatrice: "This will happen, in fact!"

Beatrice yelled the consequence of her action at Batenkaitos, who was laughing, saying that she had wasted her card.
The instant after he furrowed his eyebrows at her caustic words, at the rear of Batenkaitos' legs, something snapped its teeth. As fangs thrust deep into his left leg, Batenkaitos' stance crumbled.
Instantly looking down at his leg, seeing that, Batenkaitos widened his eyes.

Ley: "Ha~h!?"

Surprised by the thing beyond understanding, what was present there was a Water Dragon bathing in blood.
With its neck stretched out, the Water Dragon, having rushed madly across the cobblestone, crunched Batenkaitos. The Water Dragon, which had once been cornered into being unable to battle, was persisting to its final willpower.

Of the five Magic Stones, this is how the third one had been utilised.
The first one for the intense Ul Minya, which was unable to be completed, the second one for an urgent evasion through the use of Murak, the third one used for the recovery of the dying Water Dragon before the invocation of Murak.
The fourth one for using Shamak, and the fifth one for taking care of Otto's pain.

That is how Beatrice's five cards, her five Magic Stones for attaining victory, had been utilised.

Otto: "??A~h! Ithurtsithurts, it hu~rts!"

Crying such that his throat was seemingly going to explode, Otto, who had hid his call for the Water Dragon in his shriek, having fulfilled his role, now, finally, screamed for his own suffering.
Otto is truly sharp in things like this, the moment after he had received Beatrice's treatment, he immediately understood what he was supposed to do under the current situation. Only he was capable of serving as the internal affairs official of the Emilia camp, who were often unwillingly dragged out to the battlefield.

Beatrice: "Well done, I suppose, this is your vocation, in fact!"

Otto: "I don't really understand but I'm not happy to hear that!"

That was the response Otto gave, in tears, to Beatrice's unusual compliment. And then, before the eyes of the two, Batenkaitos, who had been crunched upon by the Water Dragon, tugged it to the ground and threw it down, and somehow unfastening its fangs, tried to stand up.
However, their reactions were just before the trump card made it in time.

Felt: "??Preparations, all set. You worked hard, little girl."

A voice elated with success echoed, and the rear of the Meteor knocked the ground, generating a particularly loud noise.
The staff, fabricated to deceive as if it was the back of a cesspool, its tip was pointed towards Batenkaitos by Felt. In her hands, the Meteor got tinged by faint light, and its after-effect blew off its package.

With the white package having come off, the slender white staff was revealed from within.
Its handle was long enough to qualify being the length of a spear, with no exquisite designs, or any eye-catching mechanisms.
It could be said that its dedicated utility and structure was, truly reflecting its creator's spirit.

The very spirit of the ?Witch? Echidna, who sought no further value of a device any more than what it was supposed to possess as that device.

Beatrice: "Mother....."

They truth is, Beatrice had never seen Echidna use the staff. Even still, she was aware of its purpose, and its might.
To pester the Divine Dragon Volcanica?? to think it was a weapon, capable of obstructing even the Divine Dragon.

With that being said, there are some conditions to its usage.
Either fulfilling those conditions could be difficult, or there could be problems with the user, so clearly showing all of its limitless specs was arduous??.

Felt: "A~ll right, the power which connected to even Reinhardt, have a taste and see~!"

With the condition fulfilled, if Felt still had stock of Mana, the expected amount should be sufficient.
Sucking out Mana from the user, Meteor limitlessly continued to drain power, and the radiance lighting at its stip had its aim set upon Batenkaitos.

Ley: "??~tsu."

Even Batenkaitos was unable to prevent the might from coming down upon him.
Judging that there was a possibility of it proving to be fatal, Batenkaitos instantaneously attacked the snout of the Water Dragon constraining his leg, and the moment its fangs loosened, he unbound his legs, and flew, while carrying the gash.
At that moment, the Meteor twinkled conspicuously and potently.

Felt: "Go?? ~hk!!"

Light distended at Meteor's tip, and the corona was fired towards Batenkaitos.
Batenkaitos, who had escaped instantaneously from the restraint of the Water Dragon, somehow rolled away from its path with his injured leg. At the same pace, the light missed its aim, and collided with the Water Dragon?? at that instant, its trajectory warped. The light drew a complex trajectory, and approached Batenkaitos.

Ley: "Wha?? ~tsu!?"

With his self escaping from the chasing light bullet, Batenkaitos raised his voice. At the same pace, with carriage and jumping of his sharp body, he got out of the trajectory of the light bullet progressively getting closer.
However, it was futile. Even if Batenkaitos escaped away, rolled away, leapt away, the light bullet drew arcs, drew circles, inched closer, and aimed for a direct hit.

That was the greatest power of the Magic Weapon ?Meteor?, created by Echidna.
Once it had set its aim, it functioned so that it kept track of it.

The weapon created by Echidna to ?Pester? the Divine Dragon Volcanica. If Echidna was truly serious regarding it, and wanted to engineer a device solely for the purpose of ?Pestering?, it is obvious she would not allow for any compromises in it.
Henceforth, that magic tool was, incapable of missing its aim, did not let its aim escape, and became a weapon whose hit always landed.

Ley: "Nuu, ~tsugh..... Then, how about this!?"

No matter how much he ran, the unbound light bullet continued its pursuit, and with some observations cooking up, Batenkaitos launched his counterattack. An upsurge of magical power?, and Batenkaitos' environs froze.
Various levitating icicles formed, with their pointed tips facing the light bullet, and the stormy barrage rained upon the corona?? however, that opposition was a mistake.

The moment the icicles came in contact with the corona, they got reduced to mana starting from their tips, and before the could land a hit, they interspersed into smaller fragments and got swallowed up by the light bullet. Furthermore, the light bullet absorbed all of the magical interceptors that drew close, and as that power enlarged its own scale, it continued to approach the enemy.

Ley: "Shit, no way..... no way ~tsu!"

Rolling, somehow getting out of its path, Batenkaitos let out the curse. However, the injury on his left leg was deep, and it did not allow for him to jump completely.
Otherwise, if could be agile enough, it may be possible for him to direct the light bullet towards Beatrice and the rest, or have it aim at Felt herself, but he did not have that much energy left.

The pursuing light bullet traced its path around the rolling Batenkaitos, and disabling the areas through which he could escape, it gradually enveloped the body of ?Gluttony? in its destructive might??,

Ley: "No way, by something that looks so stupid, we will we will??!"
Ley: "Shut your mumbling. Right away, Solar Eclipse should be started."

At the instant of the strike, Batenkaitos raised a wretched voice, which got painted away by, again, a terribly cold voice. And, the light exploded.

"????"

The dazzling corona distended at the core of the open plaza, and gave rise to the largest crater till now. The expanded light blotted the world in white, and the parts which got blotted vanished, as if losing colour.
The open plaza had been hollowed out spherically, and the water flowing in the waterway streamed into it.
However,

???: "Whew, geez. Having an unskilled brother really causes troubles."

Next to the destructive cataclysm, was a shadow peeping at the waterway.
Having lengthened brown hair, it was someone with a body covered in scars. Needlessly to say, the physical traits, were none other than those of the confronting Ley Batenkaitos.
How did he possibly, manage to evade the attack of the light bullet?? however, what was utmost astonishing in this place was not that.

Beatrice: "What does, this mean, I suppose."

Beatrice's words, did not stem from the confound of the attack not striking.
First of all, the attack failing to strike was not the problem. As the light bullet was supposed to strike Batenkaitos, and nothing or nobody aside from Batenkaitos.

That is why, it was obvious? that it would not strike the muscular and brawny giant man, who had his back turned towards them. The problem was from just where had that man appeared from.

Otto: "Is that..... ?Gluttony??"

Said Otto, raising his agonized face and glancing at the same. Though she wanted to deny it, Beatrice, right now, did not have any words for that. At the gaze of the silent Beatrice and the others, the giant man abruptly turned back.

The one there was the giant man, with a grim countenance, which resembled yet did not match well with Batenkaitos.
With an appearance that suggested he was close to his forties, there were no parts of him that even slightly overlapped with that blasphemer. In front of Beatrice, who narrowed her eyes, that giant man put his hand on his chin,

???: "There is no need to make such a puzzled face. We just, did this."

And, saying with feminine words, contradicting his appearance, the man relaxedly sliced away his long hair with his sword. As the chopped off strands of hair fell to the ground, Beatrice understood how the light bullet had been evaded.

The Meteor's tracking functioned till it has established contact with its target.
That was its power. Even if it came in contact with a single portion of the? body, its might would be sufficient to amass the whole body. That point had been used in inverse.

The man?? perhaps Batenkaitos had, chopped off his hair, and made it seem to the light bullet that it had "come in contact with the body". And, fleeing from the attack's span with all of his strength, he had managed to evade the detriment.

By nature, for determining the Meteor's target, it was necessary to align it towards what would become the target and ?Aim?.
Though it was best to connect to the target's Od or Gate, but in this case, being utilised as an emergency measure, it got applied to Batenkaitos' hair, that had fallen amidst the battle. Result of which, the light bullet strayed towards the decoy of the hair.

"????"

Thinking that much, Beatrice gnashed her teeth at how unfavourable the situation was.
She had not expected, at all, that the trump card, Meteor, would get dodged through such a way. Her Magic Stones had been used up, the only one left with her now was the one she wanted to save for Puck. Otto and the other men could no longer fight, and Felt too, who had gotten the bulk of her Mana drained out by the Mana, had crumbled, breathing hoarsely.

There was nothing left that she could do now?? though that idea came up in her mind, Beatrice horizontally shook her head.
It would be better to die rather than accept defeat. Just as Subaru found a way out of even the most hopeless of situations, her self must do the same.

That is why, Beatrice raised her face, and set her eyes upon the man.
Facing the gaze, Batenkaitos rounded his eyes. He then put one hand on his hip, and covered his face with his other palm. And,

???: "Nice, how nice, isn't it nice, certainly it is nice, perhaps it is nice, possibly it nice, because it is probably nice..... we too, we too, see the value of ?Eating? you."

Beatrice: "??~hk."

Before Beatrice could rebuke what babbling she had heard, Batenkaitos' body started to change. His bones distorted, creating a particular sound, with blood gushing out that was painful to even look at, the body of the giant man wilted.

Shedding blood from the newly created wounds, regaining the form of a young boy, was Batenkaitos, breathing hoarsely.
Batenkaitos' whole body was being wounded, however, he continued to express his insane smile.
?Gluttony?, looking towards this side while ringing his lowered throat, spread his two arms, in seemingly? happiness.

Louis: "Our name is, Witch Cult Sin Archbishop representing ?Gluttony?, Louis Arneb."

Beatrice: "Louis.....?"

Ley Batenkaitos, that was supposed to be his name.

Without reading the intention behind suddenly giving a different name for himself, Beatrice furrowed her eyebrows. And, stitching that gap of confusion, Batenkaitos, with just his right leg, powerfully kicked the ground.
Beatrice toughened up her body, observing what he was going to do but, ?Gluttony? flew to the edge of the plaza, recovering the tattered cloth that had fallen there, and wore it, as if hiding his scarred skin.
Above that,

Louis: "Unfortunately, that's all for today. As both Ley and Roy are too exhausted. Any further will cause hindrances in giving birth. Let's meet again, cute young miss."

Beatrice: "??! Do you think, you will escape, I suppose!"

Louis: "Please stop acting strong. Though ?Eclipse? cannot be handled decently in this body, it can still at least completely annihilate. The reason that won't be done, is because the dinner table isn't prepared."

Batenkaitos shook his head and pointed his finger towards Beatrice, who tried to step ahead.
A terribly feminine gesture?? no, the truth is, the current Batenkaitos may possibly be a woman. At that part, there was the essence of something difficult to understand.
Batenkaitos nodded at Beatrice, who stopped her feet with unpleasant feelings and wariness.

Louis: "Both Ley of Gourmet and Roy of Bizarre Eating know nothing. After all. A meal is not "what you ate". It's "who you ate with"."

"????"

Louis: "Well then. Next time, come to meet us along with the person dear to you."

Beatrice: "Wai??"

Wait, just when she was about to call that out, Batenkaitos slid into the shadow of the open plaza and disappeared. Going after him was something Beatrice could not do, in this situation full of the injured.
Following him, and diving into a situation where ?Gluttony? was at a clear advantage would be reckless as well.

There no longer was anything that could be done, now that even the trump card Meteor had failed.

Beatrice: "......It's about doing it, in fact."

Enduring her desire to speak out, Beatrice glanced around.
The pain had eroded away much of Otto's consciousness, the mercenaries and Felt's attendant had fainted, swooned. Felt was making a frustrated expression, but she was giving the impression that she could collapse at any moment.

And Beatrice, too, was no exception.
In accordance with Kiritaka's desperate appeal, its completion with no deaths, should only that be accepted as the result of Beatrice's participation in the battlefield.
Regardless??.

Beatrice: "It seems Subaru cannot even be asked for a hug confidently, I suppose....."

In the prey that was allowed to escape?? in Ley Batenkaitos, slept the soul of a young girl.
Ascertaining the surety in that, how could it be conveyed to Subaru.

With terribly heartbreaking sorrow, Beatrice turned and stepped towards Felt, calling out to her faintly.

Ironically, the fight of this battlefield came to an end with the withdrawal of the Sin Archbishop??,

Only a few battlefields now bequeathed in the Watergate City.

Arc 5, Chapter 71: "Sword Demon Vs Former Sword Saint"

by admin - Wednesday, July 03, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/07/03/arc-5-chapter-71-sword-demon-vs-former-sword-saint/

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Translated by :

- u/Ringo_17

Proofread by :

- u/Nanashi-tan

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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The various battles across the span of the city, were gradually meeting their end.

The destruction caused in the parts which had been turned into battlefields was immense, and the city's faculty had been greatly impacted.
This very fact, which conveyed the extent of the catastrophe that had occurred in this city of Priestella?? could be said to be the result, of the malice brought by the Witch Cult into the city.

Within the situation of such destruction continuing to rise and be inflicted, there existed a single battlefield with a different hair colour.
Rather, it may not even be appropriate to call it a battlefield.

Only the solemn sound of swords clashing echoed, with each of the swiping swords aiming for the other's life.
Present there was only the tactless wish of two swordsmen, with the tips of their swords pointing towards each other, shredding everything unneeded, with their, what could be at least said, true desire upon them.

"????"

The swords' blade continued to gleam under the moonlight, and the swordsmen continued to exchange love over clashes of steel.
Sharp reports, scattering sparks, the grey and red hair continued to dance under the rays of the moon.
It was a swords dance so magnificent and polished, it would eventually steal the glance of all audiences, or rob them of their hearts, it was such that even the Sword God would ululate.

The unimaginably lustrous movement of the longsword, as if blading through water.
Bouncing back, the twin swords swept through the breeze, striking each other as if lightning.

"????"

As if dancing a performance of reciprocated fixation, the swords of the two continued to intertwine with each other.
Wilhelm accepted the sword slash of the one in front of him, of Thearesia, who was still as beautiful as when she had been young, from the front, bathed in the sword slash with the same vigour, and felt grief at the reaction he felt in his palm.

Boiling up from the depths of his body, was the acclamation of the heart of his immature self, despite his age.

??He was getting excited.
??He was getting delighted.
??He was blooming.

With honesty, must he affirm.
The Sword Demon Wilhelm? thought back to the days before, and yearned for the present where he could, once again, connect with his youthful wife. His heart had been scorched by that.
His mind was now occupied by the thought, by how much he desired and how he would be willing to abandon everything, if only this exchange of swords, this tryst, just like this, never came to an end.

Wilhelm: "But??"

Such greed was blasphemy, it was unforgivable for him to even bear it.

Blasphemy, to the untiring days the Sword Demon Wilhelm had dedicated to the sword.
Blasphemy, to his oath of taking away the sword, from the Sword Saint Thearesia, once he put her to defeat.
Blasphemy, to his feelings for utmost dedication to his master, as a swordsman.

The love that lit up the chest of Wilhelm van Astrea, following it detachedly, would be blasphemy to everything that was living in this world at this moment.

??Henceforth, he must not keep settling it for later.
??Regardless of how much these moments, had proven to be a delightful paradise for the Sword Demon.

Thearesia: "????"

Wilhelm: "Hiy, a~a~a~a~!!"

A mute slash of the sword, like a storm, swept through, to which he responded with his own barrage of innumerable sword strikes.

With long, deep red hair swaying, the movements of Thearesia, who was clad in white clothes, had no faltering.
Like a leaf that had fallen into a stream, the lethal sword was fired from the interior of her completely natural stance.

Up, down, left, right, her sword strikes had no particular angle.
However, as the attacks overlapped, Wilhelm felt something be slightly off. And the convincing sense of something being off, was something he felt also in her responses.

Thearesia van Astrea's ability as a swordsman was exceptional.
That was something, in those days, which were the golden days of Wilhelm's physicality, he had rivalled once, which lay unquestionably in the territory of pure swordsmanship.

Right now, that skill continued to bode in Thearesia's blade, as she stood in front of him, silent.
The art of a Sword Saint, to mercilessly kill adversaries, that brought both relief and envy to guardians.

??However, her current self and her self of those days, had a realm of decisive difference in between.

Wilhelm: "??Light."

As the twin sword and longsword collided face to face and sparks scattered around, remarked the Sword Demon.
Locking swords, Wilhelm stared intensely into the blue eyes on the other side of the sword's blade.

Wilhelm: "Without even a need to compare, it's light, Thearesia. ??Your sword, which dropped its heavy load, is it something so light."

Thearesia: "????"

A certain tone, those words mixed with disappointment, however, the eyebrows of her beautiful face did not even twitch.
Thearesia, with perfectly clear eyes, lacking all emotion, was returning a look to Wilhelm.
No refutation, no revolt, they did not even have enmity.

She used to be a woman who used to often smile, often get angry, often sulk.

She used to be a woman beautiful like the blade when she was silent, but the times of her being silent were almost none.
She used to be a woman like a spherical flower, blooming under the sun.

??So, her state now, was nothing but tragic.

Thearesia: "????"

Present there was only the shell of his silent wife.
As he exchanged slashes of swords with the figure he had continued to love, Wilhelm's heart shattered into fragments.

Springing as if having returned to the days of the past, waning as if understanding the days of the past could not be returned to, casting aside the days of the past as if having a dream like the bubble on the surface.

??For fifteen years, what kind of a life must Thearesia have lead.

When he thought back to the time when he had lost her, and dedicated himself to vengeance, the incurable wound on Wilhelm's shoulder ascertained itself.

A wound inflicted by the ?Divine Protection of Death God?, never disappears.

It was a Divine Protection aside from the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint? bestowed upon Thearesia by the Sword God, in order to bring an end to those days of war.

A single cut could produce a river of blood, just a few slashes could pile up a mountain of corpses. Henceforth, there lay no necessity of superficial cleverness and artfulness, for her, to cut off the thread of life.

Indeed, the only way of defeating Thearesia, was through swordsmanship superior to that of hers. Wilhelm of the past had shred himself to his extreme limits, with such austerity that converted his own self into a sword, continued till the very end, had he really managed to accomplish that.

There was no way of defeating Thearesia, who, too, got her abilities boosted to their very limit through the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint?.
And now, having exchanged swords with her youthful self, Wilhelm understood.

??The abilities with the sword were transcendent, and lay in the territory of dexterity. However, there was one enormous shadow upon that swordsmanship.

Wilhelm: "Even if you felt troubled before holding the sword, you no longer felt troubled after holding it. You were a woman, who knew that even better than myself."

Thearesia: "????"

Wilhelm: "Do you remember the day we parted. At the occasion of the Great Subjugation, you shook me up, as I stopped you, and inflicted an incurable wound upon this shoulder. ??The words of that time, I have not forgotten even a single one of them."

She did not answer. He did not demand it.

This was just, Wilhelm's ceremony, looking back at that day.

Along with the pain of this shoulder, the memory etched to it was also resuscitated.
Whilst she commenced with the Great Subjugation, with the journey she could possibly never return from, Thearesia had literally let go off herself from Wilhelm, and had said.

??When I return, that day, please let me hear the words I could not hear.

Wilhelm: "I have come here, to fulfill the promise of that day??!"

The twin sword roared, and Thearesia's longsword strummed.
The former Sword Saint swung the blade utilising that recoil but, Wilhelm, without even looking at that counterattack, dodged by fully reading through its trajectory.

He knew it.
Where the blade was going to come, enough that he loved it.

Wilhelm: "Ru, o~o~o~o~!"

The habits were the same. The techniques were the same.
Scorched onto his soul, within the austerity of his former self, when he shred himself, he had painted them in his mind, the sword techniques of the Sword Saint he was in pursuit of.
Defeating her, swearing to take it away from her, reaching that region, he yearned for, he yearned for, and they got scorched onto his soul.

It was the same, along with her figure, which warmed his chest.

Thearesia: "????"

Even against Wilhelm's appeal, the crimson beautiful face did not flinch, even slightly.
As the sword aimed for its catch soundlessly, silently, emotionlessly, Wilhelm shot it down altogether.

He loved it so much, that he knew it even with his eyes closed.
That is precisely why, now he chose to love it without closing his eyes.

Wilhelm: "??~hk."

??Above, returned the slash, exchanged swipes, raised the blade, slashed the sword diagonally.

Accepting the blade raining down upon him, and sinking the counter attacking strike, dodging the swipe then released, gyrating his body around the leaping point if the sword, both, who had slashed diagonally across each other's shoulders, then entwined their swords as the key performer, and shifted the

counterattack.

Surpassing the blows with an elegant safeguard, impossibility arose in Thearesia's swordsmanship.
Thearesia, who had accumulated the blows, retreated, and Wilhelm plunged into that gap without any hesitation.

"????"

For a single moment, emotion arose in Thearesia's eyes, who was looking at the Sword Demon.
No, it was his misapprehension. His effeminate heart, had pulled out the memory of a situation of the past, exactly the same as this.

??Within the sights of abundant citizens, Wilhelm had struck and defeated the lead actor of the ceremony, the ?Sword Saint?, and robbed being a swordsman from the youth named Thearesia.

The return of that situation, exactly the same, as this one.
Then, the conclusion too, would be, again.

Wilhelm: "Thearesia?? ~hk!!"

Wilhelm attacked the longsword, flying towards her bosom.
The Sword Demon hoisted up his twin sword against it, and unable to bear the load, there occurred a fissure in the blade. But, at the same time the longsword repelled it by turning right overhead, and half of Thearesia's body largely opened up.

Drawing a large semi circle, Wilhelm's twin sword made its return.
Since the origin of this tryst and till this point, Thearesia, who was right in front of his eyes, produced the greatest gap yet. With the muscles of his arms swelling up, he gripped the handle of the sword, to the point it was creaking.
And wielding the attack with all of his might, now must he put an end to this inconceivable reunion??.

??He tried to, put an end to it.

Wilhelm: "??~hk!"

Violent passion packed his throat, with countless facial expressions floating in his eyes.
Her face when crying, her face when angry, her face when sulking, her face when smiling, floating were the beloved expressions, of the same woman.

Shaking that off completely, Wilhelm shot down the blade.
The sword slice dashed, and straight from the head to the torso of the woman??.

"????"

Before the slash struck, a person's shadow appeared at the corner of Wilhelm's eyes.
At the utmost limit of concentration, it was a fluctuation in his consciousness originally impossible.

However, that was all there was to it. Without any kind of influence, it was nothing beyond he could simply ignore.

As a swordsman, risking his life, he must cross swords at the border of life and death, outsiders could never create any room of doubt in that.
Devoting his everything to the existence in front of his eyes, he fulfilled his purpose with a sword slash befitting of the Sword Demon.
That was supposed to be what he was going to do. That was supposed to be what he could do.

??If only the person's shadow reflected, had not been that of a person of red.

???: "??Father?"

There was distance in between.
The doubtful voice was not at a distance that its echo would reach Wilhelm.
Even still, he felt as if the voice was whispering right into his ear.

Looking towards him, was a man with blue eyes and red hair.
Heinkel Astrea, was observing the final moments of this battle.

Simply dazed, at the conclusion of the deadly swordsmanship of his father, Wilhelm, and his mother, Thearesia, as they aimed for each other's life.

??At that moment, the glint of his sword became dull.

Wilhelm: "??~hk."

He was supposed to have had fired a decisive strike.
Pouring himself into the trends of the fight, a sword strike that was supposed to bring an end to this long dream?? that glint dulled, giving birth to a scope for counter attacking.

"????"

Thearesia bent her body immensely, and reversing her wrist, the returning longsword rejected away the twin sword.
The sound of the two blades colliding echoed, and she disarrayed down the strike, that had promised to wound her, with her heart, technique, physique, and distanced his purpose further away from fulfillment, as sparks scattered around.

Wilhelm: "Kh..... ~hk."

??Why, did he notice.

Receiving the blow of the sword fluttering in the wind, sidestepping its weight, Wilhelm clashed head-on

with his emerging doubts with all of his heart.
If he had not noticed Heinkel's existence, or if he had ignored that existence, if he had concentrated on Thearesia, he would not be in this unsightly shape he was in now.

He had determined to dedicate his entire life, and take Thearesia away from the Sword God.
The result of that exaggerated decision, did it have to be this predicament.

Once again, started the chaining of the sound of a light sword strike.
However, the blade that had formerly turned transparent after the exchange of blows, that swords dance had already been lost.
Foreign impurities had intermingled.

Using all kinds of strengths of all possible limits, further enhancing the purity of the blade, had all been lost by the edge of the sword, which was supposed to have had swung only twice, by a single appearance on the other side.
What was left was a single strike by the aged Sword Demon at his beloved wife, in front of their son.

Without becoming a sword, without living as a Sword Demon, he was far too immature, far too deficient, as a father, as a husband, as a swordsman, as a man.
Eventually being rendered incapable of a single swing, he realised his immaturity.
He was unable to stop evil from mixing, with the essence of his swordsmanship that was pouring into the sword.

Henceforth, this result may have been inevitable.

Wilhelm: "??~hk!?"

Shooting down the two blades, he, immediately afterwards, jolted the longsword.
Receiving the power of the sword strike with stupid earnesty, and the strengths were being compared in the gap created by Thearesia stopping her legs-- the moment he overcame the resistance and stepped ahead, the slender body in front of his eyes rotated, creating a vacuum around.
A leg appeared before him, halfway, and a gap was born.

"????"

Immediately afterwards, sense of demise approached him.
He received the extremely powerful sword slash, whose coldness could not be questioned, by gyrating his sword towards the rear with not even a millisecond of delay.
Without being able to stop the shattering attack, his sword, that had accepted it, encroached deeply into his own shoulder. Stepping as if on a foot bellow, the body that had bent forward spouted blood. His bones creaked, his muscles palpitated a lighting in his brain.

The right blade had accepted it. The left blade still remained.
With blood flowing out of the edge of his mouth, Wilhelm, with his right blade, as if carrying it on his

shoulder, once again deflected Thearesia's longsword upwards.

Without any inaccuracies, Thearesia's longsword was raised overhead.
At the same time, the sword fell out of Wilhelm's right hand. He did not mind it. If his right hand was now free, he must dedicate all his strength into the remaining left blade and strike.

With his left blade, he smashed the blow into Thearesia, behind.
His right drew a trajectory, and pierced upright into Thearesia??,

"????"

Sparks scattered.
And a sound echoed, a high-pitched report.

The weight of the blade in his hand was halved, and Wilhelm, with his own errors, who had countlessly recognised his own weakness, once again noticed it.

The moment he struck Thearesia with the attack, Wilhelm chose to act unconsciously.
The blade gripped in his left, to strike it by rotating it towards the left or towards the left.

A slight, mere, meagre difference.
But at the same time, for those two, who had attained the extremity of swordsmanship, it was a lethal variation.

If he chose velocity, left, or if he opted for strength then right.
After getting caught up in that choice, if he realised that he had erred in that action, things could still be helped.

Wilhelm, deciding whether or not he should look at Thearesia straight up, in that single instant, lost his way.

"????"

Accepting the Sword Demon's attack, was a single swing released by Thearesia's grip.
Catching hold of it while it was mid-air, Thearesia cut into the trajectory of the attack.
The moment she accepted the sword, and engaged with it while standing still, she swung it down with immense force. That cracked the belly of Wilhelm's sword, and rejected the steel without facing any resistance.

The longsword fragmented his sword, and Wilhelm perceived the loss of his special weapon. Instantly gripping to the handle of the fractured sword, he prepared for the following attack, which was in his instinct as a swordsman.

However, that preparedness would bear fruit, if only he differed in purity as a swordsman.

In that respect, her self, in front of his eyes, was the worst possible opponent.

The Sword Demon who lost his sword, and the ?Sword Saint? loved by the Sword God.
That difference was clear, there was no necessity for mentioning it.

??In the juncture when he forgot to even blink his eyes, Wilhelm saw the longsword pierce through his right leg.

"????"

It was a sword so beautiful, he almost got charmed by it.

The blade penetrated into the joint of the aged swordsman's right leg, and the edge of the sword was contaminated by minimal blood.
Without any unneeded destruction, right through the gap between muscle fibres and nerves, taking away only the functionality of the leg, it was the excellence of preeminent swordsmanship.

The lack of resistance was such that it seemed as if the blade was only swiping through water.
With that performance being held upon his own right leg, Wilhelm's back shuddered.

Was that feeling admiration, vexation, infatuation, the person concerned did not know, which one complied.
What he did know, was only the truth of his defeat being thrust into? his face.

Wilhelm: "Gh, ugh..... ~hk."

As the blade hid in his right leg and slid through, the height of his knees was divided.
Just as when the longsword had pierced in, as his flesh was drawn out soundlessly, Wilhelm groaned at the delayed pain and crumbled down.
As blood flooded out of his leg's wound, his lower body was rendered powerless.

If the power of the ?Divine Protection of Death God? was invoked, any type of healing magic may he used, but it will not heal. If the wielder of the Divine Protection was close, then the closer the distance, the more it's effectivity increased, no matter how slight the wound, it became a curse that eroded away life, and coerced endless bloodshed upon the victim.

"????"

The wound on Wilhelm's right leg, was not so slight to be called a shallow wound. It was a gash that could be life threatening if it was neglected, and the ?Divine Protection of Death God? was obliged to, and refused all recovery.

It seemed as if the deadline for his life, had been set for a period excessively short.

Wilhelm: ".....Regrettable."

As his brain was being scorched by the pain, he leaked out his grief before his anguish.
The sense of pain was stimulating a scream without any interruption, but Wilhelm revealed it on his face only by furrowing his eyebrows and nothing else.

He was not frivolously holding it back, or affixing it to his willpower.
The sharp stimulus upon his body, no matter what, did not let his heart shelter from the shade of darkness.

While despair, despondency?, and his own cowardliness and worthlessness was being scorched into his soul, how much meaning could physical pain hold for this aged swordsman.

"????"

Dropping the sword in his hand, Wilhelm put his hand on the mouth of the wound.
The bleeding was supposed to leak away his life but, the defeated had no intention of maintaining distance without any disgrace. However, according to etiquette, he must not meet his end by something like blood loss.

He had fought as a swordsman, he had opposed as a swordsman, he had been defeated as a swordsman.
Then, the life of the defeated, was to be taken away by the sword of the victor.

Wilhelm: "Thearesia, I am....."

Thearesia: "????"

The female swordsman of crimson, with her longsword on being carried on her shoulder, was looking down towards Wilhelm.
In those eyes, truly, there was no deep emotion present. Without remembering anything till the end, and continuing to not remember anything, she was the death god of the sword who was going to reap Wilhelm's life.

He looked up at the beautiful face, to the point he was fascinated by it.
Thearesia, silently, swung the sword in front of Wilhelm. When that sword would come down, Wilhelm's life, too, would come to an end.
But??,

Wilhelm: "All alone, never.....!"

The moment the longsword descended, Wilhelm extended his right hand. Over there, the fragment of the twin sword?? the sword Thearesia had cast aside, was lying there.
Wilhelm picked it up with his fingers, and floundered, unable to accept the moment of his death, till the end of the end.

His defeat, that remained.
That could not be helped.

But her, now, he must not render Thearesia, her, alone.

Unable to stop his wife, who was being made to swing the sword against her will, he could not allow her to advance towards Crusch, whom he was greatly indebted towards, or Subaru and the rest.
If his life, being burned, was insufficient, then he did not mind the destruction of his soul after death.

??However, the brandish of that resolution was.

Thearesia: "????"

Wilhelm: "Thearesia.....?"

Keeping her sword held tight, Thearesia leapt a great distance backwards.
The blade he held in his right hand, she was a distance that its swipe would not reach her. At a position which Wilhelm, who had his leg injured, would not be able to reach, Thearesia slightly inclined her neck.

Emotionless eyes, seeing a terribly empty colour in them, Wilhelm, for the first time, got frightened.
That fear, was a fear that arose in his instinct, in Wilhelm's instincts as a swordsman.

There lay no necessity to go out of the way and deliver a finishing blow, to a prey bearing fatal injuries.
With the pride of a swordsman lost long ago, there was the judgement which could be passed only by a cool-headed death god.

Wilhelm: "Wait..... Wait, Thearesia!!"

Wilhelm shouted, at the dread of being left behind.
His leg didn’t hurt. Forgetting the pain of his right leg, Wilhelm tried to pursue the distant Thearesia.
However, the pain, or at the very least, the wound, was real. Without any strength, he tumbled. Potently striking his shoulder, the aged swordsman made an expression, conveying how unforgivable this was.

Swinging about her long, red hair, Thearesia became further distant.
Ahead of the path of her self's footsteps, was Heinkel, standing upright.

The longsword, with no decline in fighting spirit hitherto, established him as its next prey.
Slashing the man whom she did not know was her husband, she will next slash the man whom she did not know was her son, for that??.

Wilhelm: "Stop, Thearesia! Do you think that is..... that is forgivable!? Fight with me! Look at me..... at *me*! Look at *me*, at *me*, Thearesia~a~a~a~!!"

With a voice, as if it was bleeding, Wilhelm called Thearesia.
Innumerable times, countless times, that name which he had called in front of her, with the figure he had thought of innumerable times and with the figure that used to be exactly the same innumerable times, the anger instead of the muted love, the insanity instead of ardour, putting all of it into it.

However, the woman did not look back.

Holding tightly the sword where abode the death god, the woman commenced heading towards Heinkel.
Heinkel inhaled at that form stepping up, and was unable to unsheathe the knight sword he had with his hands, that should have been swung.

Heinkel: "W-Wait, I said wait. Y-You..... Thearesia he said, no way? It can't be possible..... It, can't be mother..... ~hk."

Thearesia: "????"

Heinkel: "No, even if it isn't mother..... that's not it! Fa-Father had become like that, so..... shit! What is this! Just what is this, what are you doi~ng!"

Becoming imminent in front of his eyes, was Thearesia of her young days.
That form, and the form of her as a mother within Heinkel, overlapped. He shook his neck horizontally in repudiation, and desperately tried to deny the spectacle in front of his eyes, voicing words he was unable to put a halt to.

His knees sneered, his line of sight disarrayed, and his figure, while holding the sword, too, seemed frail.
Faced with the former ?Sword Saint?, there was not even the slightest chance for him to hold it.

At this rate, unquestionably, Heinkel will get slashed to his death by Thearesia.
Only that was something, which could not be allowed to happen.

Wilhelm: "Thearesia! Here! I am still alive! If you want to kill then kill me first! Heinkel, there's no way you can do it! Right this instant, flee!!"

Supporting himself with the sword, Wilhelm stood up feeling as if he was crunching stones. With no room for grasping his wound, his burden spanned, furthermore, his blood gushed out.
The cobblestone subsequently, after the overflow of fresh blood, turned into the colour of red, and while pulling the thread of that blood, Wilhelm pursued Thearesia's back.

Distant. Too distant.
Slow. Too slow.
Once again, Wilhelm did not make it. Once again, Wilhelm could not reach it.

Wilhelm: "Hugh..... ~hk."

Thearesia: "????"

Thearesia's longsword drew an arc, and the knight sword of Heinkel, who had tugged in his shoulders, accepted it.
With not even the slightest stagnation, and Heinkel's knight sword left his hands too quickly, raising a shrill sound as it bounced on the cobblestone.

Heinkel: "S-Stop..... Please stop, m-mom..... ~hk."

Rendered unarmed, the frightened Heinkel fell on his bottom at that spot. Flailing around his limbs desperately, Heinkel tried to escape, as if crawling.
However, his moving fingers, his terrified heart, Thearesia's emotionless eyes, tied his mind and body to fear, and he was rendered almost completely immobile at the spot.

His throat was parched, he wiped off the heavy amounts of cold sweat he was perspiring, Heinkel made a pallid face.
There had possibly been some incontinence there as well. However?, having been robbed of the composure to be embarrassed at that, Heinkel stared at the tip of the longsword hoisted up.

??As if slicing the moon, the longsword extended straight towards the heavens.

At the brink of his life, Wilhelm witnessed the sight of his wife slash their son to his death in front of his eyes.

He raised his voice. It did not reach.
He stretched his hand. It did not reach.

Wilhelm: "Thearesia??!!"

No strength remained in the merely shouting voice of the Sword Demon, who had been unable to dedicate his everything into the sword.
Heartlessly, the longsword was swung to cut off Heinkel's? life??.

???: "??That's as far as it goes."

That voice suddenly, but distinctly, cut into the tension, which seemed to be stinging.
With a dignified tone and not a single fragment of vacillation in it, it wielded no pardon. Those who heard it were struck with the sense of the presence of an overwhelming existence, and it was only natural to follow its intentions.

Wilhelm, Heinkel, and even Thearesia halted all movement.
Ahead of the line of sight of the three, stood a single youth.

Blazing red hair, like fire, perfectly clear, glittering blue eyes which had captured the sky.
Even while his white outfit bad been contaminated by blood and mud, the figure, standing straight, had no need at all for words to decorate him aside from heroic.

The youth, slowly, continued to advance towards the place.
In that hand, was a scabbard with the engravings of deep wounds, and a knight sword unsheathed from that scabbard.

With the sword blade polished to the point of abnormality, he clutched to the Dragon Sword Reid.

??The voice of the laughter of the Sword God, resonated raucously in the ears of the Sword Demon.

Arc 5, Chapter 72: "Sword Saint Vs Previous Generation Sword Saint"

by admin - Thursday, July 04, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/07/04/arc-5-chapter-72-sword-saint-vs-previous-generation-sword-saint/

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Translated by :

- u/Ringo_17

Proofread by :

- u/Nanashi-tan

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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??The Dragon Sword Reid was a sword with numerous enigmas.

It was certain that, for generations, it was a treasured sword that had given rise to ?Sword Saints? one after another and had been passed down the generations of the Astrea family, but from where that Dragon Sword had been granted to them was something that had not been passed down.
A treasured sword with an obscure past, and on top of that, the shady history of being unable to be unsheathed by anyone except for the ?Sword Saint?. Particularly speaking, even by the ?Sword Saint?, it was capable of being unsheathed only in times necessary.

It was a treasured sword that had descended down upon the Divine Dragon Volcanica, by the first generation ?Sword Saint?, Reid Astrea.
In the past, when dragons had advanced upon in immense numbers, slashing all of them down altogether, was this legendary sword.
Otherwise, it could just be a dull sword, a magical sword which increased its strength by breathing into the enemy's blood.

If we were to speak of its stories, all without any evidence, which seemed like mere fairy tales, there were countless.

Regardless, nothing could be stated clearly, and neither was there any way to confirm anything.
If there was to be a single thing, that could be asserted,

??The Dragon Sword Reid was a supreme sword that could defeat treasured swords, legendary swords, or magical swords of any disposition.
??It was the extremity of the realisation of steel into the sword, there existed no steel surpassing it.

Even for Wilhelm, who had been bestowed upon by the honour of a swordsman, with ?Van?, seeing the uncontaminated white blade, this was only the third opportunity in his entire lifetime.

Wilhelm: "??Reinhardt."

With the jet black scabbard which had engravings carved by the claws of the Dragon in his left, gripping the Dragon Sword with his right hand, was he.
His red hair swinging about in the wind, lording over the situation earnestly with his blue eyes was the current ?Sword Saint? Reinhardt van Astrea, it could be no one else.

Everyone was overwhelmed by the lone majestically standing figure, including Wilhelm.
Inheriting ?Sword Saint?, and becoming the sword of the kingdom as an imperial knight, was his grandson?? this was actually the first time, for Wilhelm to see his form to step into a battlefield.

Losing Thearesia in the Great Subjugation, Wilhelm left the Astrea family. His dispute with his son and grandson from back then, even after fifteen years, still stood, unburied.
Henceforth?, for these past fifteen years, Wilhelm had always been pursuing his wife, and had continued to turn his eyes away from his family. Therefore, whether it was the deterioration of his son, or the growth and accomplishments of his grandson, he had not been witness to anything.

??That is why, right now, he was overwhelmed by Reinhardt's figure.

The one standing there, was the ?Sword Saint?.
An existence blessed with the love of the Sword God, having the ability to unsheathe the greatest sword, standing above the wishes of swordsmen of all dispositions?? that could only be, the ?Sword Saint?.

Seeing that figure, Wilhelm remembered.
He had completely forgotten his pain. What he remembered was a different emotion. The emotion Wilhelm felt when, a long, long time ago, he saw the swords dance of the ?Sword Saint?, of Thearesia.

At that time, Wilhelm felt a distance he would never be able to cover.
A territory he would, by no means, be able to reach and, Wilhelm lamented the trifling nature of his sword talents.
Even still, without crumbling, he swung the sword, he continued swinging it, and finally managed to grasp the edge of that territory with one hand. No distance is too distant, that is what he was supposed to have had proven.

??Such tapered, puny visibility.

The qualities were different. The heights were different. The weights were different. The things were different. Anything and everything was different.
That was not an existence to debate over whether it could be reached, or it could not be reached.
Quite literally, it was an existence in a different dimension itself.

"????"

Thearesia, slowly, lowered the upraised longsword. The sword had been on the verge of slaying Heinkel, but stopped in the face of the newly appeared enemy.
The heartless, moving dead body of Thearesia van Astrea had, already lost the pride of a swordsman, the style of a warrior, anything and everything.

What she had right now, were only the orders of the caster who was moving that dead body with some secret arts.
The optimum judgement for using her, was making her an existence that would be an obstacle.

And if that order prioritized those who could prove to be a threat, her judgement was natural.

Having been robbed away of the ability to continue the battle, awaiting only his demise through blood loss, was the aged swordsman.
Having lost all fighting spirit, unable to even flee, was the deputy commander in only the name.

Both of them, no longer registered as threats or anything such to Thearesia.
Therefore, turning her longsword, tilting her skills as the former ?Sword Saint?, towards the current ?Sword Saint?, was a judgement lacking any doubt.

Wilhelm: "Wait! Thearesia! Look here, at *me*! Thearesia~a~a~!"

Dragging his leg, pulling the thread of blood, cried out Wilhelm.
As if not having heard that cry, Thearesia took no notice of him. As if the exchange of sword slashes till now had all been a lie, she treated him as something? that was not even present?.

It was humiliating. However?, it was even further saddening.
However, he had no time to drown in grief. He would never forgive such stagnation, of his current self.
He must shout, now. He must stop her, now??.

Thearesia: "????"

Ignoring Wilhelm, who had tension in his heart, Thearesia leapt at once and shortened the distance.
In front of the eyes of Reinhardt, who was in front of his eyes, Thearesia cavorted, with her long, red hair.

The longsword sketched a semi-circle, painting an artistic diagonal across Reinhardt?? however, in the gap shorter than the blink of an eye, Reinhardt nullified the sword slash.

Reinhardt, who was positioning himself backwards and sideways, was followed by the tip of the longsword, as if it was a living creature having a definite purpose. As it slashed the atmosphere of its trajectory to its death, even against the proceeding slashes, Reinhardt's complexion did not show the slightest change. Covering halfway of distance, he had not even been grazed.

"????"

Realising how unfavourable her standing position was, Thearesia silently flew towards the front.
Confronting Reinhardt with half of the body exposed, was nothing but suicidal.
Turning back, Reinhardt looked straight at Thearesia, whose longsword had set its aim at his eye.

Exactly behind Reinhardt, was the figure of Heinkel. As if shielding his father, Reinhardt confronted his grandmother. By just that, Wilhelm noticed how the offense and defense just now was for acquiring the standing position.

Heinkel: "Stop it..... what is it, just what is it..... what have I, what have I done.....!"

Making a blue face, clutching his own hair, Heinkel did not notice.
It did not matter, if his own son was standing in front of him before his eyes for protecting him. The preceding truths he had faced, were already overflowing from his heart.
He was not expected to have the ability to overcome the situation. That was how it was from the beginning.

That is why, all he could do was to raise his voice.

Wilhelm: "Stop, Reinhardt! Look at me! Thearesia is in the middle, of fighting with me! You are not permitted to cut into a battle, between two swordsmen!"

"????"

Reinhardt glanced sideways towards Wilhelm, who had cried out that they were still in the midst of battle. With his blue eyes, he looked at Wilhelm's right leg, whose bleeding yet continued.

Reinhardt: ".....With that leg, you cannot continue to battle."

Wilhelm: "What do you mean? if my leg can't move! For grasping the sword, these hands are still alive..... if my hands die then my mouth! If my mouth will be ineffective then my soul! As long as I've not lost my life, I have not been defeated!"

Reinhardt: "If you've not lost life..... then, what do you make of her, who is in front of your eyes?"

Wilhelm: "??~hk."

At Reinhardt's question, Wilhelm's throat choked.
Thearesia, expressionless, with emotionless eyes, with sheer silence, was looking at her opponents.
Keeping her stance at the corner of his eyes, Reinhardt sought an answer from Wilhelm.

Reinhardt: "A mere dead body without any self-awareness moving in accordance with the wishes of the caster?? I do not believe there is any meaning in fiddling around with the deceased, and involving the styles of a swordsman."

Wilhelm: "Styles of a swordsman you say..... ~hk!"

Seeking to duel with a moving dead body, was foolishness.
Wilhelm was unable to refute, Reinhardt's reasoning. It was the truth that Thearesia had already distanced away from Wilhelm, and the battle had come to an end.
No matter how much Wilhelm may cry out, the swordsman's wish shall not be granted.

On top of that, the current Wilhelm could not loudly proclaim himself to be a swordsman either.
Standing with support of the sword, the present scenario for his desire where he excused steel for words?? within that Wilhelm van Astrea, there was still the pride and dignity of the Sword Demon left.

There was nothing like that. He was empty.

Reinhardt: "??The deceased do not move. The deceased have no future. I will not forgive, that absurdity."

Stated Reinhardt in front of Wilhelm, who had lost his voice.
His eyes had averted away from his grandfather, and now they closely observed only the dead body of his grandmother, standing in front of his eyes.

In a gentle motion, the Dragon Sword Reid was held to aim for her eyes.
Oddly, that stance was identical to that of Thearesia's, as she bore the longsword on her shoulders, as if a reflection in a mirror.

"????"

The depressedly weeping sword blade of the Dragon Sword, was visible as shining, shimmering immensely.
That was the ovation of the sword. At having attained a chance to be swung, it felt deep emotions, felicity, and at having to oppose the one who was its former bearer, the supreme blade wore weeping yet delight in its voice.

Reinhardt: "????"
Thearesia: "????"

Soundlessly, the blue eyes of the two swordsmen, intertwined.
The ?Sword Saint?, with the sword wielded, did not offer his name as he originally should have.

It was natural. As it sought an opponent with the value that they would pay back the pride of a swordsman, and the style of a warrior.

Against an opponent who was not like that, against an opponent who did not have the value to be equal, it was not going to be conducted.

The atmosphere froze, the world was crushed by the tension possessing colour and weight.
Feeling his entire body get heavier, dominated by sense of compactness, Wilhelm opened his mouth.

Unaware of the words he should pronounce, he was compelled by the sense of exasperation stemming from him feeling that he must say something.
??Ironically enough, that acted like a signal for the two swordsmen.

Wilhelm: "Stop?? ~hk!"

His voice did not reach.
Leaving behind his voice, the two swordsmen clashed.

"????"

Stepping ahead, swinging, Thearesia's longsword let out a roar and slashed through the atmosphere, and her greatest sword slash, at the perfect angle, assailed upon Reinhardt.
In fact, this may have had been the slash with utmost refined beauty by Thearesia, among all which Wilhelm had seen till now.

Under normal circumstances, Wilhelm may have had been envious of the fact, that the entirety of the sword abilities sleeping within Thearesia, his self had not been the one to hale them out.
However, at this instant, the emotions distending within Wilhelm's heart were different.

And that something weighing in his chest explosively, had overflowed out by taking the form of certain words.

Wilhelm: "Don't kill her.....!"

The emotions he had contained, the passion he had suppressed, the things he had not wished for and the love he had admonished, rushed out as if breaking Wilhelm's barriers.

Thearesia, of the days of youth.
The woman who had caressed Wilhelm's heart, who had made him take notice of the world beyond the sword, the only one in his lifetime, even when he had exchanged his everything, the woman who had thought it was still not quite enough, was there.
The beloved woman, to whom he had not conveyed that he loved her, even once, was there??.

Wilhelm: “She is *my*, Thearesia?? ~hk!!"

Not once, had he said those words.
If he got perplexed, in a state where he almost lost his life, it would be inexcusable of him to prioritize his

emotions.

It was a deed that polluted, the pride of a swordsman, the style of a warrior, the nobility of battle.
That was only, the voice of a man. Of a man only desperate, to not lose the woman he loved.
And, that call of preparedness for death was??,

Reinhardt: "??Grandmother, has already been killed by me fifteen years ago."

A voice, quietly clamorous.
A faint voice, it was unknown whether it would even reach through or not.
However, unquestionably, it was a response to Wilhelm's cry.

"????"

Thearesia's sword slash, directly sailed upon Reinhardt.
The Dragon Sword, was yet to enter the trajectory of a swing.

It struck. It severed. That was how it would look to anyone, and yet.

Reinhardt: "The one over here, is a mere fake."

??Dragon Sword Reid drew a locus.

A single swing, the Dragon Sword was soundlessly swung, and the white sword blade, as if in flow, settled within the scabbard.
The guard of the sword came in contact with the scabbard, and only a faint metallic report was heard.

With just that, the battle came to an end.
It was the end.

Arc 5, Chapter 73: "Thearesia van Astrea"

by admin - Saturday, July 06, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/07/06/arc-5-chapter-73-thearesia-van-astrea/

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Translated by :

- u/Ringo_17

Proofread by :

- u/Nanashi-tan

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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??How surprised would you be if you got to know, that it was actually love at first sight?

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Thearesia van Astrea was twelve years old when she received the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint?.

It was a sudden and unforeseen change that caused immense distress in her life.
During her normal everyday life, it abruptly swooped down upon her.

"??? Could it be, that I got chosen?"

This was an honest emotion, the emotion she greeted the Divine Protection with.
And Thearesia continued to keep this truth as a secret for some time.

??The Astrea family's? forte was the sword, and had given rise to the ?Sword Saints? for generations and continued.

Thanks to the achievements made hundreds of years ago by the first generation ?Sword Saint?, Reid Astrea, the Dragon Kingdom of Lugunica recognised the sword of the Astrea family as an indispensable existence and asset.
This tradition had been passed down for years, including in the times of Thearesia.

Henceforth, every person born into the Astrea family, regardless of having the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint? or not, was to dedicate themselves to the sword for their entire life.
This of course, applied to her father, her two elder brothers and her lone younger brother, the youngest sibling, as well. Regardless of becoming a swordsman or attaining the Divine Protection, they were supposed to acquaint themselves with the sword the moment they achieved awareness of mind.

If you were to ask how Thearesia, who was born into the Astrea family where this way of growing up was natural, was maturing, the answer would be?? she was spending her days completely parallel from the sword.

Of course, if you were born into the Astrea family, then, regardless of gender, you were supposed to take the sword in your hands.
There were days when Thearesia and her brothers went through tough training. There were such days indeed, but Thearesia had absolutely no commendable aptitude for the sword.
Rather than that, it would be further appropriate to say that she never had the orientation for facing the sword.

Like many girls, Thearesia held no interest in the sword.
It was not that she was bad at it. Unmotivated efforts, accompanied with a defiant attitude. It was only natural that her parents would eventually come to notice that it was futile to make her keep swinging the sword if she continued to act like this.

??The ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint? was bestowed only upon those who had proven themselves worthy of receiving the love of the Sword God.

Generations were witness, only the members of the Astrea family were capable of inheriting the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint?. At the very least, that was what the common belief was, since no actual details regarding the inheritance of the Divine Protection were known.
It was only when the swordsman faced the sword with absolute earnestness, that the protection recognised him and bestowed itself upon him.
Seeing the possibility of her being the ?Sword Saint? reduce down to negligible, Thearesia’s greed was

ultimately fulfilled and she was granted the freedom she very much desired.

Thearesia detached herself from the sword practice, but she as well, had her own, sensible reasons behind it.
Of course, both her disinterest in becoming the ?Sword Saint?, and her lack of motivation in using the sword were factors in it, but her biggest reason behind it was completely unrelated to these.

??Thearesia was aware that she had been born with the ?Divine Protection of Death God?.

The wounds she would inflict onto others would ceaselessly bleed, incapable of healing.
When she realised that her forte lay in taking away the lives of others, what was born into the young Thearesia, was the fear of what could result from her very palms.

Something like sword training was perfect for intensifying her fear.
Even if it were just practice or training, Thearesia's Divine Protection, over which she had no control over, would not regard the situation. Even if the wound she may inflict were to be as meagre as a scratch, the fact that it wouldn't heal made it no laughing matter.
Especially considering that a wound that may accidentally get inflicted during sword practice could prove to be deadly.

Henceforth, freed from the sword training, the secretive Thearesia felt alleviated.

Living without hurting those around you, was actually something difficult to do if you were conscious regarding it.
If you were conscious about it, you would notice that unintentionally and accidentally hurting others could happen very easily. How could you determine whether the Divine Protection would activate or not, in case you end up getting a cut on the finger because of a piece of shattered dish.

The young girl named Thearesia, unconsciously eluded from having relationships with people.
If she never made contact, if she never came close, she would not have to worry about hurting people.
Gaining a natural tendency to avoid all eye contact, she started spending more and more time with flowers.
Gaining the freedom to discard the sword, she made a flower bed in the garden of her mansion for just herself, and growing seasonal flowers there, she began to love admiring them.

Her brothers who used to swing the sword in utter distress, and were repeatedly subject to difficult and painful training.
It is not as if she did not feel left out or sorry for them seeing their figures. It was simply just that due to her inability to tell them about her Divine Protection, flowers were the only ones she could be with and confide in with complete confidence.

"I wonder, if someday, even I would be able to live by someone's? side....."

Her suffering, her doubts, the only ones she could confide such feelings of hers were just to her flowers, as their petals danced to the rhythm of the gentle breeze.
This again, like that of many people, was the desire of the young girl named Thearesia, to love and to be

loved.
Well aware of her possibility of hurting others, wondering whether she was deserving of being together with someone, all whilst not complying with the schemes of her brothers or her parents, Thearesia's days of self-doubt continued.

??In the midst of such days, the love of the Sword God was showered upon Thearesia.

"??? Could it be, that I got chosen?"

Without warning, that cognisance came upon Thearesia.
It dawned upon her more like a feeling of incongruity rather than consciousness like that of her ?Divine Protection of Death God?.
It was natural. To her, awareness of the Divine Protection she had been born with her was a matter of course, like eyes providing vision, and ears providing hearing.
Something like suddenly gaining a new Divine Protection would feel something like wings had grown upon her back. She greeted it with a sense of incongruity, which did not exist previously, and the widening of her horizons in terms of her capabilities.

??I will not, take the sword in my hands.

So thought Thearesia, feeling abhorrence and nausea for her new Divine Protection.
She thought back to the times when she had been coerced to swing the sword. She had realised how pointless, meaningless, senseless and aimless her actions were back then.
She was now instinctively able to understand how to swing the sword the best, the optimum, the ideal, the finest way.

Her self, whose forte lay very much in killing people, now fully gained the proficiency in killing people.

"??~hk."

This was terror. This was despair. This was the day the world ended.
Kneeling down, she came to realise that she was a death god who had taken the form of a girl, and that her days of pretending to be a young girl had come to an end.

Thearesia did not tell anyone about the Divine Protection she had received.
She intended to conceal her possession of the ?Divine Protection of Death God? and the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint? for all eternity, and hide it within her heart that she was a monster whose only purpose was to kill others.

Pointing out that she was unwell, she shut herself in her room in the mansion.
Forgetting to look after even her flower bed, Thearesia hid within her shell. Doing nothing but sleeping, and hoping that one day she would wake up to find out that it was all just a youthful dream of hers, she enclosed herself in her shell.
But that was ultimately, just the immaturity of a child, refusing to face what she did not want to face.

??It became immediately clear that Thearesia had inherited the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint?.

"Nii-san. .....The next ?Sword Saint? is your daughter. This child."

The head house of the Astrea family?? Thearesia's birthplace, and the base of the line of ?Sword Saints?. Stepping foot into mansion, revealing that the bedridden Thearesia would be the next ?Sword Saint?, was her uncle, the preceding ?Sword Saint?.

The ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint? was an exceptional Divine Protection, capable of being inherited only by members of the Astrea family, with this trend continuing for generations.
That Divine Protection is inherited by the next ?Sword Saint? from the preceding ?Sword Saint? without any prior notice. And once the inheritance is completed, the previous ?Sword Saint? is freed from his responsibility, and loses the Divine Protection.
Once the current ?Sword Saint? loses the Divine Protection, it is natural that the identity of the of the next ?Sword Saint? will be searched for thoroughly by the kingdom.
And the previous ?Sword Saint? can identify who the next ?Sword Saint? is at a single glance.

Thearesia's days of enclosure met their end.

"Take the sword in your hands, Thearesia."

With her hair a complete mess, Thearesia was dragged out into the garden.
Barefooted, in sleepwear, with her consciousness drifting between dreams and reality, she was still forcibly dragged outside by her uncle, and forced to hold the wooden sword.

With her fingers, that had gotten skinnier, she gestured her resistance along with shaking her head several times.
However, the complaints of her opposed self went unheard. Her uncle forcefully handed her the wooden sword and made her face forward, once she had held it by its handle.

In front of Thearesia, stood the eldest brother out of the four siblings.
Her considerate and tender brother, who was polite and friendly with everyone, stood there with a confused expression. Unable to perceive what was happening in front of his eyes, his puzzlement could be understood at a glance.

??There were many gaps.

Thinking that to herself, Thearesia was startled.
With that confoundment striking her heart directly, Thearesia, speechless, simply kept her eyes open.

Ignoring Thearesia and her condition, her uncle called out to her eldest brother in a deep voice.
Hold the wooden sword, and attack Thearesia from above, he said. Prove your abilities of swordsmanship by striking down and defeating your younger sister, he said.

There is no way I can do that, called out her eldest brother.
Her brother was very kind. He had trained strenuously with the sword, and held no doubts in the way of

the Astrea family, but he could be nothing but kind towards his younger sister, Thearesia.
She was afraid of hurting him, so she was never the one who initiated physical contact, but she loved hugging her brother and that huge body of his. He was a kind, kind elder brother.

Then echoed the voice of her uncle, calling her brother a coward.
At the mocking of the preceding ?Sword Saint?, her brother made an expression suggesting he had been hurt by his words. Thearesia knew that her eldest brother, her elder brother, and her younger brother had continued to swing the sword because they admired him.
Receiving such harsh words from him, her eldest brother was immensely wounded. Her two other brothers standing at the edge of the garden, who had also come outside by hearing all the commotion, also made similarly hurt faces.

Ultimately, her eldest brother, while maintaining his wounded expression, wielded dreadful readiness in his eyes.
Straightening the wooden sword he held in his hands, and transferring all his energy into it, he set his eyes upon his target.

Seeing the shivering in his sword, and a certain sharpness in her eldest brother's eyes, Thearesia came to realise.
Her elder brother, in order not hurt Thearesia, will have the wooden sword he had clenched in his own hands knock hers down. It was obvious from his stance, his look, his body language, and the way he was holding his sword.

At her brother's level of skill, it would certainly not be a difficult task to complete.
It would be sufficient to prove his ability as a swordsman by just taking the sword away from Thearesia.

"????"

At the stiffening of her uncle's cheeks, began the fight which neither side wanted to partake in.

Her eldest brother shouted energetically, and slashed the sharp wooden sword he held into Thearesia.
Limiting the movements of the opponent and having control over their actions was another skill in swordsmanship. If the wooden sword wasn't even uplifted, it would undoubtedly be easy to simply knock it down.

The very foundation of this fight was erroneous.
Neither did Thearesia have any reason to fight, nor did her brother have any reason to hurt Thearesia.
With the interests of both the sides aligned, there should not be any rise of faults.
There should not be, but??,

"??That's it."

A wooden sword, that had been sent flying, landed on the ground at some distance, and its sound echoed.
Along with hearing the startled voice of her uncle, what was visible was the figure of Thearesia, with her wooden sword pointing outwards, and its edge touching the throat of her staggering brother, who let out a hoarse sigh.

??She remembered that she deflected away the attack of the wooden sword that came upon her upwards, and had taken away the wooden sword from her opponent.

She then had the edge of her sword touch the neck of her opponent, proving that she could kill him at any instant by making the difference between their proficiency clear.

With stunned expressions, everyone looked on at the unbelievable sight.

"The next ?Sword Saint? is Thearesia. Indeed, unquestionably."

Echoed the unrestrained voice of her uncle, saying that.

"Ah..... ah, a~h....."

Thearesia dropped the wooden sword she held, glanced at her hand, and then proceeded to pull off her red hair with the same hand. Pulling them off so violently that she would bleed, and raising a voice like that of a beast, she screamed.

Screaming, losing sanity, despairing, nearly bleeding, regretting.
Thearesia, became the ?Sword Saint?.

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The time that her brothers had devoted to the sword, Thearesia's swordsmanship had mockingly trampled upon all of it.
Against overwhelming prowess of the sword, things like time and effort dedicated held no meaning whatsoever.

In the eyes of Thearesia, who had become the ?Sword Saint?, the flaws in her brothers' sword handling were clear as crystal. She was now, in fact, surprised, that despite spending so much time with them, she had not noticed those flaws earlier.
But still, despite the clear difference in their strength and Thearesia's, her brothers pitiably continued to train with sword.

Neither her eldest brother, nor her elder brother, nor her younger brother possessed passion for anything other than the sword.
Because they had been born into the Astrea family, grown up in the house whose name was respected because of their swords, and had dedicated their life and fate to the sword, so even if their younger sister had robbed away their objective from her brothers, they still had no choice but to continue continuing.
Even if they know, that they can never, ever, achieve it.

??Is quite stupid.

That's the thought that comes up ultimately.
They should just do whatever they wish to. They should just not care about the sword anymore.
If they can never condone Thearesia, they should just live in their own worlds as per their own choice.

"Thearesia-sama, the preparations are complete. It's about time, we ought to head out now."

While she was looking outside the window of her room, at the garden where her brothers continued to train with the sword, a voice entered Thearesia's ears.
When she turned around, what she saw was an elegant looking girl of the same age as hers, with a short haircut of her beautiful blonde hair.

She was Carol Remendis?? a member of the Remendis family, known for its superlative knights, and due to her recognised exceptional swordsmanship despite being of similar age as hers, she had been appointed as Thearesia's attendant.

Undeniably, her abilities as a swordsman were indeed exceptional.
Though she did not want to mention this to anyone, but her proficiency with the sword was comparable to that of her brothers.
With a completely solemn personality, with profuse swordsmanship, she could not help but feel uneasy, as another female of her age.

"Yes, let's go. For today we have the schooling of the people of the castle, isn't it."

"Yes. Everyone in the castle as well, is looking forward to being educated by Thearesia-sama. Of course, I also wield the same feelings as them."

"......I think you are already sufficiently strong, Carol."

"Not at all. Someone like me, cannot even reach the feet of Thearesia-sama."

As if downplaying herself, Carol gave her impression of her own abilities.
Thearesia somewhat staggered at her evaluation. After all, Thearesia had never upheld the sword in front of Carol. No, not just that.

The last time Thearesia's hands had held a sword was when she had fought her eldest brother with a wooden sword.
For two years after that, Thearesia did not make even the slightest physical contact with the sword.

However, she was still fulfilling her responsibilities as the ?Sword Saint?.
The reality of her being the ?Sword Saint? alone was a truth which could not be hidden. She couldn't go as far as to cause inconvenience to the entire Astrea family, so she was willing to perform just her duties diligently.

"It can be understood easily what is worth seeing and what is not at a single glance. Even if I have not gotten the opportunity of seeing it, if Thearesia-sama takes the sword in her hands, she would surely become a force which cannot be oppressed by anyone."

She gave a wry smile at Carol's beliefs.
Along with her, Thearesia went to teach on-duty soldiers. Even in the name of teaching, she had not really accomplished any commendable feats in that.

She would just go around and have them wield their weapons and train, and point out flaws in their fighting as always, nothing unusual.
The utmost terrifying aspect of the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint? was perhaps how it heightened the battle instincts of the person to perfection. It was not limited to just swords. Whether it were spears or axes, if they were connected to battling, Thearesia knew all of their leads and imperfections alike.

If the soldiers' mistakes were pointed out to them one by one, they would eventually correct themselves. However, from Thearesia's perspective, although the way of correcting those faults may be correct, it was never enough, and even if that slight change were to happen, the talented and the untalented would perceive it extremely differently.
Thearesia tasted a feeling of guilt when she was thanked, when she was given respect.

Just as when she had despaired over inheriting the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint?, she now despaired over the situation she had been placed in.
Shutting herself in her room, enclosing herself in her shell, she always ended up hoping for the tides of her fate to change direction.

??This may have had been her punishment, for her selfish and arbitrary desires, for running away from the responsibilities she should have had shouldered.

In the Dragon Kingdom of Lugunica, wide-reaching conflicts arose with the demi-human community.
In a heartbeat, the pent up complaints and discontentment of the demi-humans, which were scattered around parts of the kingdom, blew up and consumed the kingdom within its flames.

The utmost intense and brutal civil war in the history of the kingdom, the ?Demi-human War? had broken out.

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With its origin from the east of the kingdom, this civil war worsened per passing day.
It initially seemed like a small uprising of the demi-human community which could be resolved easily without it spreading to the point of damage, but the kingdom despised the deepening of demi-human relationships behind closed doors.

On top of that, there seemed to exist people bridging the gap with demi-humans through individual relationships, and as the conflict spread person by person, the fire of the civil war widened its radius in an instant.
As the fiery warfare progressively intensified and ceaselessly spread through the kingdom, and after an entire year of fruitless efforts of attempts for extinguishing the fire, the kingdom finally recognised

publicly that this was a situation worse than anything the kingdom had faced before.

"Inform the current ?Sword Saint? Thearesia van Astrea. To expect appearing onto the battlefield, along with the knights and soldiers, who are currently scuffling to subdue the civil war."

Recognising the unprecedented situation as a threat throughout the kingdom, the senior aristocrats did not intend to keep the asset of the ?Sword Saint? for last.
Of course, Thearesia also received the message regarding request of participation in the war.

??Thearesia despaired at the arrival of the inevitable future.

This was unlike her days of selfishly refusing to take the sword.
What was expected of her now was not her knowledge as the ?Sword Saint?, but true swordsmanship and strength as the ?Sword Saint?.

She had no choice, but to take the sword.
This was also the first time she had also been handed over the Dragon Sword Reid, which only the ?Sword Saint? may wield.

"However, that sword can be drawn only when it needs to be drawn. I believe you will have to carry another sword aside from that one too. You can choose one as per your liking."

Her uncle, the former ?Sword Saint?, gave her advice out of experience.
Her uncle, who had previously wielded the Dragon Sword on his waist, understood how whimsical the sword was. In accordance with her uncle's advice, the longsword which provided the best swinging-- one which was also liked by Carol, a fellow sword user, was the one Thearesia chose.

??In her first battle, Thearesia was accompanied by Carol, along with her brothers and her uncle.

For Thearesia, she would not say this batch of hers was set up for a clear weathered stage.
Even so, she could not turn her eyes away for even an instant. This was also an opportunity to show the power of the legendary Astrea sword to people of the kingdom.

Regardless of Thearesia's thoughts and feelings, her surroundings progressed arbitrarily.
Anyone and everyone burdened her with arbitrary expectations, like how there is no way the ?Sword Saint? could lose.

The unrestrained, insensitive faith by those surrounding her, intimidated Thearesia.
As if it had become normal now, concealing it from everyone, hiding it in her heart, Thearesia trembled only in front of the batch accompanying her to her first battle.
And, seeing her in such a shape??,

"Are you scared, Thearesia?"

Yes, the one to raise his gentle voice for her was her, one and only, eldest brother.
Thearesia, while awaiting her first battle in a tent, was astonished to see her elder brother speak to her,

that too, with such kindness.

Thearesia had consciously been avoiding contact with her elder brother.
No, her eldest brother was not the only one she avoided. Her elder brother, her younger brother, as well as her parents and her uncle, she had avoided coming into contact with all of them.

After two long years, this was the first time she had exchanged such words of kindness with her beloved brother.

Thearesia could not help but continue looking downwards, at a loss for words.
However, her brother sat down next to Thearesia, who had a dejected expression, and gently patted her head.
Thearesia was caught off-guard, seeing how the palm of her brother had still not changed at all.

"I know, that you hold a feeling of indebtedness towards me or the rest of our brothers. It's not as if I didn't think anything by losing to you like that either. But....."

Cutting his words midway, her brother showed her a slight smile.
That was her brother's very smile, the one which Thearesia had looked at again and again, repeatedly.

"You are my treasured younger sister. If you don't want to, if you are scared..... I will have to protect you. Because I, am your elder brother."

"N..... Nii-san....."

Tears poured down her cheeks. She must not voice out her weakness.
Her above all, one and only, brother, whom she had defeated, must not hear it. So she thought, but her brother repudiated her thoughts.

"After losing to you, it was painful, I thought that I should quit. But, even still, I loved the sword. I am grateful? that I was born into this family, I had my younger brothers, and I had you as my younger sister. I am grateful, to the sword."

"????"

"That is why, I am glad that I swung the sword."

Thearesia realised her own idiocy, for deeming his thoughts as stupid.
Even after seeing them get defeated, seeing her brothers aim for training with the sword, she thought that they had no other path but that, ignorant regarding everything else, she thought they were swinging the sword because they had no choice, that they were merely clinging onto it, being under this impression, she looked down upon them.
Thinking that they should just do whatever they wish to, Thearesia arbitrarily put her brother on her own scale and deemed his value.

She mocked her brother by reducing his person to a mere swordsman, whom she should have had

admired, whom she should have had respected.
Who was stupid here. She was stupid here. And, the Sword God was utmost stupid here.

Why, did he not direct his love to the human who loved him so much.
Why, did he bless a human like herself, who always turned away from the sword.

Her brother, or other people like her brother were the ones who deserved to be blessed, yet.

"There is no need, for you to fight. ??After all, you are a kind girl, who wouldn't even dare kill an insect."

Afraid of the power of the ?Divine Protection of Death God?, she always made sure she never hurt anyone or anything.
She had misjudged her brother, but her brother well understood his younger sister.

This gave her such contentment, that in these two years, this had moved her heart the most.

She ended up acting like a spoiled child, she ended up depending on him. She clung onto him, cried into him, she left it all up to him.

??In Thearesia's first battle, her brother died protecting their troops' headquarter.

Not once, did Thearesia swing the sword. She could not.

And once again, Thearesia refused to touch the sword for years to come.

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??It had been five years since the Demi-human War started, and Thearesia had turned nineteen.

The ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint? remained unchanged, continuing to silently breathe within her.
However, Thearesia, who was extremely crucial to the war worsening per passing day, detachedly and unconcerned, was spending her days leisurely.

Thearesia's first battle, where she had been unable to battle.
The battle, where the ?Sword Saint? was expected to unleash her fierce strength, broke down completely, and her eldest brother got killed amidst the warfare. Thearesia's heart, taking fatal damage due to that reality, was then unable to accept touching the sword again.
The truth that the current generation ?Sword Saint? had such a dishonouring first battle was completely concealed from the public. The existence of the ?Sword Saint? also held spiritual relevance to the kingdom. They could not dare reveal that she had cried into her brother before the fight and that she had enclosed herself away once her brother had died.

Henceforth, without letting the public be aware of it, Thearesia's dishonour was erased from all records.

And her elder brother and younger brother, who also participated in the battle in order to protect the name of the Astrea family instead of the enclosed Thearesia, who refused to fulfill her duty as ?Sword Saint?, also died.

Her eldest brother, full of kindness, who would hear any of her wishes with true concern.
Her elder brother, who was slightly mean, but was always the first one to apologize when they made up.
Her cute younger brother, a scaredy-cat and a crybaby, who would always walk behind her, following her path.

All of them lost their lives while fighting in Thearesia's? place, who refused to fight.

"??I forced you into all this, didn't I. My bad, Thearesia."

Her uncle, the former ?Sword Saint?, who was the source of motivation for their troops, also died fighting.
Fighting ceaselessly, ignoring his injuries, and finally working for amendment of relations and a ceasefire, and ordering retreat of his troops, he died making outstanding accomplishments in the battle.

It is not as if she didn't hold anything against her uncle.
If it weren't for her uncle's revelation, perhaps nobody could have had ever gotten to know about Thearesia inheriting the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint?. If that would have had never been found out, her brothers may not have had prepared for being martyred in this civil war, and may not have had died at all.

If she thought about all that, then she surely did hold a grudge against him. She did, but she also felt like she didn't.
Her uncle must have had himself known the weight of the title of ?Sword Saint? better than anyone else.
As the previous ?Sword Saint?, he also, naturally, must have had gone through the same things as Thearesia.
His actions must have had been the optimum for both the kingdom, and Thearesia, alike.

Even if that doesn't work, his last words in his final moments.
After hearing those words, Thearesia could no longer hold a grudge against him.

Then if she were to look for someone to hold a grudge against, the only option left for her was herself.
Her self, who was always weak and crying, despite inheriting the title of ?Sword Saint?.

"Thearesia-sama is someone who will surely stand up. That time has simply not arrived yet."

Carol, her associate, never did once try abandoning Thearesia, who had been devastated by the repeated deaths of her loved ones.
Making her first battle a sight truly unpleasant, missing opportunities due to her own selfishness, and the now enclosed, alone Thearesia, was someone Carol still wanted to have faith in.

Even the recent orders from the Royal Castle have had her replaced from areas of utmost and direct exposure.

However, even after Carol showed such strong hopefulness in her, Thearesia was unable to respond to her feelings.

"????"

Once away from Carol's monitoring, Thearesia reflexively started walking around in the capital.
The whole place was covered by a somewhat unpleasant atmosphere, as the civil war, that had been fought for five years, had killed all of the city's vibrancy. With that vibrancy dead, all of the people's expressions had also died out. Away from all crowded places, away from all eyes, stood Thearesia alone.

The place which recently had become the spot where Thearesia frequented her trips to, was an area at the border of the capital.
It was an area whose development had been thrown aside due to the start of the civil war. Through the ruins and gaps in the pillars of the building, she aimed for the area behind.

What slightly opened up past that was the place Thearesia had taken liking to, an area which couldn't even be called a plaza.
It was not so special that it would make the heart skip a beat or anything.
That empty area which existed within the ruins, would just calm the heart by emptying it of all thoughts.

In the somewhat ironically cool breeze of the morning, Thearesia headed for the back of the area.
Sitting on the detached fragments of stone, looking onto the other side, what she saw was a flower garden stretching across, with the petals of the yellow flowers dancing sweetly in the wind.

The sunlight shining in, and the soil unnecessarily adequate for the growth of the flowers.
In this clandestine setting, Thearesia had sown the seeds of these flowers. Her flowers in the mansion, back then, she had been too inept to take proper care of them, and they had all eventually died out.
However, she held similar feelings, seeing the results of the seeds she had sown whimsically.

"I haven't even watered you..... yet you have grown this much."

Flowers, are strong.
Even while Thearesia reflects on her own weaknesses, the flowers, looking only towards the sky, unfurl their petals, and bloom in utter magnificence.
She had earlier admired their splendour, but now she embraced her wish for their strength.

She experienced her feelings swell up, and she felt as if she were about to cry.
She achingly tried to hold back her tears, and had her fingers touch the canthus of her eyes, which had an unexpected warmth.

??That was the moment, when a stinging presence got close to her.

"Ah, I'm sorry."

It was that treacherous presence itself, who had barged into Thearesia's morning sanctuary.
Just as when she was about to show her tears, Thearesia, deliberately, said such words, in an attempt to show her strength. And then, she glanced at the one who had appeared onto the square.

She saw, and she was completely awestruck.
Trimmed brown hair, elegant yet fierce eyes, a flexible, slim and fit body, and his brimming clear skin dazzling so brightly, it was frightening.
However, what had astonished Thearesia at that moment was not something so shallow.

??To Thearesia, the youth looked exactly like an unsheathed sword.

She felt as if the hot, firm, sharp steel itself had his eyes upon her.
In front of that mirage, Thearesia's heartbeats tangled. Putting her hand on her chest, Thearesia contemplated what had happened to her.

However, the only thing that came to her mind, was that the youth would not understand the tangling of her heartbeats.
Henceforth, to hide that, Thearesia said.

"So, there are people who would come here so early in morning. All the way here??"

"????"

Quite the greeting, that was.

Thearesia spoke to him sociably, but the youth narrowed his eyes, and it felt as if the tip of a sword had been directly pointed towards her. A sword so stable and intense, that it did not seem like a threat.
Perhaps he intended to reject Thearesia's unsympathetic thoughts.

Suddenly, it got unentertaining.
If he was going to use that card, neither will Thearesia hold anything back. She will make him understand that he had misunderstood that sword of his.

".....Did something happen? You're making such a scary face."

At Thearesia's words, the youth made an expression as if he had tasted an under-shoulder swing down.
He seemed to have had judged Thearesia to be a laywoman at swordsmanship, and not just that, at fighting entirely. The truth is, he was not wrong.

Thearesia lacked any experience of actual fighting, nor did she have any records of her swinging the sword.
She was a laywoman who would be stronger than anyone else, if she were to actually fight.

"What’s a woman doing here so early in the morning."

The youth responded, with rough and harsh words.
The voice of the youth, which she had heard for the first time, was sullen, but his voice was simple and easy to listen to.

??And once again, she felt the rhythm of her heartbeats go off-note.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Since that, Thearesia and the youth starting seeing each other again and again frequently.

Apparently, it seemed like the youth used to come to the square on fixed holidays.
It did seem like he was bothered by Thearesia's presence, but he never forced her to go someplace else.
Perhaps he thought, that the person he would have to approach was a nuisance.

For seeing that yellow flower garden, Thearesia used to walk up to the square.
There were times the youth was the first one to arrive, whereas, other times, Thearesia was the first one to do so. While Thearesia sat on the piece of concrete and admired the flower garden, while the youth devoted himself to training with the sword, swinging it with swiftness and excellent technique, and these activities became the promise of the two, who used to spend time in that place.

"????"

Glancing secretively, she looked at the swords dance of the youth.
Without thinking, she was about to voice out a sigh. Looking at the swordsmanship of others, and feeling this way, was something extremely rare for Thearesia?? no, this may have had been the first time.

First, she remembered the disgust she had felt by the form of the youth, clutching the sword.
The youth was not at fault here, this was because of Thearesia's own beliefs. After she ran away from her role as the ?Sword Saint?, even in the place she ran to, she had come across someone holding a sword.
She had also been chased away from the single restful place she had finally found. Such deplorable uneasiness of hers, was wiped away the moment she saw the youth's swordsmanship.

The swinging of the sword by the youth, there was nothing particularly obsequious about it.
In the eyes of Thearesia, who possessed the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint?, there were imperfections easy to find as well. Seeing the faults in the sword handling of others and feeling revulsion by it, was a bad habit of Thearesia's, but in the youth's case, his sheer passion was used to cover up for his flaws.

Thearesia's brothers also, must have had dedicated their everything to the sword as well.
Even for her brothers, elder or younger, who had such devotion for the sword, it was not as if Thearesia had been unable to harbour any negative feelings.

But still, why did she not feel the same for this youth and his sword.
The answer to that, is surely surprisingly simple.

"How stupid....."

??There were absolutely no impurities in the sword of the youth.

He had offered up his everything to the sword, he had dedicated his everything to the sword.
It's easy to put it in simple words, and Thearesia thought that her brothers had done to same till now, it was unthinkable.

Truly, the youth here was full of passion, he, who only had the sword.
He had nothing but the sword. He loved nothing but the sword. He would love nothing but the sword, that was established like a swing of steel.

".....How, stupid."

Observing the youth's swordsmanship from the side, Thearesia felt warmth enter her cheeks.
Thearesia was the ?Sword Saint?. Blessed with the love of the Sword God, an existence that stood above all swordsmen.

Her existence also stood in his path, for achieving his vexatious goal.
Although it was unquestionably her own delusion, she felt as if he was asking her.

The ?Sword Saint? Thearesia, could understand everything about the sword by just looking at it.
She could see its true nature, no matter what kind of a treasured sword, devilish sword, durable sword, or in the worst case, Dragon Sword it was. She was able to use it freely. There existed no steel which could hide its secrets in Thearesia's hands.

He was the only one.
He was the only one, who would not bend to Thearesia's free will.

He was a sword, yet his limits could not be determined by her self, who was the ?Sword Saint?.
Unmistakably, that is why, her self had grown to care so much about him.

"It's Wilhelm Trias."

Three months after meeting him for the first time, she had exchanged names with the youth?? Wilhelm.

Even though they had come across each other several times, never did they once inquire about each other's names.
The truth is, Thearesia had been waiting for a chance to do so, but Wilhelm cluelessly ignored her wish.
They had finally managed to exchange names, only because Thearesia got impatient and initiated it, Wilhelm merely gave the appropriate response.

"I had called you the "flower woman" in my mind till now."

Just how impolite could he be, this man.

His words had not a fragment of sympathy, nor did she particularly mind, with her thoughts preoccupied by her own self, and she used to get satisfied by talking just a bit and return back, so now, Thearesia's heart was fluttering.

"Do you like flowers?"

"No, I hate them."

This was his reply, even after seeing the magnificence of Thearesia's flower garden so many times. Undoubtedly, he was unable to respond merely to play along with the other party or uplift their spirits. Even after having a feeling? of angst because of that, she could not help but think "But, this is precisely why, he is such a sword-like person.....".

For the sword who would not bend to her will, the ?Sword Saint? was nothing too big, and Thearesia, at that time, failed to realise how she had been saved by that.

"??Why, do you swing the sword?"

Ever since they exchanged names, the words they exchanged started to vary as well.
They used to talk about flowers and just some other miscellaneous topics, and then go back. What had caused the change in that on that day, was perhaps because of the low spirits of that day.

The attempts to subdue the demi-human war had failed, and Thearesia had heard about the struggles on the battlefield.
Scattered across the kingdom, the demi-humans who were at the core behind all the destruction being caused were outstandingly strong, and among them was a ?Witch? commanding immense supernatural strength, whose existence had also been confirmed, is what she had heard.

She became uneasy, abruptly.
She had heard from his own mouth, that Wilhelm was not a soldier of the kingdom. Yet he was an extraordinary swordsman. On top of that, he had eyes which had seen an awful lot of blood.
In such troubled times for the kingdom, he was surely qualified to be a soldier?? rather than that, it was not he was undefeatable. Someday, even he may also no longer be able to come to this square on mornings.
Due to the anxiety caused by that, Thearesia had asked this question.

Putting a finish to his swords dance, the sweaty Wilhelm looked straight into Thearesia's eyes, with utter seriousness. Pausing for a moment, he thought of a response, shrugging his shoulders, gesturing that he seemingly found the question stupid.

"Because this, is all I have."

Yes, that was his steel-like response.
And for Thearesia, this was supposed to be precisely what she had hoped for.

Thearesia was well aware, of the feeling of uneasiness and isolation within her chest.

"Have you come to like flowers?"

"No, I hate them."

"Why do you swing the sword?"

"Because this, is all I have."

Someday, it had become a promise between them, to reiterate just this exchange of words.
Thearesia herself, had no what idea? what she should expect as an answer to her restated questions. She did not know, whether it was fine for his answers to remain unchanged, or whether she should expect some variation in his unchanging responses.

Imprudently leaving things she did not know the way they were, was the very essence of Thearesia.
Like how she, despite having the title of ?Sword Saint?, had sent her brothers to their deaths, and had forced Carol into a corner, who was now desperately? fulfilling her own duties.

That is why, change always arrived and passed by, all whilst ostracizing Thearesia from itself.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

The one to reach that area first, normally used to be Thearesia.
Wilhelm's visits, which had been irregular previously, were also consistent now, and the words they had to exchange with each other were also fully prepared.

Thearesia had lately also come to realise, how immaturely she had treated the existence of the sword.
By exchanging worlds with Wilhelm, by having her eyes upon he who had dedicated his everything to the sword, Thearesia was briefly able to forget the weight on her shoulders as the ?Sword Saint?.
She had been enchanted by him because she was the ?Sword Saint?, she had been saved by him calling being the ?Sword Saint? was nonsense.

Whether she wanted to the ?Sword Saint?, or did not, both of them would be dishonesty on her part.
As she continued to dive into the lukewarm water lacking an answer, soaking guilt embraced her.
Despite both of her desires, she wanted to be able to forget his existence.

"??Wilhelm."

As usual, Thearesia looked back, sensing the easy-to-sense presence.
Standing on the entrance of the square, was the youth of the sword.

Without thinking, her lips moved, and Thearesia smiled at him.

"????"

That was the moment, when her emotions broke down.

With his eyes turned away, as his lips shivered, Wilhelm put his trembling fingers on his face. Thearesia herself was astonished to see his dramatic response, and tasted an impact.
Thearesia rushed over to him, who was covering his face, wondering what she should apologize for.
However, she did not know what she should say.

Till now, Thearesia had refused to come in contact with people if it meant she would not hurt them.
That is why, when she would hurt someone's? heart, she did not know how to treat it either.

She despaired. At her own self, who did not know how to, and neither ever tried to know how to.
At her own self, who was unable to voice any words, in front of the hurt Wilhelm.

"Wilhelm....."

Without knowing what she should perhaps say, Thearesia's fingers reached for Wilhelm. Just how long had it been, since she had initiated physical contact with anyone.
Afraid of wounding others, she had refused to touch anyone.

Even still, at this moment, she was much more afraid of not touching him.
Thearesia embraced Wilhelm's fingers, which were covering his face. While he trembled terribly helplessly, they tasted unbelievable heat, and she noticed.

Swords, steel, when exposed to such incredible heat, turn into further strengthened steel.
Wilhelm was a sword that always struck first, but he was, in no way, one that was complete.

And now, Wilhelm was receiving this heat, and was changing like steel.
For that, it was now expected of Thearesia to take the role of striking the steel.

??If she was dealing with a sword, then she, the ?Sword Saint?, was supposed to know that.

In the case of this person, in the case of this sword, she must have had wanted to know that.

"Have you, come to like flowers?"

Naturally, she voiced her usual question.
If there was someone else here aside from these two, they may have deemed her words as stupid, as they would have expected her to say something consoling. Amidst these two, however, this was for the better.

".....I don't, hate them."

And, a different response came for her unchanged question.
That is what the Thearesia of back then thought about this.

Someday, when Wilhelm's response will change, won't the feeling that Thearesia would be left to taste be

that of despair, despondency, and dread?

That was not the case. She only loved his changed self.
That is what the Thearesia of back then, thought about this.

"Why, do you swing the sword?"

That is why, surely, the answer to this question would also be different.
And possibly, that answer could be the one that would save Thearesia??,

"Because this is all..... I could think of for a way to protect."

The sword was the only one, is what Wilhelm answered.
Yes, for this person, the sword was the only one.

It is alright, because he is that kind of a person. It is alright for this person.

??That's all it was, there lay no necessity for regular interaction between the two of them.

However, that did not mean that they had lost opportunities to exchange a word or two at the square.
Rather, if we were to speak of exchanging words, instances of that happening had increased more than before.

Wilhelm, who came to the square for practicing with the sword, came to prioritize speaking to Thearesia above swinging his sword.
Sitting on an upraised surface, her ears intently listened to the words of Wilhelm, who would always bring up meagre topics. Hopelessly bad topics, which she couldn't even put an end to, however, she felt pleasant by simply hearing his voice.

"There was talk of conferral, and I become a knight."

With a look filled with heat, he mentioned the topic for the day.
Thearesia had always kept distance from people, so she wasn't the best at socialising, but she was not so stupid that she would not understand the meaning of the words of the youth, who had voiced them after mustering up such courage.

A mere commoner, working hard and becoming a knight thanks to his efforts and going out to the battlefield, was unquestionably impressive.
Just how many feats the Sword Demon, Wilhelm Trias had accomplished, was something she was painfully well-aware of, as the cowardly ?Sword Saint?.
She wondered what could the reason be, for him to gain the honour of a knight on top of even that.

"Is that so, congratulations. Then you've gotten one step closer to your dream."

Knowing his real intentions for that, Thearesia responded with a deliberately positive attitude.

It was unavoidable for her to blush in that tone. Using all her strength in order to not let that happen, Thearesia smiled at Wilhelm, who had a questioning expression.

"Dream?"

"You wield the sword to protect, don't you? A knight is someone who protects others."

At Thearesia's words, Wilhelm nodded with an expression suggesting he understood what she had said. Though he's normally rebellious, sometimes he showed this childishly meek side of his.

??She simply wanted to be one of those existences, whom and which he wanted to protect.

Though she was not so confident about it, she hated herself, for assuring herself about it.
Even though she well understood and realised her own feelings, she found herself, who was unable to act upon them, incredibly, incredibly stupid, repulsive, irredeemable, and henceforth once again, Thearesia made a mistake.

At this point, when she thought about it, she would conclude that never had she once, done anything correctly ever.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Wilhelm stepped onto the battlefield, as his hometown burned to ash.

When Carol, out of breath, reported the steadfast fight being put up by the Sword Demon, Thearesia began to lose her body heat, and almost collapsed to her knees at that very spot.
The pale faced Thearesia could sense Carol's fright. She could sense it, but her body was unable to increase its energy. She knew just that, and how hopeless this situation was.

"????"

Someone's out of place voice entered Thearesia's ears, who had her eyes fixed onto the ground.
It wasn't Carol's. Neither was it of anyone in the house. She was acquainted with the voice, as it was someone's who had always been close to Thearesia, henceforth, she noticed.

It was the sound of the Sword God's laughter, ridiculing her for her dejected love.

"??I have to go."

Listening to the Sword God's laughter, Thearesia slowly stood up.
Even now, the sound of the ridicule continued to echo within Thearesia's ears. However, she was unable to accept losing her everything while being laughed at by the Sword God like this.

She left everything on her eldest brother, and let him die.

She enforced her own responsibility upon her second elder brother, younger brother, and her uncle, and let them die.

But, only him?? only Wilhelm I shall not hand over.
Because that sword, that steel, that person, belongs to me and only me.

"Carol, prepare."

"Thearesia-sama.....? However, the condition of your body is....."

"??Prepare."

Carol, who was worried about Thearesia's? body, straightened her back upon the second order. Moving quickly, she immediately made all preparations required for Thearesia.
The battle suit which had not been worn ever since her first battle, and the longsword unacquainted with blood.

"This time, I won't make a mistake."

Clenching and swearing to the longsword, Thearesia dashed with Carol and jumped onto the cart.
The number of carts that had come for rescuing Wilhelm, was much more than what Thearesia had expected. These were people who were in the same unit as him, or those who had been formerly saved by them.

Just the figure of that youth, firmly holding his sword, was nowhere to be seen.
By now, that youth had become a treasured sword, attracting a many with his brilliance and sharpness.

??The front lines of Wilhelm's hometown, had already crumbled down.

Screams of fury echo, as the battlefield was covered by the scent of blood and burn.
Thearesia's chest nauseated, seeing the terrible scene. She had imagined herself standing on the battlefield several times over, but the reality was much more miserable than anything she could ever expect.
In the battlefield, where wounds are inflicted, lives are taken, blood is shed, it was worthless to prepare beforehand.

"At any rate, search for Wilhelm!"

The one who raised voice, was the one leading the group of fighters, Bordeaux Zellgef. At his rage-filled instruction, his group, wearing rocky armours, moved? ahead at once, in unity.

"Thearesia-sama! What should we....."

Echoed the voice of Carol, asking for instructions, but Thearesia was unable to hear it.
Bordeaux's group clashed with the opposing soldiers, who had destroyed his hometown. Within the intense exchanges of blows, she faintly sensed him.

"Thearesia-sama!?"

The moment she noticed, her legs moved.
Thearesia dashed across, leaving no dust behind, in the battlefield, where the fighters were clashing.
Without even looking, she knew where to go.

She trode onto the soil, traversed through the heaps of corpses, and headed for the point where screams of rage and death wails overlapped.
And reaching that dark spot, on the other side, Thearesia saw.

In front of the collapsed Wilhelm, stood a green demi-human, with a humongous sword upraised.
With a face dyed red with blood, Wilhelm looked up to the sword. His lips moved. With a frail, weak voice, he muttered.

"I don't want to, die....."

"????"

It's alright.

It's alright, I said.

"????"

She could not hear anything, not anymore.
Thearesia only pondered upon what she had last heard, Wilhelm's whisper.

She swung the longsword in her hands. It was light.
It made no sound, neither did it make any shockwaves, and it easily sliced away the demi-human's neck.

She kicked away the huge body holding the sword, so that it didn’t fall on Wilhelm. At the same time, shots, filled with the lust for blood, energetically advanced towards the slender Thearesia.

All of those trajectories, she could sense them. She could read them. On her skin, she could feel them.

Dodging them, Thearesia followed a mysterious ray she could see with her sword.
Suddenly appearing, mysterious white rays were floating in the sky. What was even more mysterious, was the fact that she knew that she should follow the rays with her sword.

Following, following, her sword glided on the white rays.
Her sword glissaded like wind, and subsequently slashed down the bodies of the demi-humans.

Slicing off their limbs, crushing their throats, slashing away their abdomens, reaping their lives.
The ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint?, the ?Divine Protection of Death God?, exploded at the finally arrived chance.

If she were to cut open the wrist, that wound would not heal.
If she were to slash open their intestines, the bleeding would not cease.
Even the shallowest of wounds, shall erode them away eventually.

"????"

From the corner of eyes, she saw Wilhelm being held.
The ones standing by his side were Carol and a youth with a shield. They tried to leave this theatre, immediately after retrieving Wilhelm.

Yes, that is correct.
Hurry up, and take Wilhelm away from here.

"Thearesia-sama..... ~hk."

Carol clenched the pendant that hung down her neck, seeing Thearesia swinging the sword. Her gesture of seemingly prayer, Thearesia found it a bit funny.

I guess so. It's just as Carol said, isn't it.
Indeed, I am stronger than anyone else, and better at killing than anyone else.

??If only, I had noticed this a bit sooner.

"????"

The youths hurriedly grabbed Wilhelm, in an attempt to get out of here.
Wilhelm, who was pushing away the soil and resisting, used all his strength despite his deep wounds, to do the same.

His presence faded away. She was relieved to sense that.
While feeling relieved, she took away one, two, three lives. Easily, lightly.

Slashing, slashing, gashing, she dove into the screams of rage and death wails.
She washed away the endlessly loud voice of the Sword God.

Just let me hear his voice, he, who was desperately clinging onto life.
Kindly etch my reason, for fighting like this.

Please, let me believe, that my sword can save Wilhelm??.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

The confrontation had ended.
Thearesia's goal behind entering the battlefield had been achieved, Wilhelm had been retrieved.

However, Wilhelm's goal of fighting, saving his hometown, had not been successful.
His hometown burnt to ash, he lost his place to live, and he was all alone now.

Wilhelm, who swung his sword with utter rage, had a kill count of over three hundred.
For a single swordsman on a single battlefield, it was an unquestionably unimaginable and extraordinary number.

??Henceforth, Thearesia's swordsmanship, of having sliced more than a thousand necks, was anomalous.

The existence of the ?Sword Saint?, here was??.
With her disgraceful first battle being covered up, this case was recorded into history as ?Sword Saint? Thearesia's first battle.

The battle itself may have had ended in unquestionable defeat, but she had managed to prove her overwhelming sword skill.
The name of Thearesia van Astrea echoed across the kingdom, and boosted the morale of the fighting soldiers.
Of course, it must have had also been heard by the ears of the Sword Demon.

"It's humiliating."

There was no promise between them to meet again.
Yet, they felt if they were to go the square, they would meet each other.

It was true, it came true.
Wilhelm, who came to the square, locked his eyes with Thearesia's and swung the sword.

She put her hand in its path, and accepted it with her fingers.
Thearesia knew everything, regarding the optimal angle of striking, and the optimal force of striking.
With his sword's swipe stopped, Wilhelm harshly distorted his lips, and said words painted with passion, unfitting of the reunion.

"??Is that so."

"Were you, laughing at me?"

"????"

"Answer me, Thearesia..... no, Sword Saint!!"

She had no intention of doing so.
Neither did she have any reason behind that excuse.

It is true that Thearesia used to observe Wilhelm's swords dance. It is true that she did see his flaws, and did not inform those to him.
And neither did it hold any meaning, for them to talk about such flaws.

"????"

The perturbed Wilhelm stepped ahead, and got violent. With an angered expression, he attacked her, but Thearesia avoided his move, and counterattacked.
Before long, the fight became one-sided, and the treasured sword, which Wilhelm wielded, went in Thearesia's hands. Quite literally, she saw the blood flow into his arm and energetically slash?? and dodging that attack, she followed the white ray and struck his abdomen.
The sword's pommel stabbed his abdomen, and made Wilhelm fall and breathe hoarsely.

"I won't be coming here anymore."

With hatred, with pity, and with earnestly negative thoughts, he could not bear to see what was in front of his eyes.
Thearesia turned away her neck, and chose the option she had chosen countless times till now, to escape.

"With, such a face..... you shouldn't be, holding a sword."

With his mouth filled with regret, and his face on the soil, Wilhelm frantically wrung out.
Having faith and belief in the beauty and sublimity of the sword, was he. Having the ability to kick and trample upon his everything?, was her.

"I am, the Sword Saint. I never understood the reason for that, but I finally understand now."

She possessed the recherché ?Divine Protection of Death God?.
She had been bestowed with the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint?, even though she had not even asked for it.
It seemed that she would finally be able to compromise with what she had been blessed with.

"The reason....."

"Swinging the sword to protect someone. I think that isn't too bad either."

Swinging the sword, to protect someone.
She wished she could have had noticed something? so simple earlier.
Though even if she may have had realised it, she may not have had found someone to protect.
Now, she does.

??Protect, Wilhelm.

As long as she could protect with this power, this abominable power of slaughtering?, she shall protect Wilhelm.
Protect him, protect her family, protect Carol, protect much more, and ultimately protect something as humongous as the kingdom, and she shall become a fitting ?Sword Saint?.

Because I, am the strongest. Because the ?Sword Saint?, is the strongest?.
I may trample upon his feelings, I may betray what he believed in, but I cannot abandon the fact that I am the ?Sword Saint?.

"Just you, wait, Thearesia....."

No longer existed words that had to be exchanged.
His voice reached Thearesia, who had turned her back, thinking this would be the end.

"????"

She was about to stop her feet. She suppressed that emotion desperately.
Wilhelm's voice, regardless, reached Thearesia, who was desperately suppressing her emotions.

"I'll take away the sword from you. I don't care, about the Divine Protection and the duty bestowed upon you..... swinging the sword..... don't you dare look down upon, the blade's beauty, Sword Saint!"

"????"

She was told, that it would be taken away from her.
And once again, echoed the laughing voice of the Sword God within her head.

As if to sneer, at the youthfully? innocent declaration.
As if to sneer, at the cradling of a spoilt child with the spirit of fleeting hope.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??It took two more years to bring an end to the civil war.

Ever since her parting with Wilhelm, Thearesia stepped onto every single battlefield.
And determinedly working furiously hard over and over again, along with that, she contributed to weakening the demi-human alliance.

The alliance also lost its upper management, which was its framework, and its foundation loosened.
Let's just say that they had no choice, but to respond accordingly to the peace treaty offered by the kingdom.

Henceforth, the greatest civil war the kingdom ever faced, the ?Demi-human War?, deviated away from its gruesomeness midway through, and ended as quickly as how it had started.

"It's..... over?"

She was fully prepared to go to the next battle, the following battle, to an endless number of battles.
That is why, Thearesia was caught completely off guard, once she heard the sudden report.

"Yes, it is over. The civil war has come to an end. ??It is, Thearesia-sama's achievement."

Hugging Thearesia's soft body, said Carol innocently.
In recent years, Carol had grown to show such soft emotions several times, and had supported the emotional Thearesia and gently stroked her back several times.

"Achievement you say....."

She did not really agree with her statement.
Thearesia followed the traces of that thought. She believed that, in the end, it came down to protecting someone.
She believed that, if she had been able to protect that youth, that one man army, who was nowhere to be seen.

What Thearesia failed realise, it was exactly how Carol had said, that her actions were recognised as the greatest contribution to the kingdom.
A ceremony was held for her, and wearing a formal dress and taking a sword of courtesy in her hands, never did Thearesia once, from the beginning to the end, feel like she was in some dream.

No, if this was a dream, then Thearesia had always been in a dream.
Ever since she had been acquainted with the existence of the Sword God, ever since she had received the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint?, she had been in a dream.

Which is why, this too, was a dream. A dream shown by the love of the Sword God, where no sun ever shone.
That's why, if a time was to come when this dream was to end, then??.

"????"

An uproar stemmed from the hot and energetic crowd.
Through all the shouts demanding his halt, the existence continued to enter the hall.

In his hands, was a rusty, old sword.
He wore a brown, soiled tunic, dyed with filthy stains. But before his repulsive appearance, was something which everyone's instinct noticed.

??The overwhelming dread, being released from him.
??No, from this Sword Demon.

"????"

Thearesia greeted the silently approaching existence with the sword of courtesy in her hands.
The guards around the king and rest surround them and form a protective layer around them?. She was grateful for that. With this, no obstruction would come in the way.

Nobody would now get in the way, of her tryst with the ?Sword Demon? here.

??No warning was given.

However, as if a matter of course, the blades of the two collided, and made a high-pitched clank.
The dull blade clashed with the unmistakable holy sword, though it's purpose was for courtesy only, from the front directly. Sparkles danced exuberantly, slashes swiped through the wind, and the two shadows intertwined and untwined on the stage, as if dancing.

"????"

Whilst swinging the sword, Thearesia was filled with admiration. Her heartbeats accelerated, her heart was throbbing faster and faster.

In Thearesia's eyes, as always, were the floating white rays of battle. If she were to merely follow the rays and trace them with her sword, she would unquestionably kill her opponent, that was the Sword God's assistance in her eyes.

And that guaranteed path to victory in the sword fight, built by the Sword God, was being broken through by mere devotion and maddening passion of the Sword Demon.

The floating white rays always seemed to get slashed away at their ends by the rusty sword.
Intercepting every single one of the countless white rays, the Sword Demon roared, and stepped towards a victory which he should never have been? able to achieve.

Her heart was throbbing faster and faster. Each and every time, they came in contact.
Each and every time their swords collided, each and every time the white rays were cut off.

She was falling in love, with the Sword Demon in front of her eyes.
Again, and again, and again, the ?Sword Saint? fell in love with the ?Sword Demon?.
She loved him. She loved him. She loved him so much, that it was unbearable.

??She was in love with this person to the point that it was unbearable.

"??~hk."

The ceremony became a vortex of absurdities, and within the sight of so many people, when Thearesia thought of what she was doing, she found it unbearably laughable.
Her cheeks were hot. Her heart was throbbing fast. Each passing moment, her love was intensifying?.

The truth is, I want to throw away my sword right away, and tightly grip to my chest.

There is nothing to take away from me now. A long time ago, when I first met you, ever since your figure was first etched into my memory, I have??.

"????"

The option for her to escape away, for her to refuse facing him, had been completely thwarted?.
Not by the reprimanding voice of the Sword God, but the glint in the demon's eyes, who was in front of her, repudiated it with all of its spirit.

You don't have to be indebted to anyone else's hands or even your own hands, I, with my own hands, will take away the sword from your hands, with my own strength.
With my own strength, with my own perseverance, with everything I devoted to the sword, I will take this woman away from the Sword God.

Just how much, for how long.
Just how many times, hundreds of times, tens of thousands of times, hundreds of millions of times, must have he thought of this to himself.

The sword slashes came in contact, they pressed against each other, their tips shimmered, and embraced each other again, and again.
And, the Sword God's wrathful voice accompanied the complete slash??,

"????"

The rusted blade fractured, and its tip was separated into the air, and it landed on the platform.
The one to put it through such an ordeal, was the undoubting and passionate attack by the ?Sword Saint?.

Above all, rather than anything else, it was an attack of the strength devoted into it by the ?Sword Saint?.
However,

"My"

"????"

"My, win."

The treasured sword, was taken away from her hands.
Her palm went numb due to the shock of the attack, and the treasured sword went flying, and fell behind them, ringing a sound. And, the rusted sword, fractured to its half, with its tip broken, was positioned right next to Thearesia's white and slender neck.

The beautifully bedecked ?Sword Saint?, lost, to the coarsely trained ?Sword Demon?.
That was the moment when the rusty, old sword won against the treasured sword, and the phantasmagoria known as the ?Sword Saint? had been defeated.

"You're weaker than me, so you no longer have any reason? to wield the sword."

A voice echoed.
Now that I think of it, it's been quite a while since I've heard his rough voice.
And to think his first words, would be this.

"If I don't wield the sword..... who will."

"I'll take up your reason for swinging the sword. You just become my reason for swinging the sword."

His reason for swinging the sword, was to protect something.
You become that reason, saying that, he took his dress' hood off.

Seeing herself get glared at by the sullied and sour look, Thearesia shook her head.
Though he had said some pretty cool things like taking it away from her, or protecting her, he still could never understand a woman's heart. He is a sword, so it could not be helped, though.

"You're so rude. To render all of someone's decisions and perseverance useless like this."

"I'll take up all that too. You just forget that you ever held the sword and..... that's right. You just live in peace behind my back, and raise flowers or something."

Ah, that's, that's??.

"While I, am being protected by your sword?"

"That's right."

"Will you protect me?"

"That's right."

If she were to count herself in the things which he wanted to protect, and he were to answer her love.

Thearesia smiled at the words of the Sword Demon, of Wilhelm.
After that, touching the sword at her neck, she took a single step forward.

By touching his sword, she could feel Wilhelm's two years.
And thinking that possibly, if in that time, he had been thinking about her, she felt her chest get warmer.
With the rise of emotions she could not bear, Thearesia's eyes filled with tears. Eventually, they flow over and dropped down the smiling Thearesia's cheeks.

"Do you, like flowers?"

"I don't hate them now."

"Why do you, swing the sword?"

"To protect you."

This was the limit of her patience.
Ever since she lost the sword from her hands, she could no longer hear the Sword God's voice.

She saw nothing but Wilhelm.
She felt nothing but Wilhelm.
She had nothing but Wilhelm.

Softly putting her hands on his chest, she turned her head slightly upwards.
Thearesia's lips, who had her eyes closed, imbricated with the lips of Wilhelm. She felt his love, soft and warm, and Thearesia's world revolutionized.

With her cheeks dyed, she looked at her beloved, in front of her.
Wilhelm said nothing, silently waiting for her words.
That attitude was strange. She was the one waiting. As he seemed to not understand that, so once again, like several times before, she initiated,

"Are you, in love with me?"

"??You already know that."

Giving a brusque reply, he turned his face away.
As soon as he turned away his eyes after responding to her question, sounds entered the world of the two.
The spectators resumed their agitation, and the guards headed for them.
And there was visible, the figure of Wilhelm aware of their charge, and the guards coming towards him.

"Oh well oh well."

Looking at Wilhelm's relaxed expression, the people puffed up their cheeks.
Even though she was right in front of him, why was he looking at someplace else?
He hasn't even said the words she wanted to hear yet.

"There is something I want you to say, you know."

"Ah."

Wilhelm turned away his head, scratching his cheek, as if trying to deceive her. However, before long, he looked at Thearesia's face, and subsequently turned his face downwards and sighed, embracing her slender waist.
And gently positioning his face next to the surprised Thearesia's ear,

"Someday, when I feel like it."

??It felt as if it would take a long time to reach that day.

She felt frustrated at that, but at the same time, she looked forward to that day.
With her weakness for being charmed by him, Thearesia forgave the words? of the one she loved.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??After that, looking back at it now, a lot of things happened.

Welcoming her husband, Wilhelm, who had cut into the ceremony with unprecedented violence was one.
Wilhelm becoming a knight of the Royal Guard instead of Thearesia, who had quit being the ?Sword Saint?, at the suggestion of Bordeaux and the others was one.
Ascertaining her lifetime service to Thearesia, Carol fell in love with one of Wilhelm's colleagues, but not marrying was one.
Having several feats of his ability in battle, Bordeaux was given a seat in the Parliamentary Committee, with the task of handling important affairs of the kingdom was one.

With so much, really, so much happening, they were really fun days.

"I'm in love with you, Wilhelm. What about you?"

"????"

In the end, he never said the words that are supposed to follow. He did act instead of words, though.
The one who could be deceived by that was either a kind woman, or a woman who was head over heels in love with the man in question?? since Thearesia was both, she kept on getting deceived.

The time they spent as a couple was calm and peaceful, such that it felt too peaceful.
Wilhelm had promised to Thearesia, and ever since that, never did once she wield the sword. Neither did Thearesia have any clinging attachment for the sword. The Sword God's voice too, had long been muted ever since.

Even still, occasionally, she continued to come across her ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint?.
For example, at the time of cooking, whenever she grasped any kitchen knives, she simultaneously got aware of things like the optimal angle for striking. Even when she somehow managed that, when she got to learn other procedures that followed, she realised that being a housewife? was much tougher than being a swordsman.

".....Ah."

That, and there was the time when she learnt how to control her ?Divine Protection of Death God?. She accidentally cut her finger by the shell of an ingredient while cooking.
Voluntary wounds were to be subjected to the Divine Protection no matter what. When the wound she

had inflicted herself grew pallid, and when she hurriedly tried to stop the bleeding?, the bleeding ceased immediately.

??Was it really so easy, was, in fact, her first reaction.

She accepted the existence of the Divine Protections, and controlled their power.
The little girl who had been given the great title of ?Sword Saint? on her shoulders, but who, in reality, did not even have understanding of the things she possessed.
If only, this happened earlier?? thoughts like those, filled her heart up with the images of her brothers.

"Thearesia."

"??Hm."

At that moment, she saw the figure of Wilhelm come back home.
And he handed over his withered clothes to Thearesia, who hid her thoughts within her heart.
And in that position, she would be saved.

"Are you, in love with me?"

"????"

Just that question however, she stubbornly refused to answer.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

After that, again, a lot happened.
Truly, a lot happened.

The couple's son was born, Heinkel.
Heinkel then met the woman who later became his bride, and Thearesia's? grandson, Reinhardt, was born.

??Nobody at all, was at any fault.

Heinkel, earnest and diligent, working hard with the sword with utmost sincerity.
The bride, who was affected with the illness known as ?Sleeping Beauty?, robbed away Heinkel's opportunity for vindication, and left the young Reinhardt all alone.
Reinhardt, who was blessed with talents which could be sensed at a single glance, and was crammed up with fate unnecessary for his young age.

No one was at fault.
That's why, as always, the one at fault was herself.

Heinkel distorted, the bride was caged in dreams, and Reinhardt worked hard, trying to be loved by such

parents.
She found herself, who was the first one to notice this, the utmost foolish, and good-for-nothing.

"There's a battle known as the Great Subjugation..... the conquest to bring down the White Whale. Over there, I'll....."

A knight of the Royal Guard just in its name, and a weighty mission just in its name.
As the voice of her son trembled while presenting his proposition, Thearesia quietly, at once, cemented a decision.

Ever since she had last used her longsword, it had been taken care of by Carol, who had preserved its condition to this very day.

"I am against it. What are you thinking!"

Thearesia still had her doubts regarding her decision, but Wilhelm was absolutely against it.
She felt a strong glare upon herself.

He had some white hair, and his voice had lost its former youthfulness, but still, Wilhelm's foundation had remained unchanged.
His dignity, his zeal, his clumsiness, everything continued to be the way as when Thearesia had loved them, and she still did.

"That damn idiot..... he is such an embarrassment..... ~hk."

"Neither you, nor I have the right to say that."

"????"

Wilhelm, too, had lament for their son. With his face somehow suppressing his furious expression, Wilhelm bit his lips.
Though his zeal remained unchanged, he had matured regarding heating and cooling down.

"I too, will take charge....."

"You have your own duties to fulfill. You must be aware of it, Wilhelm. ??It cannot be that you have forgotten, Ford-sama's weeping."

"????"

The younger brother of the king, Ford, his daughter had been kidnapped by someone who intruded into

the castle. As the commander of the Royal Guard, Wilhelm had the duty of recovering her position immediately.
It was impossible for the Sword Demon to be brought to the Great Subjugation.

Instead, Thearesia, who was the inheritor of the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint?, was requested to step into the battlefield.
She could not refuse. Her days of peace by abandoning the sword had been built upon her own selfishness.

She could not let that continue anymore.

"Thearesia, something like this is....."

"Wilhelm."

With a persuasive voice, Thearesia called him. In front of his exhaling face, she smiled.
And asked, a question after a long time.

"Are you, in love with me?"

"Wha..... ~hk."

Unrest?? the same emotion as before.
While smiling, Thearesia had her sword glide over Wilhelm's shoulder. It slashed through the wind, and gashed through his skin.
Standing unprotected in front of his wife, Wilhelm failed to defend in his lack of consciousness, and the newly inflicted wound on his shoulder started to bleed.

"Thearesia..... What are you doing?"

The wound on his shoulder, was subjected to the power of the ?Divine Protection of Death God?. It wasn't deep, but the bleeding continued. This would stay the same way, as long as Thearesia, the one responsible, remained close to him.

"Thearesia?"

She gently came close to his chest.
While feeling the rigidity of the shoulders she had grasped, Thearesia put her lips on the wound on Wilhelm's shoulder.
Blood dyed her lips, as she got to taste her husband's blood for the first time.

"With this, you can no longer come after me. As if you're close to me, that wound will not close."

"Doing something so stupid for something like that..... let me make it clear, even if the bleeding does not stop, I will still"

Giving a slight smile, Thearesia released his body.
And, while pointing towards Wilhelm's wound on his shoulder,

"I shall leave that wound the way it is. So that you do not follow me. I will close it once both of our jobs are done."

"????"

"It's alright, besides, who do you even think I am? I am the strongest swordsman in this world, after you."

"But comparing your level now, in mid-forties, to that in your young days....."

"Don't say something so redundant."

Harshly, she made him shut his mouth so that he doesn't continue his rude words.
Geez, even after twenty years of staying together, all this still continued.

The steel still remained unchanged. However,

"I love you, Wilhelm."

"????"

"Yes, that's correct. Answer that later."

"Later?"

Facing Wilhelm, who furrowed his eyebrows, Thearesia nodded.
And, while swearing on her husband's wound to meet again??.

"When I return, that day, please let me hear the words I could not hear."

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Her memories, were disappearing.
Visibility was disturbed within the sandstorm, and the scattered sounds and voices were becoming increasingly difficult to hear.

"??!"

Someone's wrathful roars, shrieks, screams, could be heard.
Towards one plane of her vision, all what was visible was green?? no, this was the ground. It had the colour of a grassland. When she glanced around at her surroundings, the dense fog roughly, doubtfully around ten meters ahead her, completely locked the rest of the world.

The punitive force had been decimated to its half, and the forces were in a catastrophic state.

There was a desperate stampede, and they could not determine which direction they should take for escaping within the thick fog.
However, they just vaguely felt a titanic sense of oppression from the other side of the fog. Henceforth, it could be understood that the echoing voices were fleeing in the opposite direction from that.

"????"

Suddenly, she was unable to remember what had happened.
Within the violent and fiercely hard-fought battle, where they had worked hard to achieve dominance in the battle, she felt that it would be much more helpful if she utilised her power for retreating from the front lines?, and just when she started to feel that way??.

"???"

Thinking that far, she noticed a faint sense of discomfort.
She glanced down at her palm. Something, uncomforting.

There was no problem in her limbs, in her eyes, or in her feet.
But she felt something like, as if, she had lost her wings??.

"The Divine Protection....."

She noticed it.
She could no longer sense the feeling of possessing the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint?. The same went for the Sword God, who was always by her side no matter how far she went with the sword.
Even his ridicule, was nowhere now.

"Reinhardt??!"

At the same time, Thearesia felt she knew who now possessed what her body had lost.
Was this the same feeling her uncle got when he sensed Thearesia being the inheritor of the Divine Protection? Otherwise, it may just be that Thearesia was simply aware of Reinhardt's limitless natural talent.

Whichever it may be, Thearesia did not hold any doubts that the next generation ?Sword Saint? would be Reinhardt.
That feeling was perhaps, traitorous to her actual son, Heinkel?? but neither did exist anyone to put the blame on for that, nor did she have the time to find someone to blame for that

"??Oh, for a lone lady to be present in such a place, quite gallant indeed."

The graceful voice of a young girl, unfitting for the time and place, resonated.

Turning back, Thearesia saw a small shadow within the dense fog.

White clothes, platinum hair.
Intimate and affectionate?, an amiable gaze filled with sympathy boundlessly extolling togetherness?? misdirected love, to the point that it was unsettling.

"????"

"It seems I have not quite been taken a liking to."

Gripping the longsword, Thearesia stepped ahead.
If the girl were in a normal situation, she might have had worried for her. However, this was the world of death ruled by the dense fog of the White Whale.
The young girl, making her appearance here, was unquestionably beyond mysterious.

Even if she had lost the ?Divine Protection of the Sword Saint?, Thearesia's body still possessed the swordsmanship of a former Sword Saint. Fully demonstrating her ability, her swordsmanship, which was the pinnacle of swordsmanship, she slashed right through the petite body of the young girl??,

"??I want to, understand you."

The young girl's voice tickled her eardrums, and her consciousness interspersed.
Her voice had something special.

Within the darkness, her consciousness fell.
With her hands and legs tied, Thearesia's body submerged in the bottomless lukewarm water.

The future of her grandson, the heart of her son, the bride who tied the two, such worries ran through her mind.
And, in the end,

"Wilhelm"

She called the name of her beloved, and her consciousness fragmented completely.
And??.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Thearesia: "Such a pathetic, face....."

Slowly opening her eyelids, she could see a messed up face.
His head was completely white, and his face had been etched with the fine lines of aging, but she could not help but think that this was cool in its own way.

There is no way she could have had mistaken.

It was the face of her husband. It seems quite some time had passed ever since that parting.

"????"

She inhaled deeply.
Close by, Heinkel and Reinhardt were also there. She could feel their presence.
All three men of the Astrea family had assembled here, possibly just to see her off.

Because everyone, is so kind.

Wilhelm: "Thearesia, I am....."

With his wrinkled face, Wilhelm was breathless.
She couldn't say that she disapproved of it in front of her son and grandson.
Where did he leave his majesty and dignity? Actually, looking back at it now, such weaknesses of his always stood out, surprisingly.

Thearesia: "Hey, Wilhelm....."

Her voice was husky, yet unusually youthful.
As if it wasn't hers?? no, it definitely was hers, but she was supposed to be a grandmother.
It seemed like her voice when she had first fallen in love, how embarrassing.

"????"

When she had first fallen in love, feeling like that, she felt more and more awkward.
There wasn't much time left, but they still wasted quite a lot of it by choosing to simply look at each other.

But, even still, it's alright.

The words Thearesia should have had said, she had conveyed them a sufficient number of times.
Wilhelm, too, should know that.
That is why, the one needing the time, the chance, and the words was him.

Thearesia should simply, quietly wait for those words.
Though she will have to wait, her expectations will surely be fulfilled. That's? just how the man Wilhelm Trias was.
That's just how the man Wilhelm van Astrea was.

Wilhelm: "There is something I must..... tell you."

"????"

Wilhelm; "I-I am a poor speaker..... so I can't convey my thoughts well, I'm having a hard time even with you..... that's why even in these twenty years, never even once did I....."

"????"

Wilhelm: "These twenty years, may have made me uneasy. But, I am....."

Thearesia: "??A stupid person."

Seeing him struggle so much at speaking, and presenting himself so stupidly, she could not bear to hold it in.
She ended up saying it. Truly, what was this man saying?

Thearesia: "Did you really, never notice?"

She heartbreakingly reached out to the face which was in tears.
Her body was terribly heavy. There wasn't really any strength left in her, but she put all her remaining strength in her fingers, and wiped away the tears dropping down his face.

Thearesia: "You had always, been saying it."

"????"

Did he intend to hide it?
Did he believe, that he would be able to hide it if he never said it?

Thearesia: "Your voice, your eyes, your attitude, your actions, had always."

Everything which Wilhelm, had directed towards Thearesia.
This person, had always, above all, been clearly conveying his heart??.

Wilhelm: "I am, with you"
Thearesia: "You are, with me"

That is why, it was sufficient.

"??In love."

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

From the beginning to the end, my life was surely one full of blessings.
I had my brothers whom I had a good relationship with, I had a female friend who was always warm towards me and took tender care of me, I was helped by many people, I met Wilhelm.

I'm sure, lots of problems must still be there.
But I have faith, that you all will be alright.

But, the truth is, just one thing.

There was just one last thing, left in my heart which I wanted to ask.

??How surprised would you be if you got to know, that it was actually love at first sight?

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

This was the last time, they exchanged words of love with each other.

The figure of Thearesia van Astrea, who was smiling with satisfaction, with her cheeks dyed with the tint of love, and eyes glistened with tears, lost its shape and crumbled in the blink of an eye.
In the arms of Wilhelm, who had knelt down, no longer visible was the form of a bleeding, suffering woman, but what was left was only a lump of ashes?? and that alone, was the proof of her former presence.

"????"

Having her life burn out and turning into a mere lump of ash, was Thearesia. Wilhelm widened his eyes, and simply, quietly, kept staring at Thearesia's remains.

???: "......Are you, satisfied now?"

And, instead of the silent and stationary Wilhelm, a man raised his voice.
The red-haired middle-aged man?? Heinkel, raised his voice at Reinhardt, who was standing next to him, with a look filled with hatred.
Reinhardt slowly met that look with his own eyes, and exhaled.

Reinhardt: "What do you mean, satisfied?"

Heinkel: "Don't play dumb, it's just as how you saw it! Are you satisfied? You must be satisfied now! Both in name and in reality, the position of ?Sword Saint? is all yours now, congratulations! The rumours of you robbing it away by killing the previous generation would be unquestionably true now too. Huh, are you satisfied? Hey!"

Reinhardt: "I do not understand what you are trying to say."

Heinkel: "Don't make a face as if you're putting on airs! You shitty brat!"

Exhaling a hoarse breath, Heinkel tried to grab Reinhardt.
However, Reinhardt avoided his fingers, and controlled his father's body, stepping onto his palms like a foot-bellow.
The current ?Sword Saint? had not even the slightest of affect on himself for slashing the previous ?Sword Saint? to her death. The truth is, his opponent didn't either.
As if trying to shove that truth onto him, Heinkel's throat faintly shuddered.

Heinkel: "Don't make a scene out of this, Reinhardt..... ~hk."

Becoming further desperate, trying to deceive away the wavering of his own heart, Heinkel pointed his finger at Reinhardt, and spat out.

Heinkel: "No matter how nice and fine you may try to make things, what I saw won't change. It's a fact that you killed mother..... Thearesia van Astrea. I'll proclaim it. I'll spread this rumour everywhere, so that nobody recognises you as the ?Sword Saint? anymore!"

"????"

Heinkel: "No matter how calm of a face you may make, there's no way you'll let go of your prestige as ?Sword Saint?. You may have had continued having it till now, but not anymore. The one slashing his own blood relatives to their deaths is the ?Sword Saint?? The sword of the kingdom? Hah, don't make me laugh! You murderer!"

Reinhardt: “Deputy Commander, no matter how many times you say it, I do not understand what you intend to mean. ??It is Deputy Commander's misunderstanding that I slashed the previous generation to death.”

Heinkel: "Hu~h.....?"

Reinhardt quietly gave his answer to Heinkel, whose face was reddening. Heinkel rounded his eyes at his response, but Reinhardt did not seem to have any intention of tricking him or beating around the bush. Reinhardt was not giving his opinion, but as if merely stating facts.

Reinhardt: "The enemy just now was merely a corpse being made to move through the use of some secret arts. It could not have had been the previous generation ?Sword Saint?..... grandmother. Is there still perhaps some misunderstanding?"

"????"

Heinkel made a stupefied expression at Reinhardt's words.
After that, he put his hands in his red hair, and rubbed them violently. With faint laughter, Heinkel, and an abnormal smile,

Heinkel: "Then, what was that in the end? When she was, talking to father!? When she was glaring so hatefully at you and me..... what was it, if it wasn't mother!"

Wilhelm: "??Enough, now stop, Heinkel."

Gnashing his own teeth, with burning hot hatred was Heinkel. The one to extinguish Heinkel's heat was Wilhelm?, who had been silent till now.
The aged swordsman, while maintaining his crouched posture, tore apart the sleeve of his jacket, and treated the wound on his right shoulder?? which had been inflicted by a certain longsword.

The ability of the ?Divine Protection of Death God?, due to which the wound was not supposed to close, lost its effect the moment Thearesia ceased to exist. ??No, before even that, ever since Thearesia had returned to sanity in the end, it had been lost.
Instead of that, what remained was the pain on his left shoulder due to the wound carved onto it at the time of their final farewell.

The sane Thearesia lasted on his left shoulder, and the demised Thearesia on his right leg.
The wounds carved with the ability of the ?Divine Protection of Death God? had been nullified with the loss of both.

Heinkel: "Stop, you say..... father! Are you really fine with this! He is.....!"

Wilhelm: "Stop, Heinkel.....Stop."

Wilhelm objected Heinkel, and stopped him from saying anything further.
He took off his sleeveless jacket and used the cloth for wrapping and containing Thearesia's ashes.
Leaving her in the cold wind like this, would leave her far too lonely.
He believed that he must bury her ashes in the appropriate grave, at the very least.

Heinkel: "??~hk."

Seeing the state of his father, Heinkel gnashed his teeth and swallowed his words. And, retrieving the ashes, Wilhelm shakily stood up.
Even if his bleeding had ceased, his body had lost quite a lot of blood. The wound on his right foot was deep, so walking without any support stemmed into uneasiness. Retroactively, Reinhardt tried to support his trembling shoulders.
However,

Wilhelm: "??Stay away!!"

"????"

His fingers, which were reaching for him, were subjected to Wilhelm's rage.
Reinhardt halted his raised arm, and no longer tried to support his shoulders and face him. But, the Sword Demon, without facing him, quietly inhaled.

Wilhelm: "Reinhardt....."

Reinhardt: "??Yes."

Unlike Wilhelm's quivering voice, Reinhardt's? voice was stable and dignified.
Hearing his voice, their eyes met, and Wilhelm said the words in his mouth.

??It was, a question.

Wilhelm: "Do you regret, that you slashed your grandmother..... Thearesia to her death?"

"????"

A slight gap occurred between the question and its response.
Or perhaps, he may have had dismissed the question? as meaningless, similar to Heinkel's earlier questions.
However, before long, Reinhardt responded.

Reinhardt: "No. ??I did the correct thing. I hold no regrets."

Wilhelm: "......Is that, so. That's right."

"????"

Wilhelm: "You are right. I am mistaken. ??That is why, there is nothing left to talk to you about anymore."

Pronouncing with a quiet voice, Wilhelm turned his back towards Reinhardt.
The grandfather and grandson put a full stop to the decisive question-answer, without even facing each other.
And, Wilhelm raised his finger and pointed towards the center of the city.

Wilhelm: "I am worried about the City Hall, to which Garfiel-dono is headed. If it would be possible, then I would request you to head there for providing support. ?Sword Saint? Reinhardt-dono."

"????"

Terribly formal and unduly distant, receiving those polite words, Reinhardt looked in the direction towards which the finger pointed. He nodded, and then finally glanced at Heinkel.
Heinkel, who was still directing his resentment for the airs being put up, widened his blue eyes with a rough inhale, but Reinhardt ignored his upcoming spiteful words,

Reinhardt: "Outdoor is dangerous. If it would be possible, Deputy Commander, head to a shelter. ??Along with Wilhelm-dono."

Heinkel: "Y-You just shut the hell up! Hurry up and disappear!"

Being hit with the words of the spirit of a loser, Reinhardt turned his face away. At the same pace, he dashed towards the waterway, as if to kick its surface, he jumped above the building, and disappeared in the direction of the center of the city.
Seeing his outlandish movements, Heinkel spat. He then rushed to Wilhelm, who was walking slowly due to his injured right foot. However,

Heinkel: "Father-dono, going alone is....."

Wilhelm: "Leave me alone for now. Right now, I don't want anyone to see my face."

Heinkel: "Father....."

Wilhelm: "There is no need for you to worry about me. You should just worry about yourself. Hide in a suitable building or a shelter..... you'll be fine by just that."

Giving his thoughts, Wilhelm then left Heinkel, who was now alone.
With his wife's ashes in the coat he held, he straightened his back, and dragged his feet.

"????"

He was left behind, alone, unable to stop him,or be by his side.
With Wilhelm eventually disappearing from visibility, Heinkel, who was left alone??.

Heinkel: "What, is your problem..... what is your problem, what is your problem, what is your problem, what is your problem, damn it, what the hell is your problem!"

Left all alone in the plaza, standing on the cobblestone, glaring on the flat pavement, Heinkel cursed out his fury. Violently scratching his head, roaring his rage which could not be conveyed in words, he then threw the sword attached to his waist to the ground.
The beautiful knight sword rang a high-pitched echo, as it rolled down the ground.

Heinkel: "Shitshitshitshit, god damn everyone.....! Everyone just go die.....! Just go die~e~e~e~e~e~ ~hk!!"

Heinkel’s bloody and hateful shriek resonated in the deserted plaza in solitude.
The scream, a mixture of boundless, endless resentment and grief, echoed far and wide??.

The battlefield of the grandfather, father, and grandchild, with this, came to an end.

A lady, a grandmother, a mother, a wife.
The end of Thearesia van Astrea engraved wounds upon the hearts of the three.

??With this, all of the battlefields in the fight for the Watergate City of Priestella had been settled.

Arc 5, Chapter 74: "Fruits of The Battle for Pristella 1"

by Gracedharperd - Furuta - Monday, August 05, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/08/05/arc-5-chapter-74-fruits-of-the-battle-for-pristella/

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Translated by :

- Gracedharperd (/u/Gracedharperd)
- Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)

Proofread by :

- Gracedharperd (/u/Gracedharperd)
- Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)
- Shifty (/u/Shiftyfish87)

Art Sources

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  - Wilhelm
  - Garfiel (deleted link)

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Arc 5 - "Stars What Make History"
Chapter 74 - "Fruits of The Battle for Pristella 1"

“The heinous Witch Cult, who captured the four control towers and threatened the city, have been thrown back. With this, the safety of the City is affirmed?? The triumph is that of the Water Gate City Pristella!”

Subaru heard the broadcast that resonated in the city along with Emilia as they hurried to the City Hall.

The cheerful announcement was transmitted through a magical device that conveyed the voice to the city.

Although there were parts where the sound broke, it was only the fluctuation of the voice of the person making the broadcast. There was no reason to doubt the contents of the welcoming announcement.

Emilia: “Subaru! Just now they said...!”

Subaru: “So it seems. Somehow or other, it feels like it’s over.”

In front of the bright-faced Emilia, Subaru relaxed his cheeks as he dropped his shoulders.

The reason for his listlessness was out of relief, and a little bit of anxiety.

Subaru: “……At any rate, it’s ‘cause the enemies are who they are..”

There was Capella of “Lust” , who possessed the Authority of Variation and Change; in the worst-case scenario, there was the possibility of the broadcast voice being a ploy to cast false hope over the citizens. There was no guarantee they wouldn’t go that far, and that malice was what made the Sin Archbishops so frightening.

However, the voice of the broadcast?? which appeared to be that of Kiritaka Muse, his statement was consciously respectful, he wasn’t able to conceal his faint emotions and joy. Upon hearing that voice, one didn’t have any reason to worry about “being fooled” by such wicked trickery.

Subaru: “That means, that everyone did it……”

The broadcast stated that the four control towers occupied by the Sin Archbishops had been recaptured.

At least with this, it was safe to assume that the E N D where all the Water Gates would end up being opened, and the city would end up being both flooded and annihilated, had been avoided.

On that point, they could be sincerely relieved. If there was one problem which made Subaru concerned?? It would be the victims.

Subaru: “Miraculously, Regulus didn’t end up causing any casualties. ”

Although they had a somewhat powerful lineup as well, their enemies were the Sin Archbishops with one or two peculiarities to them. The only reason they overcame the crusade against the invincible Regulus, was because he himself was lousy in battle.

The cunning “Lust” and “Wrath” whose defeat he could not witness. And “Gluttony” with whom he was connected by fate, calling them difficult enemies or threats was simply not enough.

Even though they’d won, their damage??was frightful.

Emilia : “According to what Subaru said, there were also Sin Archbishops in the other control towers. All the others, I wonder if they’re okay…?”

It was Emilia's words that were accompanied by the same unease Subaru felt, who couldn't put on a joyful face.

Subaru shook his head, biting his lip, in front of Emilia who had cast her gaze down.

Subaru: "I also feel troubled about that, but… All we can do is trust in the others. I want to confirm that they are fine as quickly as possible."

Emilia: "Yeah, that's right……"

With such simple words of comfort, he couldn't dispel Emilia's distress.

If they considered how powerful the enemies had been this time around, they couldn't avoid the possibility that there were victims among their allies. Still, it couldn't be said that the massive destruction to save the city was the result they had desired.

Thus, although it depended on the circumstances, taking into account using "Return by Death" as one of his options was a determination which Subaru had held ever since the start of this operation.

Personally, Subaru did not like the strategy of incorporating his "Return by Death".

Of course, he was opposed to choosing his own death, but it was also related to the Trial he had witnessed at the "Sanctuary", the world after Subaru's death.

In fact, it wasn't known whether or not the world continued after Subaru's death, but the "Trials" revealed that such a possibility existed. So Subaru had firmly decided that he would not use "Return by Death" to increase the number of attempts.

Even so, if Subaru willingly chose "Return by Death", it would be when the unacceptable result of having to continue with a loss awaited him.

And this time, Subaru was considering such a possibility.

Those who swore to recapture the city and challenged the Sin Archbishops, the royal candidates, their knights, and their allies.

In order not to lose those he did not want to lose, he was prepared to repeat the pain and suffering.

Emilia: "...Subaru, your brow is veeeeery wrinkled."

Subaru: "Heh?"

Emilia was gazing straight ahead at Subaru who had a grim and serious expression on his face. She'd shot Subaru a look at his wrinkled brow, causing him to reflexively open his eyes up wide.

As her amethyst eyes filled with gloom, Emilia spoke to him,

Emilia: ”After all, no matter what you do, you still care. I’m sorry. Although it’s a difficult time, thanks to those who captured me…”

Subaru: “No, it’s not Emilia-tan’s fault. Even without Emilia-tan, it was necessary to defeat Regulus. If Emilia-tan hadn’t been there, I don’t know if we could have saved the brides.”

To save the brides from “Greed”, they had to temporarily stop their hearts which carried the “Lion’s Heart”

Emilia was probably the only one who could have done it from their existing lineup. Ferris perhaps could also have been a possibility.

Without her, in the worst case scenario, it would have been necessary for the brides to become sacrifices to defeat Regulus.

Subaru: “Well, I didn’t want to make that choice either, and Reinhard wouldn’t have allowed it.”

Even if it was a necessary sacrifice to face such great evil, he couldn’t accept that.

That young man, who was a bundle of justice, could never allow even a few sacrifices. In that situation, the affair with Regulus might not have been resolved so quickly.

Subaru: “Or, I may’ve ended up dying half-way through if only I ended up getting involved.”

First of all, if Emilia had not been kidnapped, there was the chance that the formations of the teams to defeat the Sin Archbishops would have been very different. Since no one knew what the right answer was, it was useless to think about.

But, hopefully??,

Subaru: After we split up, Reinhard went to the others. That will lessen the damage…. That is what I want to believe.”

Emilia: “Yes, that’s true.??We have to make sure of that as soon as possible.”

In response to Subaru’s reply, Emilia nodded with a serious look on her face.

And, as he resumed his step towards the City Hall next to her, Subaru gently placed his hand on his own chest. He felt that his heart was beating slightly faster?? There, another concern that Subaru had apart from his preparation for “Return by Death”.

The sensation of a strange black force callously curling next to his heart.

It was a perverse impurity that slipped into Subaru at the same time that the “Death” of Regulus was confirmed. Subaru vaguely knew the identity of that impurity.

??The “Witch Factor”.

That so-called thing was probably the identity of the impurity that connected Subaru and the Witch Cult.

Just after defeating Petelgeuse Romanee-Conti of “Sloth”, Subaru felt the same discomfort inside his body. The identity of the foreign force he felt was the “Witch Factor”, and the first person who had told him that was the “Witch” Echidna.

The “Witch Factor” had a profound connection to the Sin Archbishops and the “Witches of Sin”.

And for some reason, it also affected Subaru, as if it was consuming him.

If so, this was surely related to the “Witch of Envy” who induced his “Return by Death”

It wasn’t something that could be considered positive.

Subaru: “No matter how many creepy things possess me, I’m me….. That should be fine.”

No matter how much the influence of the “Witch Factor” increased, he would never let it affect him.

Even if the “Witch Factor” consumed Subaru every time he took down a Sin Archbishop.

Plus??,

Subaru: “If Beako wakes up, she’ll get mad at me for not having told her.”

No matter what the “Witch Factor” was, there was no need for Subaru to worry about it alone.

He had companions who would work together with him to try to solve the problem when he confessed his concerns to them.

He was sure he’d find a way to get over it.

Emilia: “Subaru? Did something happen?”

Worried about Subaru who spoke awkwardly, Emilia turned her glance to him. Subaru said “No” and shook his head, and after thinking a little,

Subaru: “By the way, while listening to the broadcast before, I think Kiritaka’s doing all right. If she knew, Liliana surely would be glad.”

Emilia: “Kiritaka-san disappeared?”

Subaru: “He protected Otto and it was unknown whether he was dead or alive. For some reason it didn’t feel like he was dead, so I wasn’t that worried.”

Emilia: “Then cheer up more, or I’m going to end up feeling sorry for you.”

As if she were casting away the anxiety that hung over her, Emilia pouted at Subaru.

Instead of being anxious about the possibility that someone had been hurt, he should have been glad that someone had been saved.

Perhaps that was also a necessary attitude for his current state of mind.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

And so, the two of them rushed on trying to avoid triggering each other’s anxieties as much as possible, but the scene that awaited them wasn’t something optimistic.

Subaru: “...This is… Terrible.”

Subaru was stunned to see that the City Hall had collapsed and turned into a mountain of rubble in front of his eyes.

The words that came from his dry lips gave off a candid impression of that scene.

The City Hall was a five-story tall building that was rare to see in the buildings of this world, but its greatness had crumbled without a trace.

The marks of destruction extended as far as the foundations of the building, the centre of the plot of land where the City Hall had been located had been crushed enormously, the large sunken hole looked like an open mouth.

This collapse likely wouldn’t have happened unless the foundations of the buildings had received a major blow.

Subaru made this assumption from the remains of the building; Emilia, who witnessed the same thing, gazed around with a restless expression on her face.

Emilia: “The broadcast from before, it should’ve used the magical device that is in that building, no? Yet, with the building in this state...”

Subaru: “??! Now that you say it, that’s true…”

Faced with Emilia’s concern, Subaru looked around his surroundings in a hurry.

The collapse of the City Hall was not an unimportant matter. It was undoubtedly the result of having been breached by the evil grasp of the Witch Cult. In addition to that, in the City Hall there wasn’t only the magical device, Otto and the others who did not participate in the groups to recover the control towers, and the victims of Capella’s Authority also remained.

Since the City Hall suffered so much damage, it meant that there had been a battle. If so, what had happened in the City Hall where only the non-combatants had stayed behind?

Kiritaka's transmission, even the fact of that matter had become suspicious.

But, Subaru's concerns??

??? : "Ah, the moment I think there's someone coming, it finally ends up being Subaru and Emilia, in fact. "

Subaru: "……Beatrice?"

The girl's familiar voice reached Subaru and Emilia who had frozen in their tracks.

When he looked up, Beatrice was at the top of the rubble looking at the two of them as she walked down holding the hem of her fluffy dress. She went down to Subaru's side who opened his eyes in surprise, and looked at him from top to bottom to check the condition he was in,

Beatrice: "Hmm, you don't seem to be injured, I'm relieved I suppose. If you'd been hurt while Betty was absent, I wouldn't have been able to leave you alone even to go to the bathroom."

Subaru: "I'm not a child who needs this much care… Or rather what I should be saying is, Beako, why are you here?"

Subaru was surprised by Beatrice who had crossed her short arms and held her head high with an aloof expression of composure on her face. That flippant attitude was exactly the same as always.

Subaru: "Weren't you supposed to have spent all your mana and left the frontlines? At least, you shouldn't have been able to participate in this battle."

Beatrice: "Spent sounds like you're blaming Betty, so stop, I suppose! If it wasn't for Betty's devotion, your leg would be a little thinner now, in fact. Your thanks, your appreciation, and your hugs aren't going to be enough, I suppose!

Subaru: "I know, I know."

Subaru gently stroked the furious Beatrice's head the way he always did. Beatrice puffed her cheeks in dissatisfaction, but even so, she took a step closer to Subaru, quietly enjoying his caresses.

And, following this interaction between Contractor and Spirit, Emilia gently butted in.

Emilia: "Beatrice"

Beatrice: "Thank goodness, Emilia seems to be fine too, in fact. If something had happened to you, Bubby would have been distraught, I suppose. Thanks to that, Subaru risked fighting without Betty, in fact. If you've learnt anything out of this, don't let yourself be captured again, I suppose."

Emilia: “Mhm, thank you. I’m sorry for making you worried.”

Beatrice: “In particular, Betty was only a little bit worried for you, in fact!”

Emilia looked at Beatrice, who had moodily turned her face away, with a smile on her face. Then, Emilia gazed over Beatrice’s entire body, and gently narrowed her widened eyes.

An ornate dress,and carefully manicured curled hair.

Both were slightly stained with mud and blood. This was the proof that this spirit-girl hadn’t just woken up from her peaceful dreams.

Subaru’s absence, and the collapse of the City Hall.

These unexpected events were surely related to Beatrice waking up.

Emilia: “????”

Emilia directed her gaze, which was full of such thoughts, and Subaru tucked his chin in. And, whilst looking down at Beatrice, whom he was still stroking, he said,

Subaru: “Thank you, it seems like you were hard at work during my absence. I’m sorry about everything. I only ever cause you problems.”

Beatrice: “I’m pretty used to you causing me problems, so you don’t have to worry about that, I suppose. No, still do worry a bit about it, in fact. Worry about it, and give me your thanks, I suppose.”

Subaru: “Yeah, yeah…. But, even if you were hard at work, it was a bit over the top. Crushing the entire building is a bit too much.”

Emilia: “Huh, Beatrice did this?”

Emilia looked at Beatrice in bemusement whilst she pointed at the mountain of rubble.

Emilia: “Do you know how much it’ll take to repair a building like this…. Subaru?”

Subaru: “With Beatrice’s pocket money, I know it’ll be a big project that’ll take a few decades.”

Beatrice: “What are you two saying with those serious faces, in fact!? What Betty did is different, I suppose! Betty saw this building only after it became rubble, in fact!”

Subaru: “I said I know. If you’d struck it, we’d be able to hear it from really far away. Such a cute girl.”

Subaru cackled as Beatrice tried to defend herself from the false accusations. To this exchange, Emilia said, “Eh, eh, which one is it?” for now.

If they'd encountered Beatrice near the remains of the City Hall, then...

Subaru: "At least, it seems like we won't have to worry about the Witch Cult trying to get up to no good around here. So, what happened to Otto and the others who were supposed to be in the City Hall?"

Beatrice: "Hmm, explaining that will be complicated, I suppose. But, those who were in the City Hall are….."

???: "We were able ta escape as well, so ya needn' worry."

A voice with a Kansai accent, or rather more accurately, a Kararagi accent jutted in between Beatrice's reply.

As they turned around in response to that, they saw a petite figure which was walking around the mountain of rubble. For a moment, they felt something peculiar about that person's appearance, as the colour of their hair that she was adjusting with a hand comb was of a different colour than the one they were used to.

Subaru: "Is that you, Anastasia-san?"

Anastasia: "What's up with the doubt in the way yer callin' me….. Eh, aah, mus' be this, right? It's 'cause now my hair colour is differen'."

Her soft light purple hair was now dyed dark green.

Only with Anastasia in her kimono, did their impression change a bunch. She looked at Subaru and Beatrice, and then, when she looked at Emilia, she gracefully nodded in satisfaction.

Anastasia: "Seems like ya were able ta get Emilia-san back without any problems, Natsuki-kun. The Sword Saint told me, so I wasn' worried about that."

Subaru: "So Reinhard was able to rendezvous with the others without any issues."

Anastasia: "He came whooshin' outta the sky. Right now, he's lookin' for any stragglers from the Witch Cult…. Or rather, I should say that he took Ferris-san to visit the evacuation shelters."

Subaru: "Visiting the shelters….. That sure is the duty of a healing arts user."

Even if they'd repelled the Sin Archbishops, considerable efforts would be needed to repair the damages which the city had received. Ferris' role would be quintessential for the quick recovery of the functions of the city. It looked like Reinhard now was being used in place of Ferris' own feet to get about.

Emilia: "I'm sorry, I also caused him a lot of trouble…. But, what happened to you, Anastasia-san? Like, with the colour of your hair, or with this building."

Subaru: "Indeed, indeed. Did you have a makeover to change your hair to a colour which is more

pleasing to the eye? I think it suits you as well, but when you know the original Anastasia-san, it feels strange after all."

Anastasia: "Natsuki-kun, you're pretty skilled at spewin' out nonsense. However, I only dyed it for a lil' strategy. Besides, it didn' pay off….. on the contrary, it went bad as far as I could see."

Anastasia sighed as she twirled her hair around her finger, and looked on at the remains of the City Hall. From the words she was saying, it seemed like she was involved in the collapse of the City Hall.

Subaru: "Ferris is fine, right? What happened, and what happened with the others?"

Anastasia: "The story is simple….. After everyone left to defeat the Sin Archbishops, an evil'n attacked takin' advantage of yer absence. They screwed things up a bit."

Subaru: "It doesn't look like they screwed things up only a bit…."

It was clear that it had been a ferocious battle quite in contrast to Anastasia's lackadaisical tone.

The attack on the City Hall?? a malignant trick that took advantage of the departure of the combatants, he felt like it was probably "Lust" or "Wrath" who had been behind this, however, the one he felt was most likely was...

Subaru: "Was the one who came here "Lust" ?"

Anastasia: "It's as I'd heard, their personality was the worst. My encounter with 'em gave me the willies."

Her opponent shouldn't have been so frivolous tantamount to only giving someone the willies, but Anastasia's attitude didn't show any signs of fear or shock. It took real guts to have encountered a Sin Archbishop.

He wanted to flatter her with an "*As expected of you*" but more pressing than that, Subaru had something gnawing at his mind.

Subaru: "I'm sorry. We left the control tower, and after that there was a surprise attack on the City Hall….. I should have taken more care."

Anastasia: "Don' worry about it. We jus' did as we fancied whilst Natsuki-kun was missin'. Moreover, it's embarassin' that we didn' get anythin' outta it."

According to Anastasia's words, it seemed like she was expecting a surprise attack, that was what Subaru felt. She'd probably dyed her hair green as a strategy for that.

When he thought to the relation between dark green hair and the person that Capella was likely interested in, he could vaguely understand the strategy they had devised.

Subaru: “Anastasia-san, you dressed as Crusch-san and dangled them the bait, is that what you mean? If you turned back "Lust" with just you and Ferris with that, then that’d leave us in a fix.”

Anastasia: “It would’ve been cool if we did that, but we had someone else there. Priscilla-san’s esteemed knight.”

Subaru: “……Al?”

On hearing the unexpected name come out from her, Subaru widened his eyes in surprise.

Al was the one who had been least interested in the battle to recapture the city. And to begin with, he was supposed to have gone with Priscilla and Liliana to defeat “Wrath”.

If he’d stayed to defend the City Hall, the “Wrath” capture team would be in a state which invited uncertainty and anxiety about their combat force and combination.

Anastasia: “Just so ya know, the team that faced “Wrath” came back safely.”

Anastasia explained this to Subaru, who had doubt etched all over his face. Whilst giving a wry smile, she looked over in the direction of the control tower that “Wrath” had occupied, and said,

Anastasia: “Priscilla-san came back unharmed. The Songstress Liliana came back along with her prince, to everyone’s surprise.”

Subaru: “Her prince…. Do you mean Kiritaka? Those two went to battle, and came back with a guy who we didn’t know whether he was dead or alive; what happened?”

There were too many mysteries, like Priscilla coming back unharmed from the battle with “Wrath”, and Kiritaka and Liliana reuniting. He would have liked to hear more details about that story, but he had to prioritise the general gist of things more than that.

Subaru: “Can I believe in the broadcast from Kiritaka before?”

Anastasia: “????”

Subaru: “The recovery of the control towers were a success. What follows that is the status of everyone who fought. What happened to them?”

The City Hall had collapsed, but they’d probably taken the magical device out from it.

So, it didn’t mean that he had to doubt the possibility that the broadcast was a trap. The other problem was that in the end, they’d only considered the damage to things from the start.

And, to Subaru’s question, Anastasia said,

Anastasia: “You need’n worry. Natsuki-kun, you ‘n y’all were the last to come back.”

Subaru: ”We were the last ones……And what about the others?”

Anastasia: ”Don’ worry.”

Emilia and Beatrice anxiously watched along with Subaru, who was showing slight traces of impatience. In front of those three, Anastasia nodded her head whilst smiling, and said,

Anastasia: “Everyone came back safely. Not a single person was missin’.”

And that was her response.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Garfiel: “Captain! Ya came back safe!”

The nearest evacuation shelter had become the new rally point, in place of the City Hall that had collapsed.

A blond boy came running and called out with a cheerful voice as he looked at Subaru and the others who had joined him?? It was Garfiel.

Subaru: “Oh… Garfiel… Eh”

When he tried to raise his hand, he was surprised by the figure that came running.

Though Garfiel’s upper body was naked, his whole body was covered in blood. Nonetheless, his expression was radiant, it seemed that he’d had a rather difficult battle, but it seemed that he had fulfilled his duty.

Just by seeing that, Subaru immediately changed his expression from surprise to a smile,

Subaru: “Heya, it’s you who doesn’t seem well. Your face looks terrible.”

Garfiel: “I don’t wanna hear that from ya, captain…. I don’t think that I can say that. But, it’s ya captain who showed his guts. Ye rescued Emilia-sama wit’out any problems.

Subaru: “Of course.”

When Subaru proffered out his fist, Garfiel bumped his fist with his own.

That was enough to honor each other’s good fight.

Subaru: “But, I heard “Lust” showed up at the City Hall. You, where and with whom were you fighting?”

Garfiel: “Tis’ obvious, with the “Eight Arms” Kurgan…. Although, I don’t know to what extent he can be called by that name”

Subaru: ”??? What do you mean?”

Garfiel: “Ma amazin’ self was fightin’ only with a dead-body. Surely when he was alive he wasn’t like tha’. That’s why I don’t feel like I won.”

It was a secret technique to manipulate the bodies of the dead and use them as warriors.

There was no doubt that this time this secret technique was used in the secret maneuvers of the Witch Cult. However, it seemed that the warrior’s capacity deteriorated compared to when they were alive. If he had been a warrior like Garfiel, he may have been able to perceive that difference.

Whether that had caught his attention, apart from the victory itself, it somewhat seemed like Garfiel felt as if he’d failed to obtain the result he’d desired.

That feeling, it was not something Subaru didn’t know about.

Emilia: “The enemy wasn’t strong, is that why you’re down?”

Emilia, who had been listening to the conversation, tilted her head, as she didn’t understand the feeling.

At her words, Garfiel first gave a “Good thing yer safe”, glad that she was back, then he violently scratched his short blond hair.

Garfiel: “To be down ‘cause he wasn’t strong…. That ain’t it. Somehow, I can’t explain ‘t. ‘Cause Emilia-sama’s a woman.”

Emilia: “It’s something women don’t understand? So, Subaru understands?”

Subaru: “Just a little, though. But, even for men there is something like an unknown barrier between the strong and the weak… But, I think the result is because Garfiel is strong. Aren’t you overthinking this?”

Garfiel: “Am I…. overthinkin’ it? ”

Emilia had a face that showed that she didn’t understand, and Subaru’s response wasn’t entirely positive. At that, Garfiel nodded with a sorrowful look on his face.

Garfiel already had his head full of worries in respect to “Strength”. There was the question of having challenged Reinhard to a duel, and also that later he had received a painful initiation from the way of the Witch Cult.

Even if he thought with his head, no matter how much he thought, the answer to his problem didn’t come into view.

It was possible that is was something like that. That was why, with regard to that??,

Subaru: ”Hey, Garfiel. If you think about it……”

??? : “Oh! There’s Gar~f! Itzuuuuu!”

Garfiel: “Guagh-!”

In front of Subaru who was trying to give him some advice, Garfiel’s body fell down with a loud *thump*. He barely noticed the little figure colliding against Garfiel’s waist, but his hand didn’t come out in time to stop him from letting out a groan of pain, and tumbling down.

He gazed at the collapsed Garfiel; the one who sat on his chest who had fallen off-guard, was a feline girl wagging her tail.

The girl pricked her ears up as she put on a cheerful and adorable expression on her face,

??? : “Fuhaha! You let your guard down, Gar~f! Your real enemy is in your heart! And within your heart, you already have important people in there! I mean, it’s filled.”

Garfiel: “Yer knockin’ and climbin’ ’n a person’s chest….”

Mimi: “Hehehe, Missy told Mimi! That slapping a man on the butt can attract love… Or something like that? Missy said that that is attractive or something! Slapping him on the butt is what Missy said!”

Mimi squealed with laughter, on top of Garfiel.

She was no longer in a state where she was losing blood from her deep wound that couldn’t be healed. Before the face of the girl who had completely recovered, Subaru touched his chest and bent down.

Subaru: “You look lively, Mimi.”

Mimi: “Oh, Onii-san, welcome! Welcome! It seems like a lot of complicated things happened while Mimi was sleepin’, goodjob! Mimi slept very soundly! But it seems that Gar~f also tried very hard, didn’t he? Goodjob!”

Subaru: “Y-You don’t seem to have changed, that’s the most important thing. Isn’t that right, Garfiel?”

He had heard that Mimi’s wounds had been inflicted from protecting Garfiel.

Garfiel had been shook to the core from her wound that refused to heal and he’d carried her back on the verge of death. He wondered whether he was relieved to see Mimi better or not.

But, at Subaru’s call, Garfiel, who was still sitting on his butt, rubbed his nose.

Garfiel: “Haa, ‘t would’ve been problemat’c if I changed too much. I’ve said ‘t many times, but makin’ a fuss while yer recoverin’...”

Mimi: “Hm, what? Did you say something, Gar~f?.... Ah!”

Mimi, who brought her face close to Garfiel's, raised her voice and glanced down at her own chest. Mimi checked the inside of the white robe, and opened her eyes wide with surprise,

Mimi: "Gar~f, this is terrible! Ya wound's reopened! Blood is streamin' out!"

Garfiel: "Idiot! That's why I told ya 'gain and again! Dam' it, if I don't bandage it 'gain and apply healin' magic it won't heal! Ay, come here!"

Mimi: "Ukyaa! It huuuurts! It huuuurts!"

Due to the wound getting worse, Garfiel took Mimi's hand, who remained composed, and took her to the inner-part of the shelter. Faced with this exchange which was as noisy as a typhoon, even Subaru remained speechless.

Emilia: "Pfffft… But, if Garfiel stays like this, he may not have time to worry."

But, next to Subaru who remained stunned, Emilia placed her hand on her lips and said that suddenly. Whilst gazing at the back of the two of them walking away, she referenced back to Garfiel's prior worries.

I see, thought Subaru, in agreement with those opinions.

Subaru: "Despite everything, they make a good pair. Those two, that is."

Emilia: "Mimi is cute, and it seems she reaaaally likes Garfiel….. It seems that Garfiel likes Ram, so I don't think it's going to be that easy."

Subaru: "Yeah, for sure…. Wait, did Emilia-tan make a comment about love between men and women!?"

Even though the example was easy enough to understand, Subaru was surprised that she could make that kind of conversation.

Emilia, who even before Subaru's confession had been in a state where she didn't understand the love between men and women, had been able to comment on the love of others.

Emilia: "Hmph, Subaru, I feel like you just said something reaaaaally rude."

Subaru: "Alright, though I'd thought that was an accurate recognition..... No way, did Emilia-tan change without me noticing? And she's dressed in a wedding dress!"

Emilia: "Even though it's ended up very much in tatters."

Due to the fact that it was difficult to move around in, she'd torn her wedding dress; it seemed like she didn't need to worry much about that around here.

Beatrice: "My my, in fact. They're a bunch of children, it seems like they only grew up in size, I

suppose.”

Subaru: “I don’t want to hear that from you, who most resembles a child here”

When Beatrice threw out her jape to recap things off, Subaru cleared his throat. Then, if Mimi had recovered, that meant that?? He looked around the shelter in search of the answer,

Subaru: “????”

In a corner where there were people rejoicing at their reunion, he found the figure of the wisened swordsman standing in silence. Subaru held his breath for a moment at the figure of the Sword Demon who had his eyes closed in silence.

Emilia: ”Subaru……”

Subaru: “Sorry. I’ll be right back.”

Replying back to the anxious-looking Emilia, Subaru left both her and Beatrice there, and slowly walked up to where he had pointed his gaze to.

First of all, what should he call out to him? However, that worry ended up being unnecessary.

Wilhelm: ”??Is it Subaru-dono?”

Subaru: ”……Yeah, it is.”

Wilhelm, who opened one of his eyes, caught sight of Subaru, who had approached him, hesitating on speaking out first. Seeing those silent blue eyes, Subaru realised that keeping his silence was pointless.

Wilhelm was resting his back against a cold stone wall, blending into the landscape. Subaru stood beside him and saw his figure from the corner of his eyes.

A figure full of wounds, that made him feel the echoes of a violent battle.

There were traces of cuts all over his light garb without his jacket, his grey hair that he tied back had come loose and was flowing down his back. What looked more painful was the bloodstained cloth that was wrapped around the top of his right leg?? That was enough to know that it was a deep wound that threatened his life.

But what caught Subaru’s attention the most, wasn’t Wilhelm himself.

It was the jacket that was right next to him which had something that seemed important wrapped inside it.

Subaru: “Wilhelm-san, that’s…..”

Wilhelm: “????”

He had tried to check what was wrapped up in his jacket, without giving it any thought. Receiving Subaru's words, Wilhelm directed his gaze to the bundle.

The wisened Swordsman kept his silence for a moment, and then moved his parched lips,

Wilhelm: "……It's as you've guessed, it's my wife."

Subaru: "????"

Wilhelm: "Immediately after she died, her body turned into a pile of ashes. It would have been too wretched to leave her exposed to the wind this way, even though it's shameful that I put her in my jacket…… Even if she's mere ashes, I want to place her in a grave, and mourn her."

It meant that?? The secret technique that moved the corpses of the dead, in the end, the corpses turned into ashes.

It was a sacrilege towards one's soul after death, and the impact it had on the people who had ended up being the target of this secret technique was immeasurable. He couldn't even imagine what was going on in Wilhelm's heart when he thought about it.

Wilhelm: "I'm really sorry. It's a rather unmanly, meaningless attachment."

Subaru: "Don't say it like that!"

Wilhelm: "????"

Subaru immediately raised his voice on hearing Wilhelm's tone which sounded like he blamed himself.

Whilst unaware that he'd gotten himself worked up, Subaru looked straight ahead at Wilhelm. Wilhelm opened his eyes a crack, and looked over at Subaru as well.

Subaru: "I don't think you're wrong, Wilhelm-san, not now, nor back during the White Whale, you're an incredible person whom I respect. What's so wrong about appreciating the people you care about? There's nothing to be ashamed of, thinking like that is no good."

Wilhelm: "Subaru-dono……"

Subaru: "You're incredible, Wilhelm-san. Your wife..... placing her in her grave, mourning her, those thoughts are no mistakes. I can't really express myself well, but you are amazing."

Those were his true feelings.

Those were without a doubt Subaru's true feelings, his true thoughts that he didn't want denied.

Back during the time of the White Whale, and during his sorrowful reunion now, destiny had been really cruel to Wilhelm.

Yet even so, the Sword Demon had gone against destiny to his utmost; he traversed it with his own willpower, and tried to reach love. Not all results may end up being rewarded.

His repentance and remorse may remain sempiternally. But, it should end well.

Wilhelm's love in loving the one he loved, it all should end well.

Subaru: "It's nothing to be ashamed of. Please, duly place her in her grave. And, if the opportunity presents itself, and it's not too much of a nuisance, please let me visit her grave as well."

Wilhelm: "????"

Subaru: "I want to do so, I think that's what a person ought to do."

He wasn't wording himself well, and furthermore he was getting emotional; Subaru grew vexed at himself.

In pushing his own egotistical feelings, he wouldn't be able to help it if Wilhelm burst into laughter. It would be quite natural for him to say that it was none of his business and refuse him.

However, Wilhelm abruptly let his lips slacken before Subaru.

A small gap broke through on his stiffened, tense face. And, he said,

Wilhelm: "……Yeah, please do, Subaru-dono. I also want you to dedicate some words to my wife, I think. If it's you"

Subaru: "??! Y-yes, I will. I'm honoured."

He'd gotten his permission, or more accurately, it was thanks to Wilhelm's generosity.

After hearing Subaru's egotistical wish, Wilhelm let out a soft sigh. Guessing by his face that he didn't want to talk anymore, Subaru bowed his head down.

He should leave Wilhelm alone with his wife for a bit.

But before leaving this place, he wanted to make sure of one last thing.

And that was,

Subaru: "Wilhelm-san. ??About your wife, erm, did you manage to?"

Wilhelm: "????"

Had he reached closure with her? Had he ended up reaching a result he didn't want?

Naturally, confronting his dead wife couldn't have ended up acquiring a desired result. Even so, no one other than Wilhelm could have been permitted to face her; after having took in that situation, Wilhelm had sought closure.

Thus, Subaru shouldn't be the only one who wanted that at least.

Wilhelm: "My wife……"

Wilhelm started to speak to Subaru, who had stopped in his tracks to look at him. But, his words stopped there. Wilhelm's gaze moved slightly away from Subaru. He directed his gaze to his jacket that had his wife's ashes wrapped up within.

For a split second, a huge swirl of emotions floated through his irises. And, he spoke out,

Wilhelm: "??Yes. I exchanged words with my wife, and certainly, I said goodbye."

Words, it was a figurative expression, most likely.

Wilhelm's wife had been the prior "Sword Saint", clashing swords with her, was a conversation like no other for the Sword Demon. Their blades of closure themselves should have been their final words of goodbye.

That's why, surely that closure had been the result of Wilhelm's choice??.

Wilhelm: "I love my wife. ??I should have gotten that across."

Subaru: "I see"

Wilhelm's quiet confession of love.

In contrast to the modest tone in his voice, there was a zeal which scorched the hearts of those who listened to it, and Subaru's chest grew hotter. Taking a deep breath, Subaru closed his eyes.

Pouring out of him were raging billows of emotions. Keeping each one in check, he opened his eyes.

Wilhelm, who was in front of him, had a lonely smile on his face. However, since he'd allowed himself to break into that smile, it felt as if he'd been saved, and Subaru too allowed his lips to relax.

Subaru: "Wilhelm-san. Thank you for your hard work."

Wilhelm: "????"

Subaru: "Perhaps, very soon everything will get hectic, I think, but until then please rest. I'll go around a little more to see what happened."

Subaru spoke too quickly and wasn't sure whether the last words were right or not. He scratched his

cheek with one of his fingers, and felt embarrassed as he turned his back on Wilhelm.

Behind his back,

Wilhelm: “Subaru-dono??”

Subaru: “Yeah?”

As he was called while he tried to leave, Subaru stopped and turned around. Then Wilhelm, who had a slight trace of surprise on his face, immediately said “No” and shook his head.

Wilhelm: “My apologies. It’s something trivial.. Please don’t pay attention to me.”

Subaru: “Is that so? No, when you say it like that, it makes me feel the opposite…..… But well, right, yes. I’ll see you later.”

Subaru walked away from there, with a bitter smile adorning his face due to Wilhelm’s atypical reaction.

Seeing what Subaru looked like when he returned, Emilia and Beatrice seemed to express relief on their faces. In that regard, Subaru’s expression had probably changed quite a bit between the time he’d left and the time he’d come back.

Subaru himself was well-aware of that.

Since reuniting with the dead was not something to be happy about.

But at least Wilhelm ended it with his own hands, and he was satisfied with the result. He felt that that fact was a modest salvation

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

As he narrowed his eyes, the “Sword Demon” stared at the back of the dark-haired boy who walked away.

His lips were firmly pursed together so to hold something back.

It was a breakdown in his camouflage which until a little while ago had masked his real intentions with firm willpower. A frenzy of emotion which was likely to gnaw through his pursed lips if he were to disregard it, even now.

Surely, what he kept hidden from that boy in his chest until then was??,

Wilhelm: “Subaru-dono……You are...”

Only within his mouth, whispering in a hoarse voice, did the Sword Demon say the boy’s name,

Wilhelm: “You could be, my??”

Having said that, the Sword Demon closed his eyes as if he’d closed off his own feeble heart.

The continuation that made no sound was never heard by anyone.

It was also something that would never come out of the mouth of the Sword Demon.

That was the only thing, which the Sword Demon would never allow.

(TL Note: Since the line about what Wilhelm was trying to say gets a lot of discussion, I'd recommend you checking out my post here on Reddit regarding some clarifications about that line's translations: here.)

Arc 5, Chapter 75: "Fruits of The Battle for Pristella 2"

by Gracedharperd - Furuta - Thursday, August 08, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/08/08/arc-5-chapter-75-fruits-of-the-battle-for-pristella-2/

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Translated By :

- Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)
- Graced (/u/Gracedharperd)

Proofread By :

- Shiftyfish (/u/Shiftyfish87)
- Setowi (/u/Setowi)

Art By :

- HaruSabin

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After ending his conversation with Wilhelm, Subaru quietly felt relieved.

Along with Garfiel, the two of them that should have been tasked with “Lust”?? They were supposed to be the combination which should’ve had the most difficult fight.

In actuality, “Lust” had abandoned her control tower, and it had been Wilhelm’s wife, Theresia, along with the former hero, Kurgan, who’d ended up blocking their path. However, it was already guaranteed that there were no casualties in these three spots.

Subaru: “????”

Of course, Garfiel and Wilhelm should have much to reflect on.

In fact, Garfiel had spoken about the reservations he had left, and it was easy to imagine that wounds too difficult to express in words lay within Wilhelm's heart.

And yet, even so.

Subaru was happy that the two of them had returned safe and sound after finishing up their battles.

If there'd been casualties amongst his acquaintances, Subaru had resigned himself that he may have ended up having to use his "Return by Death". That's why he was relieved that the two of them had survived without him needing to use it.

However, that sense of relief from the fact that they hadn't ended up dying was connected with another conviction of his, at the same time.

Namely that after all, he wouldn't have to once again depend on an unnatural power like his "Return by Death".

He'd made full use of his "Return by Death", and challenged things many times to try and secure a better future. After depending so much on that power, at this point, maybe he could speak ill of it, however it was for this reason.

It was a conclusion that only Subaru could reach, precisely because it was Subaru who had died many times, and each time, he'd overturned the future.

To begin with, something like "Return by Death" should have been unnecessary.

Surely there was a way to secure the future he wanted, even without his "Return by Death". Like now where everyone worked together with each other for the same objective, so to secure that.

Emilia: "Subaru, was Wilhelm-san okay..…?"

Coming out to greet Subaru, who had returned, Emilia asked about the wisened Swordsman who had been standing in a corner of the shelter. To her words, Subaru jerked his chin into a nod, without looking back,

Subaru: "Yeah, I think he's okay. He's wounded quite a bit, but…. it seems like he managed to take care of the wounds within his heart, which were the most alarming."

Emilia: "I see….. Although it's obvious, he really is a strong individual, isn't he?"

Subaru: "Indeed. He's a strong individual for sure. That's why he's okay."

Subaru nodded his head up and down multiple times at Emilia, who'd told him that. Emilia opened her eyes up wide seeing Subaru's gesticulation, and then burst into a smile.

Seeing Subaru frown at her unexpected reaction, she placed her hand on her mouth, and said,

Emilia: “I’m sorry. Subaru’s behaviour around Wilhelm-san is reaaaally different in comparison to when you’re with other people. How can I put it, in truth, I think he’s pure as the driven snow.”

Subaru: “No one says *pure as the driven snow* these days……”

Subaru gave a wry smile at Emilia’s antiquated words which felt like they came from the Showa Era. Following that, he scratched his cheek with one of his fingers.

Even if it appeared like he was teasing her, he understood what Emilia was trying to say. And that was plenty enough for Subaru himself to be aware of it.

Subaru: “Wilhelm-san is, how should I say it, special. Because he’s an amazin’ person whom I can sincerely admire, well, that’s what I feel anyways.”

Emilia: “I know that he’s an amazing person too, but that being the case, Reinhard and the others have to know that too, right? And yet, despite all that.”

Subaru: “The perspective changes between someone of the same age and someone from a different generation. The disparity you feel with those of the same age has rather large implications on you that end up making you feel miserable. But, the differences you feel with those older than you can be set as a goal for yourself. Someday, when I’m a sullen old man, I want to be as imposing as Wilhelm.”

Emilia: “……Hmm, I getcha. Hehe. If you say so.”

Emilia nodded, with her face full of understanding, at Subaru’s frivolous manner which he’d broken into to hide his embarrassment.

Subaru felt defeated by that attitude. Speaking seriously about it, not even Subaru knew how he should express the deep emotions that he felt as words.

Though, probably, almost certainly, he thought that it was a good thing that he didn’t need to put them into words.

Beatrice: “Betty believes that growing out his beard wouldn’t suit Subaru, in fact.”

Subaru: “I didn’t think it was this sort of conversation, but well, whatever, it’s okay too. I’ll grow out a beard when Beako deems it appropriate.”

Beatrice: “……Well then, will such a time come, I suppose. The elaborate co-existence between furriness and adorable is an area that cannot be sustained without Bubby’s elegance, in fact. Devote yourself to it, I suppose.”

Emilia: “Yeah, yeah, I say”

As Emilia and Beatrice exchanged their feelings in a manner that was typical for them, Subaru?? pointed his eyes over towards a corner of the shelter which had suddenly grown noisy.

The evacuees who were gathered in a corner of the shelter, all of the individuals that were there had been released from their fear and unease that had been born from the city being occupied. However, they had inexplicably cheerful looks on their face. And that was because??,

Liliana: “Wellthen, wellthen! Allow me to sing again! Please listen, to my new song?? The Burning Song of the Flaming City!”

Subaru: “That racket is Lilliana, huh?”

There was a short, young girl with brown skin in the middle of that kerfuffle. He could see the lively figure of the bard strumming her Lyulyre, shaking loose her blonde hair.

Her appearance caused an unmistakable impact, it had an originality to it that shot out askew that he didn’t think even “Lust” could imitate; it was Lilianna without a doubt.

Beatrice: “She’s a truly strident girl, in fact.”

Emilia: “But, Lilianna was one of the people who fought against the Sin Archbishops too, right? Erm….. I can't imagine at all how she managed to fight.....”

Taking notice of the same thing as Subaru, Emilia and Beatrice relaxed their shoulders too.

If she was acting so lively, then no doubt Lilliana had made it back alive with no injuries as well. Her, and the others’ place of battle?? Their battle against “Wrath” was a place which he couldn’t imagine, neither the strategy nor the fighting strength needed, or the most proper result.

Subaru had already considered the possibility that Lilliana’s song would have been useful for confining Sirius’ authority, however, he didn’t know how they’d been able to put it into practise in reality. He was specifically determined in wanting to hear what on earth had happened in their place of battle.

Subaru: “It won’t be easy to get close to Lilliana right now. Let’s postpone it for later.”

Emilia: “Yeah……Besides, now is definitely the time where Lilliana’s songs are most necessary. Us taking that away wouldn’t be good. Let’s postpone talking to her until much later.”

Beatrice: “I agree, I suppose. Betty would like to pass on talking with that irritating girl, in fact.”

Subaru and the others made this conclusion whilst they watched Lilliana strumming out a tune, singing at the top of her voice with utmost passion.

In reality, if they only took into account her singing voice, she was worthy of the title of “Songstress”. He concurred with Emilia’s opinion that right now the city needed her.

???: “????”

When he looked, Kiritaka’s figure was right next to Lilliana, as she gave her performance.

His expensive suit was covered in mud and blood everywhere, and there were also traces of rips left on it. It was the outcome of having fled through scenes of carnage, and according to Otto's story, it'd been unknown whether he was dead or alive.

Subaru: "No one's ought to have had a comfortable scene of battle…."

Taking note of Subaru's gaze, Kiritaka bowed in his direction. Subaru waved at him, and started to walk further into the shelter once again, in search for the next of his companions.

Then, Beatrice, who was walking right next to him as he broke into a walk, said,

Beatrice: "It's not too important, but it was that man that woke me up when I was sleeping, I suppose."

Subaru: "Kiritaka?"

Beatrice: "That man even went as far as crushing some of his precious Great Magic Stones, in fact. Betty doesn't care if it was down to his sense of responsibility, or if it was for someone, I suppose. But, that's what happened, in fact."

Subaru: "……I see, I see. That's great, Beako. You did well to say it."

Beatrice: "Hmph, I suppose."

Having heard this story that help had come from this unexpected source, Subaru stroked Beatrice's head. Beatrice puffed out her cheeks, seemingly in dissatisfaction, but it went without saying that this was just a facade.

According to the story he'd briefly heard from Anastasia, Beatrice's actions after she'd woken up had also been an indispensable contribution in regard to the current results. If it had been Kiritaka who'd played a role in that, then it could be said that he'd fulfilled his duty corresponding to his role as a city executive.

Emilia: "Subaru. It seems like those who got injured are in the furthest part of the shelter."

Emilia, who was looking towards that part of the shelter, told Subaru that as he chatted away with Beatrice. When he looked towards the dingily lit area pointed out by her, there in the middle of the bustle, was an area that was being used as a field hospital.

There were mats and blankets spread out directly on the ground and several injured people were laying there. This was supposed to be the first place which Ferris visited, so even though the people lying down hadn't completely recovered, their lives probably weren't in danger.

Subaru: "Does that mean that treating so many people to their full is difficult, even for someone like Ferris?"

Beatrice: "It doesn't matter how skilled you are at healing magic, there's a limit to the amount of mana a

person can hold, in fact. If you go around healing everyone you see, then you'd run out of it pretty much at once, I suppose. It was a wise decision, in fact."

Beatrice, who had replied, looked faintly vexed as they gazed at the rows of the injured. Even though she hid it on the surface, she was a tender-hearted spirit whose feelings ran deep.

Beatrice's healing magic was quite effective, even if it didn't even get close to Ferris'. But, even if we were to say she had any Mana, the quantity which Subaru supplied would never get anywhere near that.

It was inevitable that she was vexed, and lamenting her lack of strength.

Emilia: "In truth, I would also like to go around helping everyone with my healing magic, but…."

Subaru: "You have another role, Emilia-tan. That's why for now, you need to put that aside."

Emilia: "Yeah, I know."

If they let themselves be carried away by the emotions of the moment, they wouldn't be able to reach their goal, and would end up losing everything. Subaru called out to Emilia so she'd restrain herself, and as they walked in between people who were groaning in pain from their wounds, they searched for their companion amongst them. And soon after, they were able to find the guy they were searching for.

???: "Natsuki-san, over here!"

Subaru: "Heya, Otto!"

In the last row of the injured, there was a person who waved his hand. Noticing the young man's familiar figure, Subaru and the others approached him with a sense of relief.

Lying on a ready-made bed, with a faint smile on his pale face, was the proud Warrior-Grade Head Internal Affairs Official of the Emilia Camp, Otto Suwen.

Otto: "Though now, it feels I was given an evaluation that I really can't let by. "

Subaru: "That's your imagination, Warrior-Grade Internal Affairs Official. Once again with you, it's the same ol' story wandering around the city seeking blood, in search for foes. You love doin' that dontcha."

Otto: "Soon there's going to be strange rumours again, won't you stop with these completely false claims!?"

Instead of a greeting of reunion, Subaru exchanged jokes with Otto who was lying down. Otto shouted and dropped his shoulders in resignation, and Subaru crouched beside him to check his condition.

He didn't seem to have lethal injuries, but both of his legs looked painful.

Emilia: "Otto-kun, how's your wounds?"

Otto: “It seems that walking will be a little bit difficult until I have recovered, but apart from that there’s no visible trauma… When it comes to situations, Emilia-sama’s should have been more difficult, it’s rather too pathetic of me that I’m severely injured.”

Emilia: “That’s not true. It’s proof of having fought with all your strength, isn’t it? Otto-kun’s job isn’t to fight, so it’s good that nothing terrible happened to you.”

Otto: “So far, Emilia-sama is the only one who has decent common sense regarding the work of a Head Internal Affairs Official.”

Emilia: “Eh?”

Before Otto who murmured deeply, Emilia tilted her head with a confused look.

Putting that aside, Subaru asked Otto for an explanation of the situation in which he got injured. Initially, Otto was supposed to stay at the City Hall, and await the reports from various places at the rally point.

Subaru: “The injury isn’t because you got caught in the collapse of the City Hall, right? According to what Anastasia-san said, those who stayed at the City Hall were Anastasia-san, Ferris and Al.”

Otto: “I don’t know exactly what the three who remained did. When I left the City Hall, through the waterways of the city… I bumped into “Gluttony”. That’s why I ended up like this.”

Subaru: “... “Gluttony”.... That bastard. Damn, there’s also “Lust”, how much more do they intend to mock us…”

Subaru’s heart started boiling once again when he heard the name of his despised enemy.

The wickedness of the Witch Cult altogether had derided and undermined everything which they’d set up from their predictions. Their behaviour in ignoring the control towers was a mockery towards those who had gotten onto the stage.

Otto: “Fortunately, thanks to Felt-sama and the people of the “White Dragon’s Scales”, we managed to oppose them somehow. However, without the help of Beatrice-san, I don’t know what the outcome would’ve been.”

Beatrice: “Despite us outnumbering them, I couldn’t bear to see it, in fact!”

Emilia: “Yes yes. Thank you veeeery much.”

Emilia gently stroked Beatrice who had puffed out her small chest.

That exchange was pleasant, but what interested Subaru were Otto’s actions. Leaving aside the result of the meeting with “Gluttony” and why he left the City Hall in the first place.

Even if he had been out of the formation to intercept “Lust”, he should have stayed in the shelter and

nothing more. It shouldn't have been necessary to leave the shelter and walk through the city.

Otto: "There was a request from the Witch Cult… The priority of obtaining a certain book."

Guessing Subaru's doubt, Otto spoke quietly.

The book which the Witch Cult had requested, he spoke about it rather hazily, probably as a consideration that Emilia was listening in behind Subaru. Subaru nodded at his concerns,

Subaru: "The one that's with the restoration specialist, what's his name"

Otto: "It's Mr. Darts. No one should know that it was commissioned to be restored by him…..But, to make absolutely sure, I tried to collect it. In the end, I encountered "Gluttony" before I met up with Mr. Darts, and this is the result."

He understood the reason why Otto had left the City Hall and walked about the city despite the threat of the Witch Cult. Again, it looked like he'd tried to fill an area which Subaru hadn't been attentive about.

He hadn't thought thoroughly enough about the attack on the City Hall, and the recovery of the "Book of Wisdom".

Subaru: "At least consult with me first. We're friends right?"

Otto: "Emilia-sama was kidnapped, and you also carried the fate of the city on your back like a hero, did you want me to put another annoying burden on top of that? I'm sorry. But I didn't intend to pressure my friends with these stupidities."

Subaru: "Keh"

Though he'd intended to joke around, he'd unexpectedly ended up reciprocating with happy words, making Subaru grunt. Seeing their exchange, Emilia and Beatrice exchanged glances and gave a deep sigh.

Beatrice: "These guys aren't honest, I suppose."

Emilia: "I think it's normal for them. But, then, that book….? It'd be better if we collected it. Erm, where abouts…."

Subaru: "Ah, I'll take care of that. Or I'll get Garfiel to. Emilia-tan doesn't have to worry herself too much about that book."

Emilia: "Yeah?"

He didn't want to let Emilia get involved much with the "Book of Wisdom".

It had backwards compatibility with the Gospels, and was also a sort of relic that a Witch had left behind.

Not bringing it near to Emilia as much as possible was one of Subaru's silent resolutions.

Subaru: "But, those who met "Gluttony" were Felt and the "White Dragon's Scales", right? Leaving aside the mercenaries in white, Felt didn't end up hiding somewhere?"

Emilia: "But, I can't really imagine that girl staying quietly in one place, perhaps…."

Subaru: "I agree with that."

Felt and the others had arrested Reinhard's father?? Heinkel, and he'd heard that they were standing guard over him. Therefore, they shouldn't have participated in the recapture of the control towers, although there was probably no one to communicate that decision to.

Subaru: "So, Felt is?"

Otto: "She was exhausted, but she didn't really have any injuries like these. She came rushing out of the shelter now, to pick up the subordinates she'd brought along. "

Subaru: "Ton Chin Kan, right? I heard about that, it seems like those guys are doing surprisingly well."

A trio who had both a good and a bad impression, but none of that remained. They had an acquaintanceship where he'd been killed once by them, but instead of taking revenge someday, he'd tried to leave it in the past.

In any case, it was a good result that he was able to confirm the safety of that camp. After that, they would take care of the task related to "The Book of Wisdom", so the next issue was??.

Otto: "Natsuki-san. ??Be careful in the next shelter."

Subaru: "In the next shelter…..?"

Otto said that to Subaru, who was immersed in his thoughts, in a low voice. To the turbulent emotions which had been put in his voice, Subaru's voice also naturally lowered in response.

Otto gave a small nod on hearing Subaru's reaction.

And,

Otto: "One of the Sin Archbishops is being held there."

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

???: "What's this, is it you, commoner? How dare you show your wretched face in our presence. That impudence is worthy of admiration beyond awe."

He'd left the shelter which had been made into a field hospital, and headed to the next shelter following

Otto’s words.

Compared to the former shelter, the scale of that shelter was quite small. If the previous shelter was like the parking lot of a shopping center, this shelter was like a bicycle parking lot at best.

Immediately after he’d gotten the vague impression that its purpose, even if it was a shelter, was probably different, the woman in red who’d set herself up at the entrance of the building spoke that out to him.

The woman’s name was Priscilla Barielle.

Among the Royal Election candidates which had gathered in the city, she was someone who lacked a cooperative personality completely.

Even so, even someone like that was undoubtedly a reliable ally in this situation. In addition to that, it was Priscilla who was in charge of the unknown monster, Sirius of “Wrath”.

The ability to destroy that threat ever so splendidly, and make it back was a result that had to be praised sincerely.

Subaru: “That you don’t like my face is your personal subjectivity, so that’s okay, for now, good work to the both of us. I’m relieved that you came back safe. I’m not flattering you.”

Priscilla: “Mine personal subjectivity is the aesthetic sense which has to be respected the most in the world. It’s not even worth evaluating what you have to say….. Well, it’s fine. However, there are no words you can say in defence for your blindness in saying *safe* upon seeing mineself.”

Subaru: “Ah? Are you injured or something?

Priscilla was sitting on a chair at the entrance of the shelter, fanning herself. Looking at her upper and lower extremities, he couldn’t find any injures or anything like that.

No, it wasn’t about injuries or not. Priscilla’s white skin didn’t have a single scratch on it, even the dress she wore didn’t have a speck of dust or dirt. If there had been any differences before and after the battle, it would have been regarding her neck accessory and that her hair had come loose.

Emilia: “Your necklace and hair clip, have you lost them somewhere?”

Priscilla: “Hm. So even a commoner with such an undiscerning eye will take notice of it if it’s a woman? Even though I don’t like that boorish way of calling it a necklace. It seems to bring resentment.”

Subaru: “*That you weren’t safe,* in reality, you were talking about your accessories…”

To Emilia’s naive and innocent words, Priscilla snorted in response.

Certainly she’d now lost her luxurious gem-encrusted necklace, as well as the hair clip which kept her orange hair in place. The aroma of her charm had increased when she’d let loose her hair that was

normally held in place, what a sinful woman she was.

To being with, Priscilla's radiance was rather like that of a poisonous flower. If you approached, you'd end up getting stung.

Subaru: "So, I'll pass on getting stung. Why are you bothering to stay at this shelter? I didn't think you had such an admirable personality as to volunteer to keep guard."

Priscilla: "Foolish japes. Mineself shouldn't have to engage in these kinds of jobs that commoners do. It isn't mine actual intent to be in a place like this, but I cannot allow others to gaze upon mine sense of beauty now. So I avoided the public's gaze as a compromise. Besides, Al insisted."

Subaru: "I think he'd try to quickly deny that if he were here."

Whilst he imagined the exaggerated motions of denial from the iron helmet, Subaru directed his gaze towards the shelter's entrance. He didn't catch any glimpse of said iron helmet, but he'd heard that he was in this shelter. In other words, he wasn't outside, but rather, inside the building?? next to the Sin Archbishop.

Subaru: "Is Al keeping guard inside?"

Priscilla: "'Tis so. We don't know what an evil thing like that would get up to were we to leave it alone. Hence why Al is keeping guard over them. When it comes to him, he ought to do a good job."

Subaru: "……You didn't think he'd try to kill them. That's unexpected."

Priscilla: "He can do so if he wants. Mineself wouldn't stop him."

Had she felt bored answering him? Priscilla yawned whilst covering her mouth with her fan. That seemed to be her way of expressing indifference at Subaru's question.

She had no intention of stopping him if he entered the building. Subaru gazed at the entrance of the shelter, and placed his hand on his chest where his heartbeat had gotten slightly faster.

Emilia: "Subaru, if you're scared to go in, you needn't force yourself to…."

Beatrice: "Indeed, in fact. I don't think we'll get anything out of it, I suppose."

Emilia and Beatrice both gently expressed their opinions to Subaru who'd stopped in his tracks. He felt like he wanted to let himself be coddled by their concerns. However, as soon as that thought popped into his head, he noticed Priscilla's cruel gaze looking over at him from the corner of his eye.

It was a gaze that regarded all of Subaru's doubts and hesitation as a boring farce.

Whether he went forward or backward, Priscilla's evaluation of Subaru likely wouldn't change. For Subaru, who'd still been given the lowest evaluation that was completely unsparing, that he did not care

about.

He didn’t care about it, but he regretted that the two who were with him had also been evaluated that way.

Subaru: “I’m going. In any case, it isn’t a problem that I have to escape from.”

Emilia & Beatrice: “????”

Subaru made up his mind, and the two of them didn’t give their opinions for or against it. They just stood by his side, so as to respect his will.

Then, with the two of them accompanying him, Subaru stepped into the dark shelter. Priscilla wasn’t even looking at their backs anymore. It was rather like her, he would say.

With the parched *pitter-patter* sound of their footsteps, they moved forward into the stone building. Soon, they could see the end of the passageway, ahead of the path which turned to the left,

???: “??Is that you, Bro? I heard the Princess’ voice, so I thought she was talking with someone.”

Crouched down in the passageway, carrying his Blue Dragon Sword on his shoulder, the iron helmet??Al was awaiting them. When he saw Subaru and the others heading towards him, he turned his attention to Emilia.

Al: “Oh, it seems like the Miss too is alright. Good work, Bro.”

Subaru: “It’s ‘cause Emilia-tan’s wellbeing was my minimum requirement for victory. Moreover regarding you, I’ve heard you ran into many problems. Priscilla’s irrationalities in particular were crazy.”

Al: “Ah, you’re being completely serious. Still, I too was wondering what was going on with her this time. Well, no, I'm almost always wondering what's going on, so I've got no persuasive power."

Emilia: “But, it doesn’t seem like you dislike that…...?”

Al: “????”

Al, who had grumbled out something like a complaint about his mistress Priscilla, was hit right on the nose by Emilia’s innocent words. He couldn’t see that which was concealed behind the helmet, but he felt like he’d shaped his lips into the form of a ? on the other side.

(TL Note: To make your mouth in the form of a ? is basically describing him frowning, as you can well see, from the Kana itself.)

In practicality, he was a man that was always dragged around everywhere by Priscilla, and despite that he still wanted to be her servant. He supposed they had a relationship that others wouldn’t understand.

For a little while, Al twisted his neck in an environment which felt like it had devoured him, he clapped his shoulder with the ridge of his Blue Dragon Sword and abruptly directed his gaze towards the back of the passageway,

Al: “It’s a little bit late for you having come this far, but….. Did you come to speak with the Sin Archbishop?”

Beatrice: “Do you think there would be another purpose, I suppose? Do you think we’d bother coming to chat with the guard, there’s no way we’d waste our time, in fact.”

Al: “This little girl sure is scathing, huh? Don’t get yourself so worked up, Beako…..was it?”

Beatrice: “????”

Before Beatrice’s cold, sharp gaze, Al deliberately shook his head. Keeping Beatrice in check, who seemed like she was about to grab him, regardless of their difference in height, Subaru glared at Al who’d started this unnecessary provocation.

Subaru: “I more or less get that you’re upset, but please, don’t provoke her. Beako, you too, don’t fall for them. Deal with it with the dignity of an adult.”

Beatrice: “Betty will only allow Subaru to call her that way, I suppose. The next time you call me like that, extremely terrible retribution awaits you, in fact.”

Al: “Yeah yeah, I understand. You couldn’t be any colder.”

As he spoke, Al moved to the side of the corridor, and made way for them. A door came into view ahead of them when they moved further into the passageway. Most likely, the Sin Archbishop was locked up in there.

Suddenly, the back of Subaru’s neck started to tingle, complaining out of a tense feeling.

Al: “The Sin Archbishop is within. They’re being restrained so that they can’t get up to no good, so for now, I don’t think it’ll end up becoming a massacre. ??Also, I’ll give you just one piece of advice.”

Subaru: “Advice?”

Al: “Bro, the Miss and that spirit too. It’d be better if you went back home without talking to them. Nothing good will come from getting involved. Leave this be, and go back home.”

Subaru: “……There’s just no way we can do that.”

Dropping the tone of his voice, his opinion was an earnest one which he spoke with a serious voice. Denying those words with a shake of his head, Subaru replied that he couldn’t do so, and rejected his suggested.

And, to Subaru's reply, Al spoke out "I guessed as much," with a sigh.

Al: "No matter what I say, I don't think I ever get much credibility. This time, my behaviour here was in the wrong, I ain't got any excuses for it."

Subaru: "That's really not the reason why. Well, it's true that you weren't cooperative, but that doesn't mean I'm saying I won't listen to you. Don't get the wrong idea."

Taking into account Al's terrible words of self-castigation, Subaru pointed at the door at the end of the passageway. The task he had at hand with the person within, was one that was Subaru's problem only.

Whether his intentions had been transmitted, Al sat down with a *plunk* on that spot. And, whilst he pointed to the door at the end, only with his head, he said,

Al: "I hope you don't lose sight of yourself whilst you speak."

Subaru: "OK, don't hesitate to help me if something happens."

Al: "If that comes to pass, I'll send in the Princess, so no matter what happens, she'll send them straight up to heaven."

Exchanging a final conversation, Subaru and the others said goodbye to Al and headed towards the door. There was something drifting about that made them feel a strange sense of oppression in regards to the door which lead to the closed room.

Having arrived here, even if it was trying, he couldn't avoid it, and so with that determination, Subaru grabbed the doorknob and forcibly pushed the door open.

??It was a narrow room in which the air flowing in it smelled of dust.

Its light source was small and dim, even for a shelter, it only had the barebones. It was a narrow room that could fit at most five or six people in it, if you jam-packed it; the lack of air could be felt inside it.

And, in the middle of this room.

???: "??Aha. So you came, my dear. I'm sorry for the inconvenience? Thank you."

On top of an old chair, with her whole body completely bound by chains, was that monster?? Sirius was awaiting them.

Arc 5, Chapter 76: "Fruits of The Battle for Pristella 3"

by Gracedharperd - Furuta - Friday, August 09, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/?p=2677

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Translated By :

- Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)
- Graced (/u/Gracedharperd)

Proofread By :

-

Art By :

- To Be Added

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Arc 5 - "Stars What Make History"
Chapter 76 - "Fruits of The Battle for Pristella 3"

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Arc 5, Chapter 76: “Fruits of The Battle for Pristella 3”

by admin - Saturday, August 10, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/08/10/arc-5-chapter-76-fruits-of-the-battle-for-pristella-3/

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Translated By :

- Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)
- Graced (/u/Gracedharperd)

Proofread By :

- Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)
- Graced (/u/Gracedharperd)

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Arc 5 - "Stars What Make History"
Chapter 76 - "Fruits of The Battle for Pristella 3"

The Sin Archbishop of “Wrath”. A bandaged monster who claimed to be the wife of the madman, “Sloth”.

Sirius Romanee-Conti had her entire body tied up with the chains that had been her own weapon, and she was locked up in a room of the shelter without being able to move about.

Sirius: “I was bored because no one came, nor would they come close. But, they went to call you, my dear. Thank you, I’m sorry? Thanks to everyone, it seems like we can have a happy reunion…. Even though it seems like there’s some nuisances as well.”

On having seen Subaru enter the room, Sirius’s voice called out in greeting. However, the final part of her words were filled with an intense anger towards Emilia and Beatrice.

Subaru: "????"

As always, it seemed like Sirius was mistaking Subaru as a body that was possessed by Petelgeuse, or something like that. Of course, it was just what she wanted to believe.

Whilst overwhelmed by the monster's powerful gaze that radiated with madness, in which she had clearly lost her marbles, Subaru shrugged his shoulders so to mask that, and said,

Subaru: "You're quite composed for one who's captured. I don't know if Priscilla thought to try and capture you on some whim of her's, but we definitely won't be releasing you safely."

Sirius: "Even if you say that, they can't get rid of me either so easily, right? Thank you. I know you care about my wellbeing. But, I'm sorry? You took the trouble to worry, but that makes no sense to me. It's like that, isn't it?"

With this peculiar thought, Sirius interpreted Subaru's threat as a positive. The monster kept its quiet posture on the chair, and only let its slightly cracked voice quiver,

Sirius: "So long as there's "Love" to think of others and want others in everyone's hearts, no one can deny me. It's the same even for that prideful girl."

Subaru: "……Your authority shouldn't have worked with Priscilla and Liliana. It's not like there's no one capable of hurting you."

Sirius: "But that isn't you. Whatever doesn't come from you yourself, no matter what it is, ultimately makes no sense to me. Thank you, I'm sorry?"

Subaru: "??*tch*"

He gritted his teeth at Sirius, who had relaxed her bandaged lips into a smile. It seemed like a conversation had been established, but in reality, there was no mutual understanding between them.

The resolute values within Sirius didn't accept even a modicum of external stimuli. The more it struck him, the more the stricken Subaru got hurt.

Beatrice: "Subaru, it's pointless, in fact. It's meaningless to expect human emotion like introspection or empathy from such people, I suppose. These guys are nothing but malevolent, in fact."

Sirius: "……Spirit in the form of a girl, don't you get closer to my precious Petelgeuse."

When Beatrice pulled Subaru's sleeve, who was clenching his teeth, Sirius bluntly began to take a sullen attitude. Beatrice snorted her small nose to the words of that monster, and tugged Subaru's arm even closer to her.

Beatrice: "That's too bad for you, I suppose. But Betty belongs to Subaru, I was needed here, and here I am, I suppose. Don't you call Subaru by that disgusting name, in fact. You don't even know the true meaning of holding that name."

Sirius: “Don’t get carried away, little brat. That person’s side is the place which I snuggle up to in heart and flesh. Don’t you dare point your mistaken, arbitrary devotion to that person. I’ll set your backside on fire, burn the inside of your belly to cinders, and turn you into fertiliser for the Od Lagna.”

Emilia: “Both of you, don’t get worked up and start fighting. It’ll make me angry too.”

When the stormy atmosphere was created by Sirius and Beatrice, the intervening Emilia’s gaze became sharp. He was in a situation where he was surrounded by three women, being pulled by his arm, but Subaru didn’t have the liberty to joke about it right now.

Such was the strong feeling of oppression he felt in his soul by being next to Sirius. He wasn’t sure if it was caused by the authority that monster possessed.

Subaru: “Emilia, Beatrice, step back. Perhaps she’ll just talk with me. Although, regardless if there’s someone here or not….. It’s doubtful if it’ll happen.”

Emilia: “But……”

Subaru: “Please. ??This is an unexpected chance to speak with the Witch Cult.”

If it wasn’t for this situation, he wouldn’t have had the opportunity to sit down and talk with the Witch Cult.

Emilia let out a sigh at Subaru’s request, and both she and Beatrice exchanged glances with each other; they took a step back so as not to interfere with his conversation with Sirius.

Then, Subaru, who’d been entrusted with this situation, turned to face the bound monster once again.

Subaru: “As you wish, I will speak with you. So, you’ve been making your chains to creak since a while ago, stop moving. If you slip free from your bindings, we’ll be forced to beat you down.”

Sirius: “You too have your standpoint. I understand that. It’s fine. These chains won’t come loose or break so easily. Thank you.”

The captive Sirius was delighted with Subaru’s attitude, who had tried to converse with her.

It didn’t imply that Emilia and Beatrice’s figures were out of sight, but it seemed like she’d completely expelled them from her notice.

Sirius: “So, what should we talk about? Because of your relation with me, there’s hardly anything to say between us….. We can just exchange “Love”, don’t you think? Just kidding, I’m sorry?”

Subaru: “Your purpose….. Yes, your purpose. The purpose behind why all of you Sin Archbishops attacked this city at the same time. You don’t need crap like the book or the artificial spirit. At least, we know quite well that all of your purposes weren’t really to steal them.”

Sirius: “It’s a misunderstanding that we didn’t really intend to. Though, it's certainly true that I personally didn’t want them. I don’t know about the other guys, but I was just following the Gospel’s description.”

Subaru: “The Gospel…. That again? It was the same with Petelgeuse as well. Why do all of you follow that strange book? Petelgeuse followed it as well.”

And as a result, he lost his life.

The Gospel’s description showed the path of the future that an owner must follow?? Even knowing such circumstances, it wasn’t omnipotent, that much was clear if he thought about the final moments of that lunatic.

Subaru knew that the path of the future which could be seen was not absolute.

Yet even so,

Subaru: “Why does the Witch Cult follow exactly what the book says? Is it because that book will help with the resurrection of the “Witch”..... Of your beloved “Witch of Envy” ? ”

Sirius: “??Please don’t misunderstand, darling.”

Subaru: “Misunderstand?”

Sirius’ emotions of joy suddenly disappeared from her voice on hearing Subaru’s accusatory voice.

Whilst the monster looked into Subaru’s eyes with her glittering eyes, on her face which was wrapped in bandages, she twisted her lips so to bare her yellowed teeth.

And then, she spoke.

Sirius: “You’re the only one I love. The only one. I don’t care about the “Witch”. Everything, are just necessary things to get to you.”

Subaru: “????”

Sirius: “The other Sin Archbishops are similar. All of them have worthless, insignificant, repulsive desires, and merely cling to their authorities. For me, my only reason is “love”, and for my beloved dear, it’s different. I’m sorry? It’s different in every way.”

??The Witch Cult’s purpose was the resurrection of the “Witch of Envy”.

Subaru had believed without any doubt that it was so, considering Petelgeuse Romanee-Conti’s behaviour and utterances, and in addition, the creed and acts of barbarism he’d heard about the Witch Cult up until now.

However, that principle?? The very reason for the existence of the group known as the Witch Cult had been shaken here.

Of course, Subaru had also met Regulus Corneas, and they'd exchanged words too.

As soon as he thought about whether that conceited, egocentric man, who'd looked down on everything besides himself, was going to idolise the "Witch", his sense of incongruity became stronger.

Now that he mentioned it, it was obvious. The more he thought about, the more he could come to a better conclusion. But, if it was like this, then what purpose did the Witch Cult have in existing?

Subaru: "Then, why the hell are you all in the Witch Cult….."

Sirius: "Because you're in it"

Subaru: "????"

Sirius: "That is my sole reason. I'm here to exchange my "love" with you. I don't know about the others. If we become one, I think you'd understand."

Becoming one, in brief, probably meant melding their hearts with each other with the power of her authority.

But that wasn't understanding, it was forced conformity. It wasn't possible to call forcing a heart against its will by binding it to the same emotions a way of understanding each other, let alone becoming one.

Subaru: "What are the purposes of the other Sin Archbishops? What is the ultimate goal of the Witch Cult?"

Sirius: "Well, who knows? I'm sorry. Regrettably it's something that doesn't interest me."

Subaru: "In general, where does the Witch Cult meet? Is there anyone who leads it?"

Sirius: "……No. Especially with such established routine. You know it too."

Whilst still putting on a crazed smile underneath her bandages, Sirius avoided Subaru's question. No, she probably didn't even intend to dodge it.

The monster was going to sincerely answer in a monster-like way to her husband, "Petelgeuse's" questions. Due to her behaviour so far, there seemed to be no doubt that Sirius had an abbertant devotion towards Petelgeuse, on top of her dependance.

In other words, just like the monster had stated, she really didn't know anything.

Sirius: "??Even so, after all, it's like that?"

Subaru: “???”

Sirius grumbled that out whilst looking at the pensieve Subaru from below.

Subaru reacted a little slowly to the frigidness of those words. The monster took advantage of the momentary gap that was born from it.

The small chair creaked as it tilted, and Sirius face drew close to Subaru’s visage. Her bloodshot eyes stared at Subaru, who’d held his breath reflexively, from close up.

Sirius tilted her chair, still bound up to her ankles, and balanced herself up using only her toes which hung barely free. Her body fell forward with an injection of momentum so to lean against Subaru.

Subaru: “……Oh”

Sirius: “I’d thought something was strange ever since the time we reunited back at the clocktower, but I was so sure. The passion of that day is nowhere to be found in your eyes. ??My dear, are you being swallowed?”

Subaru: “????”

Sirius: “You’re being eaten up by a soul, by a body which was supposed to be a temporary abode, and you’ve ended up unable to move about….. Really, you’re such a useless person without me.”

Sirius’ long tongue suspiciously licked Subaru’s cheek as she breathed out a fevered sigh. Feeling the rough tip of her tongue on his skin, every single hair on Subaru’s body stood on end.

A growing sense of discomfort erupted within his chest, and the back of his eyes became dyed in deep red. It was crazy to think that this phenomenon had simply been caused from her vile action.

It was crazy to think, but he didn’t feel like he could consider anything else. And then??,

Emilia: “ICE BRAND ARTS!”

Sirius: “Gh?? *Fhhh*”

The blow of an ice hammer came swooping diagonally and hit Sirius’ body, who had been clinging to Subaru, and launched her to the back wall along with her chair.

The sound of an impact was raised, and Sirius, who had received this icy blow defenceless to stop it, fell down. Dust blew up across the narrow room, and bits from the ceiling came pattering down.

Subaru: “Oh, oh……?”

Standing next to Subaru, who had ended up falling on his knees, Emilia dematerialised the ice hammer she’d created. Subaru, who’d been slow to notice that it’d been Emilia who’d let lose that blow without

any forewarning, let out a long sigh.

He really couldn't comprehend what had happened during this moment.

Beatrice: "Subaru's such a big idiot, I suppose."

Subaru: "??*tch*. Beako?"

Amidst the impact and the parched sound, Subaru blinked, noticing that his cheek had been slapped. The one who'd struck his cheek was Beatrice, who'd nestled up close to him. She looked at Emilia out of the corner of her eyes, and said,

Beatrice: "If Emilia hadn't interrupted that now, Betty would have done the same, in fact. You were too careless around someone like that, I suppose. In the worst case, she could have ripped your throat apart with her teeth, in fact."

Subaru: "????"

Subaru became aware of his own carelessness thanks to Beatrice's words. It wasn't an exaggeration or something he could laugh at. In reality, Sirius had licked Subaru's cheek with her tongue.

Putting to one side the repulsiveness of that action, if that tongue had been a fang, and if instead of his cheek, it had been his neck, Subaru wouldn't have been able to stop it.

Emilia: "Don't try anything strange. I'm a little scatterbrained, so I can't hold myself back very well. The next one will surely be a reaaaaally painful blow."

Emilia declared that she didn't intend to go easy, whilst keeping her guard up against the collapsed Sirius.

Sirius was completely bound, such that she wasn't able to move about?? The excessive precautions they'd ended up taking against this opponent who was kept as a prisoner in this state was proof of the monster's fiendish being.

It seemed like he'd forgotten about that in front of the threat of its authority, however, this Sin Archbishop of "Wrath" stood out from the rest, even in looking at its combat strength alone. At a first glance, one would think that the strongest in the Witch Cult was Regulus the "Invincible", but in reality, since "Greed" relied entirely on his authority, his threat had been low.

A strength that didn't depend on an authority, along with the threat of an authority?? In this sense, the other Sin Archbishops were way tougher than Regulus

Beatrice: "Subaru, you should have already known this, I suppose. You won't get anywhere, even if you talk to this person, in fact. She's not the type that you can have a proper conversation with. I don't know what she knows, but even if you wish to get something out of her, you aren't going to be able to have a sane conversation to find out what she knows, I suppose."

Subaru: “If it’s impossible to converse with her….”

Beatrice: “Pose the queries to her body, what I mean is torture, in fact. Though that isn’t something which Subaru should do, I suppose. It’s something which the Kingdom does sometimes after having caught someone, in fact.”

Beatrice tugged at Subaru’s arm so to get him to stand up as she expressed that cruel point of view.

Torture, Subaru felt an undescribe feeling of uneasiness in regards to that word. Along with *death* and *brutality,* they weren’t words which were heard or spoken in his everyday life.

Although he didn’t know the reality of it, with how much such gruesome things were practised, if they were within reach of their imagination, he understood it. Along with the anguish of the people who were exposed to that.

Subaru: “I don’t think it’s what they deserve.”

Subaru’s mentality wasn’t so naive to believe that human nature was fundamentally good.

He didn’t think that everything had to end up with “Death” when it came to settling a battle; the thought of wanting to finish things up without killing as much as possible had always been in his nature. That was a moral value which he’d brought in from his original world, and that in itself was a naivety which Subaru couldn’t detach himself from.

??But, even so, there’d always been a conclusion that had stepped past the boundaries of those morals.

He would have preferred to finish things up without killing if he could. In the end, that thought meant that he would have to kill his opponents that necessitated it.

That had applied to both of the Sin Archbishops, Petelgeuse and Regulus. And it would be no different when it came to the other Sin Archbishops, Sirius, Capella and Alphard of “Gluttony” as well.

He felt hatred, and a lust for revenge. But in yet a different part to that, there was an intent that had determined that those guys were people he would have to kill.

Subaru: “I’ll be excusing myself from talking with you anymore. When we separate here, I probably won’t get another opportunity to talk with you. I don’t think that’s a pity, nor commiserable. But, hurry up and spit out what you have to say, and then you can rest in peace…… That’d always be helpful.”

Telling someone to “Die” right to their face had brought him a difficulty breathing.

Subaru said merely that, and made a motion to leave the room since there was nothing else left anymore. As Beatrice had mentioned, if they wanted to try and get information on the Witch Cult from Sirius, they had no other way but to pose the questions to her body to get more out of her. That was a different task, one which Subaru could not do.

When Subaru showed his intention to leave, both Emilia and Beatrice's faces broke into relief. Both of them had been against entering the room from the start. It was a regrettable situation in that they'd just been put in a foul mood without gaining any results. However, thinking about it in a positive light, it had become clear to them that the way those guys thought was incomprehensible; it seemed they should be content with that.

Subaru: "????"

There was no telling what would have happened if he'd gotten close.

Subaru and the others made their way to the entrance without bothering to lift Sirius back up, who still lay toppled over thanks to Emilia's blow. It definitely wasn't a laudable attitude, but, with that??.

Sirius: "????"

Subaru: "……Wait up"

Subaru stopped in his tracks due to an unpleasant sensation that grated against his skull just when they were about to reach the entrance. Then, he looked down at Sirius who was lying on the floor. The source of that unpleasantness came from over there, from the collapsed Sirius.

The monster was lying on her side, breathing crudely from her nose whilst pressing her face against the cold floor. Her breathing was so awfully ear piercing that it had drawn his attention to her.

??Just before leaving the room, he'd realised that she was humming.

Subaru: "Stop that song, what are you trying to do?"

Sirius: "????"

She was out of tune, her pitch and rhythm were both in a state of chaos. This dissonance didn't come to a stop there. It was nothing else but a declaration of Sirius' intent in regards to Subaru's words.

In other words, a refusal, a rejection.

Subaru: "I told you to stop! This song is grating through my head!"

Sirius: "??. I'm sorry? Ah, but songs sure are great, aren't they? They taught me that songs are wonderful. That's why I wanted to try and sing all of a sudden."

Subaru: "Lilianna……!?"

Sirius should have heard the song when she squared off against Priscilla and Liliana. He had no idea how her song had sealed her authority during their fight.

In the midst of battle, the monster hadn't hated the song, and she'd learnt something of it. However, the

monster's understanding of the song definitely was of different strokes to the feelings which Liliana had put into hers.

Her's was something more eerie, and distorted.

Subaru: "Don't compare her song with yours. Yours is different, it's something else."

Sirius: "??I could say the same about you. You're different. You've changed. You're definitely different from that person whom I love. Even if you're the same, you're different."

Suabru: "Huh?"

Sirius: "Petelgeuse is inside you. Soul and soul will melt together, flesh and flesh will become one, and like that, that beloved person will surface, though, it will take some time. What I ought to do is help that. To see that person waking up, by your side."

Still collapsed on the floor, Sirius twisted her neck and looked up at Subaru.

An endless swirling storm of emotions surged up in her crazened eyes. Anger, joy, sorrow, and a longing that she couldn't conceal, all continued to swirl in Sirius' eyes.

Sirius: "I'll drag that person out from inside of you. ??Thank you, I'm sorry? Please, until that day comes, take care of your mind and body."

Subaru: "??*tch*"

Sirius certainly understood that Subaru and Petelgeuse were different things.

She should have understood that, but yet the monster hid under a convenient fantasy, i.e. overwriting him. Petelgeuse, who slept inside of Subaru, would someday come out to greet him, she'd said.

There's no such thing. That would be impossible.

It was likely true that Petelgeuse's Witch Factor that he'd taken in was inside him. However, there's no way that safeguarded Petelgeuse's spirit. From where did this monster find these similarities between Petelgeuse and him to have repeated such bullshit?

??Or was it that Subaru and that lunatic had some similar parts when seen from the outside?

Sirius: "One last thing, I'm going to give you some advice so that you don't end up doing something unnecessary."

Subaru: "……Advice? You, to me?"

Sirius: "Yes, so that I don't lose my beloved darling. ??Be careful around "Gluttony". "Bizarre Eating", "Gourmet" and "Satiation" will eventually try to snatch you away. If that happens before he wakes up, no

one will end up being able to remember my darling."

Subaru: "????"

From the place he'd least expected, "Wrath" had mentioned the name "Gluttony" and given him information on them. Although, the content itself wasn't anything unusual, it was just information which he already knew, but??No.

Subaru: "Wait. "Gourmet", and who else?"

Sirius: ""Gourmet", "Bizzare Eating" and "Satiation". Being eaten and taken in without anyone noticing what was lost is an act of barbarity against "Love" which must melt together, blend together, and become as one. If you get the chance, please kill "Gluttony". Since they're a bother."

She revealed that about the Sin Archbishops who were in the same position as her, and what's more, she'd indifferently wished for their death. It was great that in this case there was a fatal discrepancy in the relations between the top brass in the Witch Cult.

The issue was what Sirius had said about "Gluttony"??no, about the "Gluttonies".

Subaru: "I totally thought that the "Gluttony" which Otto came across was the "Gluttony" who was in the control tower, since they'd been prowling about like "Lust", but….."

What if that wasn't the case, and it was just one of the "Gluttonies" from the two additional ones. *What if* all of the three "Gluttonies" were lurking in the city, and it hadn't been just that one.

And what if the "Gluttony" in charge of their control tower had continued to protect its post.

Subaru: "??*Tch.* Shit, I need to make sure…..!"

Subaru clasped his head in dismay at his own stupidity, he kicked the floor and headed towards the entrance. Now was not the time to continue talking with Sirius.

Subaru had to make sure with his own eyes the safety of everyone who had participated in the battle to defend the city.

He had to make sure that no one had disappeared due to their names being devoured by "Gluttony".

Subaru: "EMILIA! BEATRICE! Go straight back to the shelter we were at before. I've gotta make sure of something."

Emilia: "Subaru? I don't know what's blown into you, but calm down……"

Subaru: "WHEN THIS IS OVER! I'll calm down all you want. I'll calm down, so please let me do what it takes for me to calm down. It's something urgent."

Subaru hurriedly replied that to Emilia who had touched his shoulder. Emilia gulped seeing Subaru's behaviour, and then nodded saying "I understand."

Beatrice, who from the start hadn't intended to interject in Subaru's behaviour, looked shocked. Subaru had already forgotten about Sirius, and had hurriedly jumped out of the room.

Emilia: "Wait up, Subaru. I'm coming too."

And so, Emilia hurried after him, and both of their footsteps moved away at a quick pace.

As she listened to them, Beatrice turned her head back when she was at the door, and looked at Sirius, who was still face flat to the floor, and then pointed her palm at the monster.

Beatrice: "To tell you the truth, it's not like I don't think turning you into smithereens here would be proper, I suppose."

Sirius: "??So, why don't you do so? Spirit Whore. It'll be most welcome for me if it speeds up that person's awakening."

Beatrice: "????"

Beatrice let out a sigh at the provocative Sirius' manner of speech, and then lowered her palm. The little girl held the hem of her dress with the hand she'd lowered, and her eyes became filled with strong emotion,

Beatrice: "If you make Subaru sad, Betty will definitely kill you, in fact."

Sirius: "Of course. My beloved Petelgeuse's resurrection should just be welcomed by emotions of joy."

It was uncertain how much she understood, or if she was done here or not, but regardless of that, the doddering conversation ended, and Beatrice left the room, closing the door behind her.

Just before she did, Sirius's distorted hums slipped into Beatrice's eardrums.

A harassment and severity of sound that grated against your sense of hearing with its distorted rhythm like trampling the concept of music underneath it. A completely new kind of music that planted unpleasant feelings in others?? It was the "Music of Resentment".

The door was closed, and the Music of Resentment was cut off.

But, no matter where she was, that distorted rhythm remained in her ears. Beatrice chased after Subaru and Emilia at an adagio pace whilst tasting that unpleasant sensation.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

After leaving Sirius' prison, Subaru rushed over to Al who was waiting in the corridor. Al, who'd been

on standby, his Blue Dragon Sword held in his hand, was taken by surprise by Subaru's threatening attitude who'd stormed his way over.

Al: "Hey, Bro. I heard a super loud noise, you didn't kill her, right? Punching and kicking also counts as prisoner abuse, so they ain't things you can really praise."

Subaru: "I didn't kill her, afterwards I'll give you a proper explanation about the prisoner abuse, more importantly, I need to check something. Al, no one died where you were, right?"

Al: "??? Well, if you're asking about the whole city, I don't know. But at least, me, the cat eared sis? bro, and the miss with the Kararagi accent are all fine. I thought you already knew?"

Subaru: "I know, but…. Aah, shit. I won't get anywhere this way!"

It was natural that it had been an inconclusive answer.

Following with Subaru's concerns, if there had been someone who'd ended up as a victim of "Gluttony", that person would have disappeared from other's memories, like Rem. In that situation, asking *"Is there not a person you don't remember?"* made no sense.

The easiest way would be to tell Al and Emilia everyone's names, one by one.

Subaru: "??*tch*"

That was scary, that was terrifying.

Although it wasn't the time to cower, it would be terrifying to hear it from someone's mouth. It would be much more reassuring to go back to the shelter and check the safety of everyone with his own eyes.

Subaru: "I'll go back to the shelter. Please don't take your eyes off until Reinhard comes back for whatever reason."

Al: "Alright then, but….. Well, no. I won't ask the details. Gives me the chills."

Shaking his hand, Al didn't question Subaru's true intention behind his behaviour. Subaru went back through the passageway whilst avoiding considering, rather, thinking unnecessarily about problematic things, and left the shelter.

Looking at Priscilla from the corner of his eye, who seemed bored as ever, *"That's the second one," he* counted.

Priscilla: "Hah. Commoners sure are of small caliber, hence why your hearts get perturbed by such trivial things, it's such a big issue. If you're going hither and thither, at least focus your attention like you're sightseeing as much as you can."

Subaru: "That you haven't changed doesn't relieve me one bit. See you later."

Not having time to stop, Subaru quickly passed by in front of Priscilla. It was a manner, or rather, a disrespect which could have fouled Priscilla's mood, but she didn't say anything about it and only muttered "How boring." whilst fanning her skin.

Emilia: "So Subaru, what do you want to do? What is it that you have to make sure of?"

Returning back to the shelter full of the injured, Emilia called out to Subaru who was restlessly looking around. To her call, Subaru hesitated for a moment on whether to ask for her help.

Thinking about Rem's case, Emilia didn't have any resistance in regards to "Gluttony's" meals. Subaru hadn't forgotten the shock when he'd learnt about the loss of Rem's name from her mouth.

He'd resigned himself to the possibility of that wound reopening once more, and he'd the courage to explain the situation to Emilia. Because this was an unconscious blade which Emilia couldn't take into account.

Subaru: "????"

Till now, Subaru had confirmed the names of several of his companions who'd fought in the defence.

Beatrice and Anastasia first. Then Garfiel and Mimi were added to that, then Wilhelm and Otto, Liliana and Kiritaka too.

Felt's being was confirmed too from Otto's words. According to the girls' story, Reinhard and Ferris should also be fine. And Priscilla and Al whom he'd been with just a little while ago.

In other words, it wasn't yet possible to check the safety of??,

???: "??Subaru, it seems we met up safely."

Subaru: "Reinhard?"

A refreshing voice called out to Subaru, whose thoughts were spinning around rapidly, from his side. When he turned around, there was a red haired young man who had raised his arm in greeting to him; it was Reinhard.

It had been only a few hours that he'd met up safely with him, who after Regulus' defeat should have gone around to provide reinforcement to the other camps. Nevertheless, now that he was looking around for his acquaintances, he felt honest relief in being able to see his face.

Reinhard: "It's a relief that both Emilia-sama and Beatrice-sama also reunited safely."

Emilia: "Thank you, Reinhard. You should have been running around the city, right? Thank goodness you're alright. Yeah, truly."

Reinhard: "No, it's no big deal. Besides, even without me, everyone fulfilled their roles steadfastly. My

modest power was only a little bit useful."

Reinhard replied politely back to Emilia, and then looked at Subaru. Reinhard narrowed his sky-blue eyes, and as if seeing through to the depths of Subaru's heart, he said,

Reinhard: "So, Subaru, did something happen? Right now, you look like you're flustered."

Subaru: "Right now I want to check if something happened. ??Reinhard, have you met with Felt? Felt, and the others….. Well, Larkins and the others, that is."

The trio of Ton Chin Kan, now that it had come to this?? They also belonged in the framework of comrades. He'd heard from Otto that Felt was fine, he'd also heard that her servants were fine, but that didn't mean he'd mentioned the names of the three servants and confirmed them. He wasn't able to feel relieved.

To the desperation of Subaru's question, Reinhard gently placed his hand on his chin, and said,

Reinhard: "Yeah, they're fine. Felt-sama, those three, Larkins, Gaston and Camberly are all safe and sound. Larkins and Gaston have injuries, but they aren't so serious enough to worry. In regards to Felt-sama having acted independently, I think she will have to reflect on this later, don't you?"

Subaru: "There seems to be a pretty big chance that our Internal Affairs Officer was saved thanks to Felt, so do take that into account, I beseech for a lenient punishment….. Anyways, there wasn't anything else in addition?"

Reinhard: "Anything else?"

Subaru: "Anything else….. No, sorry. It wouldn't really be a specific question. So umm, after we separated, did anything happen? Any problems, or anything that worried you."

Even if he thought about it again, he still didn't have a specific question to ask; Subaru felt miserable. However, Reinhard didn't laugh at it, instead he quietly mulled it over and shook his head.

Reinhard: "No, my apologies, but nothing is coming to mind. Nothing particularly problematic happened after I left you and Emilia-sama. That I think."

Subaru: "I… see. My bad. It isn't that. Well, erm…… Yeah, there's a lot I'd like to talk to you about, so when you can, won't you gather along with Felt too? I'd like to consult with the people involved about what happened now, and what comes after. May I leave that to you?"

Reinhard: "??. Sure, since it's a request from you. Right now, I'd just asked Felt-sama to stay quietly in the standby area once again, so it'll probably sound sarcastic to her, though."

Subaru: "……Yikes that's bad. Afterwards I'll apologise as well, so for now, I'll rely on you."

Giving a wry smile at Subaru's words, Reinhard looked around his surroundings a little, and then quickly

left the place. When he jumped out to the outside of the shelter, you could barely see his figure which was leaping over buildings in one bound; he would soon meet back up with Felt, it seemed.

The problem was,

Emilia: “Subaru, Ferris is here. You want to hear his story, right?”

Subaru: “Hmm, ah. Yeah, I also wanted to talk to Ferris.”

Called by Emilia, he looked at where she was pointing at. There, he was able to find the figure of Ferris, who was restlessly letting his gaze wander to and fro in a corner of the shelter.

The cat-eared healing arts user was staggering about, and his complexion looked awful. Most likely, it was the result of his healing voyage that he’d been taken on by Reinhard. By freely using his healing magic, it seemed like he’d sustained a considerable burden. Even so, he was walking around looking for his next patient without resting??or it didn’t seem like that.

???: “??Ah!”

Ferris, who was looking around his surroundings, noticed Subaru and Emilia, and raised his voice up. He hastily tottered over to them, and caught ahold of Subaru’s scruff of his neck as if he was going to collapse.

Propping his light body up, Subaru called out to him with an “Hey?” And then,

Ferris: “Tell me…..”

Subaru: “Huh?”

Ferris: “THE SIN ARCHBISHOP! THEY WERE CAUGHT, RIGHT? I’M GOING TO MAKE THEM SPIT OUT EVERYTHING THEY KNOW, I’M GOING TO FIND OUT HOW TO TREAT CRUSCH-SAMA! SO, TELL ME WHERE THEY ARE.….!”

Subaru was paralysed by Ferris’ gaze which glared at his right in front of his wide-open eyes. Ferris’ fury was like that of a raging fire, he was only concerned for the wellbeing of his beloved mistress. And if it was to save her, he was prepared to show no mercy to those who know how to make that possible.

Subaru: “Fe-Ferris, calm down. I understand your feelings, but the result won’t come even if you hurry to do it. For now, let’s talk…..”

Ferris: “DON’T SAY WHAT’S CONVENIENT! YOU UNDERSTAND MY FEELINGS? THERE’S NO WAY YOU DO UNDERSTAND THEM IT SEEMS!? WHILST YOU SPEAK SO CALMLY, YOU KNOW HOW MUCH CRUSCH-SAMA IS SUFFERING….. IF YOU’D UNDERSTOOD, YOU WOULDN’T BE ABLE TO REMAIN CALM! STOP BEING SO IRRESPONSIBLE!”

Subaru: “????”

Having been jabbed in the chest, and a finger pointed at him, Subaru kept his mouth shut.

Having been attacked by irrational comments, Subaru couldn't even reply back. Crusch's condition hadn't changed, she was still infested with Capella of "Lust"'s blood. But more than anything, Subaru felt relieved by Ferris' comments just now, realising that he hadn't forgotten Crusch.

That black corrosion had also set itself into place in Subaru's right leg and the palm that he'd touched Crusch with.

But there was no way that would bring relief to Ferris' heart.

Ferris: "I have to save Crusch-sama. I can and will do everything that is necessary for that. If I have to torture the Sin Archbishop, I will do that too. I know how to cure people. That's why, even if I break them, I can heal them. That's why, that's why……"

???: "Ferris. ??That's enough already."

Subaru couldn't say anything to Ferris who was burning in frustration. And then, the one who'd called him from behind him to stop, was the wisened swordsman who couldn't stand to see this situation.

Wilhelm called out to the knight who served the same mistress as him with a voice which was devoid of all emotions.

Wilhelm: "I fully understand how you feel. But, this behaviour is nothing more than an insult to Crusch-sama, more so than anyone else. First calm yourself. Do things after you calm yourself."

Ferris: "You're saying you understand how I feel like as consolation…..!"

Wilhelm: "??I understand."

Wilhelm forcibly stopped him in his tracks with a low tone of voice when Ferris had tried to flare up at him. And then, Wilhelm looked at the jacket which had the ashes wrapped within it, which he'd hugged against his chest.

Ferris immediately bit his lips, his face guessing immediately who it was that slept there.

Ferris: "It's…… not fair. It's not fair, it'snotfairit'snotfairit'snotfair. Old man Wil…..!"

Wilhelm: "I know. It is poor of me to impose on your generosity and kindness. Forcing that on you, who opposes the pain of others more than anyone else. You should blame this old man."

Ferris: "Uuuu-uuua…..*sob*"

Ferris held back his tears and hung his head down. Wilhelm embraced his head and nodded at Subaru.

It looked like it meant that he would take over. Ferris too would have to face the conference later in place

of Crusch again when he calmed down.

It would be necessary to discuss the handling of Sirius then. But for now, what they should do is exchange words so that they know each other's conditions.

Wilhelm's serene eyes communicated that to Subaru. There was a pitifulness that depended on that, Subaru bowed his head and left the place.

Subaru: "Wilhelm-san, must want to cry too."

Why did everything go wrong?

There was no way to have achieved joy for everyone, acquaintances and strangers. How much did Subaru have to fight, strive and try in some way to choose the best option, to arrive at that outcome?? It was something that he did not know.

He had recently confirmed the safety of Reinhard and Felt, and also Ferris and Crusch. The ones that remained missing were Julius and Ricardo who had gone to recover the control tower of "Gluttony". In addition to that, Priscilla's page, Schult, and although an unpleasant person, Heinkel.

Speaking of which, Julius' younger brother, Joshua, ever since the problem started, he'd always b??.

Subaru: "??Ah?"

Just when he was thinking that, Subaru saw the shadow of someone watching the shelter from the outside.

He wore well-tailored white garb, and had a slender knight sword holstered at his waist. A handsome, and tall profile, along with lustrous purple hair that was almost flashy?? There was no way to mistake him.

It was Julius. Right now, the guy he wanted to check the safety of, was here.

Subaru: "Hey, Juli??"

Julius: "????"

He quickly lifted his hand up and raised his voice to try and greet Julius who had let half of his body peek through. But, when Julius noticed that Subaru's eyes were looking at him, he quickly turned around and left. He tried to leave the shelter at a fast pace.

Subaru: "Ah?"

Faced with Julius' unexpected behaviour, Subaru let out a stunned voice.

That reaction was completely unexpected. His opinions had been divided in respect to whether Julius would have obediently replied to his voice, but even so, he would have never imagined this reaction.

It wasn’t an obedient answer or sarcasm, he simply ignored him.

Subaru: “Is that bastard kidding me?”

Having spouted out all the irritation that had been boiling within so far, Subaru chased after him.

It wasn’t that he was worried. It wasn’t that he was worried, but he was looking for him to confirm his safety, he shouldn’t have had that attitude.

What was he up to? He had to catch him and find out. It was necessary to mention that this was not the time to joke around.

Emilia: “Hey, Subaru? What’s going on?”

Subaru: “That pretentious bastard Julius was there and ignored me just now. I’m going to go get him!”

Emilia: “Eh?”

Leaving behind Emilia’s voice of surprise, Subaru ran and chased after Julius. After he jumped out of the shelter’s entrance, he saw his back which was about to disappearer beyond the street. They were clearly movements to avoid the gaze of the public. However, if he wasn’t running, it’d be easy to catch up with him.

Subaru: “If you’re okay, just hurry up and say you’re okay…”

As if he was condemned, Subaru ran to the corner of the street. With one walking swiftly and the other running, the distance inevitably shortened. As soon as he turned around, he was able to see his back, and Subaru raised his voice.

Subaru: “Hey, you bastard! You, why the hell are you running around when everyone’s so busy? If you don’t show your face you’ll cause concern. No, it’s a general opinion.”

Julius: “????”

Upon hearing Subaru’s violent voice, Julius stopped. Julius turned his face only, and calmly gazed at Subaru with his yellow eyes.

Subaru frowned at the silent glance, but Julius did not change his posture,

Julius: “??My apologies. I was looking for someone, but it looks like that person wasn’t inside. I’d like to make my way to another shelter. If you’ll excuse me.”

Subaru: “Wait wait wait wait, what are you saying? What you’re looking for, surely has to be Anastasia-san, right? If so, I was in that shelter. You just didn’t realise it because you were impatient. It’s not like you.”

Julius: “??*tch*”

He called out to the back of him as he tried to leave after he left behind merely words of courtesy. Then, Julius showed a dramatic reaction to Subaru’s words.

He made his shoulders spin and turned around with a surprised face.

Subaru: “E, eh eh? What’s up?”

Subaru reflexively reacted with a shrill voice. It seemed obvious why..

Julius’ expression, as he turned, was tinged by an astonishment he had never seen before. No, astonishment wasn’t the only thing in his expression. What was there was a gleam as if he had been clinging onto something.

Faced with that emotion that didn’t suit Julius at all, Subaru didn’t know how to respond. As he saw Subaru like that, Julius gulped and with an expression of anguish,

Julius: “……Subaru. You, are referring to me?”

Subaru: “What kind of question is that? You don’t have a personality unimposing enough to forget you in just a few hours. “Finest Knight”, Julius Euculius-san, what nonsense are you..”

Shrugging his shoulders, Subaru responded as if making fun of Julius. And in the midst of that exchange, he stopped talking when he realized his own stupidity.

Beatrice: “Subaru! Don’t run off on your own!”

Subaru, whose throat had frozen, and Julius opposite him.

Both Emilia and Beatrice had come chasing him and joined the scene of the two facing each other in the street. When they saw the two looking at each other in silence, their large eyes flickered,

Emilia: “Well… You’re in the middle of something, right?”

As she noticed the strange atmosphere and tension, Emilia anxiously tilted her head.

Subaru felt a bad presentiment at her reaction, especially from her gaze which was looking at Julius.

Thus, Subaru pointed to Julius,

Subaru: “……Yes, that’s right, but it’s not that. Emilia-tan. Beako you too, well…”

Emilia & Beatrice: “???”

Emilia and Beatrice raised question marks at Subaru’s awkward words.

He had to do something, probably a definitive question. Subaru swallowed his saliva, and took a glance at Julius.

Before Subaru's gaze, Julius prepared himself and lifted his terribly hollow face,

Subaru: "I found Julius. So, I can take him to the conference, right?"

Beatrice: "??Julius"

Upon asking, Beatrice gazed at Julius.

Then, Emilia spoke doubtfully in a low voice,

Emilia: "Julius-san, is he an acquaintance of Subaru?"

And, as if to repeat the nightmare of before, she said that.

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Arc 5, Chapter 77: "A Nameless Knight"

by admin - Sunday, July 07, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/07/07/arc-5-chapter-77-a-nameless-knight/

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Translated by :

- u/Ringo_17

Proofread by :

- u/Nanashi-tan

Art Sources

- u/zhukzubast

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Receiving the jolting impact, his body got out of the dagger's trajectory?.
Not being in a position to sharpen his blade, and even if he did accept it with his broken knight sword, he would not be able to evade the severe wound. Was the conclusion that anyone would realise at a glance, henceforth, Julius was able to notice that he was being shielded.
However, it was, again, a different subject whether he should express relief or gratitude for it??.

Julius: "Ricardo??!"

Ricardo: "Shit, he got me..... ~hk!"

With an anguishing voice, Ricardo, who had pushed Julius aside, narrowed his eyes. When he called out that name, at the same time, a spout of blood clouded Julius' vision.
The blood had sprouted from, the rough, bulky right arm of Ricardo?? having lost everything from his elbow, it was a gash exposing the soft cross section.
The arm covered in beastial hair gave rise to a sound and fell onto the cobblestone, and the big hatchet it

was gripping, too, made a dull sound and rolled on the ground.

Julius: "How did such..... ~hk."

Ricardo: "Argh! This ain't the time for sayin' that, Julius! Raise your head and look towa~rds....."

At Julius, who was breathing heavily, Ricardo slammed a loud yell. However, that was abruptly obstructed by the attack of the dagger he suffered on the abdomen, and his nose was smashed and broken by the solid knee's direct hit.
Throwing him aback, and as Ricardo flopped onto the floor, with his limbs stretched out, ?Gluttony? sneered.

Roy: "Haha~! Aren't you going to, completely say it ~tsu!"

Julius: "??~hk."

The form of Alphard, who was shouting out his delight, and Ricardo, who had collapsed. Seeing the figures of the two, two choices came up in Julius' mind.
Which one of the two should he give precedence to, a seemingly instantaneous gap had been produced there.
And, the appetite of ?Gluttony? would never overlook that gap.

Roy: "To look away in the middle of the meal, you really don't have manners, nii-sama??!"

Julius: "You bastard.....!"

Like a springed doll, Alphard leapt trickily. At that phantasmagoric movement, Julius' reaction got faintly delayed.
The outstretched? palm and, the broken knight sword entangled, and the feeling of his chest being traced by the palm?? with his slash being dodged, what followed immediately afterwards was an inexplicable sense of loss.

Roy: "A~h?? thank you for the treat ~tsu."

At the end of that voice, for some reason, his consciousness distanced further, and further, and??.

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Julius: "Though it is pathetic, in the midst of the battle against ?Gluttony?, my ?Name? was stolen. Perhaps, that is what this current situation is."

Based on what Emilia had said, that truth had been brought to light.
Expressing a cynical smile on his face due to the truth of being forgotten by his acquaintances, Julius

shrugged his shoulders.

Subaru: "?Name? got eaten..... is that what you mean? But."

Eating the ?Memories? and ?Names? of people was the blasphemer, Sin Archbishop ?Gluttony?.
The threat of getting the ?Name? eaten, and having all connections cut off?? Subaru was well aware of its fearsomeness. However, looking at Julius now, who seemed to be in a healthy shape, he could not help but feel his understanding was frivolous.

Subaru: "His victimisation is, like Rem or Crusch-san....."

Having her ?Memories? eaten, and completely forgetting her own former self, was Crusch.
Having her ?Name? eaten, and vanishing from the memories of people with not a single exception, and continuing to be in a deep slumber in that state, was Rem.

Victims of ?Gluttony?, the two young girls were sufferers Subaru was well acquainted with.
However, coming here, Julius had been trapped in a state different from those two. His own memories having not been lost, nor did he lose consciousness.

??However, from the memories of his surroundings, his existence had disappeared.

Subaru: "Really, does nobody remember? If you attempt from one side....."

Julius: "I have already met with Anastasia-sama and Ricardo. For some reason, they treated me like an unacquainted person, I have endured that experience. Being unable to thank the one who shielded you, is displeasing, isn't it."

"????"

Julius, reflexively, killed his sentiments and replied but, his smile which faintly had too much energy being put into it, or the tone of his words, naturally?, were difficult for Subaru to behold. No matter how strong Julius' consciousness may be? as a knight, there is no way he could bear such mental stress with ease.

With the ruin of the relationships he had compiled, the fear and despair of losing the days he had lived personally.
That was the sense of loss Subaru had tasted, to the point of it being painful, when he had arrived into the different world at first.

Subaru: "Beatrice....."

Beatrice: "What Subaru wants to say is understandable, in fact. But, unfortunately, even Betty does not remember that man, I suppose. Betty, is already outside of the Forbidden Library, in fact."

Sympathising with his intentions at a single call, Beatrice, with a difficult face, horizontally rotated her neck.

At Beatrice's point, the confirmation Subaru had picked up?? that was, whether she remembered Julius or not.

As Emilia did not remember, naturally, there is no way Beatrice would remember. That was how it was supposed to be, but there was a possibility that Beatrice was an exception.
For some reason, Beatrice was??.

Subaru: "Even though you remembered Rem."

Beatrice: "It can be said as many times as you'd like, but rather, that case itself should be thought of as the exception, I suppose. And now, it should be thought that it has been proven with the man in front, in fact."

Subaru: "In the end, that is the inference regarding your memories, huh."

It had been some time ago.
Some time ago, Beatrice, in the Forbidden Library, had once referred to Rem after her name had been eaten by ?Gluttony?. Subaru had questioned that after she had formed her contract, after the Forbidden Library had been lost but, this was one conclusion they had reached after their exchange.

Subaru: "When isolated from the outside into the Forbidden Library, Beako does not get affected by what is outside of the room. That's why the moment Rem's name was eaten, no effect was taken..... is what I had thought, isn't it. That's why, once exited from the room, special? treatment would not be given..... huh."

Beatrice: "That tone, seems like there is a problem with Betty leaving the Forbidden Library, I suppose."

Subaru: "N-Nothing like tha~t! I, am mammoth happy to be able to walk under the rays of the sun with you!"

Beatrice: "Eh, in fact."

And, within that short back and forth, lay the truth.
And, in fact, Beatrice exhibited no peculiarity regarding Julius. Beatrice's inference was surely, that the barriers to her memory served their purpose only in the Forbidden Library.
Rather, in this case, the problem here was not Beatrice's distinctiveness??,

Emilia: "But, why does Subaru remember Julius-san? Just like, the time with that Rem-san."

Subaru: "That's it."

The question, that would dawn upon everyone, was finally spoken by Emilia.

The sole person in the entire world who remembered Rem, whose ?Name? had been eaten, Subaru.
Forgotten even across the preservation? of the memories of Ram, who was her twin elder sister, however, Emilia and the others did not make a reference.
That must also be because, looking at Subaru connect to Rem with such devotion, they could not randomly speak regarding the memories, or make any implicitly believing rash remarks.
But, not just that, the ability to refute Subaru's memories, could only be done by nothing else but having definite proof, which not a single one of them possessed.

However, it was different this time.
In this case, the concerned party who also remembered aside from Subaru?? in brief, Julius, who had been forgotten since his very beginning by the world, retained consciousness.
Naturally, the reconciliation of that mutual recognition and, the reason for Subaru being treated as the exception of the Authority of ?Gluttony? gave rise to doubts.

Emilia: "Does Subaru have any idea? No holding secrets, okay."

Subaru: "I don't intend to hide anything at all but..... I think I sort of do, I won't say that."

Emilia: "That, isn't that a secret?"

Subaru: "If you can't confirm it don't declare it, I don't think that's secret keeping."

Conversing with Emilia, Subaru investigated the possibility of him being an exception.
The feeling that had uprisen in the very beginning, was the influence of the Witch Factor sleeping? inside of Subaru. If the Authority of ?Gluttony? of eating ?Memories? or ?Names? was the power of the Witch Factor then, it was conceivable, due to a certain cause, it may not apply upon Subaru, just like ?Unseen Hand?.
Perhaps, Subaru could ?Return by Death? through the power of the ?Witch of Envy?. With the power of that ?Witch? invoked, it may have had cancelled the effects of the Authority of ?Gluttony?.

And there was the remaining feeling of the exceptionality like that of Beatrice's Forbidden Library.
That was, because Subaru belonged to a different world. Subaru was a human whose origin was from a different world?, and not an existence who belonged to this world.
Not being an existence of this world, he doesn't? fall under the effect of the Authority which interfered with the concepts of this world?? how was this hypothesis.

Subaru: "However, if it's the latter, then the way to confirm it is easy. Julius just has to meet with Al."

The sole person in this world, who was under the same circumstances as Subaru, was Al.
Regarding the exception of the Authority, if the latter hypothesis happened to be correct, Al must also be remembering Rem and Julius. Above all, the Al of this world and Rem had no acquaintanceship with each other, henceforth, it could not be confirmed.

Subaru: "There's no way he can say that even this time, huh."

Emilia: "Subaru?"

Subaru: "It's regarding Emilia-tan's question but, there's something I want to confirm before answering that. Julius, you'll have to come with me."

At Subaru's voice, who cut short the chase, Emilia made a somewhat discontent expression.
He was keeping secrets, is what could perhaps be thought as well, but this was a measure necessary for attestation.
Above all, in the case if the hypothesis' correctness being proven, what both Subaru and Al held in common?? the part of both of them being trippers from a different world would be obscure, the ones whose hometowns lay beyond the Great Waterfall do not fall under the effect of the Authority, that absurd explanation would be the only option left.

Subaru: "Don’t tell me, you won’t refuse, will you? It is regarding you, after all."

Julius: "??I must state that I have no choice. It seems, under the present circumstance, you are rather knowledgeable regarding the condition inflicted upon me. I shall follow you."

Subaru: "Why do you have such a delicately large attitude, you."

Whether the calmness had been restored through the conversation till now, the attitude of the elegant appearing Julius, with his jaw pulled in, returned. Regardless of appearances, the uprosen situation was too tough on his mind and heart. Not charming at all, was another way to put it.

Subaru: "Suddenly getting absorbed in appearing admirable and increasing problems for the party in contact, huh..... Anyway, let's go back to the shelters. I think now it's the suitable time for all the people concerned to assemble too..... that's it, what about Ricardo? He had taken part in the suppression together with you. He's fine, right?"

Julius: "......He did get injured whilst shielding me, but it should not have an effect on his life. He is currently being properly diagnosed by Ferris."

Subaru: "......Is that so. Then, that's okay, I guess."

At Julius' reply, Subaru innermost thoughts were half relief and half reflection.
To dissect, the relief of Ricardo's safety, and the reflection of Julius' insensitivity, who had directly inquired from the ones he had fought alongside with.
And at Subaru, whose voice diminished, Julius sighed,

Julius: "I do not expect you to show friendly concern. If you conduct yourself the way you always do, it would be more comfortable for myself, after being in such perplex because of the environment. Well then, let's return to the shelters."

Saying that, Julius, friendly, patted Subaru's shoulder.

Julius: "Though it's not something too pleasant, there is no choice but to leave my introduction to you. The fruitless effort of the display in the hall of the royal election, it would help if you would withdraw

that at this occasion."

Subaru: "Don't go about digging up people's guiltful history! Shit, worrying for you was a mistake."

Pushing away the hand on his shoulder, Subaru turned towards Julius while stepping towards the shelter.
Of course, he would not misunderstand by thinking that Julius' reply just now were his true feelings.
Moderating Subaru's feelings of guilt, he has simply given his reply in the need of a smart response?.
He knew that. As he knew that,

Subaru: "Am I, an idiot. No, I am an idiot."

Why must he now, uphold an attitude, of giving salvation to Julius' heart.
He, who lost all others, above all, must be feeling the helpless anxiety of solitude, how could he mistake on his words and his judgements.

His own insensitivity was terribly irritating, and Julius was almost just as irritating as well.
In the situation where anxiety was natural, acting as normal was a strength of his as well.

That strength was surely, something which Subaru could never attain, despite his desire.
Until Julius were to be left as is, Subaru would certainly harbour his own sense of responsibility.

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Looking at the back of Subaru, who was heading towards the shelter, after having angered him, Julius' lips' edges curved into a slight smile.
It was a powerless smile, one which he could never let Subaru see, who had his back turned towards him.

Emilia: "That face, do you intend to not show it to Subaru?"

In that dim gap in his heart, a silver bell's chime pounced in between. Turning back?, there lay the line of sight of amethyst eyes towards Julius.
At that gaze, wearing gloom, Julius concealed his smile and shook his neck horizontally.

Julius: "Meagre disposition, futile resistance of the defeated, that is what it is. Please do not point it out."

Emilia: "Defeated you say....."

Julius: "Perhaps we, were the only ones who missed among those who headed to capture the control towers. Fully realising our great insufficiency, I now live in disgrace, and have been left alone in a prohibited state. Completely defeated."

With a stubborn attitude, Julius strongly brought attention to their defeat.
At his attitude, Emilia's eyes wavered heartbreakingly. Emilia, at this moment, may have had been able to

find the powerlessness of Julius' heart.

Emilia: "I'm sorry."

However, Emilia's utterance was different from what Julius had been intending for.
At Julius, who raised his face, Emilia embraced her slender shoulders,

Emilia: "The truth is, I don't know what should I say to you, right now. I'm sure I must have had known you but still I cannot remember, and I can't be reliable like Subaru."

Julius: "......In Subaru's case, he should not be referred to much. He is the one that is the exception, isn't it."

Emilia: "Even still, I know you are being hurt. That's why I cannot do anything but apologize and..... in regards to Subaru, thank you."

"????"

The fact that she thanked for Subaru, was unsettling.
Emilia sighed, at Julius, who furrowed his eyebrows.

Emilia: "Julius-san's current face, if Subaru saw it he would certainly be pained more. That's why, thank you, for hiding it. I'm really sorry."

Julius: "Please stop, Emilia-sama. It is not something to be thanked for, and furthermore..... furthermore you are making too much out of me. There is no need, for such consideration."

It was true. Julius, subjected to Emilia's gaze, filled with innate kindness, could feel the inappropriate comfort.
With such admirable consciousness, it was not as if he had confirmed Subaru's innermost? thoughts. It was something much simpler, a much more uninteresting reason.

Julius: "I don't want him..... Subaru, to pity me. That is all there is to it."

"????"

Up front, drawing closer, gazing at Subaru's stature, Julius declared. Pulling Beatrice's sleeve, who was close to him, with a difficult expression, was Subaru.
At such a figure of Subaru, Julius was unable to discard his own powerlessness.
Why those thoughts, that reason was??.

Emilia: "Just now, I feel I heard Julius-san's true thoughts for the first time."

Emilia, continuing her steps, commented that about Julius' words. Julius thoughtlessly rounded his eyes, and Emilia raised a single finger,

Emilia: "It may not be of too much help but, I will also talk to everyone to try and convince them. That's why, along with Subaru, trust us as well. Let's go.

Julius: "......Yes. Also, Emilia-sama."

Emilia: "What?"

Calling a halt to Emilia, as she turned back, Julius elegantly bowed.
Though it may not be in her memories, it remained inside of him as if carved deeply, that courteous etiquette as both a knight and a noble.

Julius: "Being called Julius-san by Emilia-sama, gives rise to a helpless sense of unpleasantness. Please refer to me as Julius, that way of reference."

Emilia: "I, used to refer to you like that, isn't it. .....I understand, Julius."

With a finger on her lips, Emilia consented. After that, Emilia drowned in thought, and shortly glanced at Julius, then proceeded to face towards the empty sky. And,

Emilia: "Can I, ask something too?"

Julius: "What might it be."

Emilia: "Right next to you, Minor spirits..... no, maybe Quasi Spirits. Those children, are flying about in seeming uneasiness..... did you know that?"

Julius: "??Yes, I am aware. Because they are, buds that, being close to me, will eventually bloom."

Julius closed his eyes, at what Emilia has pointed out.
Right beside him, when he closed his eyes, he knew there were the Quasi spirits, wielding the power of six colours, flying about. However, those buds had no knowledge of why they were there.
That is why, for them,

Julius: "My current self's words will not reach them. Just like, the words for my master or my comrades."

Arc 5, Chapter 78: "The Remaining Ripples in the Watergate City"

by Gracedharperd - Furuta - Saturday, August 17, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/08/17/arc-5-chapter-78-the-remaining-ripples-in-the-watergate-city/

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Translated by :

- Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)

Proofread by :

- Gracedharperd (/u/Gracedharperd)

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- Pixiv (Deleted)

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Arc 5 - "Stars What Make History"
Chapter 78 - "The Remaining Ripples in The Watergate City"

Reinhard: “Ah, Subaru. Thank goodness we didn’t miss each other. I’m back.”

Subaru: “Reinhard? How quick, you only just left.”

When Subaru and the others returned back to the shelter after they’d picked Julius up, they came across Reinhard, who had just returned to the same shelter.

Subaru gave a surprised response at his speedy work, and Reinhard, who had slightly raised his hand up as he walked towards them, suddenly broke into a frown. With a face that felt Subaru’s awful complexion and the unease in the somewhat anxious attitudes of the four of them, he said,

Reinhard: “What’s the matter, Subaru…..Is there something wrong?”

Subaru: "There’s definitely something wrong…..But, it’s difficult to choose the words. There’s something I want you to confirm too.”

Reinhard: “If I can be of any help, you may ask for whatever you want. What is it?”

Reinhard’s response to Subaru, who’d dropped the tone of his voice, was as sincere as ever. That’s why he wanted to trust in his extraordinariness as he’d done so far, starting with the battle against the “Bowel Hunter”, all the way up to the battle against “Greed”.

However, that line of thinking of attaining salvation by divine grace was??,

Subaru: "??Do you know anything about the guy who’s standing next to me?”

Reinhard: "……You don’t mean Beatrice-sama, right?"

Reinhard said this whilst he looked down at the little girl in the dress that snuggled by Subaru’s side. Subaru in silence, didn’t reply to Reinhard’s words. He merely kept staring at the “Sword Saint”, praying that the answer he desired would be returned.

To the fervour of that gaze, Reinhard looked at the other person standing next to Subaru, and slightly narrowed his eyes as if he were thinking. However,

Reinhard: "??My apologies. He’s someone I don’t know. Judging from his aspect and appearance, I think he’s one of the valorous individuals of this battle, though.”

Julius: "????"

Julius’ cheeks stiffened at Reinhard’s reply.

The two of them were supposed to be close friends who were companions from the Order of Royal Guards?? With his “name” eaten, that connection of friendship also ended up being cut short.

Julius cast his eyes down gloomily on hearing that reality, and Subaru, looking at him from the side, was feeling dejected too.

The “Sword Saint”, as the strongest in the Kingdom, was the most skilled swordsman having cut apart even the Witch Cult.

Not even Reinhard van Astrea could escape from the influence of the authority of “Gluttony”.

Or perhaps having thought that it was possible if it was Reinhard was only a baseless wish.

That wish was cruelly broken, and only confirmed his own shallowness.

Reinhard: "My apologies. I don’t know the reason why, but it looks like I wasn’t able to meet your expectations.”

Julius: "...…Huh, it should be us who say that. From your point of view that question must have seemed like an accusation. It is us who should apologise for presuming upon that consideration.”

It was Julius himself that took responsibility in replying to Reinhard’s apology.

He masked the shock of being treated as a stranger by a friend. He looked around the shelter as he covered himself with words of calmness. And then,

Julius: "It seems like it’s almost time for the important people to have gathered. It’s high time to start the conference that included what to do next.”

Reinhard: "……I understand. You mean to say that we’ll talk about you too there, right?”

Guessing the intentions behind Julius’ words, Reinhard lifted his chin. In fact, the valorous individuals of the defensive battle from earlier?? Those involved in the Royal Selection, along with the City Officials, were beginning to gather inside the shelter.

And right then, a young woman dressed in a kimono came back from outside that very shelter.

Anastasia: "Hmm, it looks like they’ve gathered before we told ‘em to. How convenien’.”

Anastasia, who’d finished looking around the outside, said that with a smile as she tugged on her scarf, Echidna. From within the surrounding shelter?? In her field of view, she obviously must have seen the figure of Julius standing next to Subaru, but it didn’t look like she was going to mention him.

Anastasia: “It seems like with Emilia-san ‘n y’all ‘n Felt-san we’re nearly jus’ about complete. If Priscilla-san comes after, then that’ll be enough. Then, I reckon we can start the conference.”

Anastasia made her suggestion as she clapped her hands together.

She said it with an air of composure, without even calling out to her *best knight* who should have been reflected in the corner of her eyes.

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The place that had been designated as the conference room in place of the lost City Hall was a meeting place near the shelter.

This meeting place was also a shelter, but due to its poor provisionings against flooding?? The disaster

that had kept the city of Pristella on high alert, it seemed that the shelter hadn't been used during the turmoil.

Anastasia: "To start things off with, it oughta be a good time for the people in the other shelters ta start goin' back ta their homes, dontcha think? In truth, we also wanted ta go back to the inn…. But, it seems like the tidyin' still hasn' ended."

When it came to tidying, was she referring to the inn or the people involved in the current turmoil?

Anastasia had probably made that comment so it could mean either one, so to take the initiative amongst those who had gathered at the meeting place.

Anastasia: "First of all, let me thank ya all for yer hard work. Luckily, the amount of damage which the Witch Cult's grand offensive caused was extremely low…… Includin' both the people who are here and those who aren't, that's what I believe. It was a battle like no other."

Those Present in the Conference: "????"

Anastasia: "Even without those grim faces, I too, understand. *The damage was low*, your faces say that you ain't convinced by those words."

The looks on those unsuspecting silent faces became harder at Anastasia's words, who in some regards seemed unconcerned. Anastasia shrugged her shoulders and looked around the room at that.

At the meeting place, not only were the original members who had undertook the battle to defend the city assembled, but also the other collaborators who'd gotten involved had joined.

From the Emilia Camp, there was Emilia, Subaru and Beatrice. Both Garfiel and Otto were absent due to the gravity of their injuries.

From the Felt Camp, there was Felt, Reinhard and Camberly, whose face was pale due to his out of placeness. Gaston and Larkins were absent due to their wounds and exhaustion.

From the Crusch Camp, the most important member, Crusch, was still resting in bed. So Ferris and Wilhelm were participating instead of their mistress.

From the Priscilla Camp, there was Al and Priscilla, whose face looked bored. Next to them was their attendant, Schult, safe and sound. It looked like Heinkel's safety had been confirmed, but he was an absentee.

And from the Anastasia Camp, there was Anastasia, who was standing in the centre like she'd taken the reins. There was Tivey and Ricardo participating as well, the latter of which had white bandages wrapped throughout his body. And Julius, who was seated away from them, on the Emilia Camp side.

Finally, there was Kiritaka, Liliana and the "White Dragon Scales" who'd joined due to their involvement.

Nearly 20 people in total who were involved one way or another had gathered in the room to carry out the post-war conference of the defensive battle.

And the one who got the ball rolling and spoke out a rebuttal against Anastasia's initial speech was Ferris, his attitude unsettled.

His yellow eyes shook with irritation as he raised his hand up,

Ferris: "The post-conference is important…… I understand that. I understand that, but I wish to speak about how we're going to deal with the Sin Archbishop. In the end, one of the top brass of the Witch Cult was captured alive, right? There are many things that we need to ask. I want to hurry that up."

Anastasia: "……Well, I knew Ferris-san was goin' to say that. By the way, what's Crusch-san's current condition like? Has there been any change since?"

Ferris: "??I can just say she's stable. We couldn't get any information out of "Lust", so right now she's recovering her strength with my healing magic, and relying on her willpower. For a moment, her symptoms were relieved a bit thanks to Subaru-kun's help, but….."

Being looked at out of the corner of the eye from the frustrated Ferris, Subaru fixated his gaze on his own palm. A part of his palm had turned black, and it was in a state where it exposed an unseemliness like that of a burn or birthmark.

A similar change had occurred in Subaru's right thigh which was covered by his trousers. Subaru didn't feel any pain or the feeling of anything foreign in it, but it wasn't like that for Crusch. The removal of that which was definitely eating up her strength was a matter of the highest priority to save her life.

That, and it was also rather tough for a woman to bear those black veins on her skin. That a beautiful woman like Crusch had been affected made her stand out all the more painfully.

Anastasia: "If I'm ta speak honestly, I ain't in agreement with keepin' that Sin Archbishop alive. That thing is a being that brings only trouble. If it's possible, killin' 'em in a hurry would definitely be for the best."

Ferris: "??! But then our leads would disappear!"

Whilst Subaru worried about the black veins, the argument between Anastasia and Ferris was reaching a boiling point.

In regards to the captured Sin Archbishop's treatment??Sirius, Ferris stubbornly shook his head at Anastasia who had suggested its execution. It was natural from his point of view.

However, Anastasia merely shook her head at Ferris who was getting fired up.

Anastasia: "I think what happened to Crusch-san is a pity. But, they're different mattas. Besides, that "Wrath" even knows anythin' about "Lust"..... No, I don't think they do in the long run. To me, it

seems very unlikely that the Witch Cult was cooperatin’ with each other.”

Ferris: "If they’re connected, then why!? Why did something like today happen!? The Sin Archbishops all gathered and came to attack the city, and yet, they’re not cooperating!?”

Anastasia: "Of course, even I ain’t sayin’ that their actions overlapped by happenstance. But, their aims, retreat times ‘n dispersion don’t match, it’d be a little weird to call that cooperation…… The Witch Cult doesn’t have any awareness of stuff like cooperation. “

Ferris: "That’s just a deduction, right!?”

Raising his voice, Ferris completely denied Anastasia’s words. It looked like Anastasia as well had realised that her suggestion was difficult to accept, and it didn’t seem like she was going to give a rebuttal to that which she’d been denied by Ferris’ sentimental argumental.

Thereupon, Subaru slowly raised his hand up.

Subaru: "May I say something? I also have an opinion, but if anything, an opinion that’s close to Ferris’. I don’t think it’s pointless getting information out of “Wrath.””

Ferris: "……What do you mean?"

Subaru: "It isn’t a story I’m proud of, but a little while ago, I was allowed to speak with “Wrath” for a short amount of time, there I was able to hear a little bit about “Gluttony”. Even if it was only about the length, depth and closeness of their relationship, it’s too hasty to say we can’t get any information out of them.”

In fact, “Wrath” had thrown some words similar to a warning at Subaru about “Gluttony”.

Thanks to that, there was a part in which Subaru had realised the possibility of “Gluttony” having several individuals, and had ended up not overlooking Julius when he’d tried to distance himself from the shelter. He couldn’t close his eyes to this. Nevertheless, within Subaru’s true feelings, he also had a part which agreed with Anastasia.

Subaru: "But, leaving aside whether we can or can’t use them as a source of information, I also have a bad feeling in regards to keeping them captured……Though all the Sin Archbishops are like that.”

Right now, so that they could partake in the conference, Sirius’ guard duty was entrusted to the “White Dragon’s Scales”.

She was in a condition where she was bound in chains without quarter, and had even been gagged so to stop her from talking. They’d also been instructed to take turns keeping guard, as their hearts had the potential to be manipulated were they stay near her for too long. Nothing should happen during this conference, but his anxiety was unending.

Subaru: "It’s necessary to feel this anxiety whilst they are captured alive. I can’t unconditionally make a

decision about what to do about that.”

Ferris: "Which side are you on……!?"

Ferris pointed his eyes, which were full of hatred, towards the fence-sitting Subaru. Subaru grimaced at the heat of his gaze, and said,

Subaru: "I’m not taking sides. Honestly, I think both of you are right…… In the worst case, I will do something about the black veins in Crusch-san’s body using the parts of my body which haven’t turned black, if that solves the issue, then I think that’ll be no issue.”

Ferris: "??Ha"

Emilia: "Subaru"

Subaru’s own judgement was a fairly extreme conclusion in regards to Crusch’s black veins. Upon hearing those words, Ferris’ face became flabbergasted, and Emilia looked at him with rebukeful eyes.

Everyone else also turned to look at him with shock, and complex emotions in their gazes.

Emilia: "I also heard about that, but that’s truly as a last resort, right? Right now we don’t know what’ll happen even if it’s nothing, but, acting like this is normal is…….”

Subaru: "Well, it’s not like even I want to put that seemingly unhealthy ink in my body for fun. But, we have a precedent with Crusch-san that it relieved her symptoms a little.

Emilia: "????"

Subaru: "What I mean to say is: don’t hurry in drawing conclusions. I understand the feelings of impatience, but even if my back or my butt turns black, given that they’re out of sight, I’m not reluctant to help out. That’s what I’m on about.”

Despite there being a way to be able to do something, letting it go by due to his own cuteness would leave him a bad taste in his mouth.

Crusch was a valued benefactor to him, and more importantly, there was a way that didn’t involve his, nor any of the others life. He’d try and help as much as he could if it was something like darkening his skin which was out of sight.

Wilhelm: "Ferris, sit yourself. For the time being, Subaru-dono is right.”

Ferris: "……I know. I really know.”

The one who pulled Ferris’ sleeve, who was lost for words, and made him calm down, was Wilhelm. Ferris looked down and tried to say something to Subaru, but sat down without saying anything in the end.

Subaru let out a sigh on seeing his state; the mood around the then tensened meeting area went back to normal. Even so, the situation from before still continued.

Anastasia: "In any case, I understan' that everyone's opinions regardin' the treatment of the Sin archbishops are divided. It's worryin' to keep 'em alive, 'n even the limits of mine 'n Natsuki-kun's instincts ain' comin' out…..In truth, if they'd killed 'em instead of captured 'em, our talk would have gone all the more quicka."

Priscilla: "??What, this worthless spiel has ended? No matter how much you gaze upon mineself, no rewards shalt be given to a show that lacks value. Cease that beggar's look immediately."

Priscilla replied with a yawn to the bantering Anastasia's look.

That misplaced reply was proof that Priscilla hadn't been listening to the conversation properly up until now. Her participating in this conference must also have been some kind of whim of hers.

Anastasia: "Don' speak so slyly. Though that attitude is unbecomin' for one who captured someone from the Witch Cult alive, more than anyone else, why did ya capture 'em? What led to this bizarre turn of events?"

Priscilla: "As if mineself knew whether she'd live or die. When I gave the final blow, the Yang Sword clouded over and its sharpness disappeared. Thus, she survived. The one who dragged her out from the canal was one of the rabble who'd drained the water in search for the songstress. It has nothing to do with mineself."

Anastasia: "It doesn' bother you that the one you'd tried to kill didn' die?"

Priscilla: "The contrary. Mineself drove the sword solely to kill. If she didn't die by that, then mineself has no intention to kill her again. Though she didn't die by mine hand, it seems to be all the more convenient as far as mineself is concerned."

Anastasia: "Haa, I don't understand, but aight."

Anastasia seemed to have given up trying to understand Priscilla, who as ever, had elaborated her enigmatic theory. Subaru didn't know her intentions either, but Priscilla's thinking probably wasn't understood by anyone else.

It was dubious whether even Al and Schult, who stood by her side, understood heads or tails of it.

Reinhard: "At least, I am against judging "Wrath" in this place. I do want to respect Ferris' feelings of course, and it's also a unique opportunity for the Kingdom. On top of strictly keeping guard of them, I think that we should make an effort to get what they know out of them."

Felt: "……I think it's better to kill 'em. Even just remembering those Sin Archbishops makes me sick to the stomach, I don't think they'd say anything that half makes sense. It's better to kill 'em before being dragged into something problematic, so that they won't cause any problems in the future, prob'ly."

Reinhard: "Felt-sama……"

Felt: "For your information, I ain't at all saying this to get on your nerves this time."

And, coming from a different place, the opinions were split between master and servant.

Reinhard, who had advocated that they should keep "Wrath" alive, and Felt, who had denied that. Although, Felt's opinion wasn't well grounded.

Felt herself didn't seem to think that her opinion would be accepted. In the end, "Wrath's" person would be given into custody to the Kingdom, it looked like it would end up like that. And in the worst case, in the eventuality that a conviction would need to be carried out too."

Anastasia: "When it comes ta bein' suitable for that, ya are it seems. But in this case, will Felt-san follow ya to the capital too? Or shall master and servant go their separate ways….."

Felt: "If Reinhard's going, I'm going too. ??This time, it can't be helped."

Reinhard's face changed to one of astonishment on hearing Felt's words. Felt caught a fleeting glimpse of his face from the side, and plastered a deep scowl on her lovely face,

Felt: "Don't get the wrong idea. The fact that I can't stand you ain't changed. It ain't changed, but there's times where I ain't gonna do that."

Reinhard: "There are times where you aren't going to do that?"

Felt: "I don't know. Try ask that to your own chest. My chest ain't soft enuff to reply back t'ya."

Sticking out her underdeveloped chest for her age, Felt stuck her tongue out at Reinhard. Reinhard cast his eyes down seeing his master's attitude, and then quietly lifted his chin up.

Only they themselves knew what feelings there were between master and servant. At any rate, it looked like the Felt Camp too wasn't the same as it had been a year ago.

Camberley: "W-Well, in that case, I'll……"

Reinhard: "Camberly, look after Larkins and Gaston. Once they can move about, they may first return back to the mansion. Bring them only in contact with Old Man Rom."

Camberley: "Y-yessir, I understand."

A look of relief came over the uncomfortable-looking Camberley on receiving his orders.

For now, thanks to Reinhard volunteering they could feel at ease regarding "Wrath's" escort. What came after, that which they could get out of Sirius, would be the duties of the Kingdom's experts.

Kiritaka: "Then, may we move to the next issue? Ladies and Gentlemen."

The one who'd raised his hand up after he'd seen the matter of "Wrath's" treatment decided had been Kiritaka. He gazed at everyone's faces whilst he adjusted his slightly messy hair with his hand. And then, he spoke out,

Kiritaka: "First of all, regarding the battle to protect this city….. I'd like to thank you all on behalf of all of its citizens. If it wasn't for all of you, the city of Pristella would likely have fallen into the evil clutches of the Witch Cult. I offer my deepest gratitude for that."

Kiritaka hung his head low, and bowed, having taken responsibility for speaking of the general consensus of the city. Liliana, who was by his side, with a look of panic on her face, also bowed her head like Kiritaka had.

Putting Kiritaka aside, Liliana's earnest reaction was quite unlike her. Perhaps her fight against "Wrath", or something after that had caused a change in her attitude.

In any case,

Subaru: "We were already in the city, and involved, we didn't have the option to just watch on as a spectator, so you don't have to thank us to this grandiose extent. Dontcha think?"

Emilia: "Yeah. Besides, maybe the Witch Cult taking over the city was just a bonus for them judging by their aims. Whether we saved them or they saved us, maybe we don't know which one it is."

Emilia and Subaru insisted that it was hard for them to accept the praises at face value for the Witch Cult's attack. Certainly, the greatest part of repelling the Witch Cult had been down to the merit of the members gathered here. However, in the first place, the Sin Archbishops' aims were "Emilia", the "Artificial Spirit" and "The Book of Wisdom".

All of those things had been brought in by those involved from the outside, and the Emilia Camp had been responsible for gathering them all. They couldn't sincerely accept their praises.

Felt: "Wait up. It bothers me that you say that freely as if it were the consensus. Are you really saying that if we hadn't been here, they would've slammed the door shut on those Witch Cult guys? I reckon we needa talk more clearly about that."

Priscilla: "'Tis vexing, but I'm in agreement with that beggar girl. Don't drag us into all of you commoner's self-convenient diffidence. Don't be so conceited, you half-witch and you philistine."

However, the harsh duo stated their rigid opinions on hearing the words of Subaru and Emilia.

Felt and Priscilla looked at each other after they finished speaking, and immediately looked away, their faces looking disgusted. Ever since from the start, those two did not get along with each other. Only those in her camp were close to Priscilla, so it a pretty normal reaction.

Kiritaka: "Please settle down. I'm gladdened by Emilia-sama's words, but as Felt-sama and Priscilla-sama said, the city's defense was all of your merit. This I vow as a representative of the city. ??In the meantime, I'd like you to lend your strength just a little while longer."

Subaru: "By strength…. You mean the next issue you mentioned earlier?"

Kiritaka: "Indeed. It's about the inhabitants who were transformed by that wicked power."

Everyone: "????"

Everyone there went silent at hearing Kiritaka's sombre tone.

What he was about to point out?? Was something which everyone here understood. The staff of the City Hall who'd fallen into the evil clutches of "Lust" and had been transformed into inhuman forms.

One had been transformed into a black dragon, and the other dozen or so had been transformed into huge flies.

They still couldn't do anything due to the effect of "Lust's" authority, Variation & Change. For now they ought to have gathered them in one place and concealed their existence, though.

Kiritaka: "The culprit, "Lust", has fled…… No, even if we could catch "Lust" in the first place, it's doubtful whether or not they'd have any intention to turn them back to normal."

Subaru: "That's for sure….. But we can't just leave them, right? Is there anything at all which we could do? Isn't it even impossible for Ferris?"

The changes to the people who couldn't turn back to their original form were fundamentally different from injuries or disease.

Seeing Subaru's gaze, Ferris shook his head, and then bit his lips,

Ferris: "Even I simply can't cure that. No, it isn't about whether I can cure them or not. It isn't an injury or disease, they were just transformed into those kind of creatures. Healing magic can only help you get back to being right as rain if you're injured or sick. That's why healing magic is futile against those transformations."

Kiritaka: "To be frank, I can't tell if the people who were turned into flies have awareness. I can't make the distinction, and a fly the size of a person can't even fly to begin with. They haven't learnt how to move their wings properly, they're in an incomplete state. But, if they have awareness"

Subaru: "If they clearly understand their circumstances, they'd end up going crazy I guess…."

They had lost their own figures.

It was a frightening change, even in just thinking about that. However, considering that they'd been

changed into something inhuman?? into something repulsive, it made it all the more worse. When your body isn't free, and you even lose the means to express your will, you could imagine pretty easily what they'd be thinking in the end.

For sure they would....

Priscilla: "Those who were transformed into vile insects would want to die, I'd imagine. If there is no chance to turn them back, then would it not be merciful to bestow that?"

Al: "Princess, that's….."

Priscilla: "Be silent, Al. There's no meaning in mere wishful lip service. Mineself has no mercy to dish out to slothful pigs, but killing those who revile fate by being trifled to absurdity with is also a kindness. In short, that's what it means."

With her harsh view, Priscilla dismissed Al, who had instinctively voiced his opinion. However, the reason why Al didn't make any more objections, was because Priscilla's opinion was also correct in some sense.

Of course, he didn't think they should die. But, they had been transformed into flies and there was no known way to get them back to normal; it was perfectly natural that they would want to die.

Subaru: "It's impossible to negotiate with the culprit, "Lust". Healing magic doesn't fix them. What do we do?"

Kiritaka: "I'd wanted to ask everyone about that. It doesn't matter even if it's a shot in the dark. Does no one have any idea on how to cure them?"

Still seeming to cling onto hope, Kiritaka's question was drenched in both expectation and resignation. No, the amount of resignation was stronger. And that was natural. If there'd been any possibility to cling onto, someone would have been bound to have suggested it by now.

In other words, at this point in time, where no allusions to a solution had been made so far,

Kiritaka: "??I understand. I profusely apologise for the inconvenience. Dealing with them is an issue for the City, we shall take the responsibility afterwards."

Subaru: "Take the responsibility? What will you all do?"

Kiritaka: "We'll consider the possibilities after this….. We have to check the will of those involved, and see each of their conclusions. No matter what the final opinions are, we shall see it through until the very end."

They sounded like strong words that implied the end in which they ended their lives instead of the one where they could return back to normal. Kiritaka's conclusion was inevitable in a sense.

It was inevitable, but it was too soon for that conclusion.

Emilia: "Wait. ??Erm, wouldn’t you be able to leave it to me?”

Kiritaka: "Emilia-sama?"

Having realised that their discussion on that matter had reached its end, Emilia quickly raised her hand. She looked straight at Kiritaka whilst feeling his anxious and expectant gaze converging on her, and said,

Emilia: "A way to return them all back to normal right now…. Sorry, that I don’t know. But, I want you to not make any hasty conclusions. We need more time.”

Kiritaka: "I understand your feelings, Emilia-sama. But, it’s about whether they have that time in them. The big issue is for how long their spirits can maintain their equilibrium in their transformed bodies.....”

Emilia: "Yeah, I know. That’s why I will make time to protect their minds. ??It may be a crude method, but it’ll surely be able to do the job. A way of putting them to sleep.”

Subaru: "I see……*Cold Sleep.*"

Realising Emilia’s intentions, Subaru snapped his fingers and then raised his voice.

As he felt the people around him tilting their heads quizzically due to the unfamiliar words, Subaru nodded at Emilia, who was looking at him,

Subaru: "In other words, you mean the same way as with the brides in the church, right? With Emilia-tan’s magic, we’ll put the transformed people into a state of suspended animation. It may end up just postponing the inevitable, but it’s sufficient to put off making a conclusion. In the meanwhile, we should find a solution.”

Kiritaka: "Freezing them, and keeping them sleeping….. Is that possible? But won’t they end up freezing to death in their sleep?”

Emilia: "They’ll be fine. It was for a short while, but I used this on the brides, so I understand the effects on one’s health, and besides, I also slept for around 100 years by myself.”

Kiritaka: "You yourself slept……!?”

Although an undesired commotion spread throughout the meeting place, Subaru clenched his fist at Emilia’s words.

It was unusual that Emilia was being positive about her magic and that she had insisted on trying to use it this way as well. That, and it was a *fine play* that even Subaru hadn’t thought about.

It certainly wasn’t a drastic solution to the problem, but they just needed time to find a solution from somewhere other than “Lust”. At least, their possibilities should be increased in not having a set time

limit.

In the worst case?? Yes, it was the worst case, but there existed a possibility.

Subaru would defeat “Lust” with his own hands, and take away the Witch Factor she held. Or perhaps, if it was him, it may not be possible that he could return them back to normal using the power of that Witch Factor.

He’d just taken in the Witch Factor of “Greed”, and it was possible that reproducing the Sin Archbishop’s was merely a pipe dream.

Kiritaka: "……If that’s possible, by all means I would like to ask that of you, but...”

Emilia: "Let me do it. You won’t regret it for sure.”

Emilia repeated her request to Kiritaka who was hesitating, at a loss for what to think. Kiritaka agonised about it before her earnest attitude. However, Liliana who was at his side, tugged at the cuff of his suit.

The brown girl looked up at Kiritaka and then flared up her nostrils,

Lilianna: "What are you worried about, Kiritaka-san? Why not? Let her try! After all that Emilia-sama said. It’s natural that there’s a chance of success!”

Kiritaka: "Of course, I want to believe that too, very much so, Liliana. However, this is something that involves many lives. We can’t come to a conclusion so easily..…”

Lilianna: "There’s no need to worry! Emilia-sama will not fail. Because, BeeeeeecAAAAuuuSEEE! The great heroes of the future can all surmount such tribulations without difficulty! Those heroic tales where they surmount any wall standing in their way, no matter how tall or thick it is! Blood boiling and flesh raising, a tale which fascinates everyone is created like so!”

The gentle strum of the Lyulyre, unsuitable for the meeting place, resounded throughout.

None of Lilianna’s idealistic notions had any basis, but for some reason, they did have a strange persuasive power to them. Of course, it wasn’t so simple as to make their conclusion using just that.

Subaru: "At the least, let’s ask their families. If the staff of the City Hall are the victims, then their family should be in the same city, right? We should try and hear from them whether they leave open that possibility.”

Kiritaka: "……In regards to that question, there shouldn’t be anyone who seemed to have abandoned their family.”

Subaru: "Then we can talk later about whether we will leave this to Emilia or not. And, regarding whether they will believe Emilia or not….. Well, I’d like to hear about that specifically from the consensus of the city.”

Kiritaka directed his gaze towards Emilia, showing signs of hesitation. If Emilia had cowered from that look, then perhaps the debate would dragged on even further.

However, Emilia nodded without fear at his clinging gaze.

Emilia: "Leave it to me. ??I will do it without fail."

Confidence and conviction?? Even though it was somewhat of a different feeling, Emilia had shown her willingness to face her own deeds with a strong sense of self-awareness and preparedness.

Kiritaka: "????"

Kiritaka was speechless in seeing the gaze in Emilia's eyes, and in hearing her assertion.

And it wasn't just that, the gazes of the people around which were pointed at Emilia also showed an infinite variety of reactions as if they were swaying in a wave of emotions different to the ones so far.

Finally, Kiritaka let out a deep sigh.

Kiritaka: "I und...erstand. For sure, I reckon we should endeavour to make our wishes come true rather than jumping to hasty conclusions. Since otherwise the battle to protect Pristella too had seemed reckless at first."

Kiritaka: "It's me who should be thanking you…."

Kiritaka smiled wryly at having lost his position. After the conference, and after they got permission from the victims' families, it seemed like the *Cold Sleep* from Emilia's magic would be realised.

Subaru replied to Emilia's nod by giving her a thumbs up.

Having cleared up the second point of dispute, what came next was their last topic on the agenda.

And that was??,

???: "So, the last issue……There have been many reports of unconscious people of unknown identity that were found one after the other in various parts of the city. I'd like for us to discuss this matter."

Most likely, for the knight who had been forgotten and had remained silent until now, it was the most important issue.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

???: "Right now, the number of “Nameless” people is reported to be 36. Amongst them for us, it includes six people who appear to have been part of the “White Dragon’s Scales”. Furthermore, it’s very likely that the number of “Nameless” people will increase in the future.”

The one who led the debate and gave the report was Dynas, the representative of the “White Dragon’s Scales”. With his fingers, he touched the dragon crest that was embroidered on his white garb, a strong expression of regret adorning his face.

Most likely, that was the crest that denoted that they were “White Dragon’s Scales”. The ambiguous testimony that he had said, “*Who appear to have been part of*” must have been related to that crest as well.

Felt: "It’s okay to say that the guys who were attacked by that Sin Archbishop are “Nameless”, right? Like, the guys who popped up out of nowhere suddenly defeated.”

Kiritaka: "Taking into account the situation, it’s reasonable to think that, I’d say. Their uniforms have matching embroidery sewn in….. It’s really frustrating that their identities are completely unknown.”

Dynas: "What’s more is that there’s 30 more people who are in a similar position…..It’s a complete mess. It’s unclear to say whether they were or not, it’s difficult to judge what the best thing to do is.”

The victims of “Gluttony”?? Dealing with the people who had had their “Names” eaten, in some sense, were harder to deal with than the victims of “Lust”. After all, the victims had completely disappeared from the memories of those who knew them. On top of that, if the people in question weren’t conscious, then there were no clues left to find their identity.

Even with the people from the “White Dragon’s Scales”, it may be great that just their affiliation was known, but no one knew more than that. They didn’t know who they were caring for, or such.

Felt: "All of the “Nameless” that you found were unconscious, right? What was the healing arts user’s chic…….. No, guy’s prognosis on that?”

Ferris: "……It’s the same as with “Lust” as well. I don’t know why they are unconscious. The result of my prognosis is that I think they are just sleeping. But this too isn’t a certainty. Those who just sleep should keep keep weakening, but then there’s the case of Rem-chan.”

To the words of Felt, Ferris looked over at Subaru and then spoke.

A year ago, having suffered the same damage from “Gluttony”, Rem had been diagnosed from Ferris similarly as to the “Nameless” people. The result of the prognosis had been exactly the same. And still up until now, Rem hadn’t woken up, and yet her health hadn’t deteriorated.

Even though she seemed asleep, he had to say that her body wasn’t carrying out its functions for life support. Her hair wasn’t growing, and there wasn’t even any excretion. She was in an unfathomable state.

Subaru: "Putting aside knowing their identities or not, the care of those people is easy. It’s better to deal with bedridden people since they’re bedridden, we can just leave them sleeping in their beds……. Even though in truth, I’d like for someone who knows them to be by their side.”

Ricardo: "Since that ain’ possible, that’s the issue, ain’t it? It’s somethin’ arduous.”

Even though he knew saying that had been half-meaningless, Subaru had done it for Rem. In the real meaning, he had no other choice but to defeat “Gluttony” for Rem.

Even if he knew that, having offered a little bit of opposition was Subaru’s self-satisfaction.

Subaru’s naivety was denied by Ricardo, who’d raised his voice, his face showing no traces of ill will. When he turned to take a glimpse at his side, Ricardo was sitting on two chairs set side by side, having crammed his huge body in, and was taking part in the conference.

He still seemed to have his spirited attitude unchanged, but there was something that was different in just one place. And that was the hefty amount of bandages that were wrapped around him, and his right arm missing from the elbow down.

Ricardo: "Don’ make such a miserable face, bro’. It’s true that I screwed up, but I’m alive. When ya think about what happened now, it's by far more preferable damage.”

Noticing Subaru’s gaze, Ricardo raised his severed right arm up and bared his fangs. It seemed like Ricardo had lost his right arm due to an attack from “Gluttony” during the fierce battle of the control tower.

He’d heard that from Julius, who had been fighting at his side. Julius had also told him that Ricardo had lost his arm protecting him, and that Ricardo himself didn’t remember it.

As if proving that, Ricardo shifted his gaze to Subaru’s side, and said,

Ricardo: "By the way, I see that handsome guy next ta ya is an acquaintance of yers bro’? Looks like ya met the guy ya were searching for, that’s a relief ain’t it. Truly thank ya for helpin’ me earlier.”

Julius: "????"

Calling Julius a *handsome guy*, Ricardo acted as if he was talking to a stranger.

From the flow of the conversation, it seemed that Julius had exchanged with Ricardo the same words as back when he had tried to smokescreen Subaru at first.

Julius should have carried the injured Ricardo to the shelter, so it could be presumed that Ricardo's thanks in the end were for that.

Nevertheless, leaving this misunderstanding as is was far too agonising.

Besides, they'd come to the topic of "Gluttony". It was time to cut to the chase it seemed.

Subaru: "I have something which I want to talk to everyone about. It's something important that's related to the dealing of the "Nameless"."

Standing up, Subaru got the attention of everyone in the hall to himself.

Right now, the one who had the most information on how to deal with the "Nameless" was Subaru. Subaru felt everyone's gazes naturally filled with anticipation of a solution for this state of affairs, however he shook his head.

Subaru: "I'm sorry for having caused anticipation, in all honesty, this isn't something which will yield hope immediately. But I have to talk about this."

Anastasia: "Ya know, if ya give it an extravagant preface, yer bound ta make us fret. What are ya plannin' to say?"

Anastasia threw a few joking words to Subaru so to try and relieve some of the tension in the place. However, it was her who should be the one most prepared for this.

Otherwise, the fact had the potential to turn her current state of mind inside out from the roots.

Subaru took a quick breath, and then looked at everyone's faces. And finally, he looked at Julius, who nodded despite looking tense.

Seeing that, Subaru then pointed to the neighbouring Julius with his hand, and asked his question.

Subaru: "Is there anyone who knows the name of this man here?"

Everyone: "????"

Silence prevailed in the meeting place to Subaru's question.

The time that was kept in silence wasn't out of a lack of understanding, though. It was because everyone sensed the intent of Subaru's question, and were contemplating about Julius' position.

And on that basis, if nobody said a word, it meant that there was no one who had any idea about Julius' identity.

Subaru: "Al! What about you? Don't you remember his face?"

Al: "Ah? What's up, Bro. Why are you nominating me all of a sudden?"

Having had his name abruptly called out, Al raised his voice in sheer surprise. That behaviour was enough to prove that he had memories of Julius inside of him, but, even so, he had to make sure.

Subaru placed his hand on the roundtable and posed his question to Al, whilst leaning forward towards him.

Subaru: "Do you really not know why? It's what you and I have in common. So, do you not remember this guy? Well? Reply to me."

Al: "……Ah, so that's why. Sorry, bro. I know what you mean, but I don't think I can help you. That guy's nowhere to be found in my head."

Subaru: "Are you completely sure? If you think a little more seriously….."

Julius: "That's enough. ??That's plenty enough, Subaru"

As an isekaier?? Al presumed the intention behind those series of questions based off of that, but he hadn't nodded his head. Nonetheless, it was Julius himself who stopped the unrelenting Subaru.

Julius clapped Subaru's shoulder with a forlorn smile on his face, and bowed at Al.

Julius: "I over-expected, I'm sorry. We apologise for our impoliteness."

Al: "You have no reason to apologise. I don't know….. If there was such a reason to or not, but you don't need to apologise to me."

Waving his sole arm, Al turned his gaze away from Julius.

There were no signs of falsehood in his reaction. It was probably true that Al didn't remember Julius. Then, that meant part of Subaru's conjecture was incorrect.

The world you originated from had nothing to do with the effect of "Gluttony's" authority.

If it was like so, then after all, the most likely reason was the Witch Factor inside Subaru's body. And it seemed to be limited to isolation with the outside world according to Beatrice's "Door Crossing".

Wilhelm: "Judging from the story, Subaru-dono. This young man was involved with us….. And in addition to that, I also think it's someone who was in a fairly important position?"

Wilhelm spoke out his deduction after observing the trio's exchange. Others would have most likely come to the same conclusion which the wisened swordsman did.

Subaru nodded at Wilhelm, and then he turned to look towards Julius,

Subaru: "This is Julius. Julius Euculius. Like all of you guessed, his "name" was eaten by "Gluttony", and ended up as one of the "Nameless" people. But the process is different than the others who were unconscious. ??His consciousness remains."

Ferris: "We have such a case? He's forgotten by those around him, but he himself remembers….. So, is

this person one of ours?”

With disbelief on his face, Ferris swept his gaze from Subaru to Julius and then back again many times over. To the shivering Ferris’ words, Reinhard tucked his chin in and said “It seems so.”

The “Sword Saint” gazed at Julius with his tranquil eyes, and said,

Reinhard: "Before the conference, Subaru asked me the same question as well. He….. Julius was likely an acquaintance of mine or Ferris. Or maybe the word “acquaintance” isn’t sufficient to describe our relationship. A friend, perhaps.”

Julius: "……At least, I thought of you both as friends. If you both consider me a friend in the same way, nothing would make me feel more honoured."

Ferris: "Friends…… Then, Julius you’re a knight as well? One of the Royal Guards?”

Both Reinhard and Ferris were bewildered at having been called a *friend* by a stranger.Their reaction couldn’t be helped, thus Julius corrected them half in resignation.

Subaru’s insides were burning in anger as he watched the trio’s exchange.

What a warped, nauseating scene it was.

Subaru didn’t know in detail how the three of them had met, how they ended up becoming friends, and what their friendship was like.

Even so, as colleagues, as friends, the three of them should have interacted with each other in a close, naturally familiar manner. Now there wasn’t even a trace left of those certain bonds.

When Rem’s “Name” had been eaten, and everyone had forgotten her existence, Subaru had thought there was nothing that existed in this world that was more sorrowful than that.

But, what about Julius’ current condition? The sensation of complete loss that invaded him from being abandoned by everyone in the world; if that wasn’t sad, then what was?

Sadness wasn’t something you could compare. But, even if it was, this was far too cruel.

Anastasia: "……I guess it ain’t somethin’ like him bein’ a plain ol’ Royal Guard.”

Out of the blue, Anastasia’s words butted in between the painful first meeting of those friends.

She put a thoughtful expression across her gentle features, and licked her lips as she touched her jaw. Then, she pointed at Ricardo before then pointing at Julius,

Anastasia: "Julius-san was the one who brought back, on his shoulders, the grievously injured Ricardo. Straight afta we talked a bit about Ricardo’s treatment, he immediately left sayin’ that he had ta go ‘n

search for someone…… But, about that reaction, that's whatya did, wasn' it?"

Julius: "Anastasia-sama……"

It was their second first encounter which between master and servant, should not normally occur. Recalling the bitter memories of that time, Julius spoke out the name of his master with anguish on his face.

However, Anastasia didn't even take notice of the presence of the quivering devotion that he'd put into those words. She thought for a moment, and then raised one of her fingers.

Anastasia: "Julius-san's "Nameless" case is a ratha' unusual one. We don' know how many people in the city are in the same state, but mayhaps there's a possibility of confirmin' that for others too who are like the unconscious "Nameless"." There's no doubt that this too is a serious situation. Ain' that right?"

Moving her gaze away from Julius, Anastasia directed the theme to the outline of the debate. It looked like the matter of Julius' identity had been postponed as one of the problems that couldn't be resolved.

That was pretty unjust treatment for the current Julius, but Subaru was the only one in this place who could feel outraged by it.

Anastasia: "In light of these problems….. I have a proposal, though, is that okay?

Subaru: "A proposal?"

Subaru's innermost feelings were put aside, and the attention of the conference was once again directed at Anastasia.

At the centre of attention, Anastasia looked around the surroundings, before finally settling her gaze on Subaru and Julius.

Anastasia: "The victims of the Witch Cult….. The victims of "Lust", and those "Nameless" from "Gluttony". Askin' the Sin archbishop in question for a solution for each of these is hopeless, are we in agreemen' with that?"

Kiritaka: "It would be difficult to force them to speak, in that sense, you're right I guess. But, an overly pessimistic opinion could on the contrary result in clouding our view."

Anastasia: "That doesn' mean I'm thinkin' about the worst either. But, there isn' just one way to get an answer, I jus' wanted to say that."

Subaru: "There's a different way to get an answer?"

Subaru ended up parroting back Anastasia's words without comprehending the meaning of her words.

A different solution to asking the corresponding Sin Archbishops who were the culprits behind the

damage?? If there existed such a way, it would probably be close to a Witch’s deal.

For a split second, a choice which Subaru mustn’t make crossed his mind, in that if it were the “Witch of Greed”, she’d maybe know the answer.

Emilia: "So, what do you mean? Please tell us clearly.”

However, Emilia asked Anastasia about the true meaning of her words in place of Subaru, who was busy shaking his head denying that idea. And then, whilst drumming her head with her fingers, Anastasia said,

Anastasia: "If we can’t get the information out of those crooked Sin Archbishops, then we oughta ask it ta another person who may know. ??There is such it seems. Someone from this country who may know a way.”

???: "There’s no way……"

Having guessed the meaning of Anastasia’s words, someone spoke that out in a hoarse voice.

However, unlike everyone else around him who’d realised what she was on about, Subaru had no idea what her statement meant.

Felt: "I don’t understand. Don’t put on airs, and say it clearly.”

Felt sulkily demanded that from Anastasia, her understanding the same as Subaru’s. Anastasia gave a wry smile to Felt’s words, and apologised with an “I’m sorry, I’m sorry”

Anastasia: "??The Sage Shaula"

Felt: "Ah?"

Anastasia: "The Pleiades Watchtower, if it’s the “Sage” who should be there….. If they’re the person of legend who can see everythin’ about the world, it wouldn’ be strange if they knew, right?”

She said that, and revealed the true intentions behind her proposal.

Arc 5, Chapter 79: “The Sage's Watchtower”

by admin - Sunday, August 18, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/08/18/arc-5-chapter-79-the-sages-watchtower/

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Translated by :

- Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)

Proofread by :

- Gracedharperd (/u/Gracedharperd)

Art Sources

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Arc 5 – “Stars What Make History”
Chapter 79 – “The Sage's Watchtower”

Anastasia: "The Sage Shaula……"

When Anastasia mentioned that name, a stir spread throughout the meeting place.

Whilst everyone exchanged glances with each other, and put on expressions like they couldn’t believe what they’d heard, only Subaru was left behind from this situation.

Subaru patted Emilia's shoulder beside him whilst he put on a troubled expression, and said,

Subaru: "Um, is this Sage Shaula someone famous?"

Emilia: "……Subaru, you didn't read the story of the "Witch" when you studied the alphabet? I thought that nursery-tale was in the book that you were reading a lot."

Subaru: "The nusery-tale's "Witch"..... Ah, in that picture book. Now that you mention it, I'd thought that the "Witch's" story was listed as well for sure."

That which was pointed out by Emilia brought up old memories of a year ago in him.

Though he had been buried by the memories of those hectic days, a year ago, he'd studied the alphabet in a picture book for children??That was during the time when he'd just started to help out at the Roswaal Mansion.

It was a collection of classics that compiled the popular nursery-tales in this world, amongst them, there had been an illustrated one about the "Witch of Envy" for sure. However, in that tale...

Subaru: "In all honesty, its contents weren't that detailed, so I didn't fully understand everything. The most I got out of it was that long ago, at a certain place, the Witch did something terrible."

Emilia: "Was is really that vague…...Ermmm, let me think."

???: "The "Witch of Envy" is the symbol of terror that once brought chaos and ruin to this world."

When Emilia had sunk into thought on how she would have had to explain it to Subaru, who had displayed his ignorance, Julius, who was sitting opposite to her, opened his mouth instead of her.

Julius: "All that was recorded was that she was a half elf with an infinitely cruel and ruthless personality, and that she had tremendous magical power which she controlled shadows with. Other than that, her name…… we only know that her name is Satella. Even now, the scars that being left behind on the world remain strong."

Subaru: "……Eeeh"

Subaru lifted his chin up at Julius' explanation, who'd kept his emotions in check as best as he could.

He focused on giving a neutral explanation, but the change in his state of mind was painfully shown regardless, even though no one around them mentioned it. In the meantime, his explanation continued.

Julius: "At the Great Waterfall at the far east of Lugnica, there's a shrine made from Magical Sealing Stones. Even now, that Witch is sealed up in that shrine. Whilst she spews out a huge amount of miasma."

Subaru: "……I'd heard that she couldn't be destroyed. But, how could they manage to seal such a powerful

Witch?”

Julius: "That’s where the name of the Sage from before comes into play.”

Julius nodded after he heard Subaru’s question.

The Knight touched the sword at his waist, and looked towards the end of the roundtable?? Right at the red-haired youth.

Julius: "Four hundred years ago, three great heroes contributed to the sealing of the “Witch of Envy”. One of those was the “Sword Saint”, Reid Astrea?? The sword’s heaven-sent child who was the first to acquire the “Divine Protection of the Sword Saint” and the title which Reinhard inherited.”

(TL Note: The concept of a heaven-sent child is one that’s seemingly common in Japanese tradition. It refers to a child that was given as a result of a prayer to a deity. Many such exist in legend, folklore and I believe religion too, in Japan.)

Reinhard: "There’s also records that show that Reid Astrea, the first “Sword Saint”, did not have the Divine Protection. Not all known legends are unconditionally true. Of course, it's a fact that Reid-sama built the current Astrea family and the name of the “Sword Saint, though.”

Reinhard, who was said person’s descendant, supplemented what Julius, who was looking at him, had said.

However, considering it regarded his ancestor who’d accomplished great deeds that had been left behind in history, Reinhard’s expression when talking about it was somewhat brooding. He also seemed to be worried about Julius when it came to that. It didn’t look like he was going to insist on the subject regarding the inherited Divine Protection.

In any case,

Subaru: "So, the Sage was a companion of that Sword Saint, that’s the gist I’m getting.”

Emilia: "More accurately, the Sage Shaula, and the Divine Dragon Volcanica…… You know, the dragon that protects the Kingdom of Lugnica. It’s said that it started with a promise whereby Volcanica joined forces in battle to seal “The Witch of Envy” and now even to this day still watches over the Kingdom.”

He’d heard the name of the “Divine Dragon” Volcanica many times back at the place where the Royal Selection candidates expressed their determination.

In his memories, the blood of the dragon had always been heralded as something able to bring fertility to ravaged earth, let one overcome any disease, and make one either immense or unrivaled.

Julius: "It’s customary to call the “Sword Saint”, “The Sage” and the “Divine Dragon” as the Three Great Heroes. You ought to remember that.”

Subaru: "Whoaa, don't get fired up….. I get it, thank you for the explanation."

Subaru raised his hand at Julius and Emilia, before then taking a glimpse at Beatrice. When she noticed Subaru's gaze, she slowly shook her head.

Unfortunately, Beatrice didn't seem to be familiar with the legend from 400 years ago.

Beatrice was an artificial spirit created by Echidna, but other than the necessary information to maintain the Forbidden Library, she'd been completely estranged from it. He got the impression that she didn't know the behind the scenes circumstances around that matter because she'd been fairly impervious to the ways of the world due to shutting herself in for such a long time.

Subaru: "I'm sorry for bringing the debate to a standstill. Let's continue talking. But, this Sage Shaula…."

After he apologised for interrupting the discussion, Subaru took the initiative to try and bring the conversation back to its original course. But, he noticed something strange whilst he talked, and he couldn't help tilting his head at it.

He understood the background of the "Sage" Shaula, a hero from 400 years ago, but??,

Subaru: "Eeh, What? She's still living? After 400 years?"

Emilia: "Is that so strange…… I'm around a 100 years old as well in reality….."

Everyone Else: "??!?"

On hearing Subaru's mutter, a mystified look appeared across Emilia's face as she put one of her fingers to her lips. The meeting place stirred a little at that murmur, but Subaru on the contrary only replied with a "You have a point."

If he slowed down and thought about it, the half-elf Emilia's real age was in excess of 100 years, and Beatrice was a Loli who was around 400 years old. It felt to him like Puck too had mentioned that he was 400 years old; in that case, didn't that mean the average age of the Emilia Camp was about 100 years old, perhaps?

Subaru: "Putting aside that pretty shocking fact…..What about the Sage's current state."

Julius: "They're alive. ??On that, it seems that there's no doubt."

Subaru: "Seems……?"

Subaru frowned at Julius' unclear response.

But, Julius was not the only one who couldn't answer clearly, everyone around was the same. Especially, those of the Royal Guard, Ferris and Reinhard, who looked troubled.

Subaru: "Well, what does that mean?"

Julius: "Their whereabouts are known, and I dare say that them being alive is confirmed too. However, no human being has managed to exchange words with the Sage…..That's the meaning of it, I guess."

Subaru: "Once again, what does that mean?"

They knew their whereabouts, and even though it was vague, they'd been able to confirm her as being alive. But, getting in contact with them was impossible.

He thought he could put all of those impressions together, but...

Julius: "Currently, the Sage Shaula is in the tower near the "Witch's Shrine", and has always secluded herself there so to stop those who plan to revive the "Witch of Envy". Always, since that time."

Subaru: "……For 400 years?"

Julius: "For 400 years."

It was an absurd story.

Beatrice, who had kept herself secluded in the Forbidden Library for 400 years was already quite a case, but that Sage Shaula, or whatever, was also quite a stubborn individual.

Ferris: : "The tower which the Sage Shaula lives in?? That's the Pleiades Watchtower, right? There, the esteemed Sage continues to toil night and day so to prevent the Witch's Revival."

Subaru: "……Mhm, the tower's name makes me think of something, but it's of no importance, do continue."

Ferris: "Even if you're telling me to continue, that's pretty much it y'know? The Sage Shaula gives it their all and continues to watch over the Shrine to ensure the peace of the world, that's what is said."

And that is that, Ferris said whilst clapping with a sullen look on his face.

Even if he said that that was the end, it was clear from his attitude that the story hadn't completely finished there, considering that what he'd said couldn't explain the funeral-like mood around the meeting place.

Naturally, there must be some reason why they were like that??,

Subaru: "Then, by any chance are they a troubling individual?"

Anastasia: "To ensure peace in the world, the Sage Shaula continues ta watch ova' the Witch……Their name is known far and wide throughout the world. I've known about 'em too since the time I was in Kararagi. But, at the same time, the Sage Shaula is also known in this other way."

Subaru: "???"

Anastasia smiled gracefully, pausing between her words for a second.

And then, whilst looking at Subaru, who had a bad feeling about this, she spoke.

Anastasia: "The Sage Shaula is someone with extreme trust issues who can't trust a single soul. ??No matta' what the purpose of those approaching the Watchtower 'n the Shrine may be, she massacres all of 'em, or so I hear."

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??They were like that according to Anastasia's explanation.

The Sage Shaula built the Pleiades Watchtower and continued to watch over the "Witch's Shrine".

So far there had been many people who had tried to get in contact with the Sage, but all their plans failed and they gave up.

That was because of the interference of no other but the Sage Shaula themself.

Anastasia: "The Great Waterfall in the far east of Lugnica….. It seems that the "Witch's Shrine" 'n the Watchtower are near there, but the Sage doesn' know which of the two people are aimin' to approach, wouldn'cha think?"

Therefore, the Sage killed indiscriminately regardless of whether it was a wretched Witch Cultist who was trying to find the "Witch's Shrine", or a person who was trying to get in friendly contact with the Sage of the Watchtower.

The subject's good or evil, their likes and dislikes, their righteousness or malintent all didn't matter, since that was the best way forward.

As a result, there weren't any reports or records left behind of anyone being able to get in contact with the Sage Shaula in all of these 400 years.

Ferris: "Buuuut, since the situation where they attack anyone approaching has been going on and on, we can just be sure that the Sage Shaula is still in the Watchtower even nyow."

Subaru: "They sure are a damn annoying Sage…."

Ferris: "It's nyot like that. In fact, there are many Witch Cultists who try to get near to the Shrine, more than you can imagine, Subaru-kyun. The Sage-san deals with every single one of them, they're just

steadfastly keeping by their goal of preventing the revival of “The Witch of Envy”.

Even though he had stated his positive opinion, Ferris’ expression didn’t clear up. All the Royal Guard members had the same unrestful look on their face, for that to have happened, there may have been an experience where the Sage had dished out a painful lesson to the extent of the Royal Guard.

On the other hand, Subaru nodded at Ferris’ sugarcoated opinion.

Certainly, if you looked at it from the “do whatever it takes to achieve the goal“ point of view, it would be incredibly annoying, but if you took into account the evil nature of a Witch Cultist, it was a natural precaution.

Rather, it was *because* there was someone who continued to keep guard over the “Witch of Envy” that it was conceivable to even think that this world had some sort of security system in effect against the “Witch of Envy”

Priscilla: "Fleeting is the night, mineself cares not about the true colours of the hermit who lives in trepidation insofar as time permits them to. What’s important is the fact that they are borrowing mine limited time. Mineself will return post-haste to the inn if you continue with this useless prattle. I have to get Schult to massage my feet.”

Schult: "Y-yes ma’am. Priscilla-sama has worked hard and is greatly fatigued! I appreciate that with all my heart.”

Having been embraced and buried in her huge breasts, Schult had replied with a red face. Priscilla, who’d stroked the boy with the smile of a villainess on her face, hadn’t found much worth in this conference in the first place.

It was something of a miracle that she’d come all the way here without throwing a tantrum.

Felt: "Even though like I’m not on that Princess’s side, I also agree that we gotta get back on topic soon. Tell us, about the Sage.”

Felt demanded that they cut back to the main topic, a look of impatience adorning her face.

Agreeing with that state of affairs, Subaru turned to look back at Anastasia.

Subaru: "Though we’ve kept interrupting you over and over, what did you say is up with this reclusive Sage?”

Anastasia: "Sooo, the story finally goes back ta the start.”

Anastasia clapped her hands. And then, she looked over at the faces of everyone sat at the roundtable whilst still gently touching her fox scarf,

Anastasia: "??Like everyone knows, the Sage Shaula helped with the sealing of “The Witch of Envy”

with their unparalleled wisdom ‘n magical power. As well as a wide range of insight that’s said they see through the world with, and knowledge that’s said they know everythin’ about this world. If both of those are true without exaggeration…… Then doncha think they should know someway ta do somethin’ about what the Witch Cult left behin’ as well?

Subaru: "……But, isn’t what you’re saying just wishful thinking really?”

Anastasia: "Does that mean yer against it Natsuki-kun?”

Even though it seemed like she’d returned his question with another one, an answer for Anastasia’s one was difficult.

Trying to rely on it if he simply just looked at their title of “Sage” was the honest recourse. In respect to that, Subaru didn’t think it was even a bad idea. If they were someone who’d accomplished achievements that went as far as remaining in legend, then maybe they really did know a way to counteract the Witch Factors of Sin.

But, a different anxiety had taken ahold of Subaru.

The name of the “Sage” Shaula, and the Pleiades Watchtower where they lived. Those two keywords didn’t allow him to obediently accept her proposal.

Because Shaula and Pleiades were both words which Subaru was familiar with.

Subaru: "????"

According to Subaru’s modern knowledge, Shaula was the name corresponding to the second brightest star of Scorpio.

The Pleiades from the Pleiades Watchtower was far more explicit, in that it was the name of the star cluster known as the Pleiades Cluster?? Its name in Japanese was “Subaru”.

Of course, he didn’t think it was anything that denoted “Natsuki Subaru”, but the name of the celestial bodies which he knew about cropping up in this world was enough for his alert levels to rise to the MAX.

The Witch Cult’s Sin Archbishops??Petelgeuse, Regulus, Sirius, Capella, Alphard, Batenkaitos.

Currently, all of the Sin Archbishops whose names had come to light bore the names of stars from Subaru’s world in their names; it was impossible to not hold preconceived notions towards the Sage Shaula and the Pleiades Watchtower.

Ferris: "Putting aside Subaru-kyun’s dissenting opinion…..”

Ferris cut into the conversation in place of Subaru, who’d remained taciturn without coming up with a successful objection. He placed his finger on his cheek, and whilst he assumed his normal attitude with the exception of a stern look in his eyes, he said,

Ferris: "The view itself of visiting the Sage Shaula may be good, but isn't it an issue on how we will do it? Is there any way? Even when no one has managed to reach the Watchtower."

Felt: "The reason no one has is 'cause the Sage is too strong, that's the story right?"

Felt raised a question at Ferris' tantalising words, whilst she crossed her legs on top of her chair. She gave a fleeting look in Reinhard's direction.

I see, if it just meant simply not being a match for the Sage's powers, then...

Felt: "We could manage it if it's Reinhard, right? He has no other use except being strong, but when it comes to jus' that, he's insaaaane."

Reinhard: "It's unusual that Felt-sama gives me praise, thank you very much."

Felt: "This is what I meant."

Felt sullenly *tch'ed* at Reinhard's response. However, immediately after that, Reinhard lowered his eyebrows as if he were troubled.

Like that, he spoke out with a "But….", prefacing it apologetically,

Reinhard: "Unfortunately, I couldn't reach the Watchtower. I lacked the strength."

Felt: "……This guy lacking strength…, isn't that a lil' alarming?"

Julius: "He doesn't mean a lack of combat power, Felt-sama. There's no area in this world that Reinhard's true strength wouldn't reach, I'd say. But, the Pleiades Watchtower is a different problem to such impediments."

Ferris: "So you know the details….. Though, if you were a Royal Guard, that's natural I guess."

Ferris's face turned to one of discomfort on hearing Julius follow up Reinhard's words. Looking at the strained relations between between the three Royal Guards from the corner of his eye, Subaru spoke out to Reinhard, and said,

Subaru: "What was your purpose in trying to meet the Sage?"

Reinhard: "It was an order from the Kingdom. For a cure for the disease, that it was. ??It was about two years ago."

Subaru: "Two years ago……"

The phrases *disease* and *two years ago* allowed Subaru to understand the circumstances.

Two years ago from today, the members of the Royal Family fell ill one after the other to an unknown

disease, right at the Royal Castle. It was an epidemic where no cure was known?? Most likely, they ordered Reinhard to get in contact with the Sage so to learn a cure for that disease.

But he didn't accomplish it, that explained the gloomy faces of the three Royal Guards.

Reinhard: "The Watchtower and the Shrine, they're at the Great Waterfall at the eastern edge of Lugnica?? Surrounded by the Augria Sand Dunes. The Watchtower can be seen in the distance from the entrance of the sand dunes. So you shouldn't lose sight of that place, but……"

Subaru: "But?"

Reinhard: "There are many strange phenomenons that occur frequently in the sand dunes, so that you can't get closer to the Watchtower. One theory says that it's due to the miasma that's seeping out from the Shrine."

Reinhard: "On top of that, the Augria Sand Dunes have turned into a haunt for Witchbeasts who are drawn in by the miasma. In that land full of miasma, the ferocity and strength of the Witchbeasts is off the charts. Even in that sense, going there in the first place is considered to be suicidal."

Subaru: "So it's a wayward desert WITH a haunt for Witchbeasts. For sure it's hell……"

In addition to the troublesomeness of the Sage themselves, there was a desert which not even Reinhard could cross, and a metric ton of Witchbeasts which roamed the desert?? Regarding this, the factors for abandoning the ploy were too many.

It was understandable that getting in touch with the Sage hadn't been achieved even once over the period of 400 years.

Anastasia: "??Yes, but what if there was a way ta cross that hell?"

Everyone: "????"

Everyone raised their faces up at her sudden words just as a gloomy atmosphere had begun to enshroud them.

Anastasia smiled in satisfaction on account of having butted in at precisely the right moment. Then, she nodded so that everyone could see,

Anastasia: "There is, that's why I even bothered ta mention the Sage's name."

Ferris: "Anastasia-sama from Kararagi, you know a means to reach the Sage whose been in seclusion for 400 years, at this time? …...What sort of means is it?"

Anastasia: "Ya ruin yer pretty face. I'm goin' ta explain it ta ya even without that bristly face."

Carelessly turning aside Ferris, who'd gotten himself worked up, Anastasia removed her scarf from her

neck.

And then, she unrolled her scarf on top of the roundtable and lifted the head part,

Anastasia: "I mentioned her before the defensive battle, my artificial spirit, Echidna. This little’n knows a way ta the Pleiades Watchtower. ??That’s why we can go ‘n meet the Sage of the Watchtower.”

Subaru: "????"

Subaru’s breath caught on hearing Anastasia’s declaration.

The artificial spirit Echidna, that being that disguised itself as a fox scarf was the key to reaching the Sage.

???: "??I’m receiving so much attention, huh. You’re making me blush!”

Saying that, the fox spirit lifted her neck.

Subaru didn’t know how much he could trust her, just like the Witch which she’d borrowed her name from.

Arc 5, Chapter 80: "Leaving Behind Ripples on the Water's Surface"

by admin - Thursday, August 22, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/08/22/arc-5-chapter-80-leaving-behind-ripples-on-the-waters-surface/

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Translated by :

- Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)

Proofread by :

- Gracedharperd (/u/Gracedharperd)

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Arc 5 – “Stars What Make History”
Chapter 80 – “Leaving Behind Ripples on the Water's Surface”

???: "??So, let’s start shall we."

Emilia let her beautiful, crystal-clear voice echo throughout the room as she tensed her face slightly.

She spoke to everyone in the room with her bell-like voice?? Or perhaps she’d said it to persuade herself, either way, she raised both of her slender arms.

Emilia: "????"

Closing her eyes, Emilia started to concentrate her mana to both of her raised hands.

Great magical power swirling around, and the utmost concentration to handle it with precision. If she lacked either of those, she'd be unable to achieve her goal, this was an endeavour which only she could do.

Emilia: "????"

Countless gazes poured down on Emilia who met her great sorcery head-on with a serious expression on her face. The women and children were huddled together, watching over her actions with bated breath.

Some were holding each other's hands, while others had closed their eyes as if in prayer or wishing; they shared only hope and anxiety as they trembled.

Subaru: "……It must be tough on them."

And, at the tail end of the same room, Subaru was silently observing Emilia, who was being showered in many complex emotions.

The area they were in was a part of the underground facilities in the City of Pristella.

Originally, it had been a cellar that had stored emergency provisions. Its current almost empty state was ideal for their intended purpose. There wasn't anything placed in the stone cellar, and its spaciousness seemed to emphasise its bleakness and chilliness.

But, it ought to be suitable for their current purpose, precisely because it was that kind of place.

Subaru: "Though, I wouldn't say that's a good thing."

Beatrice: "Quit muttering sentimentalities, I suppose. It wouldn't be good if someone heard you, and you'll also end up messing up Emilia's concentration, in fact."

Standing beside Subaru, who'd let that mutter accidentally slip out, Beatrice gave him her advice.

The girl, who held Subaru's left hand with one hand and played with her drill curls with her other, stared at the white ritual that was being held in front of her eyes.

Her pale blue eyes seemed like they were holding back pain in some respect to Subaru.

Subaru: "Since it's Emilia, it will be okay. Don't worry about it so much."

Beatrice: "……Don't get the wrong idea, I suppose. Betty is not worried about Emilia, but about Subaru, in fact. Empathising with the emotions of literally everybody is a bad habit, I suppose."

Subaru: "I see.”

The strength of her hand holding his grew stronger, and Subaru bent his lips into the shape of a ? at the girl’s concern.

He knew what Beatrice wanted to say, as well as what she was worried about. However, his decision after he’d understood that was based off his current determination.

On that point, he couldn’t yield. Even though he knew that it’d just be troubling.

Emilia: "????"

Away from Subaru and Beatrice’s hushed exchange of words, Emilia’s ritual continued on.

Emilia, who was concentrating with all her might, had beads of sweat trickling down her forehead as she panted out misted breaths. She was giving it her everything in mind and body to control the enormous amounts of Mana.

A pale blue light originating from in between Emilia’s hands began to faintly envelop the cellar.

Although the cold air was cold enough to fog up his sight, the chill did not pierce into his skin, it was gentle as if it were embracing his heart exposed.

He’d heard that people who fell into hypothermia and were on the verge of death forgot about the cold. Extreme cold took away from people the ability to tell the temperature correctly, and granted them warmth as a parting gift before snatching their lives away, he’d heard.

Subaru vaguely thought about whether something near to that was happening in this white world, but he immediately shook his head, dismissing it as plain stupid.

Pale blue light filled the room, and the cold air converged to its centre.

And, in the middle of the light, there was...

???: "????"

A huge black creature, curled up with its wings folded?? A black dragon that was lying down.

The strange creatures didn’t stop there, there were also flies roughly the size of people gathered around the black dragon. In all they gave you the impression of a nightmarish scene.

However, Subaru didn’t feel any revulsion at this scene.

??No. To be precise, he was strongly aware that he shouldn’t feel revulsion towards the black dragon and the human flies.

They were victims, innocents without any fault.

They were victims of the malice from the Sin Archbishop of “Lust”, victims who had been transformed into inhumanities.

Subaru, and everyone else, currently didn’t know a way to restore their re-moulded bodies back to normal. That’s why they’d chosen this measure.

Subaru: "It may be that we’re just postponing the inevitable, but……”

Beatrice: "It will get us time, and even just that can be a salvation, in fact. Since you’re trying to hurry things up, your outlook is getting narrower, so you can’t see the options that you’d normally be able to. Not being aware of that, or realising it later…… both of those are cruelties, I suppose.”

Beatrice replied with something of a monologue to Subaru’s mutters.

Her small, feeble sigh contained an insightfulness and sentimentality which only those who’d spent a long, long time thinking could have.

Feeling that at the end of her words, Subaru just silently stroked her head without saying a single word back.

Beatrice: "……What is it, in fact.”

Subaru: "It’s nothing.”

No matter how much time they took, they wouldn’t necessarily be able to make the right choice.

Sometimes, even if you give it some time, there are cases where you wouldn’t be able to pick the right choice.

Nevertheless, you can act so that the option you choose is the best one.

The answer which Subaru had produced to Beatrice’s 400 years had been like so.

And so he hoped that time which would be brought to the tragedy that struck the city, would also be like so.

Subaru: "????"

The climax of the cold air that filled the cellar overlapped with Subaru’s strong emotions, and finally a sound like the air cracking, or so he thought, resounded throughout??,

Emilia: "……It ended up going safely."

Emilia turned around whilst breathing out misted breaths.

She quickly bowed her head at that place, a little out of breath??Behind her, with their whole bodies covered in white crystals, were the lives of all of the souls who had been encased inside of ice.

Subaru: "??*tch*"

The members of their family were weeping, and their significant others were sobbing in tears.

Their sorrowful wails came out before any thanks, and they cruelly echoed throughout the cellar.

For a very, very long time, their wails continued to echo throughout, as if their sorrow had no end to being separated until goodness knows when from their loved ones.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

???: "For now, it seems like Emilia-sama's proposal turned out well….. Would I be okay to feel relieved by that?"

Having been informed about the conference at the meeting place, as well as Emilia's subsequent work to freeze the mutation victims?? Otto nodded, looking relieved.

They were somewhere away from the shelters, in a private room at a hospital, where he'd been carried to.

His condition on top of his bed still hadn't changed, with both of his legs painfully wrapped in bandages. Even so, at least he'd managed to leave from the Field Hospital's treatment, and it was possible to say that his cramping legs looked like they'd improved quite a bit.

In fact, Otto's position was as one of the valorous people who'd contributed to the City's Defence, so it would have been nice if he'd gotten higher quality medical treatment. However, Otto hadn't told them that, so Subaru opted not to say anything, since he'd probably been considering those around him.

Subaru: "Hospitality that is presumed without saying anything…… That's the true meaning of Wabi-sabi."

(TL Note: For what Wabi-sabi means, read: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wabi-sabi)

Otto: "Although you're here, Nasuki-san, your mind is elsewhere; it's the same as always, so it's fine, but anyways……. Thank you for your hard work, Emilia-sama."

Disregarding the nodding Subaru, Otto thanked Emilia for her hard work, who'd come to visit him. She drew her eyebrows down on hearing his thanks, and said,

Emilia: "Nah, it's alright. More importantly, I'm sorry for going through with it on my own without

consulting with Otto-kun. But, it was because I'd thought it was something only I could do."

Otto: "Ah, it's fine. I'm not angry since your actions were undoubtedly precious, good deeds. Besides, they were very valuable actions even in a calculating sense."

Emilia: "Calculating……?"

Otto: "It probably would have been better if you understood what I meant, but if you don't, even if you don't…… No, how can I put it. Regarding that, honestly, it's really difficult for me to decide which would be better."

Subaru: "Don't think about it, *feel it*. That is E.M.T"

Emilia wasn't quite aware of the result of her own actions. With some magic words, Subaru serenely brushed Otto aside, who lay perplexed at Emilia's attitude. He then continued by saying "More importantly,"

Subaru: "Your legs, they seem like they won't be usable for a while, right?"

Otto: "With Pristella's current state, it'll be difficult to treat them more than this, won't it? The number of Healing Arts Users in the city isn't enough to take care of all of the injured. I think it may be better to move to a hospital in another city, but it seems that Kiritaka-san sent out as many messengers as he could to the neighbouring cities, and requested for Healing Arts Users. That's why quietly waiting here for a Healing Arts User from one of those places to come by would perhaps be more prudent than going back to the mansion."

Laughing weakly with a *Thaha,* Otto would be forced to withdraw from the frontlines for a while.

Wounds as severe as Otto's couldn't be so easily cured without a Mage who could use healing magic fairly proficient. They had to be at Ferris-level or Beatrice's when she was in the Forbidden Library.

Subaru: "Ferris is constantly attending to Crusch, and our Healing Special Attack Corps Leader is going around Pristella……The reason being is that family of course."

Emilia: "Those three, the mother and two siblings, right? That person who had the form of a dragon is the father, so it was a family of four, I think."

Their Special Attack Corps Leader wasn't here right now?? No, he shouldn't refer to him like that, Garfiel is what he meant.

Currently, he was going around the city which was short of working hands, and working as hard as he could on the repair work. By nature, Garfiel was a kind, well put together young man. Even if he'd felt nothing for the city, if there were people in need, he'd end up helping them without hesitation.

But, even so, his commitment to Pristella was second to none. And Subaru could more or less imagine the reason why.

Subaru: "That he didn’t tell us must mean that there are various complex circumstances, I guess.”

Emilia: "Yeah, that’s gotta be it……. Indeed, changing the subject, but don’t you think that Garfiel and that family resemble each other a bit? Their hair colour and eye colour are completely identical.”

Subaru: "Emilia-tan, you know that the subject hasn’t changed right?”

Emilia: "Eh!?"

Putting the surprised Emilia to one side, Garfiel was in such a condition.

Under normal circumstances, he himself should have sustained damage that wouldn’t be possible to call minor throughout his body, but due to his “Divine protection of Earth Spirits” and his boundless physical strength, he had no intention of resting.

In addition, Mimi, who’d been a pain to her little brothers with her wounds reopening, was also tagging along with him, so there hadn’t been any ruckus around.

Otto: "Well, in regards to Garfiel’s true feelings, one day he will reveal them on his own I’d imagine. We don’t need to try and get it out of him. More importantly……”

Emilia: "Hmm?"

Otto: "Ah, no, since both of you didn’t mention it at all, I didn’t say anything either, but why does Beatrice-san look so moody?”

Inclining the top half of his body, Otto turned the flow of conversation to a corner of the hospital room??Beatrice was there, puffing out her red cheeks, visibly shaking her head from left to right with a sullen look in her eyes.

Subaru nodded and responded with an “Ah” to that question.

Subaru: "It’s because of *that*, you know. She’s in a bad mood because we went to the Restoration Artist on your errand and ended up being turned away…… When you look at it from multiple perspectives, wouldn’t it be your fault?”

Otto: "No! You’re going too far there…..Isn’t that right, Emilia-sama?”

Emilia: "Mhm, you’re right. It’s a contractor’s natural obligation to take care of their spirit. So, the one who needs to cheer Beatrice up has gotta be Subaru.”

Subaru: "You mentioned *cheering up*, but even when you say that, I don’t have many memories of Emilia-tan taking care of Puck.”

Emilia: "Don’t nitpick with that! Besides, I’ve done tons of stuff when Subaru wasn’t there to see. Like grooming his fur, cleaning his claws, cuddling him to sleep…….”

It was doubtful whether that could be referenced as a format on the way of associating with spirits, but Emilia's expression when talking about Puck had turned cheerful.

Ever since his sudden parting back at the “Sanctuary” had stabbed her, she’d had a strong expression of grief whenever she recalled Puck, but it seemed that stage had passed too.

??A crystal stone made of colourless Great Magic Stone adorned Emilia’s chest.

The same design that she always wore before she was separated from Puck, combined with the beauty of her expression, she had gone back to looking like the same old Emilia.

She touched the crystal stone with one of her slender fingers, and said,

Emilia: "I still don’t have enough power to bring Puck back right now, but….. Mine and Puck’s contract hasn’t been severed, so we can meet again when I accumulate enough Mana so that he can manifest. So, just a little bit more patience, eh.”

Subaru: "That too was thanks to one of Beako’s achievements, and……. Well, thanks to Kiritaka’s kindness.”

The reason why Subaru and the others had come to the city of Pristella in the first place had been to obtain a Great Magic Stone.

The reality should have been that he’d turn it over or not after some negotiation, but the negotiations had ended up taking an inconceivable detour. In any case, they’d gotten one at present, and were very satisfied.

Subaru: "So you cheer up too, Beako.”

Beatrice: "I’m not moody, I suppose. It’s your misunderstanding, in fact. Hmph.”

Emilia: "Oh, Beatrice, how adorable……"

Going all the way to letting out an easy to understand sound effect, Beatrice turned her face away from Subaru who was trying to get her to cheer up. Subaru too was in agreement with Emilia, who was feeling the butterflies behind him; however, whether they could talk about her cuteness or not was yet another matter.

Otto: "It seems that Mr. Darts is a person with a craftsman's temperament, doesn’t it? He can’t leave a job half-done once undertaken, I understand that sort of thing.”

Subaru: "But, still, let’s think about how his professionalism has been taken to too much of an extreme. It seems like this guy was working in his workshop all throughout the chaos, doesn’t it? He’s too much of a workaholic.”

Otto: "That’s the craftsman in him, you see.”

Subaru: "The craftsman in him, huh?"

He didn't really know why Otto seemed to be proud, but when he said that, it seemed to make him feel good; boys were such simple creatures. A craftsman's temperament was cool.

However, Beatrice directed an angered look at the nodding Otto and Subaru, and said,

Beatrice: "Yes, but that doesn't mean he should completely ignore his client's words, I suppose. Even when I said I'd pay him double, he didn't say a single damn word, in fact."

Subaru: "Giving any indications of listening to what a little girl is saying as she slaps your cheeks with a roll of bills would only work as a reward for those who aren't professionals that are well versed in their trade. You tell her too, Emilia-tan."

Emilia: "Yeah, you shouldn't think like this, Beatrice. If you are going to waste money, I'm going to have to end up confiscating your pocket money."

Beatrice: "What rude treatment I'm getting from both of you, I suppose!"

The indignant Beatrice grabbed one of the curtains, wrapped herself in it and hid herself behind it.

Following that, Emilia couldn't resist anymore, and hugged Beako IN the curtain, making her yell out, "GNNNYYYA, IN FACT!"

Putting aside their cheerful intermezzo, it wasn't like he didn't understand Beatrice's feelings.

That which Otto had commissioned to the Restoration Artist Darts, and Subaru and the others had tried to recover was the damaged "Book of Wisdom". It was the origin as to why its owner, Roswaal, had tried so hard to interfere with the future in advance of Subaru?? It was natural to be interested in its contents.

Subaru: "Although his interference's subtle, it's since the slippery nature of that guy goes hand in hand."

Even though his sabotage had been discovered, Roswaal's attitude on the surface hadn't changed from before.

Of course, since he had schemed behind that easygoing attitude, remaining alert was essential. However, it was also true that he had an air to him that seemed like the poisonousness had slipped out.

Nonetheless, it wasn't the same as going as far as being able to call him a collaborative ally who'd take the role of a bystander.

Subaru: "If we can at least see what's lying ahead with the "Book of Wisdom"....."

If they were able to hold belief that Roswaal was not planning anything, regardless of the past, it would be safe to walk the road ahead together. It'd probably also have a bit more of a positive effect for the future of the Camp.

Subaru: "That's why I want to insist on it."

Otto: "Even when I don't endeavour to make such excuses, I and Emilia-sama have more or less the same opinions as Natsuki-kun, so on that point we're fine. Just Garfiel, well….. He has his personal enmities, so even if he knows the facts, his attitude may not change."

By *personal enmities* was he really referring to the "Sanctuary" or Ram?

Without touching that subject, Subaru gazed over at Emilia and Beatrice, messing about...

Subaru: "That book is no stranger to Beatrice either. So, I think I would like to confirm it if it's even possible. Taking her out from the Forbidden Library, and leaving the past behind are different problems."

Otto: "Did you know that many times I'd thought about trying to consult with you?"

Subaru: "I ain't blaming you for that y'know."

He thought that recovering the "Book of Wisdom", trying to restore it back to normal and trying to do it all on his own was a good judgment on Otto's part.

And fundamentally, it was hardly ever that Otto's considerations failed. He was fully aware that he was not a person who acted in self-interest.

Subaru: "You really ain't suited to be a merchant….."

Otto: "Could you leave me alone!? More importantly, what about Mr. Darts?"

Subaru: "*It may be my greatest job yet,* he said. *You can defer the fee, so I would like you to let me work on this properly until the end,* he said."

It was worrying that the deadline hadn't expired, but that guy was a craftsman, so he couldn't possibly say it was impossible.

He wanted to believe that he was not the type of craftsman who'd grumble even after the deadline passed.

Otto: "So in the end, I'll also have to collect the "Book of Wisdom", I feel like me staying behind in Pristella has already been decided, don't you?"

Subaru: "Garfiel also plans to stay for awhile for the repair work and the city defence. Them having been driven away is settled, but what if that's a feint for them attacking again! Since they never quit, those shits."

They looked like the sort of guys that'd make the same mischief over and over.

It seemed like Subaru wasn't the only one who'd recognised that, everyone who was involved hadn't let their guard down either. It was also possible that their aims were to force unnecessary feelings of tension

so to torment them.

Subaru: "Even if I bring that up, nothing more can be done about it."

Otto: "In any case, I think we need to wait and see how things go. As soon as my legs are in a better state, I will go around to check up on various things. However……."

Otto broke his words off there, as he discussed his future plans.

He strenuously lifted the upper part of his body up from the bed, and looked up at Subaru, who'd closed one of his eyes. And, as he struck his temple with one of his fingers, he said,

Otto: "I shall say this clearly, I'm against this."

Subaru: "……Well, I thought you'd say that."

Subaru gave a wry smile at Otto's declaration.

That he would say that and be against it, was an attitude which Subaru had predicted.

After all, Otto Suwen had evaluated Natsuki Subaru correctly.

Subaru himself was more aware than anyone of his own helplessness, but there weren't many who clearly understood his shortcomings.

At best, it was Beatrice and Otto. Perhaps Patrasche a bit. And although now wasn't the time for him, Ferris mayhaps too.

Therefore, he had anticipated that Beatrice and Otto, from their camp, would have been against it. He believed if Patrasche could speak, then she'd have probably been similarly against it.

However...

Subaru: "If you know me that much, then you should know my answer."

Otto: "……In truth, Beatrice-san's moodiness isn't only because of Mr. Darts, right?"

Subaru: "Weeeell, I'm not so sure. As you might expect, even I don't understand what's in the depths of Beako's heart."

When Subaru feigned his innocence with a shrug of his shoulders, Otto's face turned into one of exasperation.

Of course, when it came to him and his sharp hearing, he shouldn't be lacking in knowledge of legends/rumours. He must know all too well the riskiness of Subaru's choice.

Adding onto what he'd said, Subaru prefaced what he was going to say to Otto with an "I'm sorry,"

Subaru; "I will go to see that Sage or whatever they are, with that White Fox Guide for a little while."

He smiled as he said that.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

???: "??Come in"

When he knocked on the door as a courtesy, just in case, a calm voice replied to him from the inside.

It was a familiar voice, but one that lacked in spirit. Subaru felt excessively annoyed at it.

???: "It's you, Subaru?"

Subaru: "Is it bad that it's me?"

???: "It's strange, now when I see your face, I feel terribly relieved."

Subaru: "Bleeergh"

He walked into the room, wrapping up the reproachful words that he'd exchanged at the start with that action.

Even while he showed that attitude, there was consideration in the way Subaru closed the door behind him. Closing the door without making a sound was the minimum amount of courtesy for those who slept inside.

???: "If they would wake up because of the noise, it'd be so much better."

Subaru: "If so, would you give me a round of applause or something? That'd be a priceless scene. "Gluttony" who was let to be at large would get more and more pissed off."

???: "Hmph"

Giving a relaxed smile, Subaru inclined his head without meeting his eyes. Then he looked around the room and narrowed his eyes at the row of beds.

A simple bed, and a thin blanket: that was all the charity given to the people who slept there. And Subaru knew that more than that wasn't even necessary.

The people who slept here were forgotten from memory, cut loose from daily life, and only remained left behind as imperfect beings that just weren't dead.

Subaru: "Julius. I'm not one to say it, but you shouldn't spend so much time here."

Julius: "????"

Subaru: "Even if you keep looking at them, you can't remember that which you can't remember. That applies to both a beloved little sister, as well as someone who is truly like your other half."

Subaru called out to the young man?? Julius, without using any words of comfort.

He was sitting at a corner of the bed rows, at one of the bedsides located the furthest away. He lifted his face up, him still full of sorrow which he couldn't conceal from his handsome features,

Julius: "Knowing that in my head and knowing that with my heart are completely different things. I don't mean to be conceited, but so far I'd never thought of myself as an emotionally-driven, big-headed person. Me not realising that until this happened is a lack in my self-awareness."

Subaru: "????"

Whilst he spoke, Julius looked down at the bed right next to him.

Naturally, one of the victims of appetite who'd lost their "Name" was sleeping there as well, and their consciousness and memories had been completely cut away from the world.

That's why Julius Euculius didn't remember this person?? The slender faced young man with long purple hair who was his own little brother, Joshua Euculius.

Julius: "Joshua, eh?"

He can call his little brother's name because Subaru had told him his name, and the relation he had to him.

The victims of the authority of "Gluttony"?? When it had been reported that many unidentifiable, comatose people had been found, Subaru had been convinced that they had suffered the same damage as Rem.

And he himself may have not forgotten those forgotten. Relying only on that slim hope, he'd gone to the hospital room and discovered the sleeping Joshua.

Julius: "It's strange. Although there's enough in common to be able to conclude he is definitely a blood relative after listening to your story, within me there's not a single memory of my little brother."

Julius closed his eyes without showing any emotion on his face.

Joshua was the only he knew from those who were found. Amongst the victims of “Gluttony”. He couldn’t find the other 30+ victims even in his memory, and thus they continued to sleep without anyone even mourning for them, or worrying about their wellbeing.

If you thought about it, you could probably say that Joshua, who had his big brother worrying about him, was one of the lucky ones.

Even in these circumstances, where he was forgotten by the big brother he loved so dearly, and said big brother went to the hospital room so to cling onto his brotherly love in name only, and called out to his little brother without true emotion.

Even if he was forgotten, even if he forgot him, even if he wasn’t there in his memories, even if there were just facts, it was just heart-wrenching.

Subaru: "……Fucking hell."

He should have known. He really should have.

That the Sin Archbishop of “Gluttony’s” authority was the most despicable evil in this world.

Along with “Wrath”, who twisted people’s emotions at will.

Along with “Lust”, who broke people’s dignity as well as their form, before then trampling over them.

Along with “Greed”, who denied everything besides himself, imposing his egocentric sense of omnipotence.

Along with “Sloth”, who indulged himself in using the word *diligence* to paint over the lives of others with his selfish love.

They were the worst evil without doubt, not a single one of them deserved to live.

How could he stand those beings that profaned the lives of absolutely everyone like “Gluttony” did.

Subaru: "??Staying here will only make you feel depressed. Don’t make me keep saying it.”

Only unpleasant things passed through his mind.

He had put that irritation into words, and called out to Julius. When he heard those words, Julius stood up, and touched his forgotten little brother’s slender chest, and said,

Julius: "He’s... breathing. He’s alive. It’s strange.”

Subaru: "Yeah that’s right. But he doesn’t eat, nor does he need to go to the bathroom. He also doesn’t need to take a bath……. He doesn’t laugh either.”

Julius: "He doesn't feel the sorrow of being forgotten…. either. ??That may be a blessing."

Subaru: "A blessing……?"

Subaru raised his eyebrows in response to that word which Julius spilled out.

Looking back at him, Julius slightly curved the crooks of his lips up, and whilst giving a weak smile, he said,

Julius: "If you don't realise you've been forgotten, you needn't fear the anxiety of being left behind. It's really hard to bear having what should have been close relationships with people……. being cut off from one side.

Subaru: "????"

Julius: "Subaru. Being forgotten, and forgetting….. I wonder, which of those is the most painful?"

Subaru: "How……"

Subaru's throat clogged up at that question.

It didn't clog up due to the answer. He'd had the answer ready in an instant. So what had obstructed Subaru's words hadn't been bewilderment. It had been fury.

Subaru glared at Julius who had a cynical smile on his face.

Subaru: "How would I know? Don't mess about, stop absorbing yourself in these things."

Julius: "……Subaru?"

Subaru: "*Forgetting, being forgotten*, TO HELL WITH BOTH! DON'T TRY AND ORDER SUCH PAINFUL THINGS, ARE YOU THAT NEGATIVE!? MAKING THAT DAMN FACE LIKE YOU'RE THE MOST UNFORTUNATE PERSON IN THE WHOLE WORLD. WANT TO TRY AND COMPARE YOUR MISFORTUNES WITH MINE SO FAR? WHATEVER THE CASE, I WOULD WIN!?"

Julius: "????"

Julius became speechless at the sudden change that took over Subaru, who had raised his voice, jabbing his finger at him.

Opening his eyes wide in surprise, he couldn't say anything to Subaru who'd suddenly become enraged. And as he looked Julius keeping his silence, Subaru lowered his finger and shrugged his shoulders,

Subaru: "Don't make such a despairing face. I know you're suffering, and I know that you were forgotten and you have nowhere left to go…… But, I'm sorry but I won't let you show your weak side."

Julius: "????"

Subaru: "Have you forgotten, Julius? ??No, do not forget, Julius."

Subaru glared at Julius whilst he bit his lips in frustration. He placed his hand on his chest, and once again made a declaration like the ones he'd done.

Subaru: "My eyes know your strength. My shame knows it. Even if everyone has forgotten."

Julius: "????"

He couldn't breathe, the feeling of his blood going up to his head didn't vanish.

Really, how long had it been since he'd gotten this pissed off? Since Regulus. He was astonished that not even half a day had passed since then.

How much had this turmoil in Pristella burdened his heart and lungs?

Julius: "Hh, Haha……"

Subaru: "Haah?"

Julius: "Haha….. No, you truly are a one of a kind man. I've realised that once more….."

Getting rid of the startled face he'd had up until now, Julius suddenly bent over in laughter.

Giving in to the urge to laugh, Julius continued to laugh before the disgruntled Subaru. And when the urge gradually settled, Julius let out a long sigh.

Julius: "I see, you're right. It doesn't mean that absolutely everything was left behind, right?"

Subaru: "Rather than saying being left behind, I'd say you're in front by around three horse lengths."

Julius: "Is three horse lengths enough?"

Subaru: "I'm gonna fuckin' beat your ass! If it's me and Beako as a team, it'll be completely different for you!"

He flipped him his middle finger, and spat at Julius who was starting to get back to his usual manner.

Julius gracefully dodged his spit, and gave him a bow, whilst saying "I see,"

Julius: "Then, I will try to have faith in those big words."

Subaru: "……Mhm, do so. As much as you can too, do great deeds so that you surprise everyone when their memories come back."

This time at that smuggish attitude, Subaru raised his thumb up and then turned it down in provocation. Faced with that coarse gesture, the “Finest Knight” that only Subaru knew, smiled gracefully,

Julius: "??So, first of all, more so than anyone else, I will try to strive to surprise you. You, who remembers me.”

Saying that, he fortified his intent of accompanying him to the “Pleiades Watchtower” that awaited them.

Arc 5: Stars What Make History

by admin - Sunday, January 13, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/arc-5/

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Arc 5, Stars What Make History, is yet to be translated, but translations are proceeding at a weekly pace; once it's finished, the gap between Arc 5 and already partially completed Arc 6 will be close to being bridged.

Credit for the first five chapters belongs again to Summary Anon, who is in no way affiliated with this site. Currently, this arc is being translated by Nanashi, Fr, and Ringo, with help of WCT.

All credit for the header art goes to HaruSabin.

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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- Chapter 1: It Always Starts With A Visitor
- Chapter 2: Pedigree of the Poseur
- Chapter 3: Each Gives Perspective
- Chapter 4: On The Road
- Chapter 5: The Water Gate City Pristella
- Chapter 6: Two Spirit Knights, Two Greedy Merchants, and One Selfless Angel
- Chapter 7: The Sinful Man Sets Sail
- Chapter 8: Traveling With Seasickness
- Chapter 9: The Value of A Songstress
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- Chapter 12: Crushing Atmosphere of the Tea Room
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- Chapter 45: An Inescapable Curse
- Chapter 46: A State of Mind (Translated by another translator.)
- Chapter 47: Recapturing the City Outpost
- Chapter 48: The Person You Will One Day Fall In Love With (Translated by another translator.)
- Chapter 49: Thus Opens the Crusade Against Greed
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Arc 6 - Chapter 23 **EXCERPT**, Witch of Pride's Backstory

by admin - Tuesday, September 25, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/09/25/arc-6-chapter-23-witch-of-prides-backstory/

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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??A woman, a sole woman existed.

A woman so young, one would hesitate to call her a woman.
Humble clothes upon a skinny figure, green hair along with a skin tanned in the shine of days.

The woman seemed to be at an age to be a called a little girl, however, her heart was commanded by unending distress.
Unable to find the answer for it by any means, for the woman, it was an inborn argument.

"????"

Evermore troubling her mind with it, was the unending supreme argument.
It was the logic omnipresent in the world, that contrast of white and black?? namely, good and evil.

Righteousness, deeds of err.

Though there were innumerable choices in the world, all deeds are eventually decided to be on either of those positive and negative poles.

For the yet youthful woman, there was a reason to continue to anguish over that logic. It was inevitable for her.
The one who had divided the woman's world into white and black, good and evil, the righteous and the sinners, was the woman's father.

"????"

The woman's father decapitated the necks of sinners, and made a living by delivering punishment appropriate for the errs.

Delivering the end of their life, the punishment suitable for their err, upon the sinners who had sinned, meant livelihood to her father.

"??Executioner."

The woman had seen the actions of her father, who was named that, and the state of affairs of the execution site, before even the days of youth.

The repulsive and cruel deeds, the death wails of the sinners granted quietus, the execution site ruled by blood and death.

??What made the woman witness ?Death? there, was none other than her father's own will.

Punishment casted upon the committed sins, evil deeds met their result through the means of evil deeds.
The father attempted to convey the rightful state of affairs he believed in, of the world's good and evil, as an executioner, to the woman.

Noble was her father's will, a pure ideology without question.
However, keeping the mind the woman's youthfulness, it seemed to be conceited, it was yet too early to seek ideals.

The woman saw the deaths of many with her own eyes, scented the odour of blood, and burnt the punishment casted upon sinners into her memory.

The result, the woman, before she could study in depth the value of life, and the principle of life and death, learnt punishments befitting the sins.

Benevolence gave birth to good cause, wrongdoings called upon roots of evil, the souls of sinners were corrupted, worthy of punishment.

Comprehending the teachings of her father through that interpretation, the woman desired the rightful state of affairs for ?Punishments? Befitting the Sins?. For that she seeked something which would become her guiding principle, the balance of virtue which would establish evil deeds as evil.

"????"

However, the balance which the woman seeked, existed nowhere within her sphere of search.
The good and evil of affairs had no simple answer, but the correction, sin and punishment possessed many factors determining them.

"????"

However, the woman, yet youthful and unknowing of compromise or resignation, did not to come to a halt.
She must obtain the answer. She must conceive the balance befitting good and evil in her heart.
She must present the answer to the undissolving doubt present within the interior of her chest.

"????"

Days of agony continued, however, she gained the answer suddenly, as if a blessing had been granted to her from the heavens above.

Shattering her father's vine cup, the woman was greatly frightened by the sin she had committed herself.
Preparing herself to face beheading, the woman confessed her own sin to her father.

"??Speaking up your own sins, and apologizing for them is correct."

Said the woman's father while expressing a smile, forgiving the woman's err.
At the smile of her father and the sensation of his palm patting her head, the youthful woman came to understand.

??The balance for measuring the weight of the committed sin was nothing else, but present within the heart of the sinner himself.

Even if nobody lies witness to it, the heart of the sinner himself knows of his sin.
Good and evil, she did not understand. They're complicated. Corrections, have no certain guidelines. They can't be found.

However, the consciousness of the sin is within one's self.
There are no standards for punishments befitting the sins. However, the consciousness of sins deserving of punishments is within one's self.

The woman understood, she was satiated, and finally obtained the balance.
Remaining ignorant of the value of life, and the principle of the life and death of people, the youthful woman disclosed punishments befitting the sins.

"????"

Under the light of days the woman walked, learning through observation from her executioner father, for

delivering punishments befitting the sins.

For disclosing the hearts of those sinners, who had been judged worthy of punishment.

"????"

For the woman, the division of good and evil, corrections, sincerity and falsehood into two halves, was the natural order of things.

At the question? the youthful woman asked, some smiled, some were troubled, some were bewildered. However, the result of the answer to the woman's question?, was the same for all.

??The sins worthy of punishment, lied within their selves.

She looked around. Nobody was there. There no longer was anyone present here, aside from the sinners who had received punishment.

Trampling over the people who had been torn into tiny fragments, and finally over the fragments of her father, for the sake of fulfilling the longstanding desire bestowed upon her, the woman continued walking further, seeking sins worthy of punishment.

??The ?Witch of Pride? questioned sins, delivered punishment, and cast judgement upon sinners.

Arc 6 - Chapter 24 **EXCERPT**, Witch of Wrath Backstory

by admin - Tuesday, September 25, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/09/25/arc-6-chapter-24-witch-of-wrath-backstory/

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- Ringo

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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??A woman, a sole woman existed.

The woman was sentimental. The woman was constantly crying. Sensitive to ache, she continued to constantly cry.
The reason for her grieving and lamentation was none but one, she could not forgive her own powerlessness.

Surroundings of the woman overflowed with constant dispute, conflict, scramble.
No matter how many times she raised her voice, no matter how many times she clung to them, she wept and wailed, and such sadness of hers never came to an end. Which is why, the woman cursed her fate.
Continuing to curse, curse, curse her fate, the woman came to notice. That no matter how much she may cry, it was all but vain.

The woman, who came to notice that, afterwards desired what was merely, nothing but pure power.
Desiring power capable of overwhelming all others, and mowing down everything, the woman overcame

her limits, acquiring as much power as she could, obtaining all the strength she wished for, she commenced her efforts.

What she needed, was not the power to hurt. Neither the power to rob.
She seeked overwhelming strength, which nobody would be able to catch up to. She believed that she could end the conflict with it.
The woman who continued to shed tears, seeked to obtain the power which would let her live a future without any tears.

Just as when she had been powerless, she was unable to stop the conflict by clashing strength with strength.

Her voice did not reach through. Her wish did not come true. Lamentation kept at a distance, sorrow concealed the sky.
How, can they live so unconcerned. How, can they hurt others. How, can they think of continuing to live despite being hurt. How, how, how are they not able to believe, that another path may exist.

"The children are crying. The elderly are crying. Men are crying. Women are crying. Everyone is crying. Even still, how come?? !!"

In order to bring an end to that, she wished for nothing but power.
Training herself intensely, she endured all pain that came with it, and realized her will of steel.
Finally the woman attained it. The unparalleled strength, the overwhelming state of mind which would not let people come close to each other.

Standing on the battlefield, the woman raised a loud voice, calling for the battle to stop.
Holding down the power of all others with her own power, crushing down the cries of all others with her own power, mincing all malice with her own power, she did all this effort? only for the sake of stopping the stream of tears.
Striking the ones who were wielding swords, kicking the ones who relied on magic, smashing the ones who possessed bare fangs, she pulverised each and every one who seeked to battle.

However, for fighting back the fighting woman, for overpowering the powerful woman, the numbers? of the swords, magics, and fangs kept rising.
That seemed like a spiral, the spiral of conflict.

Aside from opposing strength with strength, nobody held the response of wanting to be left alive.
That is why, nobody believed in a path aside from the one of battle and victorious gains.

"How come??!!"

Her self, who believed that, was also, in the end, exercising violence.
Suspending her fists drenched in blood, and looking up at the sky remaining smeared with blood, the woman? wailed in lament.

The battle would not come to a halt. All hard work and effort had been in vain, and the tears of herself

and others would not ever come to an end.
Within the chest of the ceaselessly running woman, suddenly recurred melancholy.

Tears streamed. Overflowed.
They were not the ceaselessly flowing warm tears, but cold tears of powerlessness and despair.
However, alongside, gushed out a different deep emotion.

Dyeing the interior of her chest with dusk, along with that, her field of vision turning deep red, such violent emotion that could turn her face pale.
The woman acquainted herself with the true identity of that emotion, whilst continuing to cry.
Getting to know the name of that emotion, getting to know the origin of that emotion, the woman came to an understanding.

All this time, her self had not been crying out of sadness.
Her self had merely, always been drowned in rage.
The name of that emotion, is what people call rage?? no, people call it to be ?Wrath?.

A world which coerces tears, people who can never stop fighting, the absurdity of life inevitably coming to an end.

??Let them, have a taste of my fists.

Before anyone could know, the woman stood up, clearing away the dirt on her sullied knees, once again, she dashed.
Diving in the centre of the people yet continuing to battle, striking all of their faces, she screamed.

Stop fighting. Look at the sky. Feel the wind. Scent the flowers. Live, with your families and lovers.

At the voice of the woman, for the first time, unrest swept through the battlefield.
Fists that could fissure the earth, kicks that could make the sky sough, all of it let the people live.

Wounds closed, wails muted, laps bent with warmth, and the conflict rendered meaningless.
Lives returned to ordinariness, and the voices of weep and wail disappeared from the battlefield.

The tears of the people halted. The people showed gratitude to the woman. Raising their voices, raising their hands, smiling.
However, at that moment, the form of the woman was suddenly nowhere to be seen.

It was a matter of course.
There yet remained things the woman must do. Neither did she have the idle time to look back, nor any reason to halt her feet.
Seeking a world where nobody shed tears, where there was no strife, where nothing was robbed away.

Continuing to run, run, run, the woman continued to swing her fists.
Until the tears of all eventually halt. Until the warm droplets of water which wet her cheeks, halt.

??The ?Witch of Wrath? flared rage towards sadness, and continued to run evermore, evermore.

Arc 6 - Chapter 25 **EXCERPT**, Witch of Sloth Backstory

by admin - Tuesday, September 25, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/09/25/arc-6-chapter-25-witch-of-sloth-backstory/

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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??A woman, a sole woman existed.

Oppressed was the woman. By her family, by her clan, by her race who should have had loved her, she was disdained and alienated?.
Prior to being born, expectations were laid upon that woman. Her birth turned traitor to them.

What remained was despondency and disappointment, what bestowed upon her merely scorn and ridicule. Those were the sole possessions of the woman.

There existed a dearest wish of her clan. The symbol of their former glory and prosperity, the second coming of their founder whom they called god.
All types of secret arts and all types of inhumanities, unbeknownst of the number of taboos committed, the fruitification of it all was the woman.
However, the born woman betrayed their dearest wish, and the clan abandoned the woman with disappointment and despair.

"Go somewhere and live and die. For that is your iniquity."

Abandoned by her family, by her race, released into the fields was her child self.
Cast into the fields with no means of survival, the child woman was not supposed to survive.

However, even if the woman lacked means of survival, she possessed the strength to survive.

Ironically enough, it was the feast of what betrayed the dearest wish of the clan, the taboos and offences they had committed.
Unknown to words, lacking all wisdom, merely abiding by her instincts, the woman survived to live a long life in the fields.

Killing beasts, sipping on their lifeblood, crawling on the earth, tasting muddy water.
Before long time passed, the child became a young girl, the young girl became a woman, and it became difficult to live in the fields.

Hearing the rumours of a woman laying waste to the mountains as if a beast, men aimed for that life, and the woman was captured.
The captured woman appeared beautiful, the men abstained from taking away her life, and the woman proceeded to be kept by them.
While becoming a yes-man of the men, gradually the woman's consciousness descended onto a human environment from the fields.

Losing the indispensability of struggling to survive, exposed to the desires of the men, days of merely living.
Eventually the woman, upon the bed, came to acquire things unacquainted from the men.

Words, wisdom, way of life, and emotions.

Eventually her treatment altered, conferred with things to adorn her body, the woman was treated like a precious jewel.
Among those days, the woman embraced queer thoughts for the men.
Whether that was something resembling gratitude or obligation, the woman then had no lead to understand that.

While embracing those thoughts, the woman snapped the necks of all the men dwelling in the residence.
Easily, in one breath, without making them suffer, in an instant, grouping them all together, she consigned them to oblivion.

Sneaking away from the residence, proceeding towards the fields, lacking all doubt, the woman returned to her own hometown.
The woman attained queer thoughts regarding the race residing there, the clan possessing the same blood as her, the people who had bodies distantly larger than hers.
That was the feeling of hatred and desire for revenge, the woman then did not realise.

Merely, their weeps and wails, voices begging for forgiveness were quite thrilling, for the first time, the woman smiled from her heart.

"Fall apart here and die an unsightly death. ??Because that is, your iniquity, you see."

For the sake of attaining that felicity, from one after the other, the woman pulverised the dearest wish of her race, her blood relatives, her clan by herself.
Politely and courteously, not leaving a single one, not sparing a single one, taking her time, one by one, with certainty.

Before long, when all of her race died out, when anything and everything had come to an end, the woman returned to the residence where she had lived with the men.
Though she had abandoned the corpses of her race, she buried all of the corpses of the men courteously.
And once merely she alone was left in the residence, the woman took a deep, deep breath.

That was relaxation, that was tranquility, the woman, for the first time, experience?d blessedness.
Nobody would interfere with her now. Thinking, taking action, both lay in futility, she shall merely fall asleep.

??The ?Witch of Sloth?, continued to indulge in everlasting inactivity, untiring peace.

Arc 6 - Chapter 26 **EXCERPT**, Witch of Gluttony Backstory

by admin - Tuesday, September 25, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/09/25/arc-6-chapter-26-witch-of-gluttony-backstory/

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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??A woman, a sole woman existed.

The woman's spirit had been violated. The woman lay deep in the abyss of insanity. The woman, was standing upon the farthest land of starvation.
Growling in the solitary castle, gnawing the unoccupied throne, breaking her teeth, ripping up her mouth, starving.

The woman had been a human when she was born, but at that point in time, she no longer remained human.

It all began a few years ago, when the man governing those lands fell victim to an incurable illness. Weakening by the day, the man, frightened of his approaching death, stretched his hands to all kinds of means in order to prolong his life.
Before long he attained techniques which were taboo, and gathered a large number of lives for an outrageous immorality for the purpose of attaining a long life.

Abundantly, lives were sacrificed, abundantly, lives were rendered idle, and among those sacrifices was the woman.
Who she was, what her name was, what her birthplace was, who her family was, such memories of hers had already been burnt away.
Merely a tool was the woman. A seedbed, for the man merely awaiting his death, having been eaten away by the demon of ill health.
Idle lives only to be wasted, that was how it was supposed to be, yet the woman survived.

A body ruined, power gushing forth, the lamp of a life ostracized by what is called time.

The hopes, dearest wishes of the man trespassed by the demon of ill health, materialised upon the woman's body.
The man was delighted at the fruits of his labour, postponing the memorial for those sacrificed, overbearingly unfastened the woman's constraints.

??When she came to notice, the woman was alone, in the uninhabited solitary castle, anguishing and suffering with starvation.

Thoughts disappearing with cruel hunger, memories devoured into a void by violent thirst.
She had nothing in her memories. She had nothing within her understanding. Merely, her entire body had constraints, so she possessed no freedom either.

Eating away all food within the castle, vomiting out the content of her stomach, chewing and digesting them once again, she continued to repeat.
Ultimately for what remained of her starvation, she bit into the stone walls, crunched the throne, ate the carpets.

At that pace, she would starve to death. Her body, which cannot die, would starve to death.

"Grrgrr,grrrr. Grrgrr,grrrr....."

At the extremity of starvation unable to obtain trance, the woman finally saw an illusion.

Inside the solitary castle, bustling about with wilful freedom was a horde of dogs clad in beastial hair.
Even if it was a hallucination, she did not mind. If she was unable to be satiated physically, she desired to satisfy merely her heart.
With such wholeheartedness the woman crawled, devouring the beasts. Devoured the beasts. Ate them away.

She was being satisfied. The following instant, she vomited. She licked what had been vomited. She chewed. Vomited, ate.

In the illusion, in the mirage, in the hallucination, in her desire, there present was taste. There present was form. She could feel it on her tongue.
When she came to notice, the interior of the castle had become a den of repulsive beasts.

"Aha, ahaha, ahahahahahaha~."

She was greatly delighted. Buried in days of eating and getting eaten, she was satisfied after she ate, and she vomited after she was satisfied.
Stuck between starvation and refusing food, the woman ate and vomited, slurped and spilled.

Given birth to by the empty skies?? no, given rebirth to, were the beasts with a repulsive presence.

Before noticed, the woman's constraints were exposed to the battle for devouring between the beasts and her, came loose, and she was freed.
Attaining freedom, the woman crawled, exited the castle.
The beasts as well, following the woman, exited the castle. Upon the earth, in all directions, they scattered around.

Hunger, starvation, unable to endure them, the woman devoured, and kept the castle she had grown tired of eating for later.
To visit it, when the day of the satisfaction of her hunger and thirst arrives.

??The ?Witch of Gluttony? gave birth to the horde of Witch Beasts, and continued to starve from inexhaustible starvation.

Arc 6 - Chapter 27 **EXCERPT**, Witch of Lust Backstory

by admin - Tuesday, September 25, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/09/25/arc-6-chapter-27-witch-of-lust-backstory/

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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--a woman, there existed a single woman.

The woman, from all aspects, was born and raised as an ordinary village girl.

Loved by her parents, loved by her brothers, she was an ordinary woman who loved her family back as well.

A marriage is decided by the house, like how all village daughters get fixed in a little corner of the cold village. That was the doubtless way of life paved for women.

Such mediocrity of the woman was shattered by a crowd of powerful people who visited the village.

With the bad habit of only wanting what others owned, the powerful forcefully wanted that woman without knowing what was good for themselves.

Even if it's just a cold village in a small country, the disparity between the powerful could not be erased. The woman cannot go against the request of the powerful. Absurd fate, with no other obtainable outcome.

However, the woman was loved. By her family, by the family she was going to marry into, by the village.

The people burn up in anger, which eventually results in fighting.

The fire spreads, the villagers become militant, and finally burn all the powerful down.

One night, the woman's position changed dramatically. From a mere ordinary village girl, a group of men who acted as warriors, proposed for marriage.

With the continued flame, the surroundings took an even dangerous turn as powerful appeared one after another.

It went back to everyone who wished for that woman.

In the blink of an eye, the burning flares burn the small country, neighbouring countries, and even the great country.

The knowledge about? the existence of that woman spreads, and people start rumouring that she was a heavenly princess of beauty.

The fantasies and illusions overlap, and the slender body of that woman gets seemingly continually crushed by the growing interests and expectations.

Nobody notices anything about that. Neither her family nor the family she was to marry into, neither the citizens, nobody looked at the woman.

When she shook hands, the crowds shouted, if she walked down the road, the people call her out with a wave of tears.

"This, is..... strange. Y-You are mistake.....n....."

Covering her face, denying it. This cannot be, this is not possible. I am just a mere village girl, neither a heavenly princess of beauty nor a glittering, thrilling woman of the country, but just a village girl.

Where is such worth in myself.

People are drunk with dreams. Deceived by illusions and dancing for their ideals.

Eventually, the flames, which originated from that woman, start burning away everything even without any brute force.

On top of that all, the proposer kneels in front of that woman. And, holds her.

"--I love you. This victory, these smiling faces of people, everything of it was given to me by you."

The burning capital, the stacks of corpses, the people shivering in madness.

The villagers who were with her, the family who loved her, the marriage that was to happen with the wish of happiness of that woman.

There is nobody anywhere anymore.

--The woman left without giving an answer to the proposal. Discarding everything, the villagers, her family.

It's not that she has given it all away. Neither did she wish for this. The woman just lost everything she had.

Losing the things she was supposed to have, her beloved, the woman walks alone on the burnt field.

Even still, dreams, fantasies, ideals do not let the woman escape.

With not a single exception, everyone loves that woman, desire that woman, wish for that woman, making her lose everything.

Everyone loves the woman. It is like a curse. Those who loved, did not even know about what true love is.

"The Witch of Lust" continued to be loved which brought destruction, as she continued seeking for the love she lost.

Arc 6 - Chapter 28, "Julius Euculius"

by admin - Friday, February 15, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/02/15/arc-6-chapter-28-julius-euculius/

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Translated By :

- Gracedharperd (/u/Gracedharperd)
- Paper

Contributions By:

- Ice_Occultism (/u/Ice_Occultism)
- Ringo (/u/Ringo_17)
- Hayate

Proofread By :

- Setowi (/u/Setowi)
- Azeem

Art Source :

- [Link]

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THE **ORIGINAL AUTHOR** OF RE:ZERO STARTING A LIFE IN A DIFFERENT WORLD FROM ZERO
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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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Arc 6 - "Hall of Memories"
Chapter 28 - "Julius Euculius"

??I am afraid, that no one would believe it.

?My name is Natsuki Subaru?Servant of the Roswaal Manor?? and Royal Election Candidate Emilia-

sama’s Best Knight!?

At that moment, almost everyone in the Royal Hall turned their heads towards the self-proclaimed knight.

The person speaking completely failed to keep his emotions in check ??but additionally, there was another person who was equally emotional, watching everything from the side.

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Picking up the selected sword from the ground, he slowly became more familiar with the blade in the palm of his hand, at the same time the worry of the spectators slowly grew as well. Julius firmly believed that the sword chose him. This delusion was so ingrained in his mind that it became reality for him. This was what made him stand up and it was not something an onlooker would be able to grasp.

Julius:?Sh??hk??

Compared to his broken beloved sword, his new blade felt a smidgeon thicker, the tip heavier. However, if he based himself on that and swung the blade, he would be able to more or less get used to the differences immediately.

There had been no limits to the situations he had handled with only the weapon he grew accustomed to having in his hands. He assumed that in all those situations, the limit wasn’t determined by the sword. This, as well as all of his battle training, made him gain a certain sense of pride in his skills.

Reid:?Really boring, haa, you?

His sharp thrust was carried by said pride, and it was aimed right between the yawning man’s brows. However, the man just tilted his head, the tip of the blade merely coming close to its target. As soon as the red haired man noticed a few hairs having been severed, he jumped back.

He pressed his weight hard against the ground and jumped back, thanks to his heels remaining hot due to the footwork.
He formed some distance between the two of them.

In a battle, evaluating the sword skills of your opponent is not the only essential thing. Neither is it about just the sword in the hands. The rhythm of the feet and the pace of the legs are also extremely crucial.

Of course, the swordplay matters as well. To get the optimum position, to get the fastest pace, in order to maximize your potential, you musn’t just use your hands and legs; instead you have to use every part of your body.

Therefore, it’s imperative that beginners in the art of swordplay learn proper footwork first.

Truly, Julius believed he was fortunate to be blessed with a great teacher. Although that teacher's skills were now below his current skills, this was due to age, a factor that no one was able to circumvent.

Nevertheless, there was no doubt that he was quite a skillful person in teaching things to his students even beyond their own strength.

It wasn't just putting practice into his sword art, but also where those arts had come from, and in what form they had been passed down. He was a well-liked person who spoke about such things.

Naturally, he too enjoyed listening to tales of others about it, and he deemed it an honor to be able to practice it.

Julius:??????

Catching up towards him with a leap, Julius aimed his sword down to where he was about to land.
Up, down, left, right. Three of those directions were guarded, and the one with the highest probability to deliver the killing blow was from below.

Reid:?You, this again?!?

Julius' sword, which swung towards the man's chest from below, was parried with ease by the man's stick. The stick was unbelievably sturdy, and easily deflected his sword.
The sword swing took less than a second; even if he saw it coming, to be able to do that meant he was exceedingly skilled and had fine-grained control over his power to the extent that he could even thread a needle with ease.

Julius:????

Julius gasped in surprise as his heavy swing brought his sword over his head. It created a small opening as he stumbled slightly and broke posture. Julius thought to use "Wind Blade," but right now he didn't have that choice.

The magic which he could use as a diversion, did not release.
Instead, he just created a gap between them.

Julius:?Kaaagh??

Julius ate a front kick to his side, and the barefoot's nails dug into the gaps between his organs inside his body. In the moment where he felt that his body couldn't take any more pressure and would break, the foot that had been stuck inside him twisted, causing Julius excruciating pain from inside.

Julius was blown away. In an instant, he went flying from the impact, seemingly defying inertia. However, even that wasn't enough to absorb the force of that kick. As his surroundings spun, the impact he received on his body reverberated to his head and made him want to vomit. Even so, Julius kept his eyes on his opponent and slammed his feet on the ground as he landed, maintaining his posture.

His breathing was rough.
It would take him some time to recover and catch his breath.

Julius emptied out the contents of his body, and after having done so, he forcibly reminded his body to breath slowly to calm his ragged breath.

Reid:??????

He spat, and spat it all out.
After that, he would continue the battle, because he had to continue this fight.

Julius:??????

About ten meters in front of him, Julius saw the red-haired man standing with a smile plastered on his smug face.
Again, he dashed forward, towards the grinning man. The edges of the wooden chopsticks and the steel blade collided, everything to peel that calm smile off his face. From there, the real battle??,

Reid:?So pretentious. You, there are truths and lies in a battle. Are ya really readin' it out of a picture book?!?

Julius:???Ah...?

The distance between him and the man shrunk in the blink of an eye. The man's incredible speed left Julius stunned.

To be precise, it all actually happened in the blink of an eye. The man closed the distance of ten meters in a mere moment. A simple stick appeared in front of Julius' eyes. In order to protect himself, he immediately raised his blade, though while making that important action, he left the rest of his body unguarded. This resulted in Reid delivering two blows against Julius with his sticks, one in the side of his head and one to the chest.

A piercing shock hit him. The sharpness of that blow would make his consciousness fade faster than the actual pain. He clenched his teeth and stomped the ground vigorously, so he could desperately scrape back together his own fading consciousness.

Julius:?Oh… Agh??

The scream he uttered left him hoarse, and he swung his sword down in a crescent-form arc towards the man. The man jumped up, as if he was avoiding the graceful dance until death and struck Julius' side with his elbow.

His consciousness was shaken again. He was shaken off his feet, and his fighting spirit was curbed by the pain that gradually spread out in his soles.

The simultaneous chants of fire and water, and the three way attack of the sword??all missed their mark.

Unrelated to the fire and water, this was only an artistic mistake which he had repeatedly made when he was training to become the?Greatest Knight?. If his opponent was to be a normal one, this surely would have had sufficient to bring him down.

Reid:?Bang!?

The highest peak of a Knight’s sword art, it was easily blown away by the chopsticks in the hands of the man.

The sticks struck Julius’ knee, and stabbed his stomach, making him vomit up gastric juice; it was quite the unpleasant sight. His body was about to collapse, as it has been continuously struck down by the stick from all directions.

Reid:?O...Oh??

He fell down instead of forward, and kept his body up by quickly extending out his arm. Taking advantage of this moment, Julius swung to the rear with astonishing momentum. The man left out a sound out because he did not expect it, and jumped back.

He continued to move backwards, and opened up a greater distance between the two of them. Blood started to pour out of his nose.. Julius wiped his bleeding nose with his white sleeve. His uniform was stained by bright, crimson red paint.

He did not care. He let out a sharp breath and put his whole spirit into the blade in his hand..

To reach it, is to keep going for it.
To be strong, is to stay strong.

Reid:?Yer fucking pathetic, you. Can you even lift ya sword? You. I haven’t lifted my sword for anything other than three months straight, you. I’ve cut light down, what the fuck have you cut down??

Julius:?You, right here, right now???

Reid:?You, the fuck does that mean!? The fuck can you do to me? You can’t do shit. No swinging at it ‘till you reach it. Don’t swing at it ‘till you reach it. ’till you can, no swinging. Don’t swing ‘till you can. Stop talking ‘bout all the shit ya wanna do when you can’t even do ‘em, you.?

Instead of a refutation, he utterly destroyed the sword's blow with immense, immense strength.
As a response to this action, the man struck ten more blows down onto Julius.

Julius:??????

His consciousness was swaying, but he was not falling. Why wasn’t he falling?
It’s because??

Reid:?You lackin’. You ain’t enough. This ain’t a place for you to be comin’ to. Yer outta yer element.

You ain’t the one for the job. You weren’t invited.?

He just has to be strong. He just has to prove it with his sword.

A name, a house, a family, a master, a companion, a friend, spirits bound to his soul, he lost all of it.

The only thing that is left for him is this. All that he has left, is himself.
What he himself accumulated, shapeless, that’s all that remained.

This was the only proof of his sole, own being.

Reid:?Disgusting, you. Are you tryna put up a front? you? Are ya satisfied just bein’ a cheap imitation of others, you? You and your sword are both fuckin’ boring.?

There was a time that he aimed for the peak of swordsmanship.
He wondered if he could aim for that place, it was something that was stuck on his mind.

Soon, he realized that the bar was too high, and gave up.
When he saw him, that man with hair of crimson, the boy gripping a sword in his hand, he discovered he carried something so selflessly grand as to inspire admiration.

Reid:?Ain’t nobody looking at you. Ain’t nobody got expectations on you. Yer naive if you thinkin’ I’m playin ‘round. yer punches ‘n kicks are easy, you.?

He too had once yearned for it, for his life to be filled with tales of grandeur.
To stand shoulder to shoulder with those people, was not to be for his current lacking self.
That is the reason why he must risk his life. So desperately, wretchedly, that dream which he had then cast aside, he remembered.

Julius:??????

The man, with one blue eye not blocked by an eyepatch, and long hair with a color of endless flames, looked at Julius. He saw a boy who used to be able to take the opportunity to let go of his own dreams. He dreamt that he would be the one that would reach Reid’s level, spending all efforts without fail. But even now, he still had countless embarrassments about himself.

Reid:?Ain’t enough , you. You ain’t enough at all??Have you been skippin’ life day??

Julius’ yearning towards that what he craved for, was knocked out from him from him by the beating of the stick.

He couldn’t do it by swinging his sword; it was impossible to hit the one facing him with a sword. The efforts to keep fighting were meaningless. The blood and sweat that were shed were worthless. In the life of his, the life that was collapsing… There was one thing. But even that one thing he believed in?? was trampled down.

??????

Slowly, something was welling withinside him.
That thing, it completely eliminated that what was emerging from his heart.

Reid:?Gggrr! Can ya bear this? You, I'm getting more and more bored.?

Along with a click of his lips, a light gushed out and pierced through his limbs. He collapsed like a marionette who had its strings cut. However, violence did not allow that.

The wooden sticks struck into his chest, resulting in the oxygen in his lungs being drained to the verge of asphyxiation. Then, he was grabbed by his hair and swung around like a ragdoll. He was slammed to the ground, and the moment that he bounced back up, he received a kick to the face and was blown away.

In this matter he slid across the ground as if he were a Frisbee, spinning endlessly in this white world with no boundaries

He was knocked to the ground.
His body jumped up and looked at the direction where he received the kick from. But then, the man, who suddenly dashed like a gale towards Julius, hit him in the face with his knee. In the moment of the impact, the knee clashed against his forehead, and as his forehead split; he was flicked away.

A gap between them was formed.

Reorganizing his posture?? that's what he should have done, but, his body did not stir.

Julius:?Fh...Khhh…?

His whole body was screaming like a siren, especially as the damage to his head was very serious. Even the consciousness inside his own skull was in a state of fluctuation. He was afraid that if he would relax, if only for a little, he would lose his consciousness that very next moment.

The sword… Where was the sword? As if to ascertain it, he made his own strength flow into his own right hand and tried to slowly touch it.
There, there was indeed the touch of the hilt. He felt relief.

He couldn't let go. It's only this. He doesn't know what there is left to lose if he even loses the sword.

??In other words, what was in his hand was something else in the shape of a sword?Sword?just now.

Julius:??????

He did not make any mistakes in his own state of life. He always believed that it was him being on his own path.

He was so convinced, even now.

Even now, to be able to change this, he had supposed would be impossible in his life.

Henceforth, the problem here was not finding a solution for all the things that had slipped out of his hands and disappeared.

??Or… Was it simply a mistake?

He lost his own way, he walked down the wrong path… all because he misunderstood what he believed in? His name, his house, his family, his master, a companion, a friend, spirits bound to his soul, he lost all of them.
What if, what was only left with him now, was just a make-believe, incapable of offering any actual help, incapable of relying upon, incapable of any support.

??He would maintain his strength; that's what he swore to his Master.
??He would remember his strength; that's what his last remaining friend told him.

In a world where everything is lost, there's only?Strength?which would assist him.
Although, this?Strength?was the only thing his frail and fragile self was?Certain? wouldn't disappear.

Reid:???You! The hesitation is finally gone from yer sword!?

Julius:??????

How much time was wasted by asking himself how to answer that question? Probably not even a second. However, for a man? for a?Sword Saint?, such gap in the moment is like having the chance of killing the enemy.

He was desperate to raise his sword, to defend himself against this rapid, impending attack. A very sharp, shrill noise rang out. The only way of knowing that the sword's steel edge crashed upon the floor, was by actually seeing it happen.

Finally, he was parted from even the sword that slipped out from his own hands.

Losing my name, losing my reputation... Now that I even lost the sword, is there any reason for me to still stand here?

Reid:?Without the qualifications to reach at the Heavenly sword?? You! I can not stand such a henchman like you?

The parched voice coldly announced that, and the?Sword Saint?held his sticks out forward, bending his knees down.

??For the first time, the?Sword Saint?put out an attacking posture.

Then, the stick was raised, and a strike?? There was no way for it to be mistaken, it was a Sword Attack. He released an absolute sword strike, and he was wrapped in the powerful shockwave of the strike, and blown away.

Julius:??????

Whether it was punching or kicking, this blow was completely different from all the attacks so far. This wasn't an attack. This was the zenith of the sword, the highest peak the sword can reach, the true?Power?capable of a sword.

Engulfed by the light, his consciousness was blown away. Did he see death? Did he see something that surpassed death? He didn't understand it at all.

However, at the moment of being blown away, he heard a faint voice.

???:?Julius?????

A voice was screaming, it was full of melancholy. Desperately, the voice had dashed up the long staircase, as if just to witness this decisive moment alone. Since there was a voice calling for him, a very untimely smile was formed on his face.

The?Greatest Knight?from the Dragon Kingdom of Lugunica. A Royal Guard of the Kingdom's Knights. The eldest son and the heir of the Euculius family. The Knight of the Royal Election Candidate, Anastasia Hoshin.

??Julius Euculius.

Julius:?Awgh...?

I wonder, am I even worthy of being called by that name anymore?

Finally, with such doubts on his mind, Julius' consciousness, interrupted with a swoosh, was thus swallowed by the light.

Arc 6 - Chapter 30 **EXCERPT**, Witch of Greed Backstory

by admin - Tuesday, September 25, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/09/25/arc-6-chapter-30-witch-of-greed-backstory/

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Translated By :

- Nanashi

Art Source :

- Loli Dona Source

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A woman; a lonesome woman.

This woman worried about everything; about each and every struggling person in the world.

Nothing in this small world was hidden from her view. To her, everything, everyone, was a child who needed protection.

Such a fragile world, with such fragile people, would be so easy to subjugate.

But the woman sought not to control this world. Instead, she sought to shelter it from harm.

And thus, her wretched war of trial and error began. But protecting and advising and saving the entire world proved to be too heavy a burden, for the woman’s lonely hands could not reach everyone.

Although she could see every solution, she lacked a way solve every problem.

For the first time, the woman cursed her own inadequacy.

Even if she saw a calamity, she was short on helping hands.

Even if she was immersed in a building crisis, she could do nothing to prevent it. She could never do enough.

She could reach what was in front of her, but she couldn't cross an impossible distance. She could deal with pressing affairs, but she couldn't turn back the unforgiving wheel of time.

There was so much beyond her reach.

Her supposed power had not granted her wish. Her arrogant wisdom lit no path to hope.

And thus, even as she cast warding spells, the woman fell into despair. Submerged by an endless sea of regret, each sorrowful wail she could not prevent shattered her broken heart afresh.

Finally, the woman understood.
?

I can't. There's no way. It's impossible.

This exorbitant, lofty wish was unattainable, especially for one lonesome woman.
She knew. She realized. She understood. Her wish was impossible. But. Even so...
If her own vigilant hands weren't enough, she would find more. Simply by not being alone, by finding others who shared her wish, she could reach everyone.

Her mind felt cleansed. The once hazy path had finally become clear.

Her wish could finally reach her once inexorable lament, those once inevitable tragedies.

Extending peace offerings to the conquerors, introducing a cleansing celestial sword to war torn battlefields, forming warding contracts with great dragons, these would lead to the fulfillment of that wish.

Surely, she could fulfill it. Surely, it would come. The promised denouement of her great wish.

No matter what, at any cost, soon, maybe tomorrow. It was, of course, on its way—.

"Saved. They'll all be saved. The way to save them, I can see it. —The path to salvation."

Even if there were a price to pay in blood, she needed to prevail, for leaving her struggle unfinished would render it meaningless.

Even if her newfound comrades were to break their vow, even if her celestial sword's smiles were vanish forever, even if her dragon were to levant to faraway skies, she could not surrender.

Even if her first allies left her side, she lose her way, for the once lonesome woman was no longer alone.

"There's a truth here. Ah, I need it. —This sacred knowledge."

She walks a road paved with corpses, designating countless lives as sacrifices, all for the sake of grasping her greatest aspiration.

One day, with the sufficient amount of knowledge, her hands would reach each and every tear.

For the first time, she truly believes that she can reach it.

So, consumed by that sacred wish, the woman struggles through the excruciating despair.

The [Witch of Greed] bleeds avarice in the wake of her yearning.

Arc 6 - Chapter 45, "Embrace of The Guilty"

by admin - Wednesday, August 22, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/08/22/arc-6-chapter-45-embrace-of-the-guilty/

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Translated by :

- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd
- Ringo, /u/Ringo_17
- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism
- Paperlightning

Proofread by:

- Beidh, /u/Beidh
- Review, /u/ReviewR524
- Jaerek, /u/Jaerek

Fan Art Created by :

- Art Source

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??A painful red drop of blood drips down his right arm with the black spots pattern.

Call it fortune or whatever you want but his wound had stopped bleeding faster than expected, but still, if he applies force to it, his wound will open again, but he didn't care about that too much.

Dig your nails in, and you'll feel pain. Do it hard, and you'll tear the skin, and blood will flow. Even though it felt like the blood from that wound had stopped quickly, it really didn't feel that different.

Subaru:??????

Without paying much attention to the fresh, self inflicted wound on his right arm, he proceeds to wipe the blood from his palm and then pulls down his sleeve to conceal the hideous message carved on his left arm.

Subaru:?In any case, I need to hurry……?

Already he had wasted quite a lot of time in this room. Meili's corpse was still lying in the middle of the room, but at least there no longer was any trace of what he had done to her.

If he could he would have liked to avoid defiling her corpse even more but....
---There is still one last thing he must do.

Subaru:??????

Using both of his arms, Subaru drags the girl's light body to a corner of the room.

There, he finds what could be called a table made of stone, or maybe it might have been beddings. For now, he gently hid Meili's dead body behind where the hewed square stone slab was placed.

??Sorry, though apologizing to Meili from the bottom of his heart, Subaru concealed her fate.

After all, how would he explain that it wasn't him to everyone and that the culprit is?Natsuki Subaru? and even if he could, who would believe such a thing?

Subaru:?I can't defend myself or do anything, even if I wasn't the one who… killed Meili. The murder was carried out with my own hands.?

He's not aware about how criminal investigations are handled in this world. but if someone were to see Meili's nails and the wounds on Subaru's wrists, no one would doubt that he was guilty and trying to appeal would be futile.

If it ever comes to that, the only thing he can do is try to avoid the trial---No, he already covered up the crime.

He was aware that the course of actions he took isn't the right one. However, he had no other option. ??He no longer knew who he could trust, who could he doubt.

However if there is a single thing that he is convinced of, it's--

Subaru:?Next time we meet, Meili… you will be the only one I won't suspect.?

Crushed, then strangled. This is the second time Subaru finds Meili already dead.

Aside from a few others, she was the least suspicious. But it doesn't matter anymore, Subaru won't be able to get any kind of information from her.

The **Closed Circle Mystery**, in other words, it is known that the criminal is one of the people present, and the crime could not have been committed by some outsider, what a cliché....

However, as a detective, Natsuki Subaru is equipped with an illegal power:?Return by Death?which causes time to be rewound whenever he is killed. Anyone, no matter how useless, could become a renowned detective capable of dealing with any tragedy with this power.

Subaru:?Though the Detective being the culprit is also something predictable of these mystery tropes. ?

It’s regrettable, no matter how great ?Return by Death?might be, probably?Natsuki Subaru?is just waiting to make his next move, even if the situation gets redone many times, stopping Him may prove a very difficult task.

The detective having a different personality in which he is a criminal, is a pretty tired mystery trope. But you would think that in real life if the detective just threw himself off a cliff the problem would be solved right?

?Return by Death?and ?The detective himself is the culprit?, when both of these met the situation became unsolvable. A so called, inescapable helix maze.

?This isn’t the time to be talking…….! In any case, right now I gotta buy time.?

It’s not a problem that will be solved with time, there’s definitely something that brings back time. Believing in that, Subaru wished to be freed from this dead end, and then stood up.

??????

Leaving those circumstances aside, He caressed Meili’s forehead just one last time. Surely, she wouldn’t want him to touch her anymore.

Her forehead felt cold to the touch, as if she was rejecting Subaru.

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And, after despairingly concealing Meili's murder, Subaru leaves the room. Then, looking at the right and left of the aisle, as he left the site slowly???

???:???Ah, Subaru! Thank god, so you were here.?

Subaru:???tch???

It was Emilia's sudden voice that made Subaru's shoulder shiver, as he turned back to look at her. She was just taking a stroll, and she tilts her head to Subaru whose cheeks had turned rigid,

Emilia:?Sorry, did I scare you ??

Subaru:???I-I was surprised, that's, we~ll, that's, you know. It's just because it was so sudden. What happened, Emilia-chan??

Emilia:???? I was just walking around the tower, to see whether I could do something. Rather than that, Subaru.?

Subaru:?Yeah??

Emilia:?Just now, were you playing around again??

Subaru inhales sharply at hearing Emilia's mysterious question.

Her amethyst eyes were staring right at Subaru, but Subaru didn't know the meaning of her question.

It was true that his voice was shaking, but what he said was supposed to be an incomplete answer that would still suffice.

??????

Well, rather than Emilia's gleeful eyes, Subaru tasted a sense of uncomfortableness, and gulped down his bitter spit.

In the room behind them lies Meili's dead body, cold and lifeless. Although he made sure to keep it out of plain sight, were someone to search through the room, her body would be discovered within minutes.

So, leaving this place was his top priority.

Subaru:?Sorry, I need to go the washroom for a second.?

Emilia:?Ah, sure.?

Hurriedly leaving the room, Subaru left words that could easily be misunderstood. He must get away from Emilia as soon as possible and kill time as much as he can.
From there, he could take care of the wound on his right arm???

Subaru:?Eh, Emilia-chan? I am going to the washroom. Why are you coming with me??

Emilia:?Eh? I mean, we all will get together for lunch anyway, so don't you think it would be nice if we're together for a while? Don’t worry, I'll be outside the door.?

Subaru:?I'm not worried about you hearing the sound of peeing but.....?

Emilia stands in front of Subaru, who wanted to part ways with her, and looks at his face.

Speaking of justice is just an argument, and the side which deserves justice always goes through pain. In this case, it was no exception, Subaru had said all that without even once thinking of justice.

However, concerning that other side which had been struggling,, Subaru carefully hazards a guess towards Emilia's feelings.

??For what purpose does Emilia want to accompany Subaru?

??????

?????

Still, Emilia looked completely plain to Subaru who was looking at her from the corner of his eyes.

She doesn't look like she has any plan in mind, but, in fact, she is one of the enemies he suspects.

Subaru did not see Emilia's and Beatrice's dead bodies the last time when everyone had been killed.

Although it was true that "Natsuki Subaru's" intentions were unknown from the wounds on his arms, no matter how much chaos "Natsuki Subaru" could cause, it was not possible to produce such a situation alone.

Killing Shaula, Echidna, Ram, Julius and Meili, and eventually tearing down the tower with the power of shadows, and finally beheading him, that someone.

There still existed someone in this tower who Subaru was not aware of.

Emilia:?Subaru, are you okay? Actually, you still aren't back to normal, are you??

Subaru:???tch, I-I'm fine. I just got lost in my thoughts for a bit.?

Emilia:?Really? But, you don’t look too well.?

Suddenly, Emilia reaches out for Subaru.
He couldn't give up so quickly, but Emilia makes his cheeks redden in embarrassment, and Subaru senses a ticklish feeling in his eyebrows.

Subaru:?……You're looking quite closely now, aren't you.?

Emilia:?Mhm, that's right, I am looking closely. It feels like lately, Subaru often runs away from my eyes..... I don't know why, but it's strange.?

Subaru:???I guess so, it's really strange, isn't it.?

He was carefully keeping an eye on any sudden movements from Emilia. .

The smiling Emilia's hand was touching Subaru's face. The situation would drastically change if Emilia's hand were to scrape against Subaru's throat in the blink of an eye. And, with the strength of Emilia's arm , it would be easily possible for her to break Subaru's bones.

However, her hands did not feel malicious or hostile, and Subaru is at loss on what to think.

After all, Subaru -- he was only a Japanese student who had come from a convenience store, so it was only natural that Subaru would not find these feelings reliable. Things like people's hostility or malice, he could not tell such emotions apart merely by touch f.

Subaru's familiarity with the atmosphere, of making people awkward even from big distances and silence of apathetic indifference that could not even be called cold disdain -- neither of these can hurt the loner Natsuki Subaru.

Henceforth, he does not know the feeling he was getting from the girl in front of him was genuine or fake.

But, if he doesn't know???

??????

He wonders what kind of face she would make if he were to confess everything. How great would it feel if he were to screw up that beautiful face she had that made it seem like she grew up only ever seeing splendid things, as if there was nothing to worry about in the world?

?? The Natsuki Subaru you are worried about is nowhere to be found.

?? No, that's not it. If he were to say that he is a cruel, crazed murderer.[1]

Emilia:???come to think of it, Meili… you know?

Subaru:???hk?

A strangled noise emerged from his throat and his breathing suddenly started to feel quite laboured. Subaru's eyes open wide.

Why was Meili's name mentioned here? He couldn't in the slightest hide his exclamation of surprise, it had been a complete surprise attack. If it was Emilia's aim to gauge Subaru's reaction, he had fallen hook line and sinker for it.

However, Emilia had her eyes off of Subaru, her gaze had dropped down towards the floor. She wasn't looking towards the aisleway where he had come from, more so, it felt as if she was just looking around the whole tower. And following from that, Emilia sneaks a glance at him with a slight hint of hesitation,

Emilia:?I wonder if I was too short-tempered with her. When we return back safe and sound from this tower, we can see what we can do about Meili.?

??????

Emilia:?Of course what she did a year ago was terrible, and I understand Otto-kun's point that we shouldn't believe her so easily, but… it was thanks to Meili that we were able to cross the sand dunes, and

if she had been plotting something against us, I think she would have done it before we reached this tower.?

Pinching the cuffs of her clothes, Emilia carefully states her thoughts. Although it feels as if he should take her story with a grain of salt. Amongst the people in this tower, Meili's position was special. She had apparently originally been an assassin hired to take Emilia and Beatrice's lives.

Subaru:?Pardon, I guess ??

Emilia:?Even if I were to let her free, I think everyone would oppose it. But, maybe we can find some other place to put her in outside of her gloomy prison cell, right??

??????

Emilia:?Of course, we'll talk to Meili herself, and see if she wants it. It would be hard if I got ahead of myself and ended up being hated by her.?

Hurriedly shaking her hand, Emilia insisted that it had just been one of her opinions. Perhaps, she had put enough thought to hold and convey this story out to its fullness. At every turn, there's a glimpse of the argument being rebutted.

??Were these Emilia's true intentions?

??????

Would it be good to believe her? At least until now, there hadn't been a single time which Emilia had been hostile towards Subaru. ??No, if he were to say it, no one had shown any hostility towards Subaru. Beatrice, Echidna, Ram, Julius, Meili, none of them had shown any hostility towards Subaru.

The only certain things were that a criminal had killed Subaru by pushing him from the top of the staircase, and that a criminal had slaughtered everyone in the tower, and a criminal had lopped off his head. ?? And that "Natsuki Subaru" had killed Meili. Only these evil acts should be held in contempt.

Then, could he trust Emilia? Even if he were to believe in her purity, which was like that of fresh snow, he didn't know if she had impurities beneath. ??Emilia had put so much enthusiasm in her speech whilst he had been fretting about Meili, which his hand had killed, still he wonders if she would believe him.

Subaru:?……so stupid.?

Emilia:?Eh??

Subaru:?I said such bullshit. I should have known. Short-tempered? I really am. In… in these situations, there's no way I can do anything about what I have previously said.?

It feels like a stalemate in all directions, he has no room to worry about anyone else. And that especially applies to hearing the future plans of the girl who had already died. Even if he closes his eyes pretending

not to know about her “Death”, would it really comfort him?

??????

Cursing, Subaru bit his lips right after he had uttered those words. He had said such stupid things. He couldn’t help having said things such as all the remarks of suspicion that he had thrust upon Emilia due to the emotions of this place. There was no justification for his actions. He had just been venting his anger, just like a child’s tantrum. That??

Emilia:?Subaru!?

Subaru:?Fu...?

Emilia:?What happened to you so suddenly? Even if you’re in a bad mood, it’s no good to speak like that!?

??????

Astonished and shocked, he hangs his head down as his emotions gnaw at him and tears start to pour out of him as he sobs. Emilia however, having anticipated such a reaction, vigorously clasped Subaru’s cheeks with both hands and looked straight into his eyes.

Subaru:???Ah?

Emilia:?If you are going to be sulky and emotional like this, speak up! Either to me or Beatrice. If Subaru is in trouble, I will be in trouble together with him. But, don’t carry it all by yourself, you’ll just get angry at yourself, stop trying to do everything alone. That's something similar to what Roswaal would do in bad times. Don’t copy him!?

Giving it her all, Emilia turns towards Subaru and continues to speak. And just after that, she took her hands away from Subaru’s face, who had been really taken aback, and suddenly pulled his head over to her chest. She held Subaru’s head against her chest in an embrace and started to gently stroke him.

Emilia:?Do you understand? In my heart, I am not mad at you at all. I won’t be disappointed with whatever it is. So, you can tell me.?

??????

He was pressed against the feeling of soft, warm skin. Beyond that feeling of warmth, the rhythm of life was steadily ticking away in her. It was quite gentle, rather like a lullaby which a baby would listen to. Subaru let out a strangled sob. In that moment, Subaru’s heart had lurched with a feeling of intense shame.

Having done all these things until now, having said such terrible things, still she was gentle towards him. He had doubted her, he had blindly hated this poor girl, what had been the point of it all?

??Do they really exist? Just who had been planning to kill Subaru.

??Had plunging to his death really been a simple accident?

??It’s not something somebody typically does on purpose, maybe someone had inadvertently tripped and pushed him.

There was no evil person inside this tower. The only one who had a heart that was foul, ugly and dangerous was Natsuki Subaru, and “Natsuki Subaru”. Properly speaking, wasn’t he just an insolent outsider to this world that should have never been?

Subaru:?Emilia, I am……?

Emilia:???Hm??

Subaru:?I am……?

He doesn’t know how to tell her. He had thought that he would be able to confess everything to her... Losing his memories, what had happened to Meili, returning back in time every time he died. Everything he says may not be believable. But, she may believe some of it. If she believes him, a way to break out of this deadlock may be found. If just that is found, Subaru will??

???:???Emilia-sama? Barusu??

That was the moment when he had tried to somehow squeeze his thoughts out of his shivering head.

A sharp,imminent voice comes from the side, as if filling Subaru's anguish. Subaru could not see the owner of the voice at that moment due to Emilia's embrace. Then, he heard Emilia who confirmed that person's identity by murmuring?Ram?.

Emilia:?What’s wrong? I'm talking to Subaru about something which is ve~ry important.....?

Ram:?That is, something Ram understands just by looking at it..... but kindly stop it. This is an urgent matter.?

Emilia:?O-okay.....?

Whether it was the thing she saw which was bad, or whether her timing was the worst, he wanted to strike Ram with such feelings that were coming up in his mind.

Even though he just reflected on it, he felt sorry for himself for not being able to stand straight again immediately.

However, Ram's appearance said that she could not afford to do things like teasing them for them embracing one another, or thinking about Subaru who was having mixed emotions, after seeing them.

Emilia:?Ram, what’s wrong??

Ram:?……It is an urgent matter. Please come to the third floor library immediately. Beatrice-sama found something terrible.?

Emilia:?Beatrice did??

To the surprised Emilia, Ram briefly nodded as?yes?.

Then, as she turned away from Subaru and Emilia,

Ram:?Anastasia-sama..... no, was it Echidna? Anyway, Ram will go search for her and Julius. Barusu, you go with Emilia-sama?

Subaru:?Y-yeah, got it...?

Subaru nodded his head whilst being unable to form a reply..

Without even waiting for an answer, Ram kicks the door and runs away from the two. Surprised from the situation, Subaru turns to Emilia.

Subaru:?Um, Ram, said that.....?

Emilia:???-Let's hurry. Ram sounded really serious. Something terrible must have happened.?

??????

Emilia:?Subaru, I won't forget about what we talked earlier.?

Subaru:?……yeah.?

Subaru weakly nodded and listens to Emilia, who was the only one thinking about that.

Already, from his guilt towards Meili, to his sense of urgency regarding the situation, all of Subaru's thought process had been torn down.

With that, Subaru took off with Emilia, heading for the third layer?Taygeta?at a brisk pace. Welcoming them after running up the long staircase, was the library of the?Dead?which boasted a huge collection of books.

Beatrice:???So you've come, I suppose.?

Beatrice, who was standing in front of of the stairs behind the bookshelves which had the countless?Books of The Dead?fitted in them, welcomed Subaru.

The girl, with her short arms, and a peculiar pattern in her eyes, breathed out a tired sigh with a frown.

Emilia:?Beatrice, Ram told us to come. You have found something terrible is what she said.?

Beatrice:?Certainly, it cannot he said that it's good news. Rather, it is something bad I suppose.?

Saying that, Beatrice swings roundly around to Emilia's question.

Then, she turns her blue eyes towards Subaru,

Beatrice:?Betty had been looking into the?Taygeta?library since this morning. Whilst Subaru was out cold, Betty was trying to analyse this room, though it's mechanisms are nothing like the forbidden library's I suppose.?

Subaru:?Well, regardless of the introduction. What happened? Please tell.?

Subaru, who ran up the stairs and was lightly panting, urges her to get to the point.

Hearing those words, Beatrice, for once, widened her eyes. And, she slowly, pointed towards one of the bookshelves which was diagonally behind her,

?The third row from the top, the book on the far right.?

???the rightmost of?

??The third row.?

In accordance with what Beatrice pointed out, Subaru and Emilia came to the bookshelf after she had spat out those words.

The bookshelf was packed with books, and Subaru could not read the characters which were written in a foreign language on the black covers. As usual, he could only think of them as hieroglyphs.

So, even the title of the book which Beatrice pointed out to Subaru and the others, was not known to him.

At least, as all books were in this library, it was certain that it was a?Book of The Dead?--,

Emilia:?No way……?

Emilia, who had been standing right next to him, spilled these words out.. Looking at that, Subaru’s cheeks stiffened at hearing her stunned reaction.

Such astonishment had delayed the sadness which was to come straight after.. Just, what was it that had punched her heart with such force?
Shivering, her lips tremble right next to Subaru, clearly in shock.

and Emilia said,

Emilia:???Meili?Portroute?

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

- [1] He here uses “???” which is a distant way of referring to something “this guy” would have been the usual way of translating but since he’s sorta speaking about his old self I opted for a simple “he” instead.}

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Arc 6 - Chapter 52, "God, Please Forgive Me"

by Gracedharperd - Furuta - Sunday, December 09, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/12/09/arc-6-chapter-52-god-please-forgive-me/

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Translated By :

- Furuta (/u/GracedHarperd)
- Paper
- Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)
- Ringo
- Nanashi

Proofread By

- Nobidexx
- Azeem

Art Source :

- Original Art (Julius)
- Original Art (Reid)
    - Art Modified by Furuta (/u/GracedHarperd)

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ALL RIGHTS BELONG TO **TAPPEI NAGATSUKI**, THE **ORIGINAL AUTHOR** OF RE:ZERO STARTING A LIFE IN A DIFFERENT WORLD FROM ZERO, THIS IS A TRANSLATION OF THE **FREE** JAPANESE WEB NOVEL INTO ENGLISH

JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

?An unpleasant sword dance began to unfold, with the stage being the Fifth Floor Atrium.

??????

With his long, red hair flying about, the eyepatch-clad man flawlessly weaved left and right, with absolute control of his burly body, wielding only short, fragile sticks of wood. Unfolding right on the stage was an unbelievable spectacle.

??KSHEEEEEEGHHH!!?

A Witchbeast in the form of a Centaur rushed towards the Redhead, its half-human, half-horse form raising a cry that sounded like something a newborn baby would emit. On its upper-half, the human part, the Witchbeast had no head. It wielded a sword of flame, carrying it in both hands - were you to come into contact with this immeasurable, scorching heat, even if were to graze you then certainly your body would end up becoming carbonized. And, yet, how was it that the man was doing this? He had twisted his body into this dance within the searing heat, fending it off as if it was childsplay, using only those plain-as-day wooden sticks that he carried about.

Flames did not alight upon the wooden sticks which had successfully warded the creature off. They didn't catch on fire. Why!?

?Perhaps it was just because he was swinging those wooden sticks faster than they could catch on fire and burn.

The must be the reason why. The reason he managed to fend off the sword's fiery blow was because he had deflected the flash of its sword with a nonchalant parry. And, it seemed like the reason why that man found this so enjoyable, as the air around him became red-hot with murderous intent, was because he was absolutely insane.

Fully enjoying the prime of this world, Reid in this crazed state resumed the?Trial.?

Reid:?Looklooklooklook Looklooklooklook?You, what happened ??You, are ya playing?! Unlike before, 's time t' get serious, you. Use your companions around ya, time t' take vengeance on me! Youyouyouyouyouyouyouyouyou!?

While bellowing angrily, with spittle flying from his mouth into the midst of the flames, Reid held a wooden stick in each hand. In a similar manner to how those blue eyes glared at him, Julius was encircled by the flames around him.

As Julius dealt with the Witchbeasts around him, with his sword in hand, a sudden feeling of tension and bewilderment floated across his face; he didn't want to pay any heed to the words of Reid, who, as expected, was treating this as if this were song and dance. And with that same expression, Julius shouted out.

Julius:?What the heck, what are you thinking!? These Witchbeasts came from the basement! This is a big deal for the tower, we should combine our strength!?

Reid:?Wowzers! Slave of the sword is even a slave of the sword in his thinking. You, like this, can you even enjoy living? From my experience, guys who hold off on doing what they wanna do, live much boring lives than guys who do what they want, understand, you??

Julius:?What do you-……?

Reid:?First of all, what's the problem with letting those disgusting burning horseys run around? They're

only as bothersome as rain t' me. 'Cept rain's plenty bothersome, cuz I'm a clean freak, ya see?

Julius' argument had come from a sensible point of view, but Reid laughed at it like it had been madness-spurned nonsense from a madman's reasoning. Comparing the flock of clearly murderous Witchbeasts of flame to something on the same level as the rain served as proof that any reasoning within Reid was long dead. To reason with him would be impossible, for everything left within him was meaningless, save for chaos.

Julius:??hk!?

When Julius heard this, he was disturbed by a thought he'd never even considered, and as a result, a trace of hesitation was born in him as he brandished his sword, and his parry to the Centaur's attack was belated.

Julius:?Damn?!?

Julius did not meet the arcing, flaming sword with his sword, he instead dodged it with something like a backward somersault. And straight afterwards, another Centaur came to trample his head under its hooves. He avoided it by jumping forwards using his momentum from his landing. He thrusted his sword towards the body of the Witchbeast that had been wielding the flaming sword just before as the Witchbeasts behind them screamed?

Julius:??Mmmphn!!?

As he went to turn around, a hoof-kick caught Julius's left shoulder. A muffled sound, and then a look of anguish ran across his handsome features. Even so, he used the momentum of the hoof to turn his body around, and with his sword, he cut down the Witchbeast by its legs, and with one mighty sword sweep he ran his sword through its body. Then, he slammed the pommel of his own sword into his bleeding left shoulder. The sound of raw meat and bone reverberated, and far more drastic than had been the case when Reid had treated Subaru's own shoulder, his bone slotted back into place.

Reid:?And that's that. Heh, not bad, that expression of yers.?

As their giant burning bodies and trampling hooves transformed the fifth floor into a burning hellhole, only one person, Julius, had dared to fight against everyone's despair. Reid was pleased by this, with a cruel smile taking form on his face. Were the Witchbeast unable to reason, it would consider Reid and Julius equally harmful opponents; however, if it were intelligent, then the answer would be clearer than flame.

Stained with blood, lacking his usual elegance, Julius's sword kept the Witchbeasts' attacks at bay and steadily cut them down one by one. Meanwhile, Reid didn't seem troubled, and with martial arts skills that were about the same, or higher than Julius, he was reaping the lives of the Witchbeasts as if he were a Shinigami. And, in the meanwhile?

Julius:??GH?

Reid:?I like to move forward, but there's danger everywhere??

Picking his ear seemingly in boredom, Reid's long leg slammed into the back of Julius, who had been turned away from him. How much power had been in that kick? Having received it, Julius' body was blown away with ease, just like a stone, wrapped up in a piece of cloth. His body crashed into the tower wall. His crash could be felt reverberating all throughout the tower, the Witchbeasts let out a shrill cry, welcoming their prey's predicament. Hunched down on the floor, the herd of Witchbeasts rushed forward in a mad scramble towards Julius, who was coughing up blood.

Julius:?Gh… aaa!?

Julius slid his torso up from the ground, and as he kicked out at one of the hooves with his long legs, he jumped back onto his feet. Using that momentum, Julius clambered up using the shoulders and the torso of one of the Witchbeasts that had rushed forward as a foothold, and tried to break through their encirclement. He pointed his left hand towards a gap left in between the Witchbeasts.

Julius:??????

Nothing happened. Grasping his left hand, Julius's face showed bitterness. The Witchbeasts had turned around, drawing nearer towards Julius?

Reid:??Even at a time like this, ya ain't gotten serious yet, you.?

Julius found himself between the Witchbeasts, while Reid sighed and waved his stick. Holding one each in both hands, a heavy gust of wind was raised as he swung them, lifting up around about 10 of the Centaur's up into the air. A sensation of being unaware at what had happened rose up in the Witchbeasts as they felt their hooves floating in mid-air.

Reid:?Die, ya useless horses!?

Right there, Reid gently took a step and jumped up, towards the Witchbeasts, one by one, he cut the torsos in half, pierced their heart, broke their upper body, destroying all of the Witchbeasts, massacring them all, total annihilation on a completely different scale.

Flying in the air, he landed on a place where all the bodies were scattered, everything happened in about three seconds. The Witchbeasts, known for their tremendous lethality, killed without any help, all destroyed. Then, the fifth layer filled with the Centaurs was swept away, and in this case, it felt like there was room for some relief?

Reid:?Jeez, cut it out already. One after another, they emerge from their nest.?

Reid clicked his tongue, and, as if to confirm what he had said and indicated, from the stairs that led towards the Sixth Floor underneath, the sounds of hooves and the cries of their baby-like voices were once again approaching the Fifth Floor.

If this went on, due to the accumulation of the corpses, it would only be a matter of time before the

Witchbeasts would go up. If the desert outside was the natural habitat of these Witchbeasts, it was unimaginable how many of them there were.

Reid seemed to have a similar idea, and he slowly crossed his arms together,

Reid:?Destroying the mood of people wanting to go out for a walk is like getting disturbed while cleaning the plates for the leftovers. Kicking those shits, they are bad guys, mhhhm? Oi!?

Julius:?Wait, go out? That's already the case, and you're still saying you want to go out??

Reid:?You, heard me, that's my conclusion. Like I said. These guys ain't nothing but drops of rain, playin' with 'em 's just borin'. They're really nothin' special. only one person's capable of playin' with me... The rest of ya, you, can't match up t' my level at all.?

Julius:??Tsk!?

Clenching his teeth, Julius was highly dissatisfied with Reid's attitude, but he hesitated to express that.

If he would express that here, the fight with Reid would break down. In this case, the situation would be against both Reid Astrea and the Witchbeasts. Yes, Julius was thinking correctly. Glancing at him, he saw Julius's hesitation in an instant,

Reid:?Nothin' can be done about it, it's their nature.?

Reid was disappointed from the bottom of his heart, and he muttered, which made Julius' cheeks become stiff. How much anguish was coursing through there? Julius's, his expression and overly complex emotional vortex, it was like a child heading for the top of the mountain which was covered by clouds.

The pain within his heart was absolutely invisible to everyone other than him.

?However, it was immediately after that the hellfire which spouted from below rose up aiming at Julius. All of what was happening below was well visible to the?Mediocre Guy?looking down at the battlefield from up above.

Subaru:??Aah?

While everything had reached this point, Natsuki Subaru overlooked the fifth layer fight from above, he realized that he had even forgot to breathe because of the situation downstairs.

??????

Under his eyes, Reid and Julius were facing a war against Witchbeasts. Subaru wanted to intervene as a mortal piece of meat, even considering such things were an act of arrogance. Struck with admiration towards Reid, who operated far outside the norm, he could feel nothing but fresh-born awe towards him. But, for the first time, Subaru witnessed Julius's fight. His swordsmanship and skills, were at a level at which dust like Subaru could not be beneficial.

If Subaru challenged him, he would definitely be shot down in an instant; it would only be an ugly defeat. To face him without utmost seriousness, with only a wooden practice sword, well, that frank face would never waver; there would only be agonizing, crushing defeat.

Whether it was Emilia, or Julius, or Ram, it was all the same.

Or, let's say Beatrice and Echidna, not to mention Shaula, and everyone in this tower, Natsuki Subaru's meagre power could not be compared with theirs. He had taken them, the people of this world, the inhabitants of this fantasy world far too lightly.

Weak and young, Meili was the only one he had killed. Even then, it was?Natsuki Subaru?who did that, which meant that Subaru did not participate in that.

He can't kill what he can't kill. Natsuki Subaru realized that he did not have the strength to fulfill the?Book of The Dead?plan.

??????

After realizing that, Natsuki Subaru's heart became hesitant. Amazed while standing, Julius lost his calm, and did not notice the Witchbeasts behind him. Reid noticed them, but he did not warn him.

At this rate, Julius would be burned to death by the flames of the Witchbeasts, who were approaching him from behind? Through Subaru's mind, the fulfillment of such a notion flashed.

Julius's?Book of The Dead?would also be added to the library.
Subaru could not allow this situation to unfold with his own hands.
It would be a tragedy, by going with the flow of the situation, Subaru would push Julius into his?Death??.

Subaru:??BEHIND YOU, JULIUS???

Julius:??Tsk??

Upon hearing that scream, Julius's body reflexively unstiffened. Without hesitation, his slender body flew to the right, over the hellfire that had been set loose from behind him swept across the floor of the Fifth Floor, incinerating everything in its wake. Explosive flames which dyed the air crimson; the source of this continuous emission was a witchbeast an entire size larger than all the previous ones. Adolescent and adult? whether or not such distinctions existed amongst witchbeasts, Subaru felt such a discrepancy in their power levels.

?????KSEEEEEEEEEEGH???

Embraced by the flames, the big centaur that made a piercing noise, gathered several other centaurs around him. Once again the fifth floor was swarmed by a herd. The situation turned once again back into a stalemate. Having been caught up in the aftermath of the hellfire, Julius flung off his burning cloak in which flames had set it alight from the hem without turning back towards the Witchbeasts with his nimble figure. His eyes turned to the other side. Julius faced Subaru, who was feeling desperate and unable to

move.

Julius:??????

Subaru:?Urkh…...?

That moment, even with the distance between them, Julius's and Subaru's gazes crossed with each other's. Even though they are clearly quite a distance apart, in positions where they can't even see each other's faces, Subaru felt the complex emotion buried in those yellow eyes, letting out a groan from the depths of his throat. Doubt, confusion, hesitation, worry, various shades of negative emotions swirled around within the depths of his eyes. They pierce straight into the depths of Natsuki Subaru's inexpressible guilt… and then,

And then, just after, speaking this to Subaru who wanted to do nothing but run away from there, Julius spoke out.

Julius:??Echidna, Anastasia-sama, find her!!?

??????

Julius pointed his sword towards Subaru? No, not at Subaru; behind him, when he shouted that it was likely to point up to the fourth floor. With trust that was cracked and full of scars, Julius clung onto this supplication. Or rather at this moment, was this shouting right? Even Julius himself did not completely overcome the confusion. They were words shouted in the midst of everything.

Doubtful, confused, hesitant, concerned, he still did not stop, and made a decision.

So?,

??Tsk??

Like a bullet, Subaru lifted his heavy legs which were attached to the floor, and ran as fast as he could. Scrambling forward, while stumbling, he clumsily ran. He turned towards the spiral staircase and started running towards it. He did not know the destination. Was this escaping, or not escaping? He didn't even know anymore. He didn't understand his feelings, but even so he could not stop running.

Leaving Julius downstairs, in the place where there was a horde of Witchbeasts and Reid, Subaru ran away like a rabbit.

Reid:??Woah. Truly, utterly helpless, that nature.?

In the distance, Reid, who was watching the situation from afar, muttered silently. Mutters which seemed identical to all his previous ones. Whether or not a touch of emotion was lodged into them was unclear.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Why did he scream? Why couldn’t he let him die right there?

?Haa, Haa……!?

While he sprinted almost running out of breath, Subaru questioned himself over and over again in his head.

Why did he scream? Why couldn’t he let him die right there?

Meili:?Letting him die shouldn’t feel any different than killing him yourself, right??

Embracing Subaru’s back while he ran, the shade of the girl sentimentally grumbled her complaint.

The shade hadn’t come out even once after Reid’s appearance. Her voice, although ?Her neck had been strangled?was entirely torturing Subaru as if cursing him.

It seemed practical.

Subaru’s actions were contradictory. His thoughts, his actions, his desires and his goals, none of them aligned.

The Book of The Dead was constantly in a corner of his head, that craving awaited eagerly for an opportunity.

The shade of the deceased girl could see through subaru’s conflicts, so why did he, even when she gave him a push in the back by calling out to him in his time of doubt, waste his chance?

??????

He had given Julius an excuse to withdraw from the line of fire.

However, in the end he remained downstairs, where the danger of Reid and the Witchbeasts was very much still present. It was a half-hearted way of leaving someone to die. Was it that he just didn’t want to be involved in the actual scene?

Having strangled Meili with his own hands, the depths of his heart had that impulsive fear engraved in them. could he say that even if someone happened to die in front of him?

Was that why he ran away so desperately?

The words he gave to Julius, that he entrusted to him, were also unrelated to??,

??Subaru!?

While he was absorbed in his thoughts, Subaru’s feet were abruptly stopped by an overbearing call. Had he not stopped his feet while he was turning, he would’ve run over the owner of that voice without

noticing.

Coming from the corner he had turned to, a shadow rushed over to Subaru.

It was??,

?I was looking for you, in fact! Right now going there is too dangerous, I suppose!?

?B- Beatrice……!? And……?

Holding up the hem of her dress, Beatrice came running up to him with an earnest expression. Following Julius, Subaru felt both relief and surprise at the same time at having confirmed her safety as well.

However, the surprises didn't stop there. Someone else was accompanying her from behind,

Subaru:?Echidna!? Why are you two together……?

Echidna:?……It had to be here that I met you, , Natsuki-kun.?

With a slightly disturbed breath, the girl following behind Beatrice??Echidna, grumbled so.

Aside from the surprise of the unexpected meeting, what had taken a strict hold of Subaru's heart even more was the emotion with which Echidna's pale green eyes were looking his way.

???Hk?

That clear as day suspicion would be made aware to someone in Subaru's position whether they wanted or not.

Reid, of course, knew nothing. Julius and Beatrice's demeanors indicate that they also didn't know anything at all. However, Echidna's demeanor told a different story.

??Echidna knew.

About the exchange that Subaru, Emilia, and Ram had in the room where he hid Meili's corpse, where he was locked up in a prison of ice.

And, possibly, that might not be limited to only her.

He remembered how Julius looked at him with a complex emotion in the end.

All of them supposedly shared what happened to subaru when he woke up. So, it was only natural for Echidna to react this way, rather???

?Beatrice, You're……?

???hk? Right now’s not the time to talk about that, in fact? Come over here, I suppose??

However, in contrast to Subaru who was remembering his hesitation, Beatrice one-sidedly took his hand. The hole in Subaru was stabbed at by that tiny hand taking a hold of him.

As a matter of fact, if they were informed by Ram and the others of his circumstances, it was immeasurable how much determination would be required to go ahead with this action. It was such a careless move that it made Subaru want to question their sanity.

?Beatrice, are you serious? He escaped his cell! In a situation like this!?

However, Beatrice taking Subaru’s hand made Echidna’s face go pale and scream at them. She was questioning the pros and cons of Beatrice’s actions. She raised her own hand above and pointed it at Subaru, she pointed her finger at him. The look of that gesture held more pressure.

That seemingly restrained attitude did not seem like a bluff to Subaru. To him the situation was the same as if he were on the end of the police’s gun muzzle.

However, for the sake of life, Subaru took it as a matter of course.

From Echidna’s point of view, being wary of Subaru was obvious. Beatrice was, for some reason. ?even now, standing in front of subaru and standing off even against Echidna.

Echidna:?Hold it, Beatrice! With such odd behavior, siding with him, is a dangerous choice, so I can't allow it! Just as Ram warned, he isn't Natsuki Subaru! ?

Beatrice:?That’s not true, in fact! Holding his hand like this.... Betty who has been in contact with him like this knows, I suppose! Subaru and Betty are still bound by contract, in fact. You’re supposed to understand this if you’re in the same position as Betty, I suppose! ?

Echidna:?..Even if that's the case, he's still untrustworthy! Escaping his cage in circumstances like this! How is this trustworthy at all? There's no possible explanation for this!?

As Echidna screamed so, her expression had the strongest emotion he had ever seen of her. To date, she'd always stifled her feelings skillfully- the her the had always given off that air now seemed painfully anxious. Continuously forceful, she desperately tried to eliminate the threat before her. Desperately, doing so.

??????

An overwhelming number of Witchbeasts are overflowing downstairs, every single thing happening in this tower is to be feared. It’s natural she would have an outburst when thrown into that impossible situation, while looking at that, he thought.

Subaru:?Just, whatever?

Beatrice:?Subaru??

Beatrice who was holding his hand, hearing Subaru's whisper, her eyes widened in shock. That Beatrice's small soft hand was then released. With a sudden sound, something that had always been pulled taught, snapped. Snapped, like so.

Echidna:?……What are you trying to do??

Pushing away Beatrice's shoulders, Echidna furrows her brow at Subaru who stepped forward. Bewildered, her caution was more than that. Even then, Subaru's heart didn't falter.

Subaru:?Just as you see, I'm giving up……Just, do whatever you want with me.?

Just like that, he couldn't feel his own emotions anymore.

He committed a crime he doesn't remember, he desperately wanted to conceal all of it, causing doubts around people, he just tried to stay in peace, but was unable to do so, as he was continuously frightened by the shadow of?Natsuki Subaru?.

Echidna:?With that admirable attitude, do you think we'll lower our guard? If so, it's hopeless. From the bottom of my heart, I can't forgive you.?

Subaru:?Fine, whatever. You're free to add that in too. This tower, is finished..?

Subaru could not handle it.

He had gone over his mental capacity, having gone through one too many impossible situations. This was, just him wanting to grumble at his blockade.

However, it seemed that Echidna thought differently.

Echidna:?This Tower is……? In other words, you already have achieved your goal??

Subaru: ?……My goal??

Echidna:?Don't feign ignorance! Your goal, it is the Shrine of the?Witch?, isn't it??Because your goal is fulfilled, everything reveals its true nature.……I should have followed Ana's intuition. I shouldn't have brought anyone else here.?

Echidna's voice, speaking with anguish, was filled with contrition and remorse. Subaru knew of no such true identity.

Just now, she was something she had never seen before. Moreover, she suspects that Subaru is related to that. ??But does it even matter? The end of the world is approaching.

Beatrice:?Subaru, Subaru?In fact, what's wrong with you?? The way you're talking, it's nothing like

Subaru, I suppose?You cannot stop in such a place like this in fact??

Subaru:?Like… me??

Beatrice appealed and pulled Subaru's sleeve, whose expressions had completely disappeared. The trembling voice shook his ears, and Subaru stared at Beatrice.

Subaru:?What is, being like me. Just where is that being like me, which you guys are looking at.?

Echidna:?... Amnesia. Do you intent to continue your disgusting farce? Ram, who knows she lost memories of her little sister, or Julius who has gotten himself has been forgotten, the people around you have lost such precious memories, and yet you maintain your cruel act.?

Subaru:?Act!? Act you say!? Give me a break! If it's acting, then isn't it obvious I'd act with much more determination!? Who would..... who would like to become?Natsuki Subaru?, by their choice! Who would become that disgusting guy???

With his brain a total mess, Subaru bursted out with anger at Echidna,

If he had the freedom of choice, if he had the luxury of being picky, who would like to become ?Natsuki Subaru?. Twisted, unbearable, that was the kind of existence he was.

?Just who, would wish to become ?Natsuki Subaru??

Subaru:?You're all just ganging up on me! Who do you think you are! I lost everything! I was just coming back from the convenience store! All I remember is that there was just the store clerk with me! From that, suddenly a different world? Sand tower? What I am supposed to do! ?Trial?! Fakeness! ?Natsuki Subaru?! Don't mess with me! Don't mess with, me!?

Echidna:??????

Subaru:?That's right! It must be my fault! I came here when I shouldn't have had! I didn't want to go back home! I was too scared to bother dad and mom by this face mask of someone fake! So I was all excited in the beginning, but just in the beginning!?

Beatrice and Echidna were quite open-minded about the emotions of the exploding Subaru.

They surely didn't know their meaning. To them, Subaru's anguish was simply meaningless.

He also confessed of this being a different world for him.

However, they did not understand the meaning of?Different World?in its truest sense.— There was an unquestionable gap between their understanding.

Subaru was not the?Natsuki Subaru?they were seeking.

Neither if they saved Subaru, would they get the one they were seeking.

Subaru:?Why, are you all suddenly thinking about it now? I don’t know either! But, I have suddenly just reached my limit! Because I am like this, something that was perfectly fine got broken! Even if I want to, I can’t do anything! Not a single thing! So!?

??????

Subaru:?So..... just forgive me now. Please forgive me. Please, give me your forgiveness..... If God, wanted to, punish me then, I understand..... it was my fault.?

Subaru said, overwhelmed, with his voice gradually fading away and holding back all his bitterness.

He asked for forgiveness, as he rubbed his forehead on the aisle. He did not know who he should ask this of, so he prayed to God. Taking the name of all the gods that were to his knowledge, he prayed.

He wished forgiveness for the punishment given to him, to his slothful self. All his despair surely stemmed from the drastic change his life suffered.

So, please forgive me.

He no longer wished to have anyone else involved in the punishment resulting from Natsuki Subaru's foolishness.

He did not want to hurt himself, he did not want to hurt anyone else.

??????

Subaru desperately and tearfully appealed to the silent Echidna and Beatrice.

Beatrice’s palm gently stroked Subaru’s back, who was crawling next to the two of them.

That feeling of the palm of someone not of the same gender as him, why did it still persist with him?

Hearing to the answer of that question was too hurtful for Subaru.

Echidna:?……I don’t believe you.?

Beatrice:?Echidna……?

Beatrice called out to Echidna, who had sighed out her conclusion. At her voice, Echidna loosened her head.

Echidna:?Even if you cradle your head and sob, none of my doubt will be erased. My answer remains the same. I am….. I have the responsibility of borrowing Ana’s body. For her safe return, no matter who curses me, who hates me, I'll bear it.?

Beatrice:??????

Echidna:?...However, I don't want to do anything that leaves me incapable of facing her.?

Saying that, Echidna gradually lowered her fingers towards Subaru's forehead. Seeing the fingers lose the pressure they had ever since coming to this aisle, it became obvious that the issue of those fingers holding Subaru's life had been solved.

But, that had nothing to do with the salvation Subaru wished for.

Echidna:?Beatrice, you're free to go with him. I plan to go to where Julius is. After reuniting with him, if no surprises arise, we'll meet again on the top floor?

Beatrice:?... Understood, I suppose. Hey, Subaru, stand now. If you won't stand, then Betty is ready to even carry you, I suppose.?

Echidna turned her back and recognized that Beatrice respected her beliefs. At that time, as Beatrice tried to lend her small shoulder to him, Subaru stared at Echidna's back, who was trying to keep distance from his affairs.

?I'm leaving Echidna, Anastasia-sama in your hands!!

Echidna:??By this, what do you think you're doing??

Echidna turned her neck around and glared intensely? at the hand which grabbed the sleeve of her left hand. Echidna, with stiffened cheeks, asked Subaru, whose face was all messy with his tears and a runny nose.

He was unable to answer what he was doing.

Subaru could not stand Echidna's accusations. Even so, Echidna judged to not take Subaru's hand and comply with his unreasonable request.

As she realised that, Subaru's fingers continued to damage her judgement.

Echidna:?I intend to give it away. Even so, how come has it come down to this??

Subaru:?……Julius, asked me to.?

Echidna:?He did? Don't joke around. He could..... make this decision, but...?

?At that moment, Echidna, who was the reason behind Subaru's tears, reconsidered what she was going to say, letting out a "before that",

Echidna:?Did you meet him before coming here? He was supposed to keep watch at all five layers. And if he met with you..... No, rather than that, what did he ask you for? Right now he is……?

Subaru experienced a crushing tightness in his chest at hearing that short question.

The cracks in his heart hadn't healed yet in the first place. Just why, did his body act, for a world out of his control, where he could not do anything.

Why did, till he had made that promise with Julius?,

Echidna:?Ah, I don't get it. Anyway, lastly, where did you last meet Julius, tell……?

Subaru:??Ah?

Echidna, driven with impatience, picked words to continue the conversation.Looking at her efforts, Subaru sighed.

It was not because he was hesitating to tell her.

A situation even more urgent, than this unavoidable one with Echidna, had come up.

??????

Behind Echidna, who was staring at Subaru-- a dot of red light floated across the aisle.
Subaru had no idea what it could be.

The dot of red light, floating in the dark and moving slowly, directly faced Subaru's black eyes.
Subaru understood that this was a situation of being "eye-to-eye" with someone or something thanks to his mere intuition.

At the same time, the eyes of the one who had locked with his own, its figure was faintly visible through the dark. A black body that stood in the dark, with a glowing dot of light, and a pair of strangely developed sharp pincers, and above all, a trembling sharp tail stinger?,

Subaru:?WAH??

?An unbelievably huge scorpion, with its tailpiece pointing towards them.

Beatrice:?SUBARU ! !?

At the moment when it swung its tail, Beatrice, who was standing next to him, called out.

?The light swept through the aisle, firing shock waves and violently shattering the four layers of stone.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Arc 6 - Chapter 54, "Re: Starting Life in a Different World from Zero "

by Sin Archbishop of Sloth, Ice - Saturday, December 15, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/12/15/arc-6-chapter-54-re-starting-life-in-a-different-world-from-zero/

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Translated By :

- Ice, /u/Ice_Occultism

Proofread By:

- Nobi
- Review
- Nanashi's Zombie
- Graced

Art Source :

- Source

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

?The world was about to be painted in darkness.

Sitting down without any strength, the silhouette stretched out its countless hands towards the motionless Subaru. Just like spirals, or a whirlpool, the pitch-black hands were trying to wrap Natsuki Subaru along with his soul into its clutches. The places where he was touched, like melting, like crumbling, like coming apart; he knew that his very being was going to go hollow.

But, strangely enough, he couldn’t feel anything unpleasant at all.

Subaru: ??????

His body was going to crumble as far as he could see, his very being was going to be overwritten, his soul was going to be churned up. Whilst it was infringing perhaps the greatest blasphemy that could be done to a living thing, Natsuki Subaru's heart was quiet enough to say that he was at peace.

Though there too was the effects of having disappointed back then resting heavily in the depths of his heart. But, it wasn't just that. Since it was just this silhouette, its shadowy tendrils which were steadfast and unchanging.

It was only this silhouette that showed consideration for Natsuki Subaru's emotions, who wanted to vanish and disappear even now.

I want to die. I want to vanish. I want to fall apart, I want to be trampled, I want there to be nothing left of me, I want to turn to ashes. Even if I am to revive over and over again, come and erase even the ashes left from my body.

This black silhouette will grant such a desirable prayer, this black silhouette will grant what Subaru had earnestly cried out for.

?I love you.

Just repeating these words ad nauseum was irritating. Even if he plugged up his ears and closed his heart, she put her fingers in the gaps of his closed heart, and slid them in from the opened gaps, directly whispering her love.

?I love you. I love you. I love you.

Stop this, I am fed up. No matter how many times you repeat this, I know this. I… don't love you. I… don't love myself. I know about being loved. I know it all too well.

It was his parents. Both his mother and father loved Subaru from the depths of their heart. He knew that. There wasn't any reason for him to not know. And so, Subaru had wanted to disappear. Despite being loved by his parents, he couldn't love himself which had no worth in being loved.

?I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you.

Stop it, forgive me. Enough already. No matter how many times you repeat this, I can't take anything more from this. Already since a long time ago, I let this conclusion slip out from inside of me. I know it. And despite knowing, I just turned my eyes to it.

The people who were concerned about Subaru for dear life, with such desperation, all of them couldn't be bad people. He knew that. He couldn't not know that. So, Subaru should have just died. He should have endeavoured to not be illuminated by the compassion of those bothered by Subaru's very existence.

?I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I

love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you.

Stop it, I said I know. If I endure this torture until the end, will you grant my wish? Will you swallow me and break me and pulverise me and finish what that other person had twice tried to do? Will you delete me into nothingness? If you can do that? if you can do that, I will accept it. I want to accept it. If this is the end.

If this could be the end, then Natsuki Subaru would… disappear…

?I love you. I love you.

???: ?That's as far as you'll go!?

I love you. I love you.

??
????
?????????

A voice… chimed.

It seemed just like the confession of love that was being whispered endlessly into his ears. A voice reminiscent of a silver bell rose up, piercing through the confessions of love that were painting over Natsuki Subaru's existence in the world. It pierced right through and reached down towards Subaru.

Subaru: ??????

A light gushed out. It pierced right into the pitch-black shadowy appendages that had tried to swallow up Subaru. A shockwave broke out, the hand that had received the direct hit snapped off and was torn away, but that was just one from a countless number of them. It was just one amongst thousands that had been cut down, that effort meant absolutely nothing to the hostility coming from that enormous, powerful mass of shadows. But even so, the person who let loose that blow stepped forward with determination, dodging, evading, avoiding the shadowy arms' erratic movements that were launched towards them. And then,

???:??Subaru!?

Subaru: ??hk?

Stumbling forward, calling out Subaru's name, the owner of the voice that was ever so reminiscent of a silver bell grasped his feeble hand. Subaru's body was pulled up abruptly and she took him away from

that spot with all of her strength. I won't let you, as if saying so, the silhouette stretched out its arms, blocking their front and rear, trying to block off both their path forwards and their path of escape. However, even with that obstacle in front of their eyes, her legs went forwards without stopping.

Subaru:?...l...ia!!?

One hand gripping Subaru's own, sticking out her free hand, a dazzling light was born there. And immediately afterwards, a beautiful crystal of ice appeared, shining brightly? it was the very same kind as that of the ice cage which had kept Subaru confined. It was a mesmerising, valiant riposte of ice.

And right in front of them, she smashed down the pitch-black tendrils and expanded it so to make a wall that forcibly wrenched open their path. Witnessing the instant of the shadow being washed away, Subaru, who had harboured the impression that the strange silhouette would swallow everything in its path, could only feel that the heart which he'd thought would remain forever unbeating had started to tremble again.

And, as his heart started to clump back together, as soon as it stirred, his eyes also turned to face the beautiful face right beside him. The long silver hair of the girl who had won over Subaru's heart glittered like the moonlight as she held Subaru's hand whilst looking straight at him.

Though her survival was also confirmed, in his heart, he was not excited by this. Quite the opposite in fact, in the depths of Subaru's skull, he felt like something was going to crack.

Of course he couldn't be delighted by his survival. The people he had made sure were alive, Julius, Beatrice, Echidna, he had let them all die. Though he hadn't seen the end with his own eyes, he can only imagine that things went south with what happened when he left Julius behind down with the Witch Beasts and Reid. Beatrice was blown to smithereens protecting Subaru, and he couldn't even ease Echidna's suffering whilst she was on the brink of death.

Natsuki Subaru was pestilence personified. Death was intrinsic to his very being. As his own death was shaped into nothingness, correspondingly, he imposed that misfortune upon everyone around him, he was such a being, that couldn't help but conjure to mind such a ridiculous metaphor, pestilence ensconced in such a pitch black fate?

Subaru: ??Enough already?

Emilia: ?Huh??

Subaru: ?I said there's no use even struggling on anymore?

Subaru forcibly stopped moving his feet, struggling against Emilia pulling him along by his arm. And still, Emilia tried to pull Subaru's arm, though Subaru now possessing grit determination did not allow this. Although the disparity in their strength was evident, Subaru's determination still remained steadfast. Had he found that dark urge from the depths of his own dark irises? Nevertheless, it took Emilia's breath away and she stopped pulling his arm with all her strength.

Emilia: ??????

The two of them, Subaru and Emilia were at a standoff. Both of them were staring at each other. Looking around at their surroundings, there were no signs of the silhouette that had tried to engulf Subaru. Had he shook it off him when he had escaped together with Emilia? If that's the case, then wouldn't they still come across it again if they turned back? It seemed as if that thing was the best way of completely erasing Natsuki Subaru.

Subaru: ?Why did you come and save me? This behavior, it's absolutely ridiculous. You should've, because you assumed I was an impostor… with that in mind, you should have locked me in that ice cage and chosen to kill me, that would have been the best course of action.?

These words were purposefully deceptive, twisting the truth at will, each word spoken maliciously opening more wounds. His goal was to deny himself even the possibility of thinking of the idea, that Emilia would once again take his hand.

However, to Emilia, who saw only the truth when she looked, Subaru's despicable tactic was futile. Her eyes narrowed in anger, and she raised her voice at Subaru.

Emilia:?I wasn't trying to kill you! I just wanted to hear your side of the story, as there was something unusual about you. And since you hadn't told us about your missing memories, we...?

Subaru:?That! That may've been just something for my own convenience! Did you believe it that easily!? You're a fucking idiot. You've gone crazy. You, Julius, and Beatrice!?

He had been locked up in the ice cage, and he had told them the truth about having amnesia as if he had been in desperation. No one who possessed the ability to think should have believed such words. Ram and Echidna's attitude was the correct one. And yet, despite that, more than half of the others were stupid.

Subaru:?No, NO… Everyone's stupid. I don't get it... In the end… even Echidna apologised to me!!?

Emilia: ?In the end, Echidna…? Subaru, what happened? Are Echidna and the others...?

Emilia begun to ask that question to Subaru who was muttering and groaning with his face covered by his own hands. Even with how worried she looked, he was digging his nails into that beautiful girl's heart. It was because of that that Subaru was letting all of his own emotional scars as if he was made of glass.

Even his lifeblood had bled out, leaving behind only an expression of fragility, a feeling that keeping those existences which matter from feeling pain would be a blessing, achieving only such a heart wrenching, desolate desire, in the figure of a young girl who'd lost her life. As the thoughts revived back in his mind, Subaru let out a scream in an attempt to let out the wounds he had in the depths of his heart.

Subaru:?Dead! Echidna is dead! Both of her legs were blown off, and she bled out in pain… in short, she died in anguish! Beatrice as well!?

Emilia:??hk?

Subaru: ?That child even… protected me… What an absurd thing… cutting off its own tail…If I'd noticed earlier, she might have been fine, but I didn't, and so she died. She said she wouldn't forget me...?

Even if Subaru had forgotten, Beatrice would not forget. Beatrice had firmly declared that she would help Subaru regain his memories without fail. But, she had perished… straight after she had said that.

It was all bark and no bite. Words are wind. And immediately after she had spoken this, she had kept Subaru away from death. And with a face full of relief, she had vanished from this world.

Subaru:?If I were taking her to this end, I should have just left her alone in the first place. I took her out? I took her away? Whatever, how it happened doesn't matter. At any rate, if I took her from anywhere other than here, I never should have. If I hadn't, then...?

The fact was that things ended with her vanishing into thin air, having made such a face.

Subaru:?That's right, that Julius guy too. Surely, around about now, he must already be… in a place with so many scary Witch Beasts… and with that Reid guy inconveniencing him… and then requesting such stuff… What an idiot.?

Everyone here is an idiot. What on earth were they expecting? Requesting that from me, recovering them, doubting whether I was good or not, what on earth were they spouting out?

What would become of their request? What did she mean by recovering them? Wasn't it natural for them to doubt him? Natsuki Subaru was here because he betrayed everything that hung over him. He wanted to survive and have some peace and quiet alone; since that was unbearable, he wanted to disappear and die.

He was the most idiotic, stupid, utterly helpless, he couldn't save anything?
That wasn't even Natsuki Subaru?

Emilia: ??Me and Subaru met for the first time at the Loot House in the Royal Capital?

??

????

????????

Subaru:??????

Subaru had sunk to a bottomless swamp with no escape; he couldn't even move his own body, as he asked himself these questions and wallowed in self-condemnation. Emilia's sudden confession had made Subaru's eardrums throb? her words came out as if it was bringing fond, precious, nostalgic memories back to her.

Subaru:?... Huh??

Subaru was dumbfounded, all he could do was let go of his breath in his lungs when he received those words with no context so suddenly. In no way was this meant to scorn or mock Emilia's sudden actions. Subaru's consciousness simply couldn't keep up with her, and was genuinely stunned into silence. And yet, Emilia ignored his reaction, waving a finger as she allowed more memories to resurface.

Emilia:?Back then, Felt-chan stole a reaaaally important insignia from me. I was in a mad rush with Puck to try and get it back. And then, after we pursued her, we fought against Meili’s onee-san... we were in grave danger, but Reinhardt came to save us. And after that, he aimed at Meili’s onee-san, and what a relief it was… that Subaru came to save me.?

Subaru:??????

Emilia: ?That was when I first met with Subaru… Don’t you remember it??

Hearing her question, Subaru shook his head. Even though she had recited those memories in detail, he had no knowledge of even a small bit of what she had said. It was to be expected of course. Those were the memories of Emilia and?Natsuki Subaru.?No matter what, he couldn’t trace over those actions and recall them, those were bits of memories spun by ?Natsuki Subaru??

Emilia: ?But, Subaru protected me causing him serious injuries, so I brought you back with me to Roswaal’s mansion. And there, whilst she complained, Beatrice treated your wounds. Ram and… surely even Rem got on well with Subaru.?

Subaru:??????

Emilia: ?And then, without her onee-san, Meili acted wickedly and spurred on the attack of some Witch Beasts. Subaru and Ram held them back until Roswaal finished them off… I was staying in the mansion, it was when you’d also promised to take me on a “daaayte”... don’t you remember it??

Subaru:??????

He shook his head. He didn’t remember it. He hadn’t ever done such things. He never had.

Emilia: ?And y’know we did so many things in the mansion. We made mayonnaise, we drank alcohol with everyone, Puck made it snow, we played the “King Gaaayme”… and after that, I was called to the Royal Capital for the Royal selection, right??

Subaru:??????

Emilia:?It was also the first time I ever had a big fight with Subaru. I didn’t want to excessively hurt Subaru anymore, and I was scared and didn’t understand why you were so kind to me. So, I thought that everything would’ve come to an end when we fought...?

As she recounted these memories, Emilia’s voice started to faintly tremble. There was a mixture of joy and sorrow, anxiety and expectation; various conflicting emotions. Subaru was assailed by a feeling of being completely parched.

Unbearable, unbearable, unbearable was this yearning scorching his chest. For the sake of Emilia revealing this expression in its entirety? no, for this single reason, that yearning was unbearable.

Emilia:?I didn't understand what was happening, at the time I was being swept away by the uneasy situation, and then Subaru came running back to me when I was my most depressed, and after that...?

Subaru:??????

Emilia: ?And after that, what was it that you said?... Do you remember it??

Subaru:?I don...?

He couldn't get it out. It didn't come out. He couldn't finish the sentence. The trembling of Emilia's voice, her appeal, her voice that clung onto him, all of these were evident.

The Subaru that was here now was not the?Natsuki Subaru?that she wanted. Subaru burned in envy and jealousy towards himself at the facts thrust out at him which he couldn't comprehend.

Why… what are you,?Natsuki Subaru??You and I, why are we so different,?Natsuki Subaru??

Emilia, and everyone thought like this. Return the real?Natsuki Subaru.?Kill the you, the Natsuki Subaru right now. If he had been in this place already, how long had it been?

Thinking that, despite feeling like he wanted to sigh, and remembering the suffering and injuries… despite all of that, he?

Emilia:??But, I remember everything. I remember what Subaru promised me, and what Subaru told me, and what Subaru has done. I remember everything.?

Joy and hope were lodged in that smile, so that both sadness and anxiety would never appear there. Seeing Emilia's smile, Subaru's lips trembled.

There was... nothing. It was… nowhere. Everything he had said, everything he had done, everything he had promised. Inside of this body, inside of this head, inside of this heart, at the depths of his soul, there was nothing. And so he said?

Subaru:?I don't remember. I don't even remember it. Who are you… who are you! Who are you all! WHO ARE YOU ALL TALKING ABOUT!??

He exploded. Some time ago, with Beatrice and Echidna, he had let himself burst into a fit of emotions, and once again, he also shouted this here.

Emilia:??????

Faced with his derision, Emilia widened her amethyst eyes. All the while still gazing at her, Subaru rapidly blinked his eyes, clearing away the hot tears that had welled up there, with an even dirtier voice

which strove to preserve a malicious tone, he continued to howl,

Subaru: ?Putting your life on the line for someone else’s sake! Springing into action straight away for someone else’s sake! Running away and staying alive for someone else’s sake! Accomplishing something by risking my life for someone else’s sake! Can there be such things!? Can I do such things!??

To hear all of Emilia's recollections, and reply that he couldn't remember. Unable to answer Beatrice's question before she vanished, still bearing that regret in his heart, he'd listen to Emilia gently, almost convincingly, talk about her memories.

Julius entrusted in him, Beatrice believed in him, Echidna forgave him, Emilia relied on him. All of that for?Natsuki Subaru.?He had been summoned to this parallel world, the real him?,

Subaru:??Don’t joke about! Such a guy cannot be Natsuki Subaru!?

There was no way that someone could entrust their wishes to Natsuki Subaru.

Subaru:?I know all too well! About how pathetic, and disgusting, and helpless, and what a rotten bastard Natsuki Subaru is!?

There was no way that someone could believe in Natsuki Subaru with all their heart.

Subaru:?Who were you actually looking at!? What were you talking about!? Such a guy is nowhere to be seen! Everything is a downright lie! The things that guy showed, the things that guy said, everythingeverything! It was just random talk that he spouted out from his mouth! There isn't any value in believing in it!?

There was no way that someone could pardon Natsuki Subaru from that sin.

Subaru:?You think there’s such value in Natsuki Subaru!? Natsuki Subaru is the very essence of pestilence! He’s a useless rotten bastard! I know this better than anyone else!!?

There was no way that someone could rely on Natsuki Subaru.

Subaru: ??????

There was no worth. There was no worth or anything to be desired anywhere. Natsuki Subaru was pestilence personified. Even with someone else, everything just amounted to wounds, loss and death. Thus, let’s end it.

Emilia, and everyone else needed not get hurt anymore because of that guy.

Subaru:?...It doesn’t have to be... me.?

Standing alone, he muttered this out loud. It didn’t have to be himself? No, it’d be way better if it wasn’t Natsuki Subaru. Why did they entrust things to a man who couldn’t do anything. Why did they believe in

him. Why did they forgive him. Why did they rely on him. There should be more ways for them to manage things better. There should be someone else to help them manage things better.

Even if that someone was the?Natsuki Subaru?that everyone wished for, he was nowhere to be found anymore.?Natsuki Subaru?was a pretence that he never possessed from the beginning. He was a person of vanity.

Subaru:?Someone like me, just disregard and toss me away. Someone smarter than me, someone stronger than me will turn up. I am...?

He said that he couldn’t do anything. It was just this sense of sheer helplessness that knocked down Natsuki Subaru.

Everyone had a share of it. Everyone had their own identity. He wanted everyone to understand that. Subaru was unqualified to walk next to Emilia and the others. He was unqualified to desire them. He was neither strong nor smart. They needed not desire to have such a Subaru around. Therefore he would?

Emilia:??My name is Emilia. Just Emilia.?

Subaru:??Huh??

Having spat out his sheer sense of helplessness, with his heart dominated by the things he wanted to spit out as he spiralled towards hollowness, the bell-like voice rang out, like a surprise attack.

Subaru: ??????

He didn’t understand the meaning of those words. ?No, not the meaning. It was her intention that he didn’t understand. Lifting his head up, Subaru looked at the person who had introduced herself as Emilia standing right in front of him. She had her hand on top of her ample chest. Within her shimmering eyes, Subaru could see his own figure reflected, his breath was taken away. Emilia continued on with her speech, right in front of Subaru.

Emilia:?There are so many things I have to tell you, and so many things I have to ask you. Many many many things. But, right now I have to hear just one thing.?

Subaru:??????

Emilia:?Julius, Beatrice, and Echidna. And now, with my hand pulling you along... by running away together... I wanted to protect you at any cost... I didn’t want you to die… That’s why...?

Emilia closed her eyes, and plunged into thought, full of emotion. After a few seconds, she broke off her speech. He could see that various emotions were coursing through her chest. These even included her feelings of anxiety for her companions who weren’t here. Emilia’s cherry blossom lips quivered with those emotions fresh in her mind,

Emilia:?Who are you to make me think about us that way??

Subaru:??????

Emilia: ?Please. ?Let me hear your name.?

At Emilia's question, the very depths of his heart shook within his chest. The manifestation of her intentions weren't to deny the Natsuki Subaru in front of her eyes or to recover the old Subaru.

?They were an affirmation of Natsuki Subaru.

Subaru:??????

The one before us is a fake, return the real Natsuki Subaru to us, words along those lines, behavior along those lines, resentment along those lines, would have been easier to bear. Yet still, it was because it was nothing other than something Subaru had desired himself.

He still preferred the side of those who said that his self-standing in front of their eyes was a fake, that they wanted him to return Natsuki Subaru, the ones who said that to him, the ones who wished that from him, the ones who tormented him with that, he still preferred their side.

But, it was Emilia that?, No, not just her. Up until here, everyone who had spoken to Natsuki Subaru had requested the same thing.

Irrespective of whether he was strong or weak. Thus, even if he let himself be seen so shamefully, and couldn't help forgetting everything, he still hadn't changed. By their words, by their behaviour, by their life, they showed their need for Natsuki Subaru?
Subaru: ?...Why??

Emilia: ??????

Subaru: ?Why are you here, Natsuki Subaru? What can that guy do? What do you expect from him...??

He didn't understand it. In this… In just this overwhelming despair, in their helpless numerical inferiority, what would happen if Natsuki Subaru was there? In what way would the situation improve? Could they break through this?

Subaru:?A weak, dumb, miserable, spineless guy… what do you even see in him??

Emilia:??Maybe it's as you say.?

Emilia cast her eyes down at Subaru entreating her with this, shaking her head without denying it. Her eyes were bordered by long eyelashes, her voice ever so reminiscent of a silver bell tickled his heart; everything about Emilia seemed to be a linchpin that tied Natsuki Subaru to this world.

Emilia:?There are plenty of people stronger than Subaru, and surely there are many people smarter than Subaru. But, I like to be with Subaru at any time. I believe that Subaru can do it, I rely on him. And still...?

Subaru:??????

Emilia:?If people are helping me anyway, more than those who are capable, someone who helped because he happened to be there? certainly, having it be someone I like, would make me so so much happier.?

And, whilst smiling, Emilia said this. Whilst smiling and with her cheeks slightly blushing, she said this.

Subaru:??????

Subaru let go of his breath. Having received Emilia's words, in that instant, surely all time had stopped within his body. With a bad-um, bad-um, the depths of his heart pounded. And at the same time in which his feelings had boiled up from with him, another emotion rose up; it was scorn towards?Natsuki Subaru.?

Subaru:??Hah?

I see,?Natsuki Subaru.?Did you fall in love with this beautiful girl? Someone who is probably way out of my league. Such a young woman who would probably avert her face from me?
Such a handsome knight, such a wise woman, such a sweet little girl. And finally, such a beautiful girl right in front of his eyes.

Entrusting to you, believing in you, forgiving you, wishing it were you. Not asking you to be a savior, nor even expecting you to be a savior, merely, if those staggering walls had to be crossed, rather than someone capable, just wishing it were you.

Emilia:??My name is Emilia. Just Emilia.?

Once again, Emilia gave the silent Subaru her name. She looked over to him with her amethyst eyes. Subaru's dark-brown eyes gazed back at those eyes right in front of him. And then,

Emilia:??Please. Let me hear your name.?

Subaru: ?I am...?

He hesitated forming his words, hearing Emilia's question once again.

He had denied it over and over again. He couldn't do it. He couldn't do it. He couldn't do it. He had repeatedly denied it. So, this was surely nothing more than convenient wordplay.

?Entrusted, believed in, forgiven, relied on.

In this desert's tower, if he were qualified to be treated thus by Emilia and the others.
In this desert's tower, if there was someone that could save Emilia and the others.

If that was?Natsuki Subaru?, then if that?Natsuki Subaru?was nowhere to be found…

Subaru:??My name is… Natsuki Subaru.?

Emilia:??????

Subaru:?Entrusted by Julius, believed in by Beatrice, forgiven by Echidna, relied on by Emilia… by you. If that man's name is Natsuki Subaru, then...?

The black haired boy answered the young woman with the glimmering silver hair, staring with his dark-brown eyes into her amethyst ones. To the question that had quivered from her cherry blossom lips, his blood-stained lips answered back.

Subaru:?I AM NATSUKI SUBARU.?

Right now, feeble, without strength, mind and body wracked by despair, but still he declared it. For Emilia, for Emilia and everyone else, for you, for you and everyone else, for their safety, for peace and quiet, and their wishes and their desires.

Emilia:??????

Subaru strongly declared it. In his heart, he hadn't fully wiped away the pieces of distrust towards?Natsuki Subaru.?. Even now, the one that caused?his?death hadn't left Subaru's mind?No, not his death, Meili's. The face and voice of that wicked man. Maybe when that was wiped away, he wouldn't come.

But, it's okay. Even still, it's okay. It's not that I wanted to be saved. It's not that I will always cling on and wish to be saved.

I wish to save you all. I want to help you all.

?If that can be done by?Natsuki Subaru?then I will do it.

Starting from the same point, heading toward the same goal. As long as the path in their hearts were the same... Even if I dislike you, I will not complain.

Let me, let?Natsuki Subaru?save Emilia and the others.

Subaru:?Thank you, Emilia. ?You made me believe in myself.?

Emilia:?...Subaru, I am??

With Subaru's reply, ripples rose within Emilia's amethyst eyes. Her lips quivering, Emilia started to somehow string together some words towards Subaru who had named himself as such. And just after that,

Subaru:??hk?

Up until then, nothing had disturbed the two of them talking. The situation which had until now remained

peaceful, cracked in an instant.

Subaru:??Emilia!?

Near them, the aisleway where the two had been conversing was in a flash crushed and pulverised by a shadow. The aisleway lost its shape, and Emilia, losing her balance, lost her footing. Facing her, Subaru who had barely clung onto his foothold strongly kicked against the floor.

At that moment, the tower lost its shape, smashed up and weathered. Perishing next to lumps of stone cladded in the aroma of sand. Subaru immediately dived towards Emilia who had started to fall. The distance shrunk, catching up to her silver hair still lingering above, and finally he closed his arms around her slender body.

Emilia:?Subaru… tch?

As he clutched her slender, soft, warm body, Emilia stirred, calling out Subaru's name. Perhaps, she had tried to move herself so to change the position she was held at. And because of that, the one that helped and the one that had been helped reversed. Emilia, and everyone else were truly crazy. But alas, Emilia's effort had been completely useless in this situation.

He didn't want to envision what would happen were Emilia to fall straight down to the ground. It was neither the hard floor of the tower, nor the sprawling sand dunes outside that would come to meet Subaru and her. It would be the pitch-black shadows wrapping this tower that would lead to the end of everything.

So, the two of them would end up being swallowed by the silhouette whilst embracing each other just like that.

?No, the opposite.

This surely would become the beginning. Starting up once again, once more, starting from the end afresh, right here.

For that reason, he would make a promise. Right here, in this world, in this place, he would exchange genuine words with Emilia.

To save them, wanting to save them. Let's start from the end, holding everything. The time for sputtering and babbling was over.

Infatuation like a curse is nice, isn't it? It's what I always wanted.

He didn't know whether Natsuki Subaru had the requirements needed to be loved. But, since the requirements needed to be loved by Emilia, by Emilia and everyone else were there

Even if they still forget, even if they… even if they don't remember the words you told me, in this ending world, in this world beginning anew.

Even if they still forget, even if they… even if they don’t remember the words that I struck in you all, in this ending world, in this world beginning anew.

I will remember. I will remember everything. Because even now, even if I have to cling onto them, I will not forget them.

Subaru:?Even if you forget ?I will not forget any of you.?

?Always remember, Natsuki Subaru.

The silhouette drew ever closer, its darkness engulfing Emilia and Subaru. Just like that, Emilia… and Natsuki Subaru were sinking, sinking towards the depths of the shadows.

Metempsychosis, everything was coming apart, everything was becoming zero, the end was coming as expected. And, it began in the place where everything became zero.

?A battle to kill Natsuki Subaru and bring back?Natsuki Subaru.?.

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Arc 6 - Chapter 56, “Talking about what Awaits”

by admin - Monday, October 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/10/29/arc-6-chapter-56-talking-about-what-awaits/

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Translated By :

- Ringo

Proofread By :

- Furuta
- Review
- Ice
- Nana

Art Source :

- Modified By : Furuta
- Art Used Meili
- Art Used Subaru

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?----?

Dangerously with the intent of making his body lose support and fall down the spiral staircase, the girl--Meili, looked on in surprise.

Closing his big round eyes, Subaru could not help but complain at this situation, a turn of events he had predicted but doubted halfway through.

He was glad that by using?Return by Death?, he was able to eventually prevent this tragedy from happening. This was also the proof that this young girl had been the one to push Subaru's back twice in the past, in the different timelines.

To think that the criminal who had pushed Subaru from a height and into his doom-- who had been killed by the very hands of ?Natsuki Subaru? previously, was Meili Potroute.

Meili:?.....Responsibility for killing me, huh, there you go again saying strangeeeee things, onii-san.?

At that moment, as Meili widened her eyes and loosened her lips in concern, Subaru's arm immediately turned and his finger traced his torso, he continued to smile.

She took a step backwards and faced Subaru, who was standing at a distance from the spiral staircase.

Meili:?Perhaps your mind, along with memories, lost several other th~ings. This misunderstanding can happen only if that happened.?

Subaru:?Misunderstanding??

Meili:?Yes, don't you think s~o? --Me trying to kill onii-san, is a te~rrible misunderstanding.?

Inching backwards, Meili said so with a smile. Witnessing her truly dignified approach, this was something even Subaru had not expected.

He had never thought that he would be able to avoid this mishap. But if the one he was struggling against was?*Myself*?-- no, Meili, then he might just manage to convince her.

She acts quietly, adamantly, that too in a negative way.

Choosing the most seemingly optimal solution in the moment was her way of living.

Frankly, that was precisely a?Beast's? way of living.

Meili:?There is no need to be suspicious. If I really wanted to kill onii-san, wouldn't the sand dunes have had been better for that rather than this tower? Ah, onii-san doesn't remember all that, so you may not kno~w.?

Subaru:?I guess so. It's so weird. If you wanted to kill us from the beginning, you had gotten countless chances to do so. But, you didn't do that.?

Meili:?Don't you agre~e? Then.....?

Subaru:?But, the matter of your motivation to kill me sprouting and growing since this morning is a totally separate issue. Am I correct to say that it is a chain reaction due to what happened last night??

Meili:?----?

As Subaru mentioned that, Meili's facial expression changed. She sealed her lips, erased her smile, and then took a deep sigh.

And, she shrugged her shoulders in a negative attitude, something that did not match her appearance.

Meili:?Perhaps, I have been trapped into this awkward situation, I suppo~se??

Subaru:?What do you mean by?Awkward Situation???

Meili:?Didn't you try tha~t? To lie about your memory loss, and see whether I would push off onii-san..... To throw aside any disturbances you may have by your side. To see how useful I was in this tower?..... The perfect time and chance, to do so...?

The girl, who tried to clarify the authenticity of the situation, is saddened by at her disadvantageous position.

Certainly, up to this point, there had been no malice whatsoever on her part, but it is also true that Subaru knows how Meili will act. Even if she denies it, the evidence against Meili will not change.

However, there are some things that can be said clearly. They are--,

Meili:?Well, what exactly should I d~o? Since it's already this far, should I try resisting and running away from here? Especially when that bad animal-chan isn't here right now, even I can get away from onii-san by myse~lf?

Subaru:?Don't get me wrong, Meili. My memory loss isn't a lie for deceiving you. It's true, that's why I'm serious, like I should be?

Meili:?That's that, I actually did doubt whether you were lying or not b~ut..... In the end, what is it that onii-san wants to do? Do you think I believe it just because I'm not retaliating in respo~nse??

Subaru:?--uh?

Saying that, with her tongue out, the girl puts her hand on her slender neck.

At that moment, Subaru's heartbeat grew stronger and faster. However, ironically enough, it was a mere metaphor for killing, not something as ridiculous as Meili remembering her own death.

Thinking that, the young female assassin signified that she could do something serious to Subaru's heart.

That's why Subaru did not intend to let her act on that thought, but--,

Meili:?Actually, I really don't recommend using ways of killing that take a lo~ng time. I do have methods that don't require much suffering, but onii-san is pretty bad at concealing stuff.....?

Subaru:?--I, don't intend you to kill or hurt you. After this, from tomorrow onwards too, I intend to treat you the same way as I have done till now.?

Meili:?.....Huh??

Meili once again changed her expression, hearing Subaru's response.

However, it was different from the change that had come across her when she had opted for the utmost optimal solution for the immediate situation. Meili's expression was filled with obvious dismay, as she looked at Subaru with eyes that could not comprehend what he was saying.

At that gaze, Subaru nodded.

Subaru:?Fortunately, your crime was prevented in advance, and so if we were to keep it a secret, it'll all be fine. Even if you only think of killing me through some different method, all I'll have to do is prevent that too. Although, all this undeniably leaves a bad taste in my mouth. Really bad?

Meili:?Ah..... Wh-What are you.....?

Subaru:?But at least, did you get it this time? Doing something to me, for you, is an incredibly huge risk. If you're going to say?But still?, then, you know, the very least, let's talk properly. If you’re still dissatisfied, I'll hear as much as I.....?

Meili:?Dissatisfied? Dissatisfied you say.....?

Suddenly, Meili murmured with a quiet and shivering voice.

After that, she tightly sealed her lips,

Meili:?What's dissatisfying is this situati~on! I can't believe it!?

Subaru was saying all this in order to persuade her into making a moderate decision. Following that, Meili shouted, with her eyes looking at Subaru as if she were looking at something unbelievable.

Meili:?Can't believe it, can't believe it, I can't beli~eve it.....?

Saying this, her hand busily toyed with her braid.

Subaru could see that she had gotten confused about her own mental self-defence and that it was a sign-- a sign of dependence on someone who had worn the same hairstyle.

Meili:?Onii-san has no idea what I had tried to do right no~w! If that's not it then, it's str~ange. If that's not it then.....?

With words filled with frustration, Meili had an unnatural desperate attitude.

This was Subaru’s first time seeing Meili so disturbed-- no, rather he had first seen her like this in her?Book of The Dead?.

After what she had done last night, encountering Subaru in?Taygeta?, and after having a conversation with?Natsuki Subaru?, she had decided to kill the amnesiac Natsuki Subaru.

However, this plan of murder, carried out in such a hurry, would have had been a double-edged sword for her too.

Although Subaru would have been thrown down into death, ignorant, how did she plan to escape the allegations of murder that could be placed upon her after Subaru's death?

It was probably possible to cover it up as just an accident-- or probably not.

Whether Emilia or Beatrice or Ram and the others, by now, Subaru knew that they would not let his?Death?slide by without even trying to uncover the truth behind it.

In that case, it was inevitable that Meili's crime would be revealed.

Ram, Julius, or Echidna were much smarter than Subaru, and they would be able to see the truth behind the death at once. It was unimaginable to think that Meili had never taken that into her consideration.

That's why, this is--,

Subaru:?This is, just a desperate urge of yours. You are, just in a habit of murder. You, don't even consider other factors for solving issues. That, isn't your fault.?

Meili:?--hk! Don't talk like you understa~nd! What does onii-san..... what do you---! What do you know about me!??

Subaru:?--I know.?

Meili:?----?

Meili, who had been grinding her teeth, stiffened as if she had been doused in cold water.

Looking straight at Meili, Subaru assertively declared that,

Subaru:?Meili. I know about you. I know it may sound pretty creepy but, I may even know more about you than the only other two people in this world that know about you, you know??

Meili’s fear increases at Subaru's shrug.

Thinking that it was completely obvious, however, Subaru was at the same time looking for a way to convey that undeniable truth-- he was struggling with the twisted?self-love? in the back of his chest.

I will remember,*?My?* neverending temptation.

A whispering voice seemed to appear right before Natsuki Subaru took any action, repeatedly tempting Subaru to solve his problems through murder, the worst action packed with cowardice.

By reading her?Book of the Dead?, the ghost of the dead Meili Potroute and its temptations, had come back to haunt Natsuki Subaru--,

Subaru:?--No, that's not it?

Shaking his head, Subaru then criticises what the girl he had killed had done.

Over all this time, something had happened. Looking at the confusion and frustration of the girl in front. Above all, recalling what Subaru had seen about Meili in her?Book of The Dead?.

Considering what Meili had suffered, it could never be said that she became simply murderous.

This is not the same Meili as the one in her?Book of The Dead?

That was something Subaru's soft heart was somewhat sure about.

After all, at that evidence, the girl with that voice did not show herself to Subaru.

?----?

If we were to say it terribly straightforwardly and without flinching, Subaru had lived through the life of Meili by the?Book of The Dead?. That was her mindset in normal daily life-- create an impression, establishing a way of action, but she never thought of ending someone's life so unfairly and unreasonably.

In those days, there was an unquestionable emptiness in Meili's heart, and her experiences increased the?fear? inside her, but there was one thing that glowed within her.

The name of that is--,

Subaru:?--Elsa Granhiert?

Meili:?--hk?

Subaru:?That, is the reason why you tried to kill me, yes??

At that question, Meili's facial expression distorted with bitterness.

That was the anger of getting something sensitive that should never be touched getting poked-- no, getting trampled upon.

However, Subaru still dared to do so. Because.

Subaru:?When entering someone's house, remove your shoes to come down and be in direct contact with the soil and rise into people's hearts, is the rule of the Natsuki household.?

As a member of that, Subaru climbs into the heart of the young assassin.

This was something that was forcing itself into her heart--.

A black murderer, whom Subaru did not know, but was familiar with.

Just thinking about her gave rise to feelings in the heart, like a desire of relief, longing, sadness and rage,

and, emptiness-- the feelings that Meili felt for her were extremely complicated, yet, extremely simple.

--Meili, longed for Elsa, loved her, and admired her.

That's why, having her been stolen away gave rise to despair, suffering, hatred, wrath, murderous intent and disappointment.

All the time when she had accompanied Subaru and the others in their journey, it had all been for revenge-- could not be said for her unskilled self.

In fact, it could be said that Meili was very clumsy.

A despairing young girl who was ignorant about her own emotions, enough to not know about the depth of the scar in her heart.

--Making up her own environment, and a professional assassin, that's who Meili Potroute was.

Subaru:?Did you want to take, revenge??

Meili:?..... I don't kno~w?

Subaru:?Even so, Elsa was.....?

Meili:?I have no such wish. I know that….?

Meili shakes her head twice at Subaru's question.

Subaru understands Meili's feelings. And, Meili was also well-aware of where Subaru's words were coming from.

In this situation, Subaru and Meili stood equal to each other.

That's why, filled with sadness and stuck in a dark chamber without knowing the correct answer, all she could do to express her emotions was to act like the assassin she is and ”murder”.

At the same time, the hatred that Meili held while being trapped in that world, left only that option for her.

Despite all this, Meili's desperation for Elsa did not end.

Elsa, for Meili, may have had been a light but, that light was too bright for ordinary people to follow.

Subaru:?I know, that you are holding back your feelings. But, the answer you're looking for perhaps, cannot be found this way. That's why.?

?----?

Subaru:?Leave this place to me. I won't make things worse. At the very least, I'll work hard to make things not become worse. If you too think that?

Meili:?.....I ca~n't, trust it. Anything that, comes out of onii-san's mouth?

No matter how forcefully Subaru persuaded, Meili, who was hiding her face, did not nod even slightly.

That was obvious. Because, that meant finding a way of action that did not exist in her way of life.

On the other hand, there was Natsuki Subaru, who will propose and preach whatever he wants without flinching even the slightest.

On top of that, if a senior ever invited him to a place with full preparation and bashed him, even Subaru would be surprised by how much it would sting.

Henceforth, since he had an idea that she would say this, he had well prepared other measures.

Subaru:?So what comes of my mouth cannot be believed, I will reflect on that. Thanks, until yesterday I was already pretty bad with promises. That's why.?

Meili:?That's why??

Subaru:?Not a promise between you and me, let's make a promise between you and us.?

?----?

When Subaru says that, Meili frowns, unaware of his intentions.

However, the answer to her doubts became clear quickly afterwards.

That is--,

???:?--Mm, it's fine. I was also carefully listening, as the witness of the promise.?

Meili:?--hk?

Hearing that voice, Meili’s shoulders shiver, but she calms herself. What appeared in front of her next was an outstanding beauty, whose magnificence could not be doubted—.

At her appearance, Meili’s eyes widen, and her lips tremble.

Meili:?Onee-san..... you, heard it??

???:?Subaru told me, to stay here and see..... to stop Meili if she was doing something dangerous, that’s what he said.?

Saying that, stepping onto the place where both of them stood, with fluttering hair that was reminiscent of the glitter of moonlight and standing as a figure of a seemingly mythical beauty, was Emilia.

Hearing Emilia’s words, Meili rotated her neck in astonishment.

Meili:?If I, did something dangerous.....? Not, onii-san.....??

Emilia:?Yeah, if Meili did something dangerous. Well, are you fine now, Subaru??

Subaru:?--. Yeah, that's right. It’s just that it made me a bit anxious?

Emilia:?--? Why are you turning your face away? Did something happen, Subaru??

Subaru:?No, it's just that, you're just, too cute to look at directly.....?

Subaru responds with a whisper at Emilia's question, who had tilted her neck. As Emilia tilted her neck even more, Subaru managed to put aside the trembles of his throat and his embarrassment, and turned his attention to the confused Meili once again.

As Subaru had foreseen the attack, he was confident about stopping Meili's crime. The problem after that was the occurrence of?Natsuki Subaru?.

Talking about his purpose, then, it may be possible that in the loop when?Natsuki Subaru? had killed

Meili, it may have had been simply self-defence against Meili's attempt to murder, and immediately after stopping her,?Natsuki Subaru? did not necessarily take actions against Subaru's will.

Therefore Subaru determined that he would leave this problem to people stronger than him.

He has full faith that even if his consciousness disappears, and?Natsuki Subaru? appears, Emilia certainly-- no, his comrade will certainly do something about it.

Emilia:?Listen, Meili. I believe what Subaru has said. If Meili can't believe it, then it's fine to just carefully observe him. And, if he breaks the promise, I'll be angry alongside.?

Meili:?Observe, onii-san.....? That's, weird. Isn't that strange. Observing onii-san and onee-san, is what, I.....?

Emilia:?If Meili wants to do something bad, that can be only after Subaru actually breaks the promise. Till then, observe whether he breaks it or not. Isn't that fair??

?----?

Meili was confused at Emilia's words, who bent enough to have their eyes be at the same height.

In her mind, her ways to cope and solve truths and circumstances distorted and crumbled.

Subaru:?You seemed to be about to make a huge mistake, but my and Emilia-chan's nice save somehow prevented that. That's why, this is my chance to learn how it should have had been done. This is your chance to find a different solution than killing me..... it's a bet.?

Meili:?Bet.....??

Subaru:?Settle down the evil feelings inside you, and see whether you still want to kill me, or whether you've changed your mind..... I'll also, do my best at giving you lectures about morality.?

Scratching his head, Subaru laid down this path for Meili's confusion.

Frankly, unneeded care is unneeded. There was a certain way of living that Meili had followed until now, and Subaru was trying to arbitrarily open new options for her.

But, if she refused it, her path will meet a dead end because of the Sand Tower. If her way of life is followed, they can never conquer this Sand Tower together.

And--,

Subaru:?I'm not letting you get off this train. I don't know how old you are or anything but..... When I was around your age, I got the adults around me to help me all the time.?

Meili:?----?

Subaru:?That's why, I will help you even if you don't want me to. You are far too young to think stuff like what you should be doing or refusing adults' help?

Saying that, Subaru stepped forward to reduce the distance between him and Meili.

Seeing the distance between them shrink, Meili's shoulders shivered. Subsequently, Subaru patted the head of the nervous Meili, who looked up with uneasiness in her eyes.

He won't crush that thin neck. He presents this absolutely different alternative, to?Natsuki Subaru?.

Meili is, a child that does not need to die. And--,

Emilia:?I sincerely request, please trust Subaru..... trust us, Meili.?

Meili:?--Ah.?

While Subaru caressed her head, Emilia hugged from behind, leaving her completely immobile. Embracing her body, Emilia rubs her cheek while Meili lightly chews her lips,

Emilia:?This Sand Tower is a place too small for you to decide something big?

?----?

Emilia:?Leave this place, go to a bigger place and find your answer there. We will also work re~ally hard?

Teaching her all this when she has such feelings, while entrapped in such a cage, is not exactly the best thing to do.

Even so, this was the only way Subaru could have said it. With complete and utmost care, and with kinds words, they conveyed it to Meili.

?----?

In response, Meili repeatedly and thoughtfully glanced into their eyes.

Meili:?I don't want, to forget about..... Elsa.?

Subaru:?Ah, that's fine. There is no need to forget someone you loved. It's just that, we~ll.....?

Cutting his own words off, Subaru thought of the beautiful woman in black he saw in the?Book of The Dead?.

What a strange impression. He has never been in contact with her, but she still has a sense of familiarity. Reminiscing such an opponent, Subaru subconsciously stroked his belly.

Subaru:?--Even if it's someone you love, I wish you won't imitate their way of doing things.?

Yes, I believed in that.

--Meili was powerless, had lost her path, but still, after several silent seconds had passed, she nodded.

Arc 6 - Chapter 58, "That is That, This is This" - Part 1/2

by admin - Wednesday, November 28, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/28/arc-6-chapter-58-that-is-that-this-is-this-part-1-2/

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Translated By :

- Ringo

Proofread By :

- Ice
- Furuta

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—Let’s look for Reid’s book in the library of ?Taygeta?.

This is what Subaru proposed as a necessity to immediately capture this tower as a part of his two-tier plan.
The moment everyone heard that, their expressions changed.

Emilia: ?Really?..... Are you serious??

Subaru: ?Oh, Emilia-chan, you were always pretty serious about books, weren’t you. How interesting.?

Emilia: ?Enough, hk, Subaru!?

Seeing Subaru raise his eyes in reaction, Emilia's cute cheeks turn red with anger. While happily looking at her loveliness, Subaru looks around at everyone in a gesture of saying ?get it??.

Subaru: ?I think finding Reid's book is the fastest way of capturing the second layer. Don't you all think so too??

Emilia: ?I asked this just know but, how? I'm not against searching for the book. It's just that, I don't know how we're supposed to look for Reid's book. And also.....?

???: ?--Would Reid Astrea's book be in that library in the first place??

Following Subaru's proposal, as Emilia tilted her head, Julius takes over the second half of her sentence.

At that, with everyone's eyes at him, Julius, with his eyes covered in his long fringes, gazes over his head. Above that ceiling, lied the second layer.

Julius: ?Although it is hard to believe, a true jewel with his name etched into history, Reid Astrea is the one awaiting challengers of the ?Trial? of the second layer. It cannot be questioned that he is a real person, and the same one as the one from 400 years ago..... but his death now, has room of doubt for me.?

Subaru: ?Since he looks quite lively like that, then that doesn't necessarily mean he's dead, right? I didn't really think about this theory, but it doesn't really mean that train of thought is wrong too.?

The truth is, after hearing what Emilia and the others had said, Subaru was merely recognizing the death of a person from hundreds of years ago.
If you were to meet Reid without knowing his circumstances, you would not believe that he is actually dead. He is rather overflowing with strength. He is too energetic for a dead person.

Subaru: ?Nonetheless, it's hardly a debate. I don't think someone can live for hundreds of years, normally they should be dead by that time. No, Beatrice??

Beatrice: ?Regardless, Betty has still been living for 400 years, in fact.?
Emilia: ?I think, around a hundred years for me??
Echidna: ?If you consider my time of birth then I think I'd be around 400 too. Though the time I was up for was short.?
Shaula: ?Me too! Me too, Master! I've also been waiting for you here for 400 years! I missed you! I request a hug after these 400 years!?

Subaru: ?Well that's a lot of long-living characters!? Even Emilia-chan!??

He meant to seek consent, but he faced an unexpected objection.
To think that there were so many long-living characters. The average age of their party would shoot up largely, if not extremely, with this.
Especially, Emilia And Beatrice's ages were jaw dropping.
But, there were still some things that could convince them.

Subaru: ?I-Is that so. Emilia-chan is a half-elf..... and I'm completely convinced about her extraordinary beauty. So half-elves are supposed to be beautiful and live long huh.?

Emilia: ?Um, well, that's right..... Subaru is still not afraid of elves, even without memories??

Subaru: ?If you're asking whether I'm afraid or not, I'm afraid of that cuteness. It's a pretty brutal weapon. If I look at it with my naked eyes I fear that they'll go blind. I'm being honest right now.?

Emilia: ?.....Enough, stupid.?

With slightly dyed cheeks, Emilia scolds Subaru, who had manage to lighten the atmosphere for the moment, but he warms himself that he must not create any such frivolous misunderstandings.

Emilia is extremely kind, so much so that she seems to unconditionally care for Subaru. It made his heart not only beat faster, it made his heart throb. But throbbing in a good way.

Subaru: ?Ha~..... At that, you sort of felt relieved at things being like earlier, yes, Beatrice??

Beatrice: ?This is a feeling of being somewhat unconvinced, I suppose..... Though this head pat isn't so bad in fact.?

When his heart was completely blown away by Emilia, it calms down when he strokes Beatrice's head. Beatrice's mood also seems to have been made better, she seems to like it so much that it may be possible to convince her.

Echidna: ?It's not as if I don't know the reason behind Julius' concern, I also deduce to the theory that Reid is actually dead. When I came in contact in him, I sort of got an impression as well.?

Subaru: ?That impression is??

Echidna: ?Firstly, just as Natsuki-kun says, Reid Astrea cannot be considered to be from a species that lives long lives. He is a human, even if he is exceptionally extraordinary, he is still a human. Second, his personality?

Subaru: ?Personality? Um, are you talking about how he's so over-energetic??

Echidna: ?I would say that is all well and good. I just do not think that someone with such a bright personality would just miraculously sit and stay in a tower like this for 400 years. Her..... If even Shaula had never met him then that means, that he has forever been stuck in that room of the second layer. It's extremely hard to believe. Although it's my arbitrary impression, I feel he'd leave in just three days.?

Subaru: ?Ah-?

Hearing Echidna's opinion who shrugged her shoulders, Subaru responded with a calm yet surprised combination of voices.

Emilia and the others turn their heads and also think of Reid's restless attitude. They were completely convinced about the credibility of Echidna's opinion.
Looking at that, Echidna turned her innocent gaze towards Julius.

Echidna: ?Well, that was the impression that I got, is Julius convinced??

Julius: ?I have no choice but to be convinced. Certainly, if we consider the impression of the actual Reid Astrea, he is certainly not someone who would stay for long at a single place. The reason he cannot do that is, he is indeed currently tied to the ?Trial?..... is what we should rightfully be thinking??

Subaru: ?Well so, his existence is tied to the tower, huh??

While listening to Echidna and Julius' conversation, he thinks back to the ending of the last loop.
Reid freely walked around the tower when everything had become a total mess, and just casually strolled around. With an absolutely carefree attitude, he travelled from the second to the fourth layer and encountered Subaru.
Subaru could hardly see any restrictions on his freedom at that time.

The truth is, if that was indeed his last chance to survive, he could have had easily jumped out from the tower. --But, him not doing that is.

Julius: ?--? What is it? Do you need something from me??

Subaru: ?No.....?

Julius: ?Hm? I'm pretty sure my eyes, nose and mouth are still on my face, is there something wrong with that??

Subaru: ?Ah, unlike Emilia-chan's, it isn't cute. Anyway.....?

The conversation had driven away from the main topic, and Subaru looked at Julius.
Once again, he returns to the main topic, which was ?Reid's book?.

Subaru: ?Then, so the first thing we concluded is that Reid is an energetic dead person. ?Taygeta? has the ?Book of the Dead?, am I right??

Ram: ?For the moment, we can recognize at least this much. The person whose book is being read, their memories will flow into the mind of the reader..... Barusu and Julius have confirmed this much. Sadly, it seems you have forgotten even that, though?

Subaru: ?I'm sorry, don't hold it against me-- well, that is the main focus of this conversation?

Lifting his fingers, he points the tip of it towards Subaru. Regardless whether that gesture was intended to be unpleasant or not, Ram twisted his fingers, and Subaru experienced pain as he let out a ?ghk!?.
Following that interaction, Beatrice loudly voices an ?ah?.

Beatrice: ?I see, so that's what that means, I suppose!?

Emilia: ?Beatrice, did you understand what Subaru wanted to say??

Beatrice: ?Well understood, in fact. I see, so that's what that means, I suppose-- in other words, using Reid's?Book of the Dead? as an advantage to defeat Reid, is what it means, in fact?

Subaru: ?That's right?

Subaru confirms Beatrice's statement with a pained expression as he continued swinging his twisted fingers.
Hearing that explanation, Emilia rounds her purple-blue eyes and muttered out an ?Is that so?.

--Capturing the dead person using his?Book of the Dead?.

Earlier it had been established that a?Book of the Dead? is a record of a person's life and at the same time it could be said that it was a ?Book of Strategy? as it would have a glimpse of the person's death recorded.

And if you ask Subaru, who is well experienced with ?Death?and has already died four times-- the cause of death, cannot be avoided very easily.

Subaru: ?Like I said, by reading his?Book of the Dead?, we will find out how he died, which we can easily exploit to our advantage. Perhaps, the?Book of the Dead? were there for that exact reason in the first place, you know??

Echidna: ?That is..... something we don't know about. But, if we go by what you're saying then, certainly. They went out of their way enough to have a dead person take the trial. It would not be strange if that was their aim all along?

Subaru: ?No, you really don't have to presume so much.....?

Subaru smiles bitterly at Echidna, who had rounded her eyes and given an unexpected opinion.

Regardless, it could not be denied that formulating a strategy or finding a loophole was difficult in this impossibly difficult situation.

Subaru: ?Though, there's one thing, that I can say with complete confidence..... not just this amnesiac me, even the me with memories had tried this plan I think?

Beatrice: ?.....That can be agreed to, I suppose. Such a way of action, there is no way Subaru did not try it, in fact?

Emilia: ?Mm, I guess so. Subaru is good at such things?

Subaru: ?To say I'm good at such things.....?

Subaru's eyes shine at Emilia's unexpected and sudden evaluation of ?Natsuki Subaru?. Subaru's reaction was of astonishment, but Emilia quickly pins her fingers to his cheeks.

Emilia: ?Mhm, won't do won't do. The one working the hardest is Subaru. I need to care otherwise.....?

Ram: ?Emilia-sama, I understand your feelings but, his cheeks are reddening?

Ram, paying careful attention to her actions, took away Emilia's hand, who was criticizing herself.

Lately, Emilia and Beatrice have been giving quite sensitive responses, perhaps because of their feelings for ?Natsuki Subaru? that are still left within them that they feel.

Completely honestly, he felt bad for that. He wanted to return that Natsuki Subaru to Emilia as soon as possible.

Anyway, in accordance with Emilia's impression, it was possible that the Subaru till yesterday arrived at the same conclusion of using the strategy of utilising the?Book of the Dead?.

After listening to Subaru's suggestion, Meili puts her hand on her mouth and lets out an ?ah?.

Meili: ?...That reminds me, yesterday night, I saw onii-san in?Taygeta? with lots of books scattered around him. That was because of this I suppose~?

Emilia: ?Last night, Subaru went to?Taygeta?? Hmm.....?

Subaru: ?Along with that, did you see what book I was reading??

Meili: ?Um..... I don't know that much. I'm so~rry?

Patting on Shaula’s knee, Meili strokes her head and bows her head.
Waving his hands towards the girl, Subaru thought back to ?himself? who was not actually him,

Even though it was confirmed that Subaru had scattered around several ?Books of the Dead?, any further details could not be seen by her.

As a result of which, the disappointment of not getting the desired answer to that question was not too much. However, it is certain that something went wrong with ?Natsuki Subaru? when he was in the library of ?Taygeta?.

Either before he scattered the books around, or immediately after that--,

Echidna: ?Possibly, what if those actions themselves are related to losing your memory??

Julius: ?He scattered around several books, is it..... What if, the amount of ?Books of the Dead? he read was past the allowed limit, and there was no space to store so much of content and his memory overflowed??

Subaru: ?I want to think you're wrong, but I can't deny it. What the hell, amnesia!?

Arc 6 - Chapter 59, “Smiles in the White World” [Ending Part]

by discountanon - Sunday, December 02, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/12/02/arc-6-chapter-59-smiles-in-the-white-world-ending-part/

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Translated By :

- Ringo

Proofread By :

- Ice
- Nanashi

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??The feelings he felt at the time he read Meili's ?Book of the Dead?, had become quite fuzzy.

The sight of seeing her traumas, and the life she had lived, was still just as vivid.

However, while witnessing that sight, one's memory was vulnerable to become one with the memories of the person whose name is the title of the ?Book of the Dead? being read, and follow their thoughts and opinions in future situations.

To summarise, the contents of the ?Book of the Dead? were basically for assimilation of the journey of that person.

At that moment, Natsuki Subaru, who was reading the book, was ?Meili Potroute?.

That is why, at the corner of his consciousness, Subaru referred to himself as ?*I*?, and was accompanied by a strange shadow of Meili in his self-consciousness.

That was the effect of ?Books of the Dead?, they presented a series of thoughts which could not be comprehended, and right now, Subaru will see through the life of Reid Astrea.

What he thought, what he liked, what he disliked, what he loved, what he hated, what he did.

It was supposed to be that Subaru would become one with the beliefs of Reid Astrea, and see through his life.

Henceforth, Subaru started to notice some abnormalities.

??Right now, he was somewhere which clearly wasn't Reid Astrea's past.

Subaru: "..... Ah?"

He was standing in a white, white place.

The surroundings endlessly spread in the limitless unbelievable white, and not knowing where he was, Subaru was at a loss.

He could see his hands. He could see his legs. When he turned his neck around, he could also see his torso and waist.

In other words, Subaru's body was present. This did not match with what happened at the time of Meili's ?Book of the Dead?. He had been thrown into an unexpected and unnatural situation.

As visible, Subaru's clothes were the same as those when he had tried to read the ?Book of the Dead?.

Was this, because Subaru's spirit recognised the "current situation" and made him have this form, or because the book's spirit intended Subaru to have this form, and hence reproduced it as the same?

Subaru did not want to think that, by any chance, his body was transported into the book when he read it??,

???: "??Well well? Oh onii-san, you came again?"

Subaru: "??~hk."

Fortunately enough, Subaru heard a voice that did not belong to himself, and his shoulders jumped in surprise.

As the voice came from behind him, Subaru unintentionally jumped and rolled forward, and looked behind him. Seeing Subaru behave like he was having seizures, that person widened their eyes.

Subaru: "??You are."

Subaru muttered in astonishment and confusion to that person.

This was a strange and unexpected encounter with someone strange, which Subaru could never have had imagined.

There stood a girl which Subaru had never seen before.

Beautiful hair, like long, extremely long transparent threads of gold. As they covered the girl's feet and spread over the white floor, they seemed a sea of gold.

With large, round, blue eyes, and white limbs like clear, transparent marble. At the same time, her body wore clumsy clothes which seemed to be seams of low-quality thin cloth, contradicting her beautiful impression.

"????"

A girl, he had never seen. That was how it was supposed to be.

However, Subaru narrowed his eyes and rubbed his eyelids violently with his hands at that girl's figure. It seemed to be a gesture for gaining the clear image from blurred, but her appearance showed no change.

Even if he looked at her again, a girl he was not acquainted with. ??For some reason, he felt as if she had been in his memory.

???: "Have you calmed down a bit, onii-san?"

Subaru: "Where am I..... No, who are you? Which one should I ask first?"

???: "How selfish, onii-san. But, we don't hate your honest emotion of wanting to ask both of those. Because, we love selfish people."

Said the girl to the astonished Subaru.

Yes, her smiling face clearly expressed that was all it.

Her age was about thirteen, but she gave the impression of being still a bit younger.

Her smiling face unquestionably suited her, going with her well-formed appearance.

In Subaru's eyes, her smile was clear.

His instinct said, it seemed as if the soul of the girl had taken down several lives.

And, in front of the intimidated Subaru, she said.

???: "This is, the solitary lonely white, the final destination of the soul. The cradle of Od Lagna. ??The Hall of Memories."

Subaru: "The Hall, of Memories?"

???: "Yes yes, the Hall of Memories. And??"

Subaru widened his eyes, at words he had not heard before.

Satisfied with Subaru's reaction, the girl, said.

Louis: "??We are Witch Cult Sin Archbishop representing ?Gluttony?, Louis Arneb."

"????"

Louis: "Pretty sure, it'll be just for a short while again but, nice to have you, onii-san."

Arc 6 - Chapter 60, “One Bright Place”

by discountanon - Sunday, December 02, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/12/02/arc-6-chapter-60-one-bright-place/

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Translated By :

- Ringo

Proofread By :

- Tournament
- Review
- Ice
- Nobidexx
- Nanashi

Art Source :

- Owari-chan!

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???Corridor of Memories? and ?Louis Arneb?.

"????"

Yes, as Subaru silently looked at the blonde girl, Louis, who had answered his questions.
He did not expect to land up in this white place, nor did he expect to encounter this girl. And, this girl, and this atmosphere had a sense of familiarity??,

Subaru: "..... What do you mean by the Witch Cult, and ?Gluttony? and Sin Archbishop anyway."

Louis: "A~h ~tsu."

At Subaru's words, Louis placed her hands on her face and tilted her head.
Regardless of this particular moment, the spectacle of this girl standing within the dazzling white was a breathtaking sight, but still, Subaru's instincts had been bothered by it since earlier.

Subaru's survival instincts, which had developed in the peace of modern day Japan, were highly unlikely to be of any use. The fact that they were alarmed, it was unquestionably because of the odd presence of this girl.
On top of that, being slapped with an unexpected situation, this was something he could not help??
Subaru's knowledge was far too lacking to comprehend this.

The same applied regarding the Witch Cult Sin Archbishop or the Od's Corridor of Memories. Perhaps all this was common knowledge in this world, however, unfortunately enough, Subaru lacked all such knowledge.
Hence, it was difficult to formulate questions that would help in further development??,

Louis: "??The Witch Cult is, to summarise, a group of people that are hated by this entire world."

Subaru: "Oh?"

Louis: "Even onii-san must have had heard about the name ?Witch of Envy? at least? The Witch Cult, you see, is deeply connected to that Witch-sama..... We~ll, think of them as something similar to believers."

Subaru: "..... Then, what you had said earlier, this goes for Sin Archbishop, huh."

Sin and archbishop, although they gave off a sense of conflict, they went pretty well as a combination, and they line up with Subaru's tastes in names.
Regardless, the moment you hear that,

Subaru: "I understand that it's a name for the evil."

Louis: "So harsh, isn't it harsh, how harsh, as it's harsh, really harsh, even though it's harsh you kno~w."

Shaking her head in denial, in front of Subaru, Louis hugs her petite body. However, her smile did not fade away from her mouth, only her gestures were of refusal.
She was a girl whose true feelings could not be foretold?? No, rather, should it be said that they were completely incomprehensible?

Louis: "With such words, don't bully fragile girls, onii-san. Even we get hurt, you know? Because like many other people, we also have a delicate and soft heart."

Subaru: "You're not convincing at all. Also, do you want to act like a character by using that way of referring to yourself? Or, is it a cool appeal of being a one-man army or something similar? We and us, it's not normal though."

Louis: “A~h..... don’t worry about that. It’s just that, with so many personalities, it gets a bit confusing about which one is to be subjected. We’re getting tired of it too.”

Saying that, Louis turned her gaze downwards, following up with a “But”.

Louis: “It can’t be helped. They are gifts from onii-chan and nii-sama, not accepting them properly would be a failure as a younger sister. We’re siblings so we must cooperate with each other.”

Subaru: “.....That’s, thinking of your brothers’ feelings, you’re an adorable younger sister. I was an only child so I’m jealous.”

Louis: “Is that so? By now, onii-san may have gotten a younger brother or sister though, no?”

Subaru: “Will you not say such scary things!? I don’t even want to imagine that!?”

Anyhow, parents are close couples, it was no matter to joke over.
For those parents, now that Subaru is gone, having another child?? no, it was inconceivable.

"????"

If Subaru disappeared, Subaru's parents would keep searching for him until they've? found him. What must have had his mother felt, seeing that her son did not even bid a final farewell? What must have had his father experienced because of all this?

The thought of them figuring out that Subaru had been reincarnated in a different world.
If they would endlessly search for their absent son, Subaru wished they would just get to know that he died and was reincarnated into a different world and make them taste the pain of losing their child. That would be much easier. That would save so much of their time and effort.
That was why??,

Louis: "??We understand, onii-san."

Subaru: "??~hk! Don't joke around!"

With both his hands gripped upon the floor covered with air, Subaru flew into a rage as Louis continued looking at him from below.
That gaze, it was not because of worry. However, just from that dark gaze, it became obvious that she had seen through Subaru’s feelings.
Subaru found that frustrating, and shrugging at Louis, he turned his back towards her.

Subaru: “As if you’d know anything about me! Stop saying such selfish thi.....”

Louis: “??You are sorry for your mother and father, aren’t you? Failing to bid even a single goodbye, you regret how disobedient of a son you were. No, you were always filled with regret. Both now and before weren’t you?”

“????“

Yes, understanding everything, Louis softly crawled upon Subaru’s back, in an attempt to make him realise that.
A small, light body. Holding his breath, Subaru stiffened his own body.
It wasn’t because of the girl cuddling with him. It was because of the girl’s words themselves.
That understanding speech, however, unmistakably, had struck at Subaru’s heart.

Louis: “How do we know, you say? It’s obvious that we would know. After all, there is nobody that knows about onii-san as much as we or us.”

Subaru: “??Don’t touch me!”

Louis: “Ah.”

Shaking away his arms, Subaru moved away from Louis, who had her lips sharpened, and resumes his breathing.
What the hell. Are the women of this world, not hesitant at all about setting up close relationships between them and newly acquainted men? The similarity is uncanny.
As a matter of fact, he was afraid that with his body’s temperature rising, his heart may become weaker.

Subaru: “Just, what the hell are you! What are you trying to say!”

Louis: “We’re telling you, we just want onii-san to feel a bit relieved. It’s alright, it’s alright. You are co~mpletely separated from your mom and dad, the ones your feelings clung on to. Even though it may be only by your side, you want to face them again. You have absolutely no doubts about that. Face to face, isn’t it.”

“????"

Saying that, Louis put her right claw on her left arm. Grabbing it tightly, she started to, seemingly painfully, wound that thin, white arm.
As Subaru continued looking at what she was doing, Louis was getting awfully redder, and showing her long tongue,

Louis: “Ostensibility is, completely healthy. It looks like you don’t hold that in your heart at all. You’re skilled at it, onii-san. It’s sad that you are skilled at it, onii-san.”

As if his chest had been terribly slashed, Subaru twisted his lips.
Not intending to play along with her anymore, Subaru decided to follow the warning alarm of his instincts, which were ringing because of a different reason now.

Subaru: “I have no idea, about what you want to say. I have no idea but, stop scratching those wounds open. Well, this a conversation where we're just playing catch. No stupid talk. Let’s try working this out.”

Louis: “Together?”

Subaru: “Together. Yes, like..... let’s continue our earlier conversation about the Sin Archbishops.”

Not wanting Louis to suffer anymore, Subaru returned to the original topic quickly.
If Sin Archbishop literally meant Sin Archbishop, then he had an idea about the possible relationship between the words Sin and ?Gluttony?.

Subaru: “If you are ?Gluttony?, then, are there six other people like you?”

Louis: "Including onii-chan and nii-sama, it'd be around six people we guess? Ah, but, recently we lost two so it's maybe just four now. It'd be nice if those two also, just die off."

Subaru: "......If you feel that way, then your sense of comradeship must be pretty low."

Louis: "It's obvious. We all may be called Sin Archbishops, but in the end we're just a group of people hated by the world. We are just named a bit differently, otherwise we are the same as the ?Witch?."

Saying that, Louis knelt down at that spot.
As she did so, it seemed like something was sinking down within the sea of long golden thread-like hair, an exceedingly unique sight.
Scratching his head, Subaru sat down, carefully at a position where he didn’t tread on her hair, and said "Witch?" while tilting his neck.

Subaru: "From being the same as the Witch you mean, that ridiculously scary Witch?"

Louis: "Unsurprisingly, the ?Witch of Envy's? nature is worse than even us so we don't want to be grouped together with her though. The rest is all the same. The ?Witch? and Sin Archbishops, they are just named differently, otherwise they are the same. The good-for-nothings? that take in the Witch Factors, are just called by different names in different times and positions."

"????"

Louis: "We~ll, the current onii-san has forgotten about the ?Witch? and Sin Archbishops, and us anyway, so either of them may be fine. We understand, we perfectly understand, we fully understand, as we understand, though we understand, because we understand, because we want to understand....."

Subaru: "Keep quiet."

Louis: "Ah."

Cutting in between, Subaru stopped her wave of words and put his hand on his chin.
He somewhat felt like he had heard something important. Although currently it isn't explicitly relevant to Subaru, the probability of Emilia and the others not finding this information useful was low.

But this wasn't the reason why Subaru had his hand on his chin, why he was in deep thought.

Subaru had been thinking that it was no longer possible to avoid the sense of incongruity that came with Louis' answers?? No, it was certainly a feeling that was known.
If there had been something that came to his mind for that reason, it was??,

Subaru: "By any chance, are you a God?"

Louis: "A God you say..... Ah, that? Something like, reincarnation in a different world? We don't really get it but, we have nothing to do with that. Certainly, this place may cause such strange feelings though."

Fluttering the fluffy blonde hair that slid down her back, forming a cage, Louis responded.

Louis: "This place is, just as it looks. A place with nothing to lose, therefore a place that has nothing. As we're alone in this place, we may look something like it’s guardian."

Subaru: "Od Lagna's cradle, was it? You said it's name was the Corridor of Memories, though I don't understand anything about it, not a single thing."

Louis: "Mm, mm, mm, mm, is that so..... To summarise, this is the place where the soul gets filtered."

Subaru: "Soul gets, filtered?"

Question marks arose in Subaru’s mind, as he heard an expression he was not acquainted with.
Filter would mean the same as the process of filtration, however, it is not often that you hear that for souls.
However, Louis pleasantly says “Yes yes” as she pulled her knees in.

Louis: “After using something once, you would wash and dry it and reuse it again? The same goes for souls. Cleansed of it’s stains, it goes back to it’s beautiful state.”

Subaru: “What do you mean by stains..... things like memories or experiences?”

Subaru turned his neck around toward Louis, who distorted her cheeks and displayed her tongue.
As usual, there came up nothing new in the white space?? in the Corridor of Memories. In this unpopulated world of white, there was no easy-to-understand evidence for what Louis had said.

If this place was like what Louis had told it is, perhaps there would be floating visual evidences of souls, memories or experiences in some way.

Louis: “Well, it’s not so easy to understand.”

Subaru: “That God Od Lagna is pretty cruel.”

Louis: “That thing can’t be called a god. It isn’t as wonderful as it may seem. It’s just a mechanism. A mechanism to keep the world from breaking.”

Subaru: “A mechanism.....”

Louis: “No Witch Factor, no Protection, no ?Sword Saint?, no ?Witch?, is special in it’s eyes. If there’s anything good about Od Lagna, it’s that it is equal, fair, and uninterestedly indifferent.”

Narrowing her eyes uninterestedly, Louis closed her attractive eyelashes to touch her face. Subaru catches a small breath, in front of the kneeling girl with her cheeks distorted.
Till now, the girl had spoken with him with sincerity. This makes him think that she would not lie, probably. Because of that, Subaru exhaled.

Bringing it to his tongue, swallowing it back, and bringing it to his tongue again, he looked at her.
And, asked.

Subaru: “??Did you, steal away my memories of everything till yesterday?”

Louis: “That’s right?”

The villain answered the question, astonishing Subaru completely.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

“????“

Subaru closed his eyes, as he asked that question and received it’s answer.

He did not feel much denial. The truth is, he felt that to be the case by just this brief interaction.

Louis was, too well-informed. She was deeply informed regarding Subaru’s heart.
That was exactly why, what the current Subaru did not know much about, Louis Arneb knew about ?Natsuki Subaru?.
This was not the case when words could be figured out through looks, that was why Subaru had asked sincerely and gotten affirmed.

Strangely enough, what was rising in his chest was not rage, but a feeling of being convinced.

In other words??,

Subaru: “??So yesterday, I really did come here.”

Louis: “Strictly speaking, the way of coming was a bit different. But we~ll, the purpose was the same. The results were just slightly different. But, how amazing. How wonderful. How many times, have you reached up to this point?”

“????“

Louis: “Hey, answer, onii-san. We answered when it was our turn. ??Onii-san, from after getting eaten by us, which count of onii-san is this?”

Immediately after hearing Louis' question, chills ran up Subaru's spine.
Her eyes, her question, made her knowledge about ?Return by Death? clear.

No, it was obvious. It was natural.
If she had stolen ?Natsuki Subaru's? memories, and could freely browse through all of it's contents, it would be no mystery that she would know about ?Return by Death?.
?Return by Death? isn't an ability exclusive to amnesiac Subaru, it was surely possessed by ?Natsuki Subaru? before he lost his memory as well.

Certainly, ?Natsuki Subaru? had lived through several difficulties. The result of which he gained the trust of Emilia, Beatrice and the rest of his friends, in other words, just like a cheat code.
Subaru did not intend to fault it. Whether it's a cheat or foul play, he will be willing to use it without? any hesitation if someone else's life was in danger. ?Natsuki Subaru's? choice was correct. Which was why, in the current of absence of ?Natsuki Subaru?, Subaru will do it in his stead.

And, recognising it's value of usability, he swallowed the power of ?Return by Death?.
However, contrary to his preparedness, Subaru had a strange sense of anxiety, concern, rise within his chest.
Louis Arneb was violating that inescapable fear, that taboo.
That is??,

Louis: "??You cannot have anyone find out about it? If it's about that then, it's already too late, onii-san. After all, us meeting onii-san, happened yesterday, no?"

"???"

Louis: "The ?Rule? of not having anyone know it, has been broken a long time ago. But, what happens in the Corridor of Memories cannot leak outside easily. That's why, the scary ?Witch? will not make her move."

Louis, with her limbs on the ground, approached Subaru's face , who was sitting cross-legged. With a smile that was unsuitable for her age, and a long red tongue hanging out,

Louis: "Hey, onii-san. How many times has it been?"

At that voice, Subaru felt a painful numbness, as if that tongue had stabbed right through his mind.
Then, slightly twitching his own tongue and throat,

Subaru: "......It's the, fifth time."

Louis: "??~tsu! Amazing, how amazing, really amazing, absolutely amazing, isn't it amazing, truly amazing, because it's amazing, because it's admirably amazing..... Gluttonous drinking ~tsu! Gluttony ~tsu!"

Subaru: "Hu~h ~hk!"

Louis: “We want to taste onii-san so unbearably, that it feels like it’ll be the death of our stomach! Speaking from our experience, we think that eating and sexuality are pretty similar. Sexuality in other words, is love, isn’t it? Then in other words, onii-san, we??“

Pushing herself over Subaru, Louis, with hot breaths and excited eyes, seemed as if she were riding a horse. With cheeks full of cheerfulness, and with eyes full of enchantment, Louis lets her tongue roll over Subaru’s neck without any hesitation.
With the same pace, the words she seemed to be about to say, could be well imagined??,

Louis: “??Love you.”

In the previous loop, Subaru, who desired ?Death? under those desperate circumstances, such words of love were thrown at him several times, and recalling that, he felt his heart seemingly explode.

Subaru: “Is that so, you cowardly brat ~hk!”

Louis: “??Uhi.”

Opening his eyes, Subaru grabbed the throat of the dominating girl and forcibly pushed her brutally onto the white floor. This time, it was Subaru’s turn.
Her body was thin and light. Biting his teeth, Subaru held her neck in his hands and pushed her onto the floor, with her long blonde hair spreading all over the floor, it seemed as if he had pushed her onto a golden bed.

Subaru: “How could you be careless? How unfortunate! In this position, I am overwhelmingly advantageous! If you don’t want to me to continue strangling you like this, you better.....”

Louis: “Return your memories? If we don’t return them, you will strangle us? Our neck, a weak girl's?”

With her neck grabbed and grasping the right to resist being murdered, Louis looked at Subaru, who snorted, with eyes that had not changed a single bit since earlier, and loosened her lips.
And from those loosened lips, she let out a voice that seemed like a curse.

Louis: “Can onii-san even do such a thing?”

Subaru: “??You think, that I can’t?”

Louis: “Rather than think, we know. After all, you know, right now we know more about onii-san than onii-san himself.”

Saying that, Louis pushes her index finger into her cheek and tilted her small head in an attempt to provoke him. At her attitude, Subaru sighed and looked at his right hand which had grabbed Louis’ neck.

He should increase the strength he was applying into his arms in order to show his seriousness.
If he manages to prove he’s serious, Louis’ mind might change.

If you are asked if you can even kill or not, it certainly gets difficulty. That is a fact.
Even though he had a proper reason to, Subaru had been unable to swing down a single stone at his companion's head.
So, even if he was well aware that he was dealing with an enemy, it was not possible to tighten his grip on the girl's neck in front of him.

No, he could do it as much as he wanted it. He needed to.
He thinks about Emilia, Beatrice, Ram, Meili, Julius, Echidna, Shaula, Patrasche, everyone, and. And??,

Louis: "??The strength, from your arms has disappeared, hasn't it, onii-san."

"????"

Louis: "We really didn't plan to resist? After all, right now, we are just the weak girl we look like. Unlike onii-chan and nii-sama, we cannot use the strength of the eaten person, until we take their form."

Saying that, Louis pushed away Subaru's right hand which had her neck grasped, with fingers that were previously poking her own cheek. In all it's weakness, Subaru's palm unexpectedly let go of her throat.

Subaru: "Shit..... ~hk!"

Louis: "Don't get depressed like this, onii-san. It was a job well done, well done. After all, to be honest..... we never even thought that onii-san would come back here."

Subaru: "Do you think, that you're doing good job at consoling me with all this?"

Louis, lying on the ground in the same position as she was pushed into, passed her opinion. He wished to break that face and put forward his demand, but he was unable to find the right words to do so.
Hence, in the end, looking at Subaru drenched in disappointment, Louis passed out a "Ahaha" as if she was admiring some fish in an aquarium.

Louis: "But we~ll, isn't it fine. If we return the memories of "Natsuki Subaru" or something, the current onii-san will die, and it would be a foolish death to commit suicide like this."

Subaru: "..... Ah?"

Louis: "Huh, what's with that strange reaction? Did you not realise that? If memories return, they will overwrite the current you, and your current existence will disappear..... isn't that, the same as death?"

??That, Louis states her mysterious answer as if it was an obvious matter, and Subaru stiffened his body at her attitude.

He'll die. He'll disappear. Yes, he had been told that clearly.
The moment the memories of ?Natsuki Subaru? return, Subaru's current consciousness and memories will get overwritten and disappear.
If that wasn't ?Death?, then it was??,

Louis: “??Right now, ?Natsuki Subaru? is dead. After all, he isn’t anywhere. But, if ?Natsuki Subaru? comes back, this time onii-san will die. After all, he won’t be able to go anywhere.”

“????"

Louis: “Hey u~m, after knowing all that, is it really worth bringing ?Natsuki Subaru? back? We mean, onii-san should be be able to do the same things? After all, onii-san also must have had come to like the people around him the same way. Everyone around as well, will come to like onii-san in the same way. ??What’s so bad in that?”

Subaru: “What is.....”

If it said, that there’s nothing bad in that, surely there is nothing bad in that.
Subaru is, a person full of faults. So many faults that he hated himself for that. If someone asks him who he hated the most in the whole world, he would answer himself without any hesitation.
That much, was the good-for-nothing, lacking Natsuki Subaru.
However, Subaru has nothing to do with this matter.

??The fact is, there is only a single glimmer of sunlight for him.

Subaru: “I, Emilia-chan and the others.....”

He had wanted to return ?Natsuki Subaru?.
That’s why, he intended to prepare himself in such a way that, if he ever gained an opportunity to gain back his memories, he would grab it with no hesitation.

However, his disappearance, made him, completely, close his eyes away.
Speaking with absolute convenience, if their two memories mix together, the current Subaru will remain somewhere inside ?Natsuki Subaru?, that was the miracle he hoped for.
Subaru’s such an uncertain expectation??,

Louis: “It’s really a mystery? You may end up not seeing things the same way as now.”

Louis bared her teeth to Subaru, who was feeling very conflicted, and her eyes had a look like that of a cat’s when it spots a rat.
The villain who robbed away his memories, was extremely carefree, and could not know any better about the rest. This wasn’t a lie, surely it was the truth.

Louis Arneb did not return anything she takes from her opponents.
So really, in exchange for having his memories return, nobody knew how Natsuki Subaru would end up.

Louis: “Onii-san, you were born and have this life, you must live it to its fullest.”

Casually, she slaps the insult right at Subaru’s face despite being so close to him.

Louis: “As a result of us eating ?Natsuki Subaru’s? memories, onii-san is here. In other words, doesn’t

that make us like onii-san’s birth parent. In front of that very mother, her child making a choice to die, isn’t that tragically? disobedient to the parent, onii-san.”

Subaru: “Such, nonsense..... ~hk.”

Louis: “??Memories are what shape people, onii-san.”

“????“

With all facial expression erased, Louis said that with serious voice in a low, cold tone.
Subaru inhales at the unexpected sharpness of her words.
At the same time, he felt that this was not his first time hearing those words. That sound, those words, just before the second ?Death? were also??,

Louis: “The current onii-san has relationships that the current onii-san has made. Looking straight ahead and living a new and positive life, won’t that be nice. That is also something you should consider, is what we think.”

“????“

Louis: “Besides, we’re not so sure if we should say this but..... ?Natsuki Subaru? wasn't the most ideal man, you know?”

Closing one eye, Louis punched Subaru’s feelings, with an expression difficult to figure out.
Continuing her actions, while directly looking at Subaru, she puts her hands on her chest, and her dark, deep eyes seemed to be similar to that of a dreaming maiden??,

Louis: “Pitiful Emilia! Just because of her birth being the same as the former Witch, anyone and everyone avoided her! Ah, how kind am I, to still stay with you!”

Subaru: “Wha.....”

Louis: “Weak and fragile Beatrice! With not a single person to rely on, a lonely girl who spent all her time alone! To take her through this dark and dangerous path, I must hold her hand!”

In front of the surprised Subaru, Louis continued her words, taking the names of two girls who had wished and prayed for Subaru’s safety, for them, she spoke of a horribly twisted impression.
Subaru knew exactly what Louis aimed to say.
He knew, but that’s.

Louis: “Devoting her undivided dedication and unbound love, Rem! So foolish and beautiful, how pure. Surely she is someone who feels to be living an empty life unless she desperately does something for someone else. That should be lead by this existence known as myself!”

Subaru: “What are you..... What are you trying to do!?”

Louis: “This was all what ?Natsuki Subaru? believed. He wanted a sense of superiority. All the time, he never thinks it’s for someone else. Using the convenient people around him to satisfy his hunger, to drink on the pleasure of reaching out to someone. He won’t feed on just anything. He’d rather stay away from that.”

“????“

Louis: “Do you really want to substitute yourself for that ?Natsuki Subaru??"

She repeats that question.
That was a request from Louis, from ?Gluttony?, to have Subaru’s confession.

Louis is asking Subaru to say what his heart truly feels.
If he didn’t want to die, or if he wanted to die, and if he was to die, would he die for such a person, and all that.

??No, Subaru's death won't be for ?Natsuki Subaru?.
--No, Subaru did not intend to die in the first place. He wanted to return ?Natsuki Subaru? to Emilia and the others, but if it meant his own death.
--No, but, could ?Natsuki Subaru? really be trusted? At the very least, he knew ?Natsuki Subaru? had killed Meili and carved all those inscriptions onto the walls.

Louis: "We~ll, what do you want to do, onii-san."

Subaru: "??~hk."

Saying that, Louis grabbed Subaru's hands with her own thin ones and set them on her own neck.
Once again, though this time she intended this, Subaru's hands held Louis' thin neck. If he applies force in his arms, it would surely break with ease.

He had just concluded that he couldn't do it.
But not doing it meant, that he would be killing ?Natsuki Subaru??? at the very least, that was what Louis had said.

Suppose that he broke the thin neck he was holding, and ?Natsuki Subaru? came back and the current Subaru disappeared, would the result of his action also disappear?
If that's so, then what Subaru is trying do with such little courage, was.

Louis: "We~ll."

Subaru: "????"

Louis: "What? What will you do? What will it be? What will you be doing? What do you plan to do? What do you want to do? What do you want to be done? What can you even do? Whatever may the outcome be, it's fine? Whatever you may end up doing, it's fine? Whatever you may do, we will forgive you??"

Louis' words, which seemed like curses, struck Subaru's eardrums.
Louis Arneb, ?Gluttony?, a Sin Archbishop, a thin girl, a hated existence, his creator.

Urged Natsuki Subaru to choose what had to be done with ?Natsuki Subaru?.

Louis: "We~ll."

It began.

Louis: “??What do you want to do? Onii-san."

Arc 6 - Chapter 61, "??Stand Up"

by Gracedharperd - Furuta - Sunday, December 02, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/12/02/arc-6-chapter-61-%e2%80%95%e2%80%95stand-up/

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Translated By :

- Ringo

Proofread By :

- Nanashi
- Ice
- Furuta
- Nobidexx

Art Source :

- Original Art, Modified by Furuta (/u/GracedHarperd)

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??A choice, an extremely cruel choice, was eating up Natsuki Subaru.

Out of nowhere, he heard a sound, as if something were burning at the back of his chest.

It was his own humanity, his trust in himself, his feelings for ?Natsuki Subaru?, something of that sort was burning away.

Natsuki Subaru was standing at a position which would affect ?Natsuki Subaru's? destiny, in front of the laughing girl he had pushed down.

"????"

His heartbeats were no longer audible. He was breathing heavily, but his lungs had perhaps failed. Even though this was a situation he must somehow work his way out of, he had no cold sweat on his forehead.

Certainly, that was because Natsuki Subaru's body was currently in a place which was not a part of reality.

When he read the book, his body was not transferred, just his soul was?? All that, thinking about it now while not complying with the situation, would that count as a desperate attempt to turn his face away from the situation?

And, Subaru's mind was trying to obtain a temporary state of safety by escaping on to other thoughts.

However, neither time, nor space, nor the one he was confronting would allow this escape.

Louis: "We~ll, what will you be doing, onii-san?"

The girl below him raised her head, looking up to Subaru who was unable to make the choice, and said mockingly.

Looking directly into Subaru's eyes, she flicked her tongue around to try and lick his eyeball,

Louis: "Pushing down a weak girl and then grabbing her throat. Don't you feel a bit excited? Or perhaps, doing such things is a common experience for onii-san?"

Subaru: "??~hk."

Louis: "That made you shiver, huh, how nice. Rather, will you now be able to make such an extremely, extremely important choice?"

Tilting her head as she lay down, Louis kissed Subaru's wrist. Her gestures and the implications of her subtle words reminded Subaru of a certain situation.

That was, the first scene filled with absolute cruelty that Subaru ever saw. ??However, the appearance was exactly the opposite. It was not that which Subaru's true self had seen with his own eyes, but what the girl which Subaru's true self had become saw.

As he pushed her, with a truly evil form, he had strangled her throat.

Just like the current situation, when ?Natsuki Subaru? had strangled Meili??.

Subaru: "Ugh."

??The moment he realised this similarity, Subaru's whole body and his cheeks stiffened.

Louis: "??Really, so something similar is indeed in your memories?"

Subaru: “Nons ~hk! “Nonsen.....”

Louis: “We’re not saying nonse~nse. Rather, onii-san is the one not being so serious, no? Love yourself with more seriousness, commitment, honesty.”

“????“

Louis: “A~h, yes yes. Love yourself. See, love. ??Onii-san must also love himself the way everyone around onii-san loved him.”

With a flirty tone, she slipped out those words.

What he had heard, was their understanding and sense of sympathy really deepening? Did she actually mean all this, did she really want to comfort him, or was she just mocking him?

Such thoughts were foolish. Louis Arneb's way of action was deceptive.

Deceptive, deceptive it was.

Louis' words, her words were like fallen leaves of trees, creating ripples on the surface of the water. If all of them were indeed arbitrary, twisted and deceptive, would it be possible to even reduce this delusion, rather than clearing it up completely?

No, above all, how dangerous would it be to use her words as the basic foundation?

Subaru: "If I..... do just like you say, things will become just like how you say, but, what proof do you have."

Louis: "Proof?"

Subaru: "Do you have the proof that if I have ?Natsuki Subaru? come back, I'll disappear.....!"

Louis: "We don't. We really don't. We're saying we don't. As we don't. We said we don't. But we don't. Even though we said we don't. We told you we don't. Although we don't..... Will that comfort you?"

"????"

Louis: "We're doomed to endlessly wonder about that, onii-san. After all, we cannot talk about things we don't know. Whether if we, onii-chan or nii-sama die, what we ate will come back. ??To be honest, we have never returned what we have eaten before, so we don't know. We mean, we ate it, you know."

Saying that, Louis opened her mouth, revealing her canines and her red tongue and the beginning of her throat, which were completely unappealing to Subaru.

If it was to be considered that memories, the memories of someone, had gotten ?Eaten?, robbed away, then, there would be no actual physical traces left.

However, Subaru was able to feel the terrible heavy weight of the words ?Gotten Eaten?.

Louis: "What are you going to do, onii-san."

Louis asked Subaru yet again.

During this interrogation, Subaru's hands had not let go of Louis' neck. Unable to fully apply strength in his arms, nor retract them away, Subaru had asked questions regarding his own existence.

Subaru: "Gh, hu..... ~hk."

Death was scary. Horrifying.

The fear he tasted now, however, was different from the one Subaru had tasted four times so far, through ?Return by Death?.

The choice which currently crushed Subaru's soul was "the value of his own self" being put on a scale.

?Death? is supposed to be like that in the first place.

If you die, you'll lose all consciousness and won't be able to redo it.

Therefore, even if Subaru gets the chance to redo, he has no right to be picky and complain about other details.

Right now he had to make the choice of whether he would disappear or not, so he had no time to worry about such luxuries.

But, it was his own life.

Subaru's heart had been placed in such a situation, that every second he is between the choice of extinguishing this fire or not, it suffered a crack.

"????"

In this parallel world, Subaru had died a total of four times. All of them within a short period of time.

Being thrown into a different world, meeting new people, and then the inevitable circumstances that slapped him which resulted in his death.

The total time he was conscious for was less than even two days.

It had been a short, short period of time. ??However, other than the two days Natsuki Subaru had lived through in this parallel world, he had also lived for a good seventeen years back in his own world.

He had his father. He had his mother. Though there were only a few, he had friends too, and though there

were several other subtle relationships, he had several people who would at least greet him back. Looking back now, he got along well with some in Elementary and Junior High schools, and he was well familiar with his neighbours.

Everything didn't go the best. Subaru sucked at life.

However, as it did not go well, there had been a time of his life filled with trial, but he did not have enough exposure to properly learn the way to deal with life, as Subaru always avoided the big stage.

So, would he be throwing away those times and memories?

If ?Natsuki Subaru? is returned, things that have happened will not change. But, thinking of those times now, his current self would surely disappear.

His self that swore to protect his commitment with Ram, pledged Meili to protect her, intended to carve forgiveness in Echidna's heart, scolded Julius to not give up and fight, had full faith in Beatrice's love, and Emilia??.

??His self that fell in love with Emilia, would it disappear?

Subaru: "No....."

That realisation sent a crack down Subaru's body, as he muttered that out.

A crack appeared on his cheek, spider web-like cracks were on both of his arms that held Louis' neck. He felt no pain. No blood flowed out from those cracks. Strangely enough, there was plain darkness behind those cracks. Neither flesh nor bone, but only an unfathomable, unnatural darkness.

It was just as he had guessed, this wasn't his true body.

Subaru's body present here was not real. And as it was not real, his feelings reflected directly, resulting in the cracking and breaking of Subaru's body.

As the crack spread, the surface of his body peeled and fell off.

That was surely ?Natsuki Subaru's? body, who had been deceiving everyone through the shell of Natsuki Subaru's body.

As it fell off, it peeled away into the void.

Subaru: "No, no, no..... no~..... ~hk."

Louis: "That's right. It's obvious."

Shaking his head, he denied his fear of death which awaited him?? denied that fear of loss.

Why, must he lose. His self that just confessed his love.

Subaru: "No....."

Louis: "Yes yes. We understand. We completely understand. As we understand. We perfectly understand."

Subaru: "Just, no..... ~hk."

Louis: "It's onii-san's life. Why do you have to hand it over to others."

Subaru: "I, to everyone..... with everyone, more....."

Want to stay together more with everyone.

He had fallen in love with them. He had completely fallen in love with them. Even though, in those two days he had been wrapped in suspicion, in doubt, and more than once, he had tried to kill them, and escape from them.

Subaru had fell in love with them. Now, he loved them.

If he stayed by their side, who cherished Subaru, he might start liking the self that he hated.

He thought that. With full honesty, he thought that.

Subaru's life, which had always been drenched in negativity, sunlight, he had finally started to embrace it.

Why must he abandon all that.

All that was??,

Subaru: "??No."

Louis: "That's right. That's how it is. ??Well, then what do you think should be done?"

Subaru: "......I, just as myself."

Louis: "Yes, onii-san, just as onii-san. That's correct. We take it without any second thoughts. It's like musical chairs. Whoever sits on the empty chair, is the king."

"????"

Louis: "You must leave some hope for the losing opponent you pushed away. You must accept it. Your existence. You must shout it out loud, that you are real! We~ll, isn't that so!"

Beneath him, close enough to feel each other's breaths, with her eyes twinkling brightly, shouted Louis.

As if she were biting?? No, in reality, her neck crawled to Subaru's wrist as she tried to carve a commandment onto it, inflicting fresh pain.

Looking into his dark black eyes, Louis Arneb screamed.

Louis: "Accept it! ???Natsuki Subaru? is the person closest to onii-san!"

She shouted, in demand for him to establish that.

To stop doing something as foolish as giving up on his own life for others.

Why must he sacrifice his own life for the sake of others.

??That too, for another his own alternate self, someone he won't ever be able to meet, to make that someone meet those who he loved.

In order to give up the time he spent with them, those precious moments.

As if he would do something so foolish.

Louis: "No~w! Kill him! Let's kill him! We'll kill him! We're killing him! Just kill him! If we kill him! We'll end up killing him! We'll really kill him! We will be killing him! If we just kill him! If we can just kill him!"

Subaru: "?Natsuki Subaru?....."

Louis: "Onii-san is, the one and only in this entire world, the irreplaceable Natsuki Subaru!"

Subaru: "??~hk."

One and only in the whole world, not a substitute for anyone, Natsuki Subaru.

Holding hands with Beatrice, exchanging insults with Ram, making Meili sulk, being shocked by Shaula's openness, exchanging a smile or two with Echidna, trusting Julius to have his back, receiving Patrasche's unbound love, and falling in love with Emilia, was what he had done.

With those being established, he would be handing it all over to ?Natsuki Subaru?.

"????"

At first, his judgement was blurred by various miscellaneous obstacles.

His spirit was having a direct influence on his body. His heartbeats, and the pain of breathing with his lungs could unmistakably be felt.

However, the strongest feeling was that of his uncontrollable tears.

Was that rage or despair, envy or jealousy, guilt or fear?

Subaru had no idea why, just why he had such strong emotions. He didn't understand anything. However, through those obstacles of tears, there was one thing which Subaru could see.

"?????"

Someone, overlooked Subaru and Louis.

Looking at the tear-stained Subaru, who had pinned Louis down and had his hands around her neck.

Subaru could only think of one person who could be that individual.

Subaru: "......Did you, get scared by me and come here, ?Natsuki Subaru??”

"????"

The hazy figure said nothing.

A white, foggy figure overlooked Subaru, standing on the white floor, with the backdrop of the white world.

At that existence who had arrived here in a hurry, Subaru twisted his expression, and said.

Subaru: "I..... I don't want to disappear. Don't want to die. That's why, I....."

"????"

Subaru: "I want to stay with everyone. I love everyone. That's why, I....."

"????"

Subaru: "That's why, I....."

As if it were an excuse, Subaru repeatedly whined.

It was same as the time when he clenched Louis' neck. ??Not wanting his own self to disappear, he arrived to that conclusion. That's why, to the one who had appeared, he said all this.

After all, he is, ?Natsuki Subaru? is, the one he is most familiar with.

So, Subaru is supposed to have that right.

Natsuki Subaru, by killing ?Natsuki Subaru?, bring an end to this??.

Sunatu: "That's why, I am, not you! You and I are.....!"

Different, is what he had tried to convey, to bring an end to any other possibilities.

Yes, he tried, at that moment.

Louis: "......Who, are you talking to, onii-san."

Suddenly, with her eyes widened in seemingly denial, Louis interrupted in between.

Tilting her head, she looked in the same direction as Subaru, in an attempt to see that person. However, as she furrowed her eyebrows sharply and shook her sharp canines,

Louis: "??Even though there's nobody, nobody there, who are you talking to, onii-san?"

"????"

Trembling with her sharp teeth, Louis said this with an astonished face.

Her face took the expression of being in denial, as if she had been frightened by something.

Louis: "This is, our place..... no obstructions are supposed to get in. In this place, talking with someone other than us..... just stop. Onii-san is our, our..... ~tsu!"

The hurt Louis let out those words, but Subaru's consciousness did not get perturbed even slightly.

Subaru's consciousness was fully focused on the one who undisputedly in front him. His vision had been blurred with tears, but he could see the outline of that shadow.

Someone, whose identity he had no clue of.

As the outline became more and more visibly clear, it seemed to be smiling at Subaru.

He shook his head, blinked strongly in order to see that smile with more clarity??,

???: "Why, are you only choosing one?"

A question had been asked.

The voice of someone who shouldn't be here, someone whose voice he had never heard.

A girl he had never seen smiling?? A blue-haired girl stood there and smiled.

That smiling girl, with her smile in place, said to the speechless Subaru??,

???: "??Stand up!!"

??That was how she opened.

??She screamed at Natsuki Subaru with the harshest voice in the world.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

???: “??Stand up!!”

The voice struck Natsuki Subaru, making him tremble, making him crack, making him throb.

With no mercy or hesitation, the sheer fury accelerated Natsuki Subaru’s rate of cracking. ??As if bare sharp claws had busted into his mind.

???: “Stand up!”

The blue-haired girl, raised her voice as she faced Subaru.

Staring at Subaru, the girl shouted. Shouted. She shouted.

Lying on his knees, Natsuki Subaru cracked further, a depressed expression on his face.

???: “Stand up!!”

Filled with rage, she repeated.

Again and again, she struck Subaru’s heart mercilessly.

Why must he be struck with such words.

It was hurtful. It was painful. It ached. It was sad. It made his heart about to burst.

He had never felt such an overwhelmingly crushing force of decision that was cracking him away in his life, that too without getting an opportunity to prepare himself mentally. ??Which was why, he gave up on regretting it any further.

That’s why, at the very least, he arrived at a conclusion. That’s why, things aren’t fine anymore.

???: “Stand up!”

To Subaru’s stubborn heart, which too scared to face failure, the girl’s tone did not weaken at all. Firmly, with no intention of compromising, she repeated.

He had made a decision. He might as well affirm it. At least, he should show it wasn’t something to worry over. Won’t that be fine. He had suffered enough. Even so, for some reason, the girl, for Subaru

was.

???: “Stand up??!”

With no intention of forgiving Subaru for his decision, she further cracked and broke his heart.

???: “Stand up??!”

Is she still... saying that.

Why is it, that this voice, this girl.

Even though it’s painful, it’s hurtful.

???: “Stand.....! Stand! Stand! Stand up!”

Just who, is this girl?

Where in his memories was this girl?

He had never spoken with her. There were no such memories that Subaru had.

Who she was, what kind of a person she was, he didn’t have the slightest clue about her.

There was no reason for her to be here, that was the kind of relationship they had.

Even then, why was it that he felt this warmth in his chest.

Why, at the back of his chest, he felt slight fever coming up.

???: “Stand up, Natsuki Subaru! Stand up! ??Rem’s hero!!”

Hearing the teary voice of the girl who was not in his memories, as she called out to her hero, his heart trembled.

Subaru’s heart trembled at her laughably unbelievable words.

Cracking, cracking, his cracking accelerates.

It became visible that Natsuki Subaru will break away this shell of ?Natsuki Subaru?.

But what slept inside that shell now was barely any different than what had slept before.

??No, if it were to really change, it would be from now.

Stand up was what she said, and with fear chewing up his heart, he now stood, just as she had wanted.

???: ”If you’ve managed to stand up then, please go. Go, and save, everything.”

Everything, what’s that. What does she mean, everything.

She said it way too bluntly. Just what the hell did everything mean.

???: “Everything is everything. Anything and everything. Everything, everyone, yourself, and your beloved others too!”

What’s up with that.

Is that, even possible to do? Does she actually think that’s doable?

By him, who couldn’t stand so many things, couldn’t even save his own self.

For those who loved Subaru, for those who cared for Subaru, for those who cherished Subaru, for those whose memories he did not want to lose.

Does she seriously believe that Subaru could do this alone?

???: “You can do it. After all”

After all.

After all, what.

Give me the strength, give me the answer. If you give it to me, if you say those words.

I truly hope, blue haired girl, through your words, I’ll??,

Rem: “??Subaru-kun is….. Rem’s hero.”

“????"

He felt something fall into his chest.

That black something, as if it had been purified by the voice of the girl's seeming confession of love. ??No, it wasn't a seeming confession of love. It was indeed, a confession of love.

His reasons to not let ?Natsuki Subaru? return, increased.

Subaru: "??Ah."

At the same time, that was not the only thing that increased.

Purified by the girl's words, that stagnant black glows brightly and changes its shape.

And, this was the moment, Natsuki Subaru felt the strongest pulse he ever had through his very core.

"????"

It pulsated. Everything of it, he left all of it behind.

Nevertheless, he wanted to reconsider, he wanted to let go of everything he was bound by, he did not want to let go of anything that was in his hand, he did not want to miss anything that came his way.

In response to that, his cowardly ?Greed?, bloomed into a force to fulfil his desires.

??The agitated factor, now connected with his very existence.

Subaru: "Come, ??Cor Leonis."

Within Subaru, the seeds of ?Greed? germinate and bloom.

And, the figure that firmly stood in front of him??.

"????"

At that moment, just the smile of that blue-haired girl, blessed him.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Louis: "??Onii-san?"

"????"

Slowly looking up to the standing Subaru, Louis said.

He had pulled his hands away from her, as Louis sat up from the golden bed of her hair, as she looked on with confusion, blinking as if she were puzzled.

Louis: "What, happened. Look, continue what we were doing..... you'll continue, right?"

"????"

Louis: "You'll continue....."

At the word "continue", Subaru licked his lips with his tongue.

Considering that he only existed in spirit currently, this movement could only serve to relax him a little, the way an utterly meaningless habit would.

However, this one small movement led him to a new discovery.

??His mind was so sharp right now, that even he himself was surprised.

The incomprehensible confusion and panic he felt earlier, both of which were like calm waves, calm waves in the middle of the ocean.

That was why??,

Subaru: "You don't have to say anything else. I'm getting nauseated by your twisted explanations."

He was also able to now realise the truth behind this malice collected into the form of the girl, how she wanted to distort Subaru's intentions and wishes for her own good.

When Subaru pointed that out, Louis shook her head, saying "No no no".

Louis: "Nauseated..... how rude. All we did was to pro~perly offer advice to onii-san just the way we could....."

Subaru: "Doing that, and using such words to manipulate me, stop that too. It's useless to try and disbalance me up like that. ??The current me, will not get disbalanced."

"????"

At those words, Louis narrowed her eyes. She did not know what caused such changes in Subaru. Neither did she know what exactly had changed in him.

Simply, the ?Greed? to not let go of anything, had reaffirmed Natsuki Subaru.

Subaru had already affirmed himself.

Rather than anything else, to the expectations of the girl who had screamed at him, in that moment.

"????"

Then, Subaru looked towards, not Louis', but her direction.

There stood no girl which had faced and cast her merciless words towards Subaru. By the time Subaru stood up and took a step forward, she had already disappeared.

But, probably, it was fine that way.

Where she needed to be, was neither this place, nor in front of Subaru.

No, that wasn't true either. It's just that, the Subaru that should reunite with her, should be the Natsuki Subaru with his memories and feelings of her returned.

And, there was no reason to segregate that Natsuki Subaru and ?Natsuki Subaru?.

Subaru: "I was told so..... again and again."

??He realised that even without his memories, Subaru was Subaru.

Stubbornly believing that they should be distinguished, differentiated, segregated, was the burden of chained curses within Subaru.

But, what of that.

Subaru had settled to that thought now, this will surely guide him to a thread of hope.

He will hold the hands of everyone he cherished who have the tip of that thread, and will unquestionably guide Subaru onto the right path.

That's why??,

Subaru: "Put away your utensils, you food-thieving escaped fugitive. There's no noodle soup for you here--"

"????"

She widened her eyes.

Striking her fingers together, Louis Arneb looked into Subaru's eyes with her own eyes widened. And, looking at Subaru, all his expression had was a sense of rejecting.

Louis: "A~h....."

As she moaned that out.

Her sigh had an emotion difficult to describe.

Louis raises her body, with shivering shoulders, and draws her knees on her round golden carpet.

And slowly, raised her rejected face??,

Louis: "??A~h, shit, shit, shit. One step, even though just one step was left."

With a look filled with sheer hatred, Louis glared at Subaru and let out that seemingly cursing voice.

"????"

Louis: "Though just one step was left, huh. Though we will regret it, huh. Why, how, were you hurt, huh. ??Who, broke onii-san, huh."

A voice full of hatred, as if it came from someone who had been trapped and isolated into the depths of hell, who envied the life and paradise that living beings enjoyed on earth.

With that hateful voice, Louis continued.

Louis: "Even though, with just this one step, we would have had completely torn apart Natsuki Subaru and ?Natsuki Subaru?.....!"

Subaru: "..... What's up with that. Why are you acting like this."

Louis: "??Isn't that obvious that we wouldn't eat the same person twice ~tsu!?"

Subaru: "--hk."

Her strange voice cracked and smashed Subaru, as Louis said so as if she was spitting out blood.

At that spot, she straightens her limbs and stands with facial expressions that had changed completely?? like that of a beast who had lost its humanity.

Louis: "We must have it different! We must have the ?Natsuki Subaru? we ate once and the Natsuki Subaru that was left to eat to be different! For getting that taste, we wanted to separate them, but..... it was all fruitless! How laughable!"

Subaru: "..... It's not laughable. Nothing you said was funny."

Louis: "That? Is that so!? But, onii-san also hates us, no? Isn't it fun to see the hated us so saddened? It must be feeling nice, no? Only onii-san..... only *you* could have had fulfilled us, who are fed up of eating..... For us ?Satiation?, only *you* could have had ~tsu!"

In front of Louis, who had bloodshot eyes, Subaru murmured "satiation".

If he had heard her correctly, then her title was supposed to be ?Gluttony?. Why was she now, talking about ?Satiation?.

In front of the confused Subaru, Louis yelled towards the sky "First of all!".

Louis: "Both Ley of ?Gourmet?! And Roy of ?Bizarre Eating?! Know absolutely nothing! From next to next, blindly stuffing themselves up like a bunch of idiots..... all that for us, who are trapped here and don't have the freedom of choice? Don't make us laugh, failed siblings ~tsu!"

Hugging her own golden hair, Louis spat out as her body continued to shiver.

Subaru did not understand? the meaning behind her words. What she had said, Ley and Roy, were those

perhaps someone's names?

However, one thing that he learned through the existence of ?Gluttony?, and memories, was??,

Subaru: "Are you really fine with..... revealing the names of your partners who you eat things like memories with? Anyway, stealing away such things. Eating them away. Was it?"

Subaru was an example of someone who had his memories eaten, and lost sight of who he was.

Julius was an example of someone who had his name eaten, and had gotten forgotten by everyone around him.

And, Rem, who perhaps had both eaten and was forgotten by the entire world, and fell into an endless slumber.

That was all the work of ?Gluttony?, Louis, and the names of her partners she said earlier??,

Subaru: "Why are you all doing this? What is your goal?"

Louis: "??To be happy."

"????"

Hearing that spontaneous answer, Subaru was rendered breathless.

Not looking at that reaction, Louis, seemingly due to her mental instability, gnawed her teeth.

Louis: "To be happy. What other goal can there be? The goal of living is to be happy, no? Or perhaps, did you think the hated us had twisted away from even that? Wrong. You're wrong. As you're wrong. You're wrong anyway. Because you're too wrong. We're saying you're wrong. Because we're telling you you're wrong! A~h, soul hurts..... ~tsu!"

Subaru: "What is the relation between the goal of being happy and stealing away other's memories....."

Louis: "??Onii-san we~ll, have you ever thought that life is unfair?"

Subaru: "I have."

Louis: "Awa ~tsu."

Displaying her teeth, with her white hand on her back, Louis asked. Seeing Subaru instantaneously nod to her question, Louis muttered out a bitter "Of cou~rse".

Pressing her hands on her thin chest, she continued to show her teeth.

Louis: "We have, too. Rather, life is unfairness itself. We can't choose our birth, we can't choose our

parents, we can't choose our surroundings, we can't choose our future, we can't choose anything at all. We're just in such a system. We're just sitting on such a belt conveyor."

"????"

Louis: "??But, what if, that wasn't like that?"

Louis tilted in front of the silent Subaru.

Louis: "What if we could choose our birth? What if we could choose our parents? What if we could choose our surroundings? What if we could choose our future? What if everything was just like how we chose? .....Everyone would choose a better life, no? Are we wrong?"

Subaru: "That's..... Maybe so, but."

Subaru tries to figure out the relationship between that and the crimes committed by Louis and the others.

But, at Subaru's words, Louis gnashed her teeth.

Louis: "??That's it."

Subaru: "..... Ah?"

Louis: "If we choose our birth, if we choose our parents, if we choose our surroundings, if we choose our future, if everything is how we choose, everyone would choose for a better life. ??That's why, we are taking time out, and are working hard, to find the best life for us."

"????"

Louis: "Certainly, it is somewhere ~tsu! A life in which we live with our head held high, live like us! A future so bright, that we get to say that we were glad we got to live this way! Till the time we meet that fated life, we'll eat, we'll chew, we'll sip, we'll swallow, we'll drink, gluttonous drinking ~tsu! Gluttony ~tsu!"

With absolutely no signs of hesitation, Louis Arneb shouted out her beautiful objectives.

From the bottom of her heart, she truly believed that her pursuit for happiness would only be able to grasp the best for her only through this method.

In her own life, Louis had not discovered any hopes or expectations.

For some reason, in the life of the girl named Louis Arneb, the beginning was unfavourable. Her starting point was wrong. ??That was why, she wanted to do something that she couldn't.

Her birth, her parents, her surroundings, her future, her talents, she wanted to win all these blessing for her own self.

Those are exactly what the conditions are for maximising one's enjoyment and happiness in life.

That's why??,

Subaru: "For that, you steal away people's memories, and eat them.....?"

Louis: "If we find the life we desire, we'll affix that ?Name? and ?Memory? and live that life with our head held high. Unfortunately enough, till now everyone has been rejected..... There were some lives which were on a good line but, you know, we won't be satisfied by just a few good experiences here and there."

With her voice trembling feverishly, Louis gently slipped her finger through her patchy clothes and touches her body beneath, and that fancy gesture did not seem unfitting for her age.

If her, if ?Gluttony's? words were true, then she had eaten an uncountable number of people's lives, and must have had acquired physical experiences of such extent which would not be possible to be experienced by a single person.

A seeker of satiation, who had trampled on men, women, children, the elderly, even the boundaries of different creatures and tribes, enjoyed all kinds of experiences that exist, and tasted them all.

It is just as what Louis herself had said.

She was tired. Of eating others' lives.

For her, who kept eating, the ?Delicious Parts? of normal people's lives, all of them were common, repetitive, boring and old-fashioned substitutes.

However, just like some could be comprehended, there some parts of Louis' mind that were incomprehensible.

That was??,

Subaru: "Then why did such a picky eater like you, even use that pain in the ass method to have me? Something like not letting go of anything edible that you got, is that against your pride as a food fighter or something?"

Louis: "It's not such a stupid reason. ??Because onii-san, is our fate."

"????"

Subaru angrily and alertly glares at Louis, who had let out her true thoughts in idiotic honesty.

However, Louis' eyes that looked at Subaru, their passion could not be refuted. She seriously loved Subaru?? not his personality, but his ?Life?.

As for why. That was??,

Louis: "Young and old, all kinds of humans, races, positions, standings, we have eaten anything and everything but, there is one thing, we are not familiar with. Do you know what it is?"

Subaru: "What could it be. I don't know. Like, my good-for-nothing self's sorrows or something."

Louis: "??The experience of ?Death?."

As soon as he heard that, Subaru closed one eye and ceased all movement.

Staring at that Subaru, Louis lifted her thin arms and turns her palms towards him.

Louis: "No matter how many people's memory we eat, it's just impossible. The memory of ?Death?, we can never get our hands on just that. Because it is like that, no? Memories are the record of someone's life when they were alive. That's why, something like the memories of death don't exist. ??Only onii-san, is the sole exception."

The ability of ?Return by Death? was loved, envied, and desired by Louis.

For a girl tired of all experiences in this world, there was only one boy who could provide her with a fresh experience.

Louis: "Hey hey, how does it feel like to die? It must be painful, no? It must be hurtful, no? It must be difficult, no? It must ache a lot? There would also be a moment it stops aching? Is what they say about it being a pleasant experience true? When you die, are you normally happy? Or, do you feel nothing anymore? Is it an easy victory? Hey hey, heyhey, heyheyhey!"

Subaru: "......If you have my memories of everything till yesterday, then, won't you already know all that."

Louis: "Just as a memory, yes. But, actually, that's old, it's not real! We wish for a more raw feeling. We can't be satisfied by reclaiming old used ingredients. What can fill us is only something that is new, fresh, and something which nobody else knows ~tsu!"

That was why, following up with those words,

Louis: "A special memory that has not been experienced by anyone in this world! Not only that, the ability to just do things again by dying if you ever make a mistake! Even after finding the best life, there is always a possibility that a failure may ruin everything, no? But, in onii-san's life, that's not there! It's fine, we'll do it so that we're not found out!"

"????"

Louis: "Neither Emilia would, nor Beatrice, nor Ram, nor Meili, nor Julius, nor Echidna, nor Shaula, nor Patrasche, nor Petra, nor Otto, nor Garfiel, nor Frederica, nor Lewes, nor Roswaal, nor Clind, nor

Annerose, nor Felt, nor Reinhardt, nor Old Man Rom, nor Ton Chin Kan, nor Crusch, nor Felix, nor Wilhelm, nor Ricardo, nor Mimi, nor Hetaro, nor Tivey, nor Priscilla, nor Al, nor Schult, nor Kiritaka, nor Liliana, anyone and everyone anyone and everyone anyone and everyone! Deceiving them all, we will live happily!"

Louis pointed her hands towards him, and pretended to be acting cutely.

Louis: "That's why, please. ??Let us fill our stomach, and eat, onii-san's life?"

Pitiably, she must have had unquestionably found this choice to be the most suitable from all the countless memories she had.

It was also the proof that, regardless what kind of ingredients may be available, they would all be put to waste if they aren't cooked properly.

For the moment, there were no ingredients. For the moment, there was just a good dish, was one of Subaru's favourite phrases.

He had never felt it this way.

Not valuing the experiences of countless, several, normal people.

Subaru had never met such a wasteful existence before.

Subaru: "??This is the third time, isn't it. My suffering, my death, my life, everything of it is all mine. Not a single bit of it is something you can just eat up!"

"????"

Subaru: "Starve to death, idiot. If you can choose only one way to die in your life, then that's what I recommend to you. ??The most painful way, in this world."

Gesturing his neck being scraped with his thumb, asserted Subaru.

At those words, Louis widened her eyes and then looked at her own hands. Then, with both her hands on her face and looking up towards the white sky, she moaned out a "A~a~a~a~h."

Louis: "We've, failed. We've done it. We did it. We did do it. We ended up doing it. We have really done it. As we've done it. Because we've done it..... A~h, a~a~a~a~h."

With shaking hands and shivering knees, Louis collapsed on the spot.

What was truly shocking was how serious her desire for Subaru was. The outcome of that seriousness were those words, and the way she lost all her spirit.

Even Subaru could not keep up the attitude of further damaging her.

Subaru: “I will not become how you wished. My name is Natsuki Subaru. It’s the name that Natsuki Kenichi And Natsuki Naoko gave me. ??Nothing else. I am me.”

Louis: “Even though it may get overwritten, and disappear?”

Subaru: “I’ll let you on some magic spells. ??That is that, this is this.”

He intended to fire those magic spells the same way Julius had fired at him.

If ?Natsuki Subaru? was made to return, the current Subaru may disappear. However, he may not disappear as well. There may be ways to make sure he doesn’t get erased.

In this white place, he may find a way to compromise that.

Subaru: “I, who rises into others’ hearts, have no need to behave like I am a ray of sunlight to them. That’s my answer. Get a haircut, stupid.”

Throwing that dirty line, Subaru turned away from Louis.

He did not care about being vigilant to keep his gaze fixed at her, rather than that, he needed to find a way to exit this unknown dimension more importantly.

As soon as possible, return to Emilia and the others, and read Reid’s ?Book of the Dead? again.

Firstly, why did Reid’s ?Book of the Dead? lead into this place??,

Louis: “??A~h, enough. So there’s no choice but to leave the rest to onii-chan and nii-sama, hu~h.”

“????“

Behind Subaru, who was submerged in his thoughts, sighed Louis.

Hearing that, Subaru stopped and looked backwards. Louis lay on her golden hair, with her face covered by her palms, as she flapped her legs around.

Onii-chan and, nii-sama.

Louis had mentioned them quite a few times. If that’s just as how Subaru imagined, then??,

Subaru: “??Ley and, Roy. ?Gourmet? and ?Bizarre Eating??”

Louis: “We cannot go out of this place. That’s why, unless onii-chan and nii-sama eat, we can’t choose what to eat either..... So, we requested them.”

Subaru: “Request.....”

Rethinking those negative thoughts, Subaru encouraged her to speak.

It felt as if it would take some time for Louis to say anything. Eventually, as if she traced Subaru's frustration, Louis' red lips trembled,

Louis: "Isn't this the second time onii-san came here, since last night. ??That's why, both onii-chan and nii-sama, either of them must have had noticed. About where, onii-san went."

"????"

??Her words made it clear, those two threats now approached the ?Pleiades Watch Tower?.

Louis: "Both of them, were quite interested in onii-san. That's a matter of course. ??Because onii-san has plenty of experiences, that they have never had before."

Subaru: "Sh, it.....! You..... ~hk."

Louis: "??A~h, how unfair."

Knowing that truth, Louis muttered to Subaru, who had suddenly started to shiver.

Louis' out-of-context mutters, Subaru understood the meaning behind them right away.

Subaru: "Is that, an exit!?"

Behind Subaru's back, a crack opened up in the white space, with the other side visibly distorted.

Simply jumping out of this space was not possible, their obvious disagreement was what had caused this.

In response to his intentions, Subaru needed to return to that archive.

"????"

Louis: "*You* can't do it. Onii-san can never do it. Even though we want you to do it."

The existence of the exit, before that, Subaru was unsure about how to deal with Louis' treatment.

Maybe all that about her not having any fighting strength, including when she had revealed her desires and her attitude of that time, and how she did resist her neck being crushed, were just as they looked, true.

Therefore, it was physically possible, for Subaru to deal with Louis at this place.

As he considered it, for just a single moment, her clouded gaze saw through his intention.

Louis: "Even if you are suspicious, even if you are despairing, whether it's yourself, those around you, or those you hate, you can never kill them. You spineless coward. ??Even though we were gentle with you."

Subaru: "??. No, it's fine to get cavities sometimes. Brush your teeth, stupid."

Subaru raised his middle finger against Louis, who wore a horrible expression.

Subaru attempted to put his body into the crack without looking back at Louis or hearing any more of her cheap words. Just before that, he hesitated a bit, at just that moment.

He did not regret Louis. He fully believed that he doesn't have to look back onto her face.

Subaru's sole regret was only because of him parting ways, not with Louis, but the voice that made Subaru stand up.

At just that moment, appeared for motivating Natsuki Subaru, that girl.

With her memories and name robbed away from her, henceforth, called out to only Subaru at the end of her world.

Subaru: "It's fine. ??I remember, that promise."

Natsuki Subaru will surely not forget about it.

Therefore, they will surely meet again.

??As he thought that he would have had preferred her gentle voice, rather than her harsh one.

"????"

With such enthusiasm, and his desire to return back to his comrades, Subaru went through the crack.

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Louis: "A~h, a~h, a~h, shit! Not even looking back, what a man ~tsu!"

Louis: "We'll not let you go. We'll not let you escape. No way, no way..... ~tsu!"

Louis: "Don't think it ends with this, Natsuki Subaru..... ~tsu!"

Louis: "Your life, is o~o~o~ urs ~tsu!!"

Arc 6 - Chapter 62, "Tremors of Collapse"

by Gracedharperd - Furuta - Monday, December 17, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/12/17/arc-6-chapter-62-tremors-of-collapse/

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Translated By :

- Ringo

Proofread By :

- Ice
- Furuta
- Nanashi

Art Source :

- Anime, modified by Furuta

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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??As the white world peeled away, the coloured world which lied beyond, at the other side, got rebuilt.

God's enormous, rough and overwhelming paintbrush added colours to the world.

It seemed as if he watched the world being painted with colours from the confined colourless space, an exotic feeling.

He had heard the legend of God creating the world in seven days, but it did not necessarily seem like God assembled the building blocks of the world in seven days, it rather felt as if God had painted it out on the colourless canvas.

??Od Lagna's cradle. Or, the?Corridor of Memories?.

From a seemingly different dimension, Natsuki Subaru's existence was being extracted away from.

Being separated away from that space unfamiliar to the former world, the fragments of his consciousness gradually tied up, and bit by bit, his self was being reformed??,

???: "??Subaru."

Subaru: "Mph....."

At that voice, Subaru opened his eyes, as he was struck with his thirst.

With blurred vision, as he blinked over and over again in this world, he realised that his back and hips felt something hard and cold. He was perhaps lying against a wall somewhere.

Immediately after that, he noticed the signs of the existence in front of his eyes.

"????"

In front of Subaru was a grief-stricken girl with a peculiar pattern in her eyes?? it was Beatrice, with a fancy dress and a cute appearance.

Subaru realised that he had returned from the ?Corridor of Memories? to the former world, to the watchtower, to despair and concern.

Subaru: "??Ah."

Beatrice: "How's your consciousness? Is it alright, I suppose? We should confirm that you didn't accidentally lose your memories, in fact. For starters, do you know Betty?"

Blinking her eyes, Beatrice touched Subaru's face and chest in the intense surroundings.

She knew that it wasn't something she could confirm by touching him, but to someone worried, it served as a reassurance. With his cheek being touched, Subaru answered in that mood, and said "I'm fine, I'll be alright."

Subaru: "No problems at all. I do remember. My memories are safe, you..... Beatrice, I haven't forgotten about you. Of course, that goes for everyone else as well."

Beatrice: ".....We~ll, you'll get praise for calling Betty by her name for the first name, in fact."

Beatrice, who had touched Subaru's cheeks, let out a sigh of relief and relaxed her eyes as she saw him call her name. At her reaction, Subaru also loosened his lips, and stroked her head without any hesitation.

Taking in a deep breath, as he felt Beatrice accept his palm with narrowed her eyes, Subaru reaffirmed his

memories, their safety.

Although he had asserted that "I remember" to Beatrice, it was difficult for him to find enough confidence for that.

The encounter he had had just previously, the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, Louis Arneb.

She was unquestionably a monster who had eaten countless ?Names? and ?Memories?, but it was unknown how her ability to eat those memories was actually used.

It was not certain whether actually biting was needed, or just to declare ?Eating?, or a more complex procedure. ??The more powerful the conditions and restrictions, the more complex the requirements, the greater the power is promised into those hands. He wanted to have an idea.

That aside, Subaru did not know if those conditions could be satisfied in the?Corridor of Memories?in the first place. The truth was, physical contact, biting the arm, or licking. If they were the conditions, then he was totally done for.

Therefore, it was indeed possible for his memories to disappear without even her presence??,

Subaru: "??It's probably fine. The promises and love, are all still within my chest."

His heartbeats rise when he thinks of Emilia, and feels the desire to pat Beatrice when he worries about her. It was proof that all doubts had disappeared within Subaru, and he wished for the safety of his friends.

He doesn't need to proceed alone, at the very least, he wouldn't experience those horrors again that way.

???: "??Natsuki-kun, have you come back?"

A voice stroked Subaru's eardrums, who was reaffirming the presence of his memories in his mind.

Raising his face, he saw Echidna with her purple hair fluttering, as he put Beatrice aside. Subaru noticed that she had arrived late after making some compromises.

Subaru: ".....Emilia-chan, and the others are?"

Echidna: "Good, it appears you haven't lost the ability to look around. Do you remember what you had been doing just before this?"

Echidna, with a look which seemed to convey that she were looking at someone pitiful, looked at Subaru, who looked back innocently, as he understood the meaning hidden behind her words?? that a few of his comrades were missing.

Neither was it something cute like they were hiding behind the bookshelves in the archive in wait to surprise him. Touching the thick black binding on his knee, Subaru exhaled.

Right now, the only members who were present here, were??,

Subaru: "Beatrice and Echidna, and Meili.....?"

Meili: "Onii-san, so you're finally up? You overslept so~ much, I was feeling lonely."

Subaru: "Oversleep, huh....."

At Meili's negative words, Subaru slammed his palm on his head.

Somehow managing to calm himself down, Subaru now tried to figure out what had come up.

In this room, he could not see Emilia, Ram, Julius or Shaula.

There were only three people here along with Subaru, that being said, all four of them were non-combatants. The situation were plenty strange, but what was more strange was??,

Subaru: "It can't be that I had just opened the book, isn't that right? How much time was I unconscious for?"

Beatrice: "??. About an hour, I suppose. Till now, the books had been finished in a few seconds, so we were concerned if something happened to Subaru, in fact."

Subaru: "One hour....."

Thanks to Beatrice’s answer, Subaru figured out the time lag between the?Corridor of Memories?and reality wasn’t large.

The challenge he faced now really was different from what happened when he read ?Book of the Dead?normally. That?Corridor of Memories?really did exist somewhere, and the time he spent there seemed to be authentic as well.

He encountered Louis, opened his heart to Louis, got licked, strangled her throat and resisted ?Natsuki Subaru???and, refused her with gentle yet harsh words.

It would be safe to say that Subaru hadn’t been seeing such a convenient dream all that time. However, it was undeniable that the limited time he passed there did indeed pass.

Subaru: "Why are Emilia-chan and the others, not with you?"

Echidna: "While you were, quite literally, immersed in that book, some abnormalities came up here, you see. The four not present here are going around, dealing with those."

Subaru: "Abnormalities.....?"

Echidna: "The first one to notice the abnormalities was Shaula. It might be said that it was expected of the

one who holds the position of defending this watch tower, no?"

Although her tone was calm, the content of her words wasn't so settling. Echidna responded to Subaru with a voice that repressed her feelings.

She pointed to the entrance of the room, the staircase which led to downstairs,

Echidna: "Shaula said that something was approaching the tower from the outside. After that, she was lightning fast. In order to confirm the reason behind the abnormalities, and to stop them, she headed out without losing any time."

Meili: "The cool onii-san then went after he~r. In that time, the silver-haired onee-san and the maid onee-san went to take the sleeping younger sister, I think."

Subaru: "So after that, we four were left in this place, huh. ??To be honest, though it makes me feel lonely, it was the correct answer. Especially in this situation, we don't want to be in an unfamiliar place."

Responding to Echidna and Meili's report, Subaru sighed out his words in this situation of utter confusion.

Subaru is thankful to Shaula, who noticed something concerning and Julius, who followed her, and Emilia and Ram for their actions as well.

If the body of the blue-haired girl, Rem, could be safeguarded, then he could crush all his worries one by one.

??Before the emergency that could happen any second from now.

Echidna: "??That reaction, Natsuki-kun, are you aware of something?"

"????"

Out of nowhere, Echidna asks a question seeing Subaru's subtle expressions. Targeted by that mindful gaze, Subaru tried to respond that very second, as he shook his head.

There was no need for him to mix-up or complicate. He could go ahead with bothersome words if only he wanted to have his comrades' heads' ache.

Subaru: "I'll tell you what happened from the conclusion. ??The plan of reading Reid's book and seeing through his past failed. I couldn't see his past, so nothing much could be made for that."

Beatrice: "You could not see his past, I suppose? What in the world does that mean, in fact?"

Subaru: "Something got in the way. ??The Sin Archbishop, of ?Gluttony?."

Beatrice: "??hk!"

Though he had got those words several times till now, he finally conveyed them fully.

Hearing the words that came from Subaru's mouth, Beatrice blinks her eyes in astonishment. Though Subaru had heard of the words Sin Archbishop for the first time by Louis, though it perhaps wasn't the same for them.

Echidna: "Though it's frankly unbelievable to some extent, the Sin Archbishop of?Gluttony?is in the book..... In this situation, it would be uncertain to say that it was literally in the book, but let's say it was in it and?"

Echidna furrows her eyebrows, as she pondered with a difficult face. In her eyes, more than doubt, was uneasiness. Even so, her uneasiness was still directed to Subaru.

It was increasingly obvious that her anxiousness had more to it than just the issue of Subaru's memories.

Subaru: "Though Beatrice had said the same earlier, I didn’t lose my memories..... It's the truth. I haven’t forgotten the faces of my friends, and my love for Patrasche is still genuine."

Meili: "I don’t know why Dragon-chan’s name was mentioned there tho~ugh....."

Puffing up her cheeks, Meili made a face filled with anger at Subaru’s words.

Her anger was fitting. The truth was, Subaru had already lost his memories once. The presence or absence of his memories was ambivalent , and without any subjective symptoms, nothing could be proved.

??However, at this moment, Subaru could say with full confidence that that wasn’t the case.

Subaru: "I’m really glad to see you’re so worried for me, but I haven’t forgotten anything. I can assure you."

Echidna: "Though I am very doubtful of that assurance..... But if you have such confidence, then there must be some ground to it, no?"

Subaru: "??Because I, who was completely doomed to fall before?Gluttony?, was saved by Rem, you see."

"????"

The only one to follow the name that was mentioned till it’s very echo, was Beatrice.

That’s why, unlike Echidna and Meili who did not make an extreme expression, Beatrice took the form of complete surprise.

To Beatrice, who was in such a shape, Subaru nodded. ??No matter what kind of a memory it was, the reason Subaru did not get them robbed away from him by Louis, was only because of her existence.

In that place, the girl that encouraged and made Subaru stand up, who had started to break into fragments.

Her existence could not allow such a gap for ?Gluttony?, was what he truly believed.

Beatrice: "Subaru, give a detailed explanation, I suppose. That too....."

Looking directly into Subaru’s black eyes, Beatrice asked for a detailed explanation. However, by the ending? of the little girl’s words, a deathly quake?? shook the tower.

Though it was obvious that the bookshelves would shake, the shaking of the tower itself was obviously unnatural. This was probably because of the emergency that Shaula went to take care of.

Henceforth, Beatrice, blinking just once.

Beatrice: "As briefly as possible, in fact."

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Subaru: "??When I dove into the?Book of the Dead?, I was brought to, not Reid's past, but a place which was white and had nothing. That was where?Gluttony?..... the girl Sin Archbishop, Louis was present. According to that Louis, that place was something like Od Lagna's cradle, the?Corridor of Memories?, basically."

Inside the tower, with continued tremors that could faintly be heard as soles of feet, Subaru began to explain what he had seen in the ?Book of the Dead?.

The reality of his encounter with the girl in the white space knows as the?Corridor of Memories?. The interposition of a supernatural existence possessing overwhelming strength, Od Lagna.

Though they were just a bunch of words and phenomena of unknown meaning to Subaru, they should prove to be important information to those who have both common sense and a right mind in this world.

As Subaru explained, Beatrice deeply muttered "Od Lagna.....".

Subaru: "Louis said it was a mechanism to keep the world from breaking. Do you have any idea?"

Beatrice: "Even Betty isn't well-knowledgeable regarding that, I suppose. But at least that it is said to be the world's core point..... where all the mana returns to, is known, in fact."

Turning her neck sideways, Beatrice voiced out her doubt. Putting her finger on her sliding down drills, she continued to fidget with her hair.

Beatrice: "All mana returns there, subsequently circulating..... In other words, Od Lagna is an existence heavily tied to the death and regeneration of spirits. That's why, it wouldn't be correct to say Betty and the others of her kind are unrelated to it."

Echidna: "However, we are special because of our origins. Not because of the fact that our existence is tied to Od Lagna. Taking that into consideration, I wonder if we can actually maintain an objective view at Od Lagna, unlike normal spirits."

Subaru: "Unlike normal spirits, you say..... Is that so. So the reason why you lived for so long is because of that."

Echidna took over Beatrice's words, which caught Subaru's attention.

Though the topic itself was deviating, it seemed true that Beatrice and Echidna had lived hundreds of years.

The reason for the longevity of their lives was perhaps their origin, not just because they were spirits.

Subaru: "If you ask me, Beatrice's cuteness makes her seem more like a fairy than a spirit."

Beatrice: ".....That, Subaru said that once before too, I suppose. Subaru's level of ignorance is unknown, but here, fairy is not a compliment, in fact. That's why, we~ll, Betty honestly can't feel either happy or insulted, so it's just weird, I suppose."

Subaru: "Uh, is that so. I was pretty rude, then."

Indeed, in places home to fantasy, fairies have the image to have had immensely harmed humans.

If the same thought applied to this world as well, then it was natural that calling someone a fairy won't be considered a compliment.

Subaru: "Sorry. I meant, that you are cute enough to be chowed down upon."

Beatrice: "The feeling of wanting to eat being complementary to cuteness is worrying, in fact!"

Subaru: "Huh, is that so? Isn't it like you just want to gulp down something cute?"

Meili: "That reminds me, bad animal-chan's carefully put their babies in their mouth, and the~n kill them or something."

By Meili's unnecessary remark, Beatrice trembled with fear.

Regardless, the topic had deviated from the original. What was crucial here was??,

Echidna: "??That, cradle of Od Lagna. Is that the location of the?Corridor of Memories??"

Subaru: "It is where the soul is filtered, and all that is what it was described to be, you know?"

Echidna: "Filtering the soul..... Meaning filtering and cleansing it? If we think that Od Lagna's role was just mana circulation, then this isn't even funny."

Echidna's opinion was fully agreed upon by Subaru.

Subaru, who had seen that place himself, could not laugh at it simply thinking it was just an exaggeration of some sort.

Each of the deads' soul arrived at the?Corridor of Memories?and gets circulated.

Then, the soul was washed away of it's dirt like memories and experiences, stained on it by the living of that life, becoming like a completely cleansed platter, and started a new life again.

Subaru: "I think I have a good explanation for all this. The system of reusing the soul of a dead person..... the?Memory?that gets cleansed over there, becomes a book in this library."

Echidna: "So it's not that it disappeared somewhere, because of the fact that the dead are still remembered in this world. Looking at these bookshelves, there really is no writer mentioned either."

These bookshelves, banished from the world, recorded everything that arrived at the ?Corridor of Memories?.

In other words, the ?Corridor of Memories? was place for compilation for making the?Books of the Dead?. From there, any memory that arrived was compiled into the form of a book and stored in these shelves as a ?Book of the Dead?.

And, ?Gluttony? was obstructing that through its evil acts, stealing away the memory and history of people from where they are originally supposed to be.

??That exactly was the identity of the power of?Gluttony?.

Subaru: "If that's true, then the soul filtration that Od Lagna is supposed to do, is being done by them arbitrarily. With that, they gulp down the stolen?Memory?into their stomach, and literally eat the?Life?of others."

When that was put into words, it became clear how inestimable that would be.

Louis had adamantly declared that it was the?trial and error for achieving happiness?. She said that she would continue to eat and swallow lives till she found a life appropriate for herself.

It was the same as continually attempting to win a lottery till you ultimately strike the victory.

As a result of having the ability to play boundlessly, Louis chose the way of robbing others and find happiness for herself for those brothers of her's. ??To Subaru, that was dreadful.

Not Louis' judgement. It was that her idea was not something special or out-of-the-box.

Anyone would choose to play boundlessly if they got the chance to.

That's why, the actions of Louis Arneb, were just an extreme version of human desires??,

Beatrice: "Even if that's the case, you can't continue going for the win if you know others will be sacrificed in doing that, I suppose."

Subaru: "Beatrice....."

Beatrice: "Knowing that there will be sacrifices, but still continuing to play the lottery, is the not the way a sane person would think, in fact. That's why, something like sympathy doesn't exist for a Sin Archbishop, I suppose."

Reading Subaru's idea, Beatrice said so with a voice sweet to the ears.

No sympathy could exist for someone so cruel. Beatrice was well aware of Subaru's thoughts, and only said the words which Subaru himself was unable to say.

Yes, there was indeed no room for sympathy.

They themselves may not have had been to blame if they stood in different positions than now. Even so, a person who took the very first step in the wrong direction, continues to deviate further from the original path as he further proceeds.

No matter who it is, they must get the fruit for their actions.

Meili: "But, it's pretty strange. Why did the book of a known person connect to that whatever pla~ce?"

Subaru: "That's..... because the soul of a dead person is recycled at the?Corridor of Memories?, and from there the book is linked like wholesale..... No, what a useless explanation."

Subaru was unable to clearly clarify Meili's doubts.

Why did Reid's?Book of the Dead?connect to the?Corridor of Memories??

At the very least, Subaru, before losing his memories, was supposed to have had read ?Books of the Dead? once. He had also heard of Julius reading one at the timing, and he had already experienced reading Meili's book in a former loop.

But, in those experiences, there was no instance of someone being thrown into that dimension.

Then, should it be considered that Louis purposefully intervened?

Subaru: "But, it didn't seem like?Gluttony?intended to summon me. Even to her, it felt like my appearance was unexpected..... Reid's?Book of the Dead?is not supposed to have had done it either."

Beatrice: "??There is just one hypothesis, in fact."

In front of Subaru, who was drowned in his thoughts, said Beatrice, with a finger raised.

Looking at her fingertip, Subaru said "Hypothesis?" in an attempt to encourage her to continue.

Subaru: "Tell us. What possibilities are there?"

Beatrice: "The ?Books of the Dead? of the archive records the memories that get stripped away from souls in the ?Corridor of Memories?, I suppose. The normal mechanism is to read them in the form of a book..... But, what do you think will happen if that record will be used for other purposes, in fact?"

Subaru: "Using the memories of the dead in a way other than the ?Books of the Dead?? But, how is that possible if it's not using them for the?Book of the Dead?....."

Echidna: "??Ah, I see, is that so. Intelligent indeed, Beatrice."

Subaru furrowed his eyebrows at Beatrice's words. However, Echidna interjected with her words, seemingly understanding. Not just that, following up Echidna, even Meili put her fingers on her mouth, and said.

Meili: "Could it mean that?"

Subaru: "Wait wait, don't make a face as if you understand. You're such a loser. It's good that you have found a new part of yourself and all, but showing that you don't understand what you don't understand is a must for kids."

Receiving Subaru's words while pressing her fingers, Meili confirmed Beatrice's words. At that, Beatrice let out a sigh,

Beatrice: "Meili's idea is correct, I suppose..... Reid is, like that."

Subaru: "Well um, that means?"

Echidna: "Reid's past could not be referred to through his ?Book of the Dead?. That is because there is no record of Reid Astrea actually in it. Reid's record right now is being used differently, ??In order to reproduce Reid Astrea for taking the trial."

Subaru: "Ah!"

Hearing the explanation of the grumbling Echidna, Subaru finally came to understood.

Subaru: "Along with that, it also explains how I got my memories eaten by Louis yesterday at the ?Corridor of Memories?."

The Subaru of yesterday had undoubtedly concluded to the same strategy as the current Subaru. In result of trying to read Reid's book in the library, he landed up in that world of white.

The truth was, Louis herself had said that this was her second meeting with Subaru since last night. When they first came in contact, she robbed away Subaru's memories, and tried to finish off the leftovers when they met the second time.

Subaru: "But, if you take that into consideration, then Reid's book can never be used to capture him huh..... Or, instead, it could send you straight to the dangerous ?Gluttony?."

Echidna: "I suppose so. That being said, though it was indeed unexpected, the one to be held responsible for making Natsuki-kun lose his memories could be stated as just fortune. Taking memories away was not a function of the tower..... Because they didn't wish for creating a trap that led straight to?Gluttony?from the very beginning."

Subaru: "That's, we~ll, um, I guess so."

Whether the creator of this tower wanted to move the trap to a point where it leads to an instant death or not, was unknown. This was perhaps only a matter of accident that it turned out like this.

If that wasn't the case, then the person who planned this tower out possessed a catastrophic way of thinking and a hellish personality.

Though Subaru has no memories of it but, the way Shaula addresses him as master, and talks to Subaru like he is that very same person, there existed a possibility even more disturbingly scary than that.

Subaru: "With Reid reproduced, his book was "blank" and contained nothing. That's why that?Book of the Dead?linked directly to that part of the Od Lagna..... am I right?"

Beatrice: "For now, that is the only hypothesis we have, I suppose. Why one of ?Gluttony? was hidden in there is still a mystery. But, the one thing that can be said is....."

The series of inexplicable events that happened around Reid's ?Book of the Dead?.

There was one hypothesis around that. Naturally, questions whose answers weren't found still remain unanswered. However, unfortunately, Subaru and the others did not have the time to ponder over that question.

The proof of that was??,

???: "??Echidna! Is everyone alright!?"

Rushing up the stairs, a solitary knight arrived in this archive of?Taygeta?. Echidna quickly turned her head backwards, and focused her eyes on that person.

Echidna: "Julius, you seem in quite the hurry, don't you?"

Julius: "Things we did not expect to happen have come up. As fast as possible, I'd like to hear everyone's thoughts on them..... Mh."

It was Julius, as he came up, answering Echidna's question.

He had stiffened his cheeks, sensing the tension and cautious atmosphere, but seeing Subaru lying down, his two yellow eyes slightly twitched.

Julius: "So you have woken up, Subaru. That is indeed very fortunate. Do you know who I am?"

Subaru: "I guess so, first comes your worry. Um, you are.....?"

Julius: "??So it really is."

Subaru: "I'm lying! I'm joking! You are Julius Juukulius! What really is with that serious face of yours! I came back properly!"

Julius: "Hmph. I was also joking. I wish you would get cured of your childishness. ??Now I'll be telling you something which isn't so laughable."

Subaru made a difficult to comprehend face, making agreeing with him even more difficult. Smiling at Subaru's reaction, Julius subsequently tightened his facial expressions without any delay.

Just as he had said, what he was going to report was no laughing material.

Julius: "While I would like to hear Subaru's report back from the?Book of the Dead?, but this is an emergency. ??The reason behind the abnormalities that Miss Shaula sensed have been confirmed."

Subaru: "I can't see that Shaula anywhere though....."

Julius: "She is dealing with the threat from the outer wall of the tower at this very moment. However, just by herself, she is not enough,."

Subaru intensely gazes at Julius at his words. Receiving that gaze, and with an apologetic expression of "I'm sorry" in his eyes, Julius sighed and said,

Julius: "You all also must have had experienced those slight earthquakes. Those were, footsteps."

Subaru: "Footsteps?"

Julius: "Yes."

Subaru and the others twisted their expressions at those words, and seeing them, Julius pulled his chin in, and pausing for a second, continued.

Julius: "??The Demon beasts that resided in various places in the Augria Sand Dunes are charging towards the tower all at once. Although Miss Shaula is fighting them back, it is only a matter of time before they manage to break through inside."

Arc 6 - Chapter 63, "Five Obstacles"

by admin - Thursday, January 24, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/01/24/arc-6-chapter-63-five-obstacles/

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Translated By :

- Ringo

Proofread By :

- Nanashi
- Matter
- Furuta

Art Source :

- Haru Sabin Twitter

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??The arrival of the Witch Beasts at the watchtower.

Subaru and the others' cheeks stiffened and their expressions changed as Julius reported the Witch Beasts of the Augria Sand Dunes are pushing themselves inside all at once.
The feeling of the slight tremors running up their own feet?? were their footsteps, and that the scent of the Witch Beasts now poisoned the whole tower quite literally, all that made it impossible to not be disturbed.

Subaru: "Aside from it's hugeness, I know barely anything about this desert though....."

Subaru's only experience with the bare harshness of the dunes outside was in the loop in which he tried to retract away from the tower before he was charged of any suspicions, when his plan had failed at the very first step.
Just how it was only a sand-filled scenery as far as the eye saw, and that he was able to imagine it's

corresponding ruggedness.
Regardless, it was hard to believe that the desert was home to an enormous amount of living beings??,

Julius: "Originally, the Augria Sand Dunes were just a colony of Witch Beasts. What was more serious than the environment's harshness were, however, the Witch Beasts which targeted any and every human which entered them, you see."

Echidna: "It also seems that there was a military contingent dispatched with a plan of annihilating the Witch Beasts. Though, the result of that should be obvious from the sound of these footsteps."

Julius and Echidna gave their respective responses at Subaru's question.
In other words, Subaru's hope of the rumbling earth being but mere paper tigers and that the number of enemies coming was at best at the level of a zoo was a gross miscalculation. To be exact, it was rather like the level of an entire savanna of Witch Beasts.
Understandably, it made you want to go despair.

However??,

Meili: "??So, you realised that you should ca~ll me?"

And at that point sounded a voice, one of someone who was playfully fiddling with her fingers.
She was the only one here who had not shown any signs of ?Anxiety? on the news of the arrival of the Witch Beasts. Her reaction did not mean a lack of surprise.
It meant she did not see the Witch Beasts as any form of threat.

Julius: "Although it sounds quite pathetic, it's just as you say. I want you to lend us your strength."

Julius stiffened his cheeks and nodded at Meili's question.
Leaving the large number of Witch Beasts up to Meili, who possessed the ability to order Witch Beasts around. ??Julius' idea was understandable. Even Subaru had earlier come up with the same plan.
However, an alarm bells rang out in the depths of Subaru's chest.

Beatrice: "Subaru? What happened, I suppose? Your face is a bit strange, in fact?"

Subaru: "......It was my fate from the moment I was born to have a strange face."

Beatrice: "That goes just for your eyes, I suppose."

Beatrice looked at Subaru with worry in her eyes, as she noticed the bitterness of Subaru's expression.
Taking a deep breath, he took in her gaze.

He exhaled out a large amount of carbon dioxide, along with something like his anxiety. That was indeed, not so easily comprehensible for others as always.

Julius: "Subaru, is there a matter of concern?"

Subaru: "Don't hesitate so much while asking something from me. That being said, I'm so~rry for making such a strange, worrisome face. As an apology for that, I'll let you in on something else. An exclusive scoop I picked up from the ?Book of the Dead?."

"????"

Julius swallowed his breath, while Beatrice was amazed at his words. To be fair, though his response was predictable, he has to say it to explain what is going on.
The reason behind the sudden change in situation, why the Witch Beasts were rushing into the tower in such large numbers??,

Subaru: "??It's ?Gluttony?. The Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, is sending the Witch Beasts towards the tower."

Julius: "??~hk, why?"

Subaru: "That's my fault. In Reid's ?Book of the Dead?, one of ?Gluttony? was present. Accurately speaking, I came across one of ?Gluttony?. It seems even yesterday night as well. That is....."

Julius: "The reason behind your loss of memories, is what you mean to say, huh."

As Julius interrupted in his explanation and reached straight to the conclusion, Subaru lowered his chin. Even though it was something which was hard to believe, Julius had high understanding of their power. The ability associated with the name of ?Gluttony?, using that knowledge, he wanted to reach the conclusion as fast as possible.

Julius: "I cannot say I'm not unsettled. Once again, did you really not get anything stolen away from you this time?"

Subaru: "Fortunately, aside from a lifetime of stalking, I'm still beautiful as always. Though, I just explained all that to Beatrice and the others."

Julius: "I see..... Beatrice-sama?"
Beatrice:"Betty shares your concern, in fact. For the time being, no abnormalities are present, I suppose."
Subaru: "You really can't trust me, can you....."

Julius, with an expression of being convinced, instantly turned towards Beatrice. Though Subaru understood that it was necessary, he still found it somewhat strange.
That aside??,

Subaru: "It seems like they caught wind of us being here since yesterday night. About half a day after that..... They took that time to come here with their pets, huh?"

Echidna: "Considering the normal speed of traveling, it's hard to think they could reach this tower in half a day. especially if we were to consider they would be obstructed Witch Beasts during their travel. However....."

Subaru: "However?"

Echidna: "Unlike the difficult journey we had, if ?Gluttony? had the power to make the Witch Beasts obey them..... then it only comes down to the speed of traveling."

At the comment from the shrugging Echidna, Subaru made a difficult expression.
?Gluttony? had the power to make the Witch Beasts obey them, that assumption was the minimum and completely accurate. At the very least, it could not be doubted that the Witch Beasts were flooding into the tower because of guidance from an enemy.
It should be kept in mind that they had the means as well.

Subaru: "What about the issue of the speed of traveling?"

Echidna: "......The terrain is sandy. Even if there were no Witch Beasts to obstruct, the speed is bound to decrease on sand. Even if the sight of the tower is not lost and the the correct path is always taken, I believe it would still take several days to reach so."

Subaru: "But, are there any other possibilities?"

Echidna: "??It would be a totally different story if they took the aerial route, since going by land was quite time consuming."

Subaru: "Aerial route.....!"

As an unexpected possibility was presented, Subaru, in astonishment, widened his black eyes.
The aerial route, if that was possible, then the travel time would change drastically. It was perfectly reasonable to assume that a flying bird would travel faster than a walking man.

Subaru: "With my own ideas mixed up, I completely forgot about methods like flying. Is there some magic for it, or is it normal?"

Beatrice: "That is not the case, I suppose. Flying is a varied mixture of magic, it is a complicated procedure, in fact. Normally it would be too risky to be done if you considered the risk of crashing, I suppose. The ones who could do it are either idiots or geniuses, idiotic geniuses in fact."

Julius: "There is a famous rumour that the Margrave Mathers comes to the royal castle through the skies....."

Beatrice: "That is an idiotic genius, I suppose."

Apparently, it seemed like Beatrice was not a huge fan of unknown and risky techniques.
Subaru rotated his neck at the words of the cute Beatrice, who informed about the rarity of flying magic.

Subaru: "If it's not magic then, a huge bird..... Ah, a dragon! They must have ridden on a dragon's back!"

Echidna: "In fact, such a technique does exist in secret in the Volakia Empire in the south. Though the

empire has full monopoly on that technique, there exists a different way for ?Gluttony? to simply take it from them."

Subaru: "Someone who already knew that technique. Someone who had their memories eaten, huh."

If that thought was to be continued, it could be said that the enemy was too powerful, having the ability to snatch away all information in warfare.
If the ?Memory? was to be eaten, then you could own all the mysteries your opponent wanted to keep secret, and if the ?Name? was to be eaten, you could even erase the fact it even happened, along with the very existence of the opponent.

??It is often said, that memories shape people.

"????"

Subaru believed that a person's value is, a person's achievements are marked by their memories and what they etch into history.
Because of the special beliefs he held till now, Subaru truly hated the power of the despicable ?Gluttony? from the very bottom of his heart.

It was destructive.
The power of ?Gluttony?, of robbing away others' memories, was utter blasphemy and evil that brought ruin to everything.
It was ridiculous to use it for one's own well-being, for one's own pursuit for happiness. Unreasonably choosing the wrong path and twisting your own fate.

??Is onii-san, who uses ?Return by Death? himself, really saying that?

Subaru: "??~hk."
Beatrice: "Subaru!"

Beatrice called out to Subaru who subconsciously bit his lip with force.
Feeling his arm being pulled, his line of sight and her deep blue eyes intersected. He could feel strong pain at the edge of his lip, and it was pitiful that this painful wound had been inflicted by his own bite.
Licking the blood coming of that wound, he lowered his head, saying "sorry".

Subaru: "For a moment, my head started to hurt from her ridiculing face. Making her have a tearful face full of regret is one of my biggest goals though..... The problem before that is those brothers of hers."

Julius: "We already know that there are two or more Sin Archbishops of ?Gluttony? but, did you catch something?"

Subaru: "It's re~ally confusing because of her indistinguishable way of referring to herself but, there is one holed up in the ?Book of the Dead?, and she has two brothers, I think."

In the ?Corridor of Memories?, Louis had mentioned the nicknames "onii-chan" and "nii-sama". If those

were to be taken at face value, then it would mean that Louis had two brothers.
That being said, whether it was proof of ?Gluttony? being three siblings or not was a totally different issue??,

Subaru: "At the very least, she was not the type who would be willing to negotiate. We~ll, not that I, who almost lost to her eating antics, can say that."

What would have had happened if he would have had fallen for his enemy's words and speculation, and strangled that slender neck?
Had the voice of the blue-haired girl not sounded, what would be of him now?

Meili: "??Well, so what does onii-san actually want to say? Saying all these disappointing things, and beating around the bush is onii-san's ba~d habit."

And, fidgeting around, Meili shakes her body and expressed her disappointment.
The young girl, who was supposed to have had assigned her own role to herself since the beginning, seemed to be dissatisfied by simply standing there and waiting.
Understanding her complaints, Subaru took control, saying "I know".

Subaru: "I understand how you feel but, this was the bare minimum of information that I needed to share. It is certainly my bad habit to beat around the bush but, think of it as another one of my charms and love it....."

Meili: "Can I bite yo~u?"

Subaru: "Sorry! It's just that, a ton of Witch Beasts have come! Well then, let's request the Witch Beast expert, Professor Meili! Is that how I should have had normally said it? I needed to explain. That the enemies are the ones who stole my memories."

Meili: "That is....."

Meili quietened again when Subaru shifted his tone to a serious one. What Subaru had conveyed were his true intentions.
And the same went for his comrades by his side, who also changed their expressions.
Looking at their expressions, Subaru scratched his head.

Subaru: "I will blame myself for the initial part of it. But, they have my memories. ??Knowing our strengths, they will try to trap us. We, just have to beat them in their own game."

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??The ones who have the upper hand in knowledge, have the upper hand in battle.

Natsuki Subaru, who grew up in modern day Japan, poisoned by various game cultures, recognized very well that equation for victory in modern warfare.
Even if that didn’t apply, having your own cards shown to the opponent make victory in poker

impossible, it was something so obvious that even children could understand the logic of it.
Henceforth??,

Subaru: "When the opponent has seen through your strength, they will also take note of your weaknesses."

While leading the way, Julius narrowed his eyes at the words of the voice which came from behind him.
Having a partial understanding of the situation and ignorance in regards to the opponent's? character may be dangerous, such thoughts made him restless. Regardless, the idea of using your anxiety not as a disadvantageous factor but to tip the scales towards your side was not as bad of an idea as it seemed??,

Beatrice: "Keeping important information a secret is way more scary, in fact. Subaru's current idea is correct, I suppose."

Subaru: "Really? It's fine? You're all not going to end up hating me?"

Beatrice: "Why are you so uneasy, in fact? It's fine, I suppose. No one is going to hate Subaru, in fact. Rather, we li-li-li-....."

Subaru: "I get it I get it. It's fine, I've calmed down. I'll be loved."

While holding hands and walking side-by-side, Subaru nodded at Beatrice, who was trying to somehow encourage him. In fact, the one who was going to say it was more embarrassed than the one who was going to receive it.
Words of love are much lighter on those uttering them, than for those whom they are uttered to. There is no need to have second thoughts about your own feelings.

Subaru: "Well, where is Shaula!?"

Julius: "Ah, almost there..... over there."

At the very front, the walking Julius pointed towards the stone passage. Though the passage appeared to be a dead end, a hidden sideways path was present in the right.
Folding his body from the waist, Julius dove towards the path, and the moment his body exited the tower, it was welcomed by winds, sand, and unheard sounds.

??That, sounded like an innumerable amount of glass shattering on subaru's ear all at once.

Shaula: "Uh, hiyah hiyah hiyah yahyahyahyahyahyahyahyahyahyah~!!"

"????"

That place was, like a balcony which had been hung on the tower wall.
Though it was something he knew thanks to the enormous staircase which led to the lower layer, but the four layers were present at several ten-folds of meters from the ground, enough that the latter could not he felt at all.

In that balcony, in which winds deprived of all moisture blew, the one jumping around and dancing around, was a beautiful lady with a long lustrous braid??,

Subaru: "??Shaula!"

Shaula: "Ah! Did master-sama come here!? I'm so happy! My place of work suddenly feels as if it has been filled with sunshine! Like my father-in-law has come to visit, finally the time to meet him!"

Shaula loudly proclaimed, with her magnificent voice, in front of Subaru, who had covered his eyes to protect them from the dusty wind. The fact that she was able to say all that in this state, was an amazing fantasy in itself.

One side of the balcony had been turned into a field of weaponry among the fast winds.
Calling it bombing portals would indeed be a bit exaggerated, but he could not find a more fitting word for it. Bombing portals , muzzler, injection's mouth?? In any case, it was undoubtedly a hollow space which would fire something from within.
The enormous bombing portal, wrapped up in pure white, with multiple of them floating in the air, aimed directly diagonally below towards the ground.
And??,

Shaula: "??Infinitied Hells Snipe!!"

Subaru: "What the hell, that's so cool!!"

At the moment when Shaula loudly shouted that, the white bombing portals emitted a brilliant shine. Immediately after the words of the fired up Subaru, the sound of repeatedly shattering glass echoed in the sandy sky. Alongside, the bombing portals lost their form and melted into the atmosphere, similar to a wound being closed up and healed.
This was, the true identity of the sound which had greeted Subaru and the others upon their arrival on the balcony earlier. And, there was only one reason behind Shaula's actions.

??The one-sided bombardment fires, and the white light dashes towards the ground at what seems like the speed of light.

Colliding with the ground, the white light shined brightly and blew away the ground. The same went for the backs of the running and raging Witch Beasts on the sand.
The Witch Beasts, which were aiming for the tower, received the white light on their backs, and their flesh and blood scattered onto the sand. The dry sand's thirst was quenched with their blood and shattered corpses, as the Witch Beasts that remained stepped onto them, crushing them further, as the carpet of bombardment sharply reduced the total number of Witch Beasts and prevented them from overflowing.
However, even against that bombing by Shaula, similar to an army of ants, the only resistance the Witch Beasts had were their sheer numbers, which could easily even fill the tower itself.
Obviously, the total number of Witch Beasts in the sand dunes was nothing less than overwhelming.

Subaru: "Hey, hey, hey..... I don't want to hear it but, could it be."

Echidna: "From this outpost, only one direction from the tower is visible. However, the same scenery is spread in the other sides of the tower as well. That chain of thought is not wrong."

Subaru: "It's also possible that they are painting sugared water on just this side of the wall as well."

Beatrice: "If someone does do such an idiotic antic, Betty will bash this side with full seriousness, I suppose."

The sound that did not stop sounding, and the dark lumps under his eyes.
Hearing that they were approaching from all directions, Subaru was about to collapse from this overwhelming reality. That aside, he wanted to give the visibly approaching Witch Beasts a piece of his mind.
Unquestionably, their sheer creepiness and grotesque, their powerful designs were of C-grade.

Shaula: "What do you think, master-sama! Did you see my successfulness!? Also, being stuck at that weird angle was an appeal for master-sama. What did you think about that too!?"

Subaru: "You, even in this situation you can afford to be in such a mood, amazing, I'd normally admire it! Since you seem the type who improves your results at praises, it was great, it was totally great! Nice bulk! Also, I could not help but look at you at that angle, it really distracted me!"

Shaula: "Okay Google! Defense! Offense!"

In fact, his idea did work till the bottom of Shaula's spirit. While acting cheerfully, he also felt slightly guilty at the back of his chest for Shaula, who responded even more cheerfully.
At the very least, he wanted to reward her at the end of this battle??,

Subaru: "First of all, gaining domination of this place is our top priority.....! Meili!"

Meili: "I know, no nee~d to shout like that. But....."

Subaru: "But!? But what!? "But, it doesn't matter if I fully annihilate the Witch Beasts, doe~s it?" Is that what you mean to say? Ah, it's completely fine, rather, I request you!"

Meili: "Don't expect such positive things, okay? Even I haven't dealt with thi~s many bad animal-chan's before."

Meili looks down from the balcony with both her hands clenching her ears and cheeks.
Alongside that, she kept her impressions on Subaru's easily dislikable hopes within herself. And, somewhere within her glossy lips.

Meili: "??That's why, I'll shake and bash these annoying children up."
Subaru: "--Wowowow!!"

Saying that, Meili pointed her hand towards the ground and simultaneously, a huge mass jumped up, visibly making it seem like the sand dunes exploded.

There was considerable distance between, and the large Witch Beasts were clearly visible of the size of ants, as those existences blew off and scattered away in the ground.
In other words, that meant that a different enormous existence. ??With the size of about twenty or thirty meters, a gigantic earthworm appeared, crushing the surrounding Demon Beasts.

Subaru: "That one is....."

Meili: "I figured that it may be needed, so I kept it just in case. The truth is that I was going to use it for quietly escaping from here, so I kept it here and failed."

Seeing the gigantic earthworm, Meili put out her tongue in front of the inhaling Subaru.
Sadly, Subaru's reason for surprise was not the earthworm itself, but the fact that he had an earlier memory of the earthworm. That was the Witch Beast which Subaru had once encountered when he had tried to escape from the tower.
Thinking back to it, Subaru had also suffered at the hands of it once when it had appeared in the basement as well.
Along with that, there was another memory of the earthworm being blown away by a white light.

Did that mean that Meili was behind the earthworm and Shaula was behind the white light?
Somehow coming to terms with that, tasting those unexpected surprises, Subaru, with a bad expression, patted Meili's head, which was oddly satisfying to her inexperienced self.

Meili: "Wah, ah, He~y!"

Subaru: "I don't if it's just your habit but, you don't have to act villainous. I won't believe someone like that you wanted to run away from us anyway."

Meili: "Huh?"

Meili could not understand the meaning behind Subaru's words, neither did Subaru intend to explain it to her.
In the end, Subaru could now easily see through all misleading in Meili's words. Regardless, he himself had seen the memories of her dead self.
In this tower, if it's her self that didn't change her values, he could say that he perfectly understood.

And, while having his hand on Meili's head, who was unhappily groaning out "Ugh", Subaru was fully conscious of the current situation?? and something which had happened in his former loops.

The Witch Beasts getting into the tower, the centaurs being allowed to invade the tower, was perhaps normal. In other words, how they were allowed to enter the tower itself was the same as last time. Dealing with them and chasing them away at the lower layer had been Julius, last time.
If that happened?, did Shaula deal with the Witch Beasts outside similar to this time?
And since she was lacking, that resulted in the invasion of the Witch Beasts.

However, the same will not happen this time.
Against this horde of Witch Beasts, they had an unforeseen advantage, unlike last time.

That was the existence of Meili?? the very girl who had lost her life at the hands of Subaru previously, was the key to open the lock for breaking through this situation.

Subaru: "If Meili is fighting the Witch Beasts alongside Shaula, then the situation will change. Does that mean Julius' hands are free? If that's so, then....."

??The strength of Julius could be used for dealing with another problem.

"????"

At the moment when that thought crossed Subaru's mind, he realized that it was essential to deal with the problems that would occur in the tower and arrange the necessary people to deal with them.

??The horde of Witch Beasts filling the sand dunes.
??The Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, who will launch an attack on the tower.
??The horrid faced humongous scorpion which will wander around the tower.
??The colossal black shadow which will swallow not only the tower, but the sand dunes as well.
??And, Reid Astrea, who will start freely walking around the tower.

Subaru: "Our strength exists out of me and Beatrice, Emilia-chan and Ram. Meili and Shaula, along with Echidna and Julius....."

Echidna: "Could you add the Ground Dragon and the healing spirit of the Green Room as well? It will only be to our advantage to include them, I believe."

Echidna shrugged her shoulders at Subaru, who was counting the strength of their side and the enemy's. Nodding to her words, Subaru decided to include the Ground Dragon Patrasche and the huge spirit of the lower layer to their number of hands.
Just as Echidna had said, it was not a situation in which they could afford to keep any hand free.
Subaru rotated his head, as the inclusion of all available hands was necessary, he must also fulfill their conditions for victory.
Even in that sense, he wanted to keep an accurate track of all his comrades??,

Subaru: "??Hey, wait a second. Regardless of here, isn't it already too late?"

"????"

Subaru: "Emilia-chan and Ram, went to the Green Room to take Rem and the others, did they?"

Subaru feels the immense thirst for meeting the allies that are not present with them.
The Green Room was on the fourth layer, the same as the layer Subaru and the others were. The possibility of them not knowing about this place and being limited to the rest of the tower was also low.

Julius: "It's this situation. If it's just that our location is unknown, then Miss Ram would surely somehow find a way out. There is also the possibility of Emilia-sama breaking the wall and showing her self."

Beatrice: "Confidence being absent is a good proof, in fact. But, Betty has a bad feeling about it, I suppose."

Subaru: "??~hk! Shaula! Meili! Can I leave this place to you guys!?"

With the backing of Julius and Beatrice, Subaru called out to Shaula and Meili. Immediately afterwards, Shaula, who had been laying down more bombing portals, paused, and Meili turned back, with her braid twisting.

Shaula: "Leave this place to me and go ahead!"
Meili: "At this pace, I'll do wha~tever you want me to. Do~n't you dare come back and tell me that you couldn't find onee-san and the others safely."

As Shaula said the line which would be more appropriate for her death and Meili said her words of dependence and trust, Subaru nodded and turning his back, dashed out in front of Beatrice and the others. As he dove towards the wall, and slid onto the aisle,

Subaru: "Even though Meili and Shaula are making their move, what is the possibility of the Witch Beasts getting into the tower?"

Echidna: "It's not as if it's not there, but the underground sand chamber that we fell into..... That Natsuki-kun does not remember. There is the possibility of getting into the tower from there. But, thanks to Meili-kun, that is."

Subaru: "When the Earthworm appeared, the underground passage collapsed?"

Echidna: "It's indeed doubtful for that underground passage. I doubt it will be able to withstand that magnitude of force."

At Echidna's affirming words, Subaru tightened his fists.
In other words, the doubly beneficial existence of Meili, was the way to stop the Witch Beasts' stampede. She has done plenty to defence to ensure they didn’t enter, either from the ground or the underground.

If the huge group of Witch Beasts was dealt with, then that would largely leave four more problems. Even though these are plenty of a matter of concern, there was still one left, one which surely must be overcome.
After these five obstacles??,

Subaru: "By us, this tower must be....."

Captured, just as he was about to say that word, at that moment.

???: "??Barusu!!"

Subaru: "??~hk! Ram!?"

Dashing towards the Green Room, they raised their faces towards the voice which came from the other side of the aisle. From where they were, the four of Subaru and the others, was visible a pitch black shadow sprinting roughly?? it was Patrasche. On top of the Ground Dragon with a sharp face, Ram was clinging onto it's back, along with Rem's body embracing her thin arms.

Subaru: "Ram! Along with Patrasche and Rem, are you alright!?"

Ram: "Yes, somewhat. A lot of problems happened while Barusu was simply dozing off. How can you even sleep in this situation. Stand up immediately."

Subaru: "I'm sorry! Both you sisters, don't blame me! Look, I'm standing! I'm running!"

Getting down from the back of the Ground Dragon, with Rem in her hands as it is, Ram's harsh words bash him up.
Her words happened to be similar to those of Rem in his dream, and considering the similar appearance of the sisters, he felt a strange emotion rise in his chest.

Ram: "??? While Barusu's odd attitude is indeed worrying, this isn't the time for that."

Hearing Subaru's words, Ram briefly and gracefully shrugged her eyes, but immediately turned her head back.
That was, the direction she just came from?? where the Green Room was.
Seeing only Ram be with Patrasche and Rem, and not Emilia, who was supposed to accompany her, Subaru felt odd.

Subaru: "Ah, I also have some things I have to ask and talk about. You, were supposed to be with....."

Ram: "??Beyond the aisle, Ram came across the enemy who claimed to be the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?."

"????"

Blocking his question, Ram declared with absolute clarity.
Inhaling at the strength of those words, Subaru, along with Beatrice and Julius, exhaled from their mouths. The one who reacted the most differently, with most calmness, was Echidna.

Subaru: "You just said the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, right? That too, on the other side of the aisle?"

Ram: "Yes, that's right. ??And, someone is fighting that Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?."

Subaru: "......Someone?"

An explanation that gave an increasingly odd impression.
Ram's words do not change, filled with will and clarity, and the existence of those parts which were not clear created a gap understanding and harmony.
When Subaru persuaded those unclear parts, Ram nodded with a "Yes".

Nodded, and then said.

Ram: "??An unknown person of silver hair, is currently clashing with the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?. Told Ram and the others to escape, and right now too."

Arc 6 - Chapter 64, "The Second Obstacle"

by Gracedharperd - Furuta - Friday, January 25, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/01/25/arc-6-chapter-64-the-second-obstacle/

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Translated By :

- Ringo

Proofread By :

- Nanashi
- Furuta

Art Source :

- Created by Ringo

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??An unknown person, of silver hair.

Subaru: ?Huh??

That, Ram's unexpected expression created a gap in Subaru's consciousness.

If it was just, ?Silver Haired Person? , it would be misleading, and even Subaru had never felt this strange feeling so far.

There was no question that Emilia possessed beautiful silver hair. Her purple-blue eyes were also beautiful. Her face, and all parts of her body were so cute, like she was a piece of art made by God himself.

However, just that undesirable ?unknown?, that one word immensely changed the meaning of her words.

Subaru: ?An unknown person, of silver hair.....?

Ram: ?Yes, that's right. Someone who was never there in this tower before. At the very least, that person did not seem to be an enemy..... Seeing the situation, Ram retreated at once. But.?

Subaru: ???Whosoever may join in as a reinforcement , if the opponent is ?Gluttony? then it is a totally different issue.?

Nodding at Subaru's understanding, Ram nodded while facing the direction she came from. Hearing Ram's words, and holding up an unpleasant expression at the echo of the name ?Gluttony? , was Julius.

Tightening his lips, he drew out the knight sword attached to his waist.

Julius: ?Though the encounter is unexpected, as long as the enemy's movements could not be seen, there was no way to avoid them anyway. Our goal for coming here was counteracting the damage done by the Sin Archbishops of ?Gluttony? and?Lust?originally as well. If they themselves have appeared, then we might as well hear it from their own mouths.?

Ram: ?Agreed. Ram too has no intentions of leaving them alive. They must regret coming here.?

Subaru: ?W-wait! Wait a second! I understand your? eagerness! I understand but..... ~hk.?

Not expecting the sheer hostility towards ?Gluttony? of those two people, Subaru interrupted.

Julius, who had had his own existence erased from the world, and Ram, whose bond with her beloved sister had been rooted out?? it was obvious that they had an immense desire for defeating ?Gluttony?. The truth is, Subaru felt that bad happening and good opportunities had come at the same time.

But, the problem here was??,

Subaru: ?In your entire conversation, there was no mention of Emilia. What about that??

??????

Getting a bad feeling while remembering back to that, Subaru voiced his doubt without any hesitation.

The unnatural happening which Ram had reported, and the lacking response of Julius and Beatrice at her explanation. Following his line of sight, even Beatrice and Echidna did not wear expressions which

would come from sensing something odd.

Ram had also made a remark about ?an unknown person of silver hair?.

Ram: ???Who is Emilia??

Subaru: ???~Hk.?

As Ram tilted her neck, without hiding her suspicions, Subaru's throat got parched in surprise.

Looking at it now, Julius and Beatrice, even Echidna looked at him with eyes of confusion. ??At that, the damage done could no longer be hidden.

Subaru: ?I mean.?

The truth is, it was only an issue of whether even a minute had passed since then or not.

Just before this level, Subaru had been talking about?Emilia?with Julius and the others. Above all, wasn't the reason behind them dashing into this balcony was because they were concerned that Emilia and Ram don't stray away into the tower, and wanted to confirm their safety.

How did that, in just these few seconds??,

Beatrice: ?Subaru, could it be.?

Suddenly, Beatrice, who was holding Subaru's hand, made an expression as if she had noticed something about this strange development. The first one to notice was Beatrice, and the others subsequently changed their faces.

And immediately came to realise that the name Subaru had mentioned, the name which did not exist in their memories, was a name that held a deep meaning to them.

Beatrice: ?Emilia..... Is that, the name of that silver haired girl??

Subaru: ???. That's right. If you are talking about the silver haired girl, than that is the girl named Emilia, a comrade of ours. That's why, she told Ram to escape, and stayed there herself. Right now too, she's fighting.?

Julius: ?I suppose, something like that can happen. If not anyone else, I myself have tasted that feeling.?

??????

Responding to Subaru's strengthless answer, Julius replied with some words difficult to believe, making him touch his bangs.

Of course, on losing memories, misunderstandings and suspicions rise, the harsh feelings towards Emilia and the others are hard to forget, it is just like a dark patch of history which, is possible, should be simply forgotten or erased.

But, even still, that feeling was minute. It was the uncertain fight, like fishing in a wide ocean on a night with zero visibility.

That's why, that feeling was minute. But, that was not the case as well.

Forgetting Emilia, the comrade who was fully remembered till just recently, the friend who had overcame hardships alongside, in just a second. ??Is there anything at all more bizarre than that.

Stealing memories, trampling on memorable moments, eating away bonds, were habitual acts of ?Gluttony?.

At last, witnessing it himself, Subaru came to understand it.

?Gluttony? was a villain who only cared for their own happiness, and mercilessly damaged others on parts which should never be hurt.

Ram: ???~Ugh, kh.?

Subaru: ?Ram!??

And, Subaru grinds his teeth at the somewhat of a surprise. In front of him, among those shocked over the robbing away of their memories of a comrade, Ram knelt down on that very spot.

Beside Patrasche, leaning against the feet of the black dragon, was Ram, exhaling out a rough breath.

Subaru: ?What happened? Are you alright??

Ram: ?.....My head, just hurts a bit. Just when, thinking about that, unknown person.?

Subaru: ?About Emilia.....??

In front of Ram who furrowed her eyebrows and shook her head, Subaru made a stressed expression.

Possibly, if ?Gluttony? had robbed away the memories of Emilia, Ram must have had watched that happen to her. Whether that was the reason behind it, was what Subaru thought.

However, Beatrice voiced out a ?Subaru...? as she touched his shoulder,

Beatrice: ?It would be better to stop trying to remind about it, in fact. It's too absent, I suppose.?

Subaru: ?Too absent, you say.....?

Beatrice: ?There is one thing odd about the Authority of ?Gluttony? , in fact. ??That, with too many parts which cannot be explained without the presence of the person whose memory was erased, there will be gaps.?

??????

Hearing Beatrice's words, at that moment, Subaru went speechless.

However, immediately he swallowed its implication and understood what it meant.

The Authority of ?Gluttony? was exercised, and Emilia's memories disappeared from Ram and the others.

Ram's position was Emilia's caretaker?? otherwise said, a master-servant relationship. In their bond, though it was difficult to explain, there was certain warmth which both of them felt for each other.

With that being secretly erased, the emptiness in place of ?Emilia? had been created within Ram.

Memories are like items which have been put into the drawer of memorable things.

Though we are not always conscious about it, but when we open up that drawer to look back into those memorable things inside, what we take out from there are faces. ??If that isn't so, then life is not instituted.

In other words, for Ram, if she searched the name of Emilia within herself, no matter how many drawers she openws, she would not find her, resulting in an endless cycle.

Echidna: ?I can look after her.?

Subaru: ?Echidna.....??

Beside the pain-filled faced Ram, said Echidna with raised hands. Subaru looked at her with surprise, Echidna shrugged her slender shoulders,

Echidna: ?Now, is not the time for discussing that. Especially not when ?Gluttony? is coming, and one of our comrades have gotten their name eaten and is fighting. You must not stop your feet.?

Julius: ?Echidna, please stay by Miss Ram. Along with Patrasche, stay away from the battle.?

Echidna: ?Yes, I assure you. ??Julius, just in case but, don't get hot.?

Julius: ?I know. The fighting spirit is definitely becoming cooler. Just like this sword.?

Without wasting any time, Julius accepted Echidna's demand, and turned his dignified gaze towards the front. The sheer fighting spirit he had, made Subaru hesitate, as he bit his lips.

Subaru: ?Ram.?

Ram: ?Though it's unfortunate, but, even if Ram goes, she will only get in the way. Leave and go. However, don't spare ?Gluttony's? life. Rest is all in Barusu's hands.?

Subaru: ?It seems like as if you're talking to some cow or pig, anyway, don't worry. We'll go!?

Ram: ???Yes, do it.?

Leaving behind the regretful Ram, Subaru nodded towards Echidna and left them. Then, brushing Patrasche's neck before sprinting away, he looked back, once again, at the sleeping beauty on it's back.

??????

Unchanging, silent, sleeping as if she weren't breathing, Rem's eyes continued to be closed as she watched an endless dream.

Right now, that's fine this way. He had already received words from her.

After that??,

Subaru: ?Just you wait,?Gluttony?.....! I'm sick of telling you to stop eating already!?

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??In full honesty, that doubt continued to come up within him limitlessly.

Why, did the effect of the Authority of ?Gluttony? , not show on Subaru.

Even when Emilia's name had been robbed away, and she disappeared from the memory of Beatrice or Ram and the others, Emilia's name, form, and voice were still present clearly within Subaru.

The warm feelings he held for her, without forgetting, were still present within his chest.

Subaru: ?Because I, came from a different world.....??

Because of that, this world's rules may not apply to Subaru.

If the memories in this world are a record of life which get stripped away from the soul of the dead in the?Corridor of Memories?, the fact that the power of ?Gluttony? intercepting the same does not affect Subaru means, it may be an exception for Subaru, someone from a different world.

If that is so, would the memories of ?Natsuki Subaru?also etch onto it if he died. Otherwise??,

Subaru: ???Am I?Returning by Death?, because I can't do that??

That was, the cold conclusion he reached after a lot of tiresome thinking.

If that was the answer to the question why Subaru was?Returning by Death?, then Subaru's life will follow an endless spiral of life in this world.

To summarise, it means that he will spend decades and decades in this world, unable to die from even ageing.

If he was an exception to this rule, and if Subaru was going to complete his life, in other words Natsuki Subaru, actually was an endless stockpile of memories himself??,

???: ?Ice Brand Arts!?

Subaru: ???~Hk!??

At that moment, a loud voice, like one of a silver bell, chimed through his thought drowned consciousness.

As he raised in face, in front of Subaru?? he felt that the passage to the Green Room had been frozen white, as he was welcomed with an overwhelmingly cold gale.

And, at the starting of that wind was a fairy of snow dancing within the diamond dust?? was what one may have thought, but actually it was Emilia, with her silver hair fluttering.

Emilia: ???Yah! Hiyah! Hi! Yah!?

With her sword of ice wielded, Emilia fought with her voice raised. Her voice was somewhat frustrated, but the velocity of the sword slashing through the air was not something so adorable.

Slashes of perfection, striking the opposing enemy, as she struck continuously.

Subaru: ?That is.....?

And, around Emilia, who held the sword of ice in her hands, the now battlefield frozen passage of white

and blue, stood several pillars of ice, as if other towers stood within the sand.

It was perhaps the result of her magical abilities on the surroundings. Just as when he was wondering whether this level of strength of extraordinary in this world, he saw the awestruck faces of Beatrice and Julius, which cleared his doubts.

But, aside from that was??,

???: ?Aha~ha! You're doing it, you're quite doing it, aren't you doing it, you're really doing it, seems you're really doing it, because you're doing it, because you're really doing it! It's also so~mething we have eaten!?

In contrast to Emilia, his eyes caught the sight of an odd existence lightly receiving the blows of the sword of ice.

??????

It was, a young boy with long, dark, brown hair, smiling widely with somewhat melancholic insanity.

In mid-teens, a shabby appearance, or could be said that it was even dirty. His filthiness was enough on its own, but there was something even more repulsive about him, that he casted limitless grief over others, with no hesitation for eating, and abnormally mocked the suffering and despair of ?life?.

It could be understood at a single glance. There was no need to say it.

There was nobody else except Louis Arneb with those eyes, and that was a fact.

Subaru: ???Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony? ! ?

Gluttony: ?Aha~ha! Customer! Nope! It's the main dish, onii-san! We were also waiting to meet you. Seems like you've taken care of little sister!?

Hearing Subaru's shout, ?Gluttony? , who was defending away the blows by Emilia's sword, widened his smile. In front of that memorable horrid smile, Emilia noticed Subaru and the others at that instant, saying ?Eh!? in a surprised voice.

Emilia: ?Ah, everyone! Um, you may not know about me, but he is the enemy! The villain! Leave this to me..... even though, you may not, know about me!?

??????

Emilia had correctly judged the situation she was in, as she told her comrades behind.

Obviously, with the memories of her being lost, they were supposed to have had received a shock as well. Its impact, unlike those who have forgotten, to Subaru, who had not forgotten, was immense.

However, not only did she rightfully let Ram escape, doing that, she continued fighting ?Gluttony? , and yet, was worried about Subaru and the others as well.

With boundless emotions building up inside him, Subaru cried out.

Subaru: ?It's alright, Emilia-chan! I haven't forgotten!?

??????

Subaru: ?I will never, ever forget! Whatever happens, I will not forget you!?

Pushing his fist up, Subaru said towards Emilia's back.

Hearing that, Emilia's eyes widened and then squinted at that moment.

??????

At that moment, Subaru had no idea what feelings rose up in her chest.

However, when the standing girl smiled, it became clear that she did not feel anything negative.

At the same pace, Emilia dashed towards?Gluttony? , threw her sword of ice, and pulled spears of ice out of the floor, and continued her icy dance performance while striking her opponent.

Julius: ?You are not aware in the slightest, how much those words meant to her at that moment.?

Subaru: ?Ah??

He heard Julius, who was standing right next to him, watching the same with a smile. With his words

seemingly holding a deep meaning, Julius did not respond to Subaru, who had turned around.

And??,

Julius: ?There surely is no need to say it, but she is sided with us, Subaru.?

Subaru: ?Yeah, that's right. There is no way she can be our enemy, with that cuteness!?

Julius: ??I knew it.?

Julius was visible at the edge of his visibility, responding. ??No, that was just an illusion.

The very next moment, the standing Julius dashed ahead with a single step, diving straight into the extraordinary icy battle, colliding with ?Gluttony? , who crossed his arms and jumped backwards.

Gluttony: ?Uh-oh, onii-san is.....?

Julius: ?I was looking forward to this time, ?Gluttony? ??!?

Julius' cutting edge sword slashed strongly into the gruesomely laughing ?Gluttony?. However, ?Gluttony? killed the impact of the attack by flying backwards, stamping his feet on the ice of the wall and voiced out sadly.

After that, ?Gluttony? provokingly pulled out his long tongue.

Gluttony: ?Heyhey, don't come at us using that thing like tha~t. Sorry but, we and us don't share everything we eat, you see~. We have no recollection of onii-san. Doesn't that mean that not us, but Roy did it??

Julius: ???~Hk.?

Gluttony: ?Well, we guess the thought process of there not being much difference also exists. But still, Roy aside, we aren't really too interested in onii-san. Feels like it doesn't match our eating standards??

Julius: ?Eating standards, you say??

Gluttony: ?Ah, yes yes. That is.....?

Loosening and lowering both his hands, with knives attached to his wrist was ?Gluttony?. Looking at Julius, he tried to say in a terribly frightening style.

However??,

Emilia: ?Take this?? ~hk!!?

Gluttony: ???~tsu!??

At that, blocking his hand sweep with icicles with no hesitation was Emilia.

Moving first, she mercilessly attacked, filling up all empty space up to the width of the passage, making the battle unsuitable for fighting.

In the middle of their conversation, this was certainly unexpected, and ?Gluttony? , changing his blood flow sneaked through the bottom of the ice, and barely but successfully managed to dodge and pick up his life.

Gluttony: ?Wa~h ~tsu! We know it because we ate it but, you really aren't hesitating, Emilia! If you attack like that, what if people start thinking you are a scary person.....?

Emilia: ?Just keep quiet! I am already used to being thought of as a scary person, you must also be knowing that! What's important is what I think of others! And also.....?

Kicking strongly, Emilia's white knee thrusts into ?Gluttony's? face, who was dodging the ice, breathing hoarsely. ?Gluttony? received that with his arm, and flew back, negating the impact.

As that happened, the startled Emilia then turned towards Subaru by the end of her words,

Emilia: ?The one who I wanted to be remembering? the most did remember. Right now, I'm feeling re~ally good!?

Gluttony: ?This is why, we're not good with the type who get moved by feelings. The type that doesn’t go well the most.?

Julius: ???Is that so. But, I also agree with her.?

?Gluttony? distorted his cheeks, provoked, and Julius' body slid behind him. He swiftly slashed him down, but ?Gluttony? received it with his arm that he turned back.

However, his defence was incomplete and was unable to completely deflect the slashes away, and a deep slash ran through his elbow, with his blood bursting out. ?Gluttony? struggled, and the repeated attacks continued??,

Julius: ???Once I was forgotten by everything, I lost my foothold and felt like my own life had been denied to me but, there is no need for me to lose my foothold again.?

Gluttony: ?Ah ~tsu! Ugh, gh, ga~h!?

With his silent words strengthening his resolve, the intensity of Julius' nonstop strikes increased.

?Gluttony? was unable to accept them, with his wounds gradually increasing, and eventually receiving a commendable blow at his chest, screamed.

Beatrice: ?Subaru.?

Subaru: ?I know. I won't jump into it.?

Beatrice: ?.....Good that you know it, in fact.?

Julius, who was continuing fighting, and Emilia, who launched merciless attacks, aimed for ?Gluttony?. And being targeted by both of them was ?Gluttony? , was the state of this battlefield.

Of course, if it was possible, then Subaru also wanted to join in and further oppress ?Gluttony? , but him not having the skills to do so was obvious.

Right now, he had no choice but to just watch and have faith that the combination of Emilia and Julius will overcome ?Gluttony?. However??,

Gluttony: ?You did well with that fast paced combination ~tsu! But, how about this??

Julius: ?What??

Gluttony: ?Ice Brand Arts.?

His blood was flowing, but ?Gluttony? did not cease his smile of a surplus, and muttered while facing downwards.

Hearing that whisper, Subaru and Emilia raised their eyebrows in surprise. Ignorant in regards to what it meant, Julius and Beatrice furrowed their eyebrows. However, all four of them were astonished to see what happened next.

The very next instant, a spear of ice erected out from ?Gluttony's? feet, making Julius roll his body in order to avoid it, and Emilia prevented the spear's blow by transforming the one she held in her hands into a hammer of ice and forcefully smashing it.

However, even if they had avoided the attack, it did not mean that they weren't surprised and fought away.

Gluttony: ?Haha ~tsu! How does it feel to see your own special ability get eaten and then used! How does it, how is it, how will it, how can it, how will it perhaps be, how can it probably be, how is what we're saying, how does it feel is what we're saying, gluttonous drinking ~tsu! Gluttony ~tsu!?

Emilia: ???~Hk! Suddenly?

Julius: ?His movement changed!??

Said Emilia and Julius in sheer astonishment, and in front of them was ?Gluttony? , pulling out weapons of ice from the floor. Subaru, who was looking at that, was speechless, seeing the form the clear ice was moulded into.

For some reason, that was??,

Subaru: ?E-Excalibur!??

Gluttony: ?Ice Brand Arts itself is Emilia's ability, but we, who ate onii-san, are the ones who replicated it, you see~! Knowledge is weaponry! We are intelligent Sin Archbishop.?

Subaru: “??~Hk.?

Saying that, ?Gluttony? upheld the holy sword he made himself with replicated abilities, and brought down the dazzling slash upon Emilia and Julius, overwhelming them. Of course, just as visible, it was just a weapon of ice, so no actual light energy emitted from it.

However, in that position, ?Gluttony? , one after another, created weapons that were not supposed to exist in this parallel world, overwhelming and driving Emilia and Julius into a disadvantageous and inferior position in a unique way.

Of course, Emilia's side also regained their positions within really short periods of time, and avoiding the first attack, they tried to counterattack ?Gluttony? but, ?Gluttony? kept switching his fighting style as if people were switching each time, and they were at a disadvantage in the fight again, and were supposed to respond to the situation again.

??????

Looking at ?Gluttony's? combat ability, Subaru realised the fearsomeness of the threat of incorporating the memories of several people.

Emilia's ability of creating weapons of ice one after another was sufficiently strong by itself, but when you add the versatility of imagination to it, it became a completely different ability. Especially, when Subaru's knowledge from another world entirely was added to that, the weapons then produced can prove to be an immense threat.

Unlike this world, there exists a mountain of practical use for weaponry. That was the taboo-like knowledge Subaru had gained by reading history books of ancient east and west when he was in middle school.

In addition to that,?Gluttony?had perhaps, till now, consumed the lives of several warriors for himself, and thus obtained their unhampered combat ability.

Therefore, by picking out the ideal suitable memory out of his stockpile, he immediately transforms into an expert of that respective weapon?, and uses that to fight, and then repeats this again and again.

And, that was not the only bad news for Emilia's side.

Emilia: ?Julius! Not over there!?

Julius: ?Kh..... ~hk.?

At Emilia's scream, Julius' painful footsteps overlap with hers.

That was cooperation, too much cooperation for defeating? a single enemy.

Emilia and Julius, both of them were not too compatible with each other.

Emilia, a?Feeler? who leaves? her battling to her feelings and senses, and Julius, with ?craftsmanship? , who leaves his battling to his training and practice, both of them were being affected by each other.

However, this issue could be reduced if they got an understanding of each other's strengths, tendencies and habits.

Yes, if they had a relationship close enough, to know each other's habits.

Gluttony: ?It's really sad. Did you really think you could work side by side? Knowing the other person and, for the moment, trusting, in terms of results, are in the same direction but are totally different things, no? Don't know each other's ideas so can't adjust, don't know each other's habits so can't fix..... Haha~, won'tdowon'tdo no~, you two people!?

Julius: ?Kh.....?

Gluttony: ?Knowledge is power! Memories are bonds! Sacrificing memorable moments, we are higher up! We are stronger?! We ca~n fly as far as as far as we want!?

Jumping, ?Gluttony? landed a karate kick and captured the two at the same time.

As he was still short, his legs were not too long either, but his soles perfectly came in contact and angled themselves, and blew away the two, making an unpleasant noise behind.

In the meantime, ?Gluttony? flew backwards, somersaulting and landed on his limbs on the floor of ice.

Gluttony: ?Burdening?! Impertinence! Immensely close fighting! How is it, the people who will be our skills! The onii-san over there who's just watching too, are you satisfied with just that feeling of impatience??

Subaru: ?You bastard.....?

Gluttony: ?You said something or the other about not forgetting? bu~t, how much can someone of your worth even save? In the end, it all comes down to experiences. The one who manages to get better knowledge is the one who enriches his life and wins over people. In other words, it means that we are the greatest!?

Widening his arms and showing his fangs, said ?Gluttony?. And what ?Gluttony? had said was indeed, his philosophy. Louis, who was supposed to be his younger sister, had mentioned her?Philosophy to be Happy?which was a bit different, but it was still the utmost horrible level of thinking by trampling on others' lives just for your own purposes.

Subaru, from the bottom of his heart, despised that idea??,

???: ???You, gettin' too ahead of yourself, let me tell ya.?

Gluttony: ?Wha.?

??????

Till that, ?Gluttony? had been laughing gruesomely with utter ecstasy in his eyes, but now he widened his eyes the moment he heard this voice. And, his surprise was common with Subaru's.

That figure arrived at the fight scene too suddenly, dignified and acting natural, as if everything was a matter of course.

Slowly and steadily, as he stomped upon the passage of ice, the red haired figure's height became clear, so tall that barely anyone could come up to even his shoulders. As he displayed his violent smile, on the other side of the aisle?? on ?Gluttony's? side, his figure appeared in the direction Subaru and the others were facing.

And??,

???: ?The greatest ain't for a 'I've got passion, so my personality's crooked' brat like ya. 'Cause the greatest or the best, the utmost or the strongest, 're all words for me.?

Saying that, Reid Astrea, who was not supposed to, but still descended down from the second floor, stood there with a ridiculing smile.

Arc 6 - Chapter 65, "The Second, The Fifth, And Then–"

by admin - Wednesday, January 30, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/01/30/chapter-65-the-second-the-fifth-and-then/

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Translated By :

- Ringo

Proofread By :

- Nanashi
- Furuta
- Matterfied

Art Source :

- Created by Ringo

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? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

“????”

Reid Astrea, the red-haired tall man elegantly appeared.
The coming of the unexpected man, who did not care about the surprise he caused, caused everyone?? even ?Gluttony?, to be at a loss of words.

Reid: “Heyhey, what’re y’all gettin’ surprised for? Is my bein’ here somethin' to be surprised from? It’s obvious, eh?”

And, looking at the frozen Subaru and the others, Reid touched the eyepatch on his left eye, stomping the ground with his sandals.
It was a gesture suggesting his access to the entire tower.

Subaru: “.....That’s, completely for your own convenience, isn’t it. We are plenty busy over here already. Don’t complicate things even more.”

Reid: “Hang on for a sec! Is this young fish sayin’ somethin’? Sorry, but your voice is so low that it can’t reach my ears. We~ll, even if I hear it or not, it won’t change anythin’.”

Subaru: “Your personality makes me want to vomit.....”

And, what was bad was not just his nausea, but the timing itself as well.
Accusing him would show their own weakness, and resisting him would be fruitless. As he said those hurtful and unforgiving words, Subaru realised that he had been intimidated by Reid, and clenched his fists.

His soul still wielded the sense of defeat caused by Reid.
Though it was still questionable, it was not only because of Reid’s appearance here that made him avert his eyes. In the previous loop as well, he had been exposed to his nasty attitude.
Till that time, Subaru’s heart did not hold any horror for Reid.

Then why now was there this odd, odd feeling.
That was because??,

Subaru: “??Because clearly, my soul has recognised as you as an enemy, huh.”

Reid: “Sure, young fish. I have no plans of supportin’ young fish either, though I’ll praise you for recognisin’ I’m no convenient ally to y’all.”

Subaru: “You aren’t someone I would be convinced by and accept, even if you yourself declared to be our ally anyway.”

Reid: “Wow! You sure said somethin’.”

Subaru concealed the chilling feeling he had in his chest in front of Reid, who brutally laughed, displaying his shark-like teeth.
Reid’s declaration just now, were words completely hopeless as well. However, the Subaru of before did not think of an ally or something at all.
It was just that it got confirmed. ??He was not misunderstanding.
And, just when the conversation between Subaru and Reid had broken down to this??,

???: “??Um we~ll, Reid Astrea.”

Yes, the person who returned to consciousness as soon as possible, ?Gluttony?, called Reid's name.
In the middle of the frozen passage?? between Subaru's side and Reid, stood the eccentric Sin Archbishop, with a gaze full of vicious emotions aimed at Reid, who snapped at that gaze.

Reid: "Oh, what is it, little boy..... What a filthy little boy. What is it, filthy-little-boy-chan."

Gluttony: "Aren't you, the first ?Sword Saint?? Then why is that here again? According to our memories, you, who takes the trials, shouldn't be able to leave the upper floor, no?"

Ignoring how humiliating that nickname was, ?Gluttony? fired his question at the provoked Reid.
That, though it was offending, the ?Memories? he had mentioned were clearly Subaru's ?Memories?, the question itself was the same as what Subaru and the others had in their minds.

??The trial taker of the second floor, Reid Astrea, arriving in the fourth floor.

This was also something Subaru had witnessed and recognised as one of the obstacles that needed to be overcome.
That, the trick behind the phenomenon which made him able to walk freely around the tower was unknown. However, this phenomenon did not occur until only this phase. ??It can't be, that he was always capable of leaving but just never did.

Gluttony: "Is there some unusual trick behind it, or did the rules of the tower itself change. Whichever it is, you doing this is out of calculations, and we'll have to re~think our course again. The main dish after the appetiser, and after that the dessert is standard. Isn't it?"

Reid: "Don't spew such bloody nonsense around, filthy little shitty bastard."

"????"

Reid: "I can't come down, huh? Widen your eyes and look, you. Pretty sure ya'll be able to see what stupidity you're blabbering out, you, hey you."

Saying that, Reid sulked at ?Gluttony?. Flashing his white fangs and glaring at his opponent, his look was exactly the same as a thug’s.
However, the pressure he released by his sole dissatisfaction was as strong as that of a thug in front of a convenience store before a police station, such that you start fearing for your life and thinking of the aftermath later.
If an example were to be given, then he was a monster made with the combination of a tiger, a bear, a lion, and a dragon.
Gesturing his violence, Reid displayed his fangs.

Reid: "Don't kid with me, you. I do whatever the hell I want to. As if I'll accept anybody's restrictions, you. Don't joke around with me, you. Before that, right back at ya. Whose permission did ya get to loiter around here. Hey, I'm talking to you, you."

Gluttony: "Ahaha~, how amazing, how irritating, we won't ever be able to get talking."

Changing the sword of ice he wielded into mere fragments, ?Gluttony? shook his long bangs.
Even ?Gluttony? did not go well with the opponent who had proven to be difficult to converse with till now. Emilia, who had long realised how pointless it was to argue, also showed some signs of distress, but even Emilia couldn’t negotiate with Reid.
However, ?Gluttony? said "Though", continuing his words with an opponent he didn't go well with at all.

Gluttony: "It is indeed top-class that we have bee~n served a prey. Our appetite, the appetite as ?Gourmet?, is craving to binge again ~tsu! Eat it away! Tear it away! Lick it away! Savour the taste! Gluttonous drinking ~tsu! Gluttony ~tsu!"

Shouting out loud, the hysterical ?Gluttony? stood on the frozen floor, glaring at Reid.
Through the gaps of his white canines, his long tongue peeked out, anomalously, with the ?appetite?that could not be comprehended by normal people, which commanded him to horridly take away people's memories, his saliva dripped onto the floor.
And??,

Ley: "??Witch Cult's Sin Archbishop representing ?Gluttony?, Ley Batenkaitos."

Whether that was him boasting it or being haughty, in any case ?Gluttony??? no, Ley Batenkaitos, said that and kicked the floor of ice the next instant, dashing ahead at the speed of an arrow shot from a bow. It was the hunting ground of a ferocious quadruped beast, whose speed was wild enough to describe him as an illusive being.

Reid: "Ah, what a pain."

That, seeing the attacking Batenkaitos in front of him, Reid sighed with a finger in his ear.

Reid: "Well then, I'm the swordsman, Hauroy Rallior."

Subaru: "Who is that!?"

Reid: "The one who lived next to my house in my hometown."

Reid answered to Subaru with a terrible attitude, who had questioned his dignified pseudonym. After that, Reid pulled out his finger from his ear and looked straight into the eyes of Batenkaitos.

Ley: "??Let's eat ~tsu!!"

Reid: "Keeping aside the friendly-nee-chan, I'm not happy at all to hear that from a filthy-little-boy-chan like you."

Ley: "??Dzu ~tsu."

At the end of the sentence, the body of Batenkaitos, who had wide opened his large mouth, got violently pushed sideways.
This was because of Reid's raised up right leg, and his kick that had caught onto his central body from the side, which would slam him right into the wall of the passage subsequently.

Ley: "Ghu, ~egh..... ~tsu."

Reid: "Don't make noises like that of a chicken being squeezed, you. I'll say it though, whether a chicken

like you'll even get to eat, I have no plans of eatin' ya. Don't care about gluttony and all."

Ley: "Ghi, ~ah!"

Reid: "Learn how to be a flying fish from an adult now. I hope ya're prepared for the spanking, yo~u!"

Saying that, Reid pushed Batenkaitos' body onto the wall with a kick, and sprinted on the passage of ice with unfathomable speed using just one leg.
Naturally, as he made contact with the wall, Batenkaitos could not resist the ice's ups, downs and edges and its slippery nature. That damage was immense, and destructive.

Ley: "Ghi, ga~a~a~a~a~a~a~-- ~tsu!"

Reid: "Heyhey, don't start cryin' by jus' that. We won't be able to talk if ya're like this. In my era, this ain't even children's play. The brats of now have not only become filthy, they've also become meagre huh, hey, hey, hey, yo~u!"

In a tone filled with boredom, Reid said that as he stopped speedily running and turned around halfway. As the foot which kicked Batenkaitos' body to the wall comes down, the Sin Archbishop's body slid down as well. After that, his left foot had was skilfully lifted and swept through Batenkaitos' body, creating an impactful strike on his side and sending him flying like a piece of rubber.

"????"

With atypical momentum, Batenkaitos' body slid through the floor. The bleeding Sin Archbishop swept from between the standing Emilia and Julius at a fast pace, and, finally, rolled through the entire aisle, bouncing and stopping beside Subaru and Beatrice.
The figure who had rolled down the entire place was, just as the place was completely dustless, completely powerless.
So much so, that it gave off the impression that he had possibly died.

Subaru: "That guy, he had been giving a good fight to Emilia-chan and Julius till now, right?"

Beatrice: "......No question in that, in fact. But, the risks have increased, I suppose. That's why, the situation has only worsened, in fact."

Subaru: "Isn't it just that the fighting cards have changed."

Beatrice: "That too, to a way worse opponent, I suppose."

With sharp words, Beatrice, while holding Subaru's hand, warned him about, not the immobile Batenkaitos who had fallen behind them, but Reid, who stood in front of them. That warning went for Emilia or Julius as well.
The situation of this battlefield had already changed, from the battle against ?Gluttony? to against a newer, much stronger opponent.
Even though that happened??,

Emilia: "Thank you so much, for wounding the Sin Archbishop..... can't you make up with something like that?"

The one to first speak with Reid in a friendly manner was Emilia. The girl had offered a proposal for peace, however, at that, Reid shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and stomped the floor.
Responding to that offer with those three gestures, Reid fiercely scratched his head.

Reid: "Hah, don'tcha tell me to stay out, you..... Rather, the hell's up with ya, you. Ya're too friendly, the heck happened, it's no joke! Aren'tcha being fiercely frizzlin'! Why're ya sayin' all this here, you. The hell are you doin' in this situation. Playin' around in this desert, let's go for drinks tonight, you."

Emilia: "Um, this is the second time though....."

Julius: "??Unfortunately enough, she cannot go for drinks with you. The reason is"

Reid: "Oh?"

Julius: "Nobody would want to come and see you at night."

And, the man who solely stood, wielding his knight sword?? Julius, covered for Emilia and confronted Reid, and gestured with his sharp sword to dismiss his unneeded comments.
In front of those yellow eyes, Reid changed his expression slightly.

Reid: ".....Huh, you. Haven't ya gotten handsome. Did somethin’ good happen, you. It's a woman, isn't it, you."

Julius: "There have unquestionably been changes in my attitude, I shall not deny that, however, I will state that they are not because of a female. The embrace of a female can heal a wounded heart, but an unforgiving friend's yelling is an equally good substitute for it."

Reid: "The beating-around-the-bush bastard part of ya hasn't changed at all. The hell do ya wanna say?"

Julius: "In other words, the fact that I am able to hold my sword like this, is because of my friend??!"

The moment after he said that, Julius jumped with his knight sword aiming Reid, who looked at the trail of the sharp and magnificent weapon's tip with eyes filled with doubt.

"????"

The opponent had not shown any hostility yet, would be an uncalled for and wrong thing to say.
If you were to stand in this place, you would instantly come to realise Reid’s fiery idea?? the moving swordsmen had little concern to give to the bystanders.
It was inconceivable that the wielding swordsman would do anything contradictory to his impression.

??Reid was motivated. Same as the previous loop, without giving any regard to the surrounding situation.

Hence, Julius had no hesitation in making the first move.
His choice was correct. He was well capable in making a strike enough to capture the arrogant Reid, the first ?Sword Saint?.
The problem was??,

Reid: “??Do ya’ve any idea what it means to be calm and composed?”

“????”

Reid: “That’s, no matter how impossible a thing may seem, being able to do it, unrelated to all effort, idiot, is what it means.”

??This resulted in nothing but Julius’ strike getting stopped in its tracks by the two chopsticks Reid held.

Julius: “Kh..... ~hk.”

Reid: “Well, it ain’t my bad, ya know? If I ain’t against ya, ya would’ve had at least eaten. ??Well then, let’s go.”

Julius: “Shi ~hk!”

Reid laughed like a shark against Julius, who let out a distressed sigh at the failure of his attack.
At the same pace, Reid tightened his grip on the chopsticks one by one, pushing away it’s tip and firing the chopsticks as she stepped ahead. --The impact strikes the edge of the knight sword, and a sound echoed.

“????”

The short, slender sticks of wood did not go well with swords, but when held by someone as skilful as Reid, they too transform into murderous blades capable of causing damage normally impossible at their size.
The moment the violent sound echoes, the resultantly produced shockwave sends a tremor through Julius' hair, clothes, and the entire frozen passage.

??Truly out of possibility, against common sense, a seeming bug in this world.

Even though Subaru had seen this at least once before, seeing this ability again irritated him.
The fact that such a monster existed in this world, and the nastiness of the devilishly depressing designer of this tower who decided to include overcoming this monster as one of the conditions for this tower's strategy, nauseated his chest.
However??,

Reid: "??Oho, I'm actually seriously impressed."

It was unknown how much strength Reid had applied in that stroke of his chopsticks.

However, it did not seem like Reid even expected that blow to be accepted, so, he praised the fighting?
Julius, who had experienced the impact of the chopsticks in his whole body, had put up.
Accepting it, Julius squinted his eyes, as blood seeped out of the edge of his mouth.

Julius: "Regardless, if I do not win against you here, our calculations will flunk."

Reid: "Do ya think it's fine to only blabber about your desire to win."

Julius: "Indeed. However, let's accompany each other in this!"

At that moment, Julius' sword brimmed in light, and roared and dashed towards Reid's chopsticks.
The sword's momentum got deflected, and Julius' body swam away?? was not the case. Julius' knight sword spun and successfully landed a blow as revenge. After that, he still continued.

Hence, he started a sophisticated sword dance like water, with not a single drop getting wasted.

"????"

With that, Subaru inhaled upon seeing the swordsman who had faced countless battles.
Subaru was merely looking at it, but he could understand the suffering and discipline it took for Julius Juukulius to compete with the utmost swordsman, the ?Sword Saint?.

??If Reid's swordsmanship was like the flames of fire, Julius' swordsmanship was like the flow of water.

If we were to speak of basic compatibility, then water will extinguish the fire, however, the fire here was powerful, so powerful that it would simply evaporate the opposing water and reduce it to nothing.
Perhaps, many swordsmen had been evaporated away by the flames of Reid.
However, at the very least, Julius had no fear of throwing himself and getting himself evaporated, as he launched a destructive and unavoidable attack upon Reid.
And??,

Emilia: "Don't think that your opponent is just, Julius!"

Reid: "Hah ~hk! I didn't forget, fiercely frizzlin'! Your face's too good to forget!"

Emilia: "Thanks for the compliment! But, there is only one who truly remembered!"

Emilia joined in on Reid and Julius' sword dance, with mountain sized weapons of ice.
Due to that, Reid turned one of his chopsticks against Emilia and the other against Julius. Regardless of how successful that action would be, they had all intention of taking down Reid's swordsmanship and overwhelm him.

Freezing ice interrupted the swords of flowing water and burning fire, and the battlefield's colour got more vivid.
One changed his way of sword dance, and against Reid, who was the opponent now instead of Batenkaitos, Emilia and Julius continued their same mismatched cooperation?? no, that also changed.

Against the stronger enemy, both of them changed their styles and combined their strengths, though they were still a bit mismatched, they inhaled, and their cooperation became true cooperation indeed.

Beatrice: "Julius is matching in with Emilia, in fact."

Subaru: "Do you get it?"

Beatrice: "There's also their compatibility on the basis of their personality, I suppose. Emilia's thought out actions became visible, and Julius was able to move like her, in fact. Probably Emilia dropping the need to change herself to be like him was correct, I suppose."

Subaru: "What an amazing comment."

Regardless of that, as long as it was working, it was the correct option.
In the end, Emilia doing in her own style, and letting Julius, who was capable of copying other's movements perfectly, to match up to hers while not cutting down on his strength, turned out to indeed be the better option.

Reid: "Haha~! Good going good going, y'all! I'm havin' fun too!"

Emilia: "Huyah! Siyah! Hah! Hiyayaya~!"

Reid laughed at the two, who saw their cooperation bearing fruit and were happy for it. There was Emilia going at it, continuously striking blows strong enough to kill while shouting, though her blow failed to become the decisive one.

A magnificently intertwining swordsmanship of water, fire and ice.
The knight sword of steel, the sticks that had been turned into seemingly steel due to the skill and force they were being used with, and the weapons of ice, which struck, broke, regenerated, and generated a high pitched sound.
As if truly there was a fascinating dance happening in this passage, so beautiful that it could well create this misunderstanding??,

???: "??Shi~ya~a~a~a~a~!!"

And then, a dissonant existence interrupted in between, unfamiliar to both eyes and ears in this performance.

Subaru: "You bastard..... ~hk!"

Interrupting the three fighting offensively, and disrespectfully? barging in onto the space between them, was Ley Batenkaitos.
The young boy who had eaten Reid's kick and rolled away into a state of half-death at the same pace. He rose again, joining in on the battlefield as if he had not suffered any damage.

Batenkaitos wielded daggers attached to the wrists on both of his hands, and further using his acquired combat abilities, he used his short legs masterfully, and launched a fatal attack against the three simultaneously.
Emilia, Julius and Reid avoided the problematic threat.

Julius: "Quite unreasonably stubborn you are, Sin Archbishop!"
Ley: "Haha~! Shunning us and then having fun, stop doing such nasty things, nii-sama! Always and always having it just to yourself? How unfair, truly!"
Emilia: "Reid! You must have had gotten it by now! It can't be helped that we fight here! Will you please help us, just stay still at the very least!"
Reid: "What a clueless woman ya're, fiercely frizzlin'. I'm enjoyin' things the way they're?, ya know? Even if the stars fall from the sky, my plans ain't changin'!"

"????"

The four, muttering each of their wills, violently clashed with each other.
This was clearly, a scene filled with incomprehensible amounts of odour of blood that came with the battle, something which could not be approached easily.

Who was advantageous, disadvantageous, superior, inferior, was difficult to judge from the outside.
All he could do was to hope for their allies' victory, however??,

Subaru: "??Gh."

Beatrice: "Subaru!?"

And, Beatrice was astonished to see Subaru, who could do nothing but watch and hope, knelt down while grabbing his chest.
Beatrice lied down, touching the shoulder of the hoarsely breathing Subaru, and looked at his face.

Beatrice: "Subaru, Subaru! What's wrong, in fact. What happened, I suppose!"

Subaru: "......No, what, is, this?"

Beatrice: "Subaru?"

Against Beatrice's desperate calls, Subaru tightened his grip onto his chest and repeatedly blinked.
There was no possibility that he had made a mistake, or a move. However, even Subaru did not understand this. Oddly unusual, pain?? unbelievable heat swelled up at the back of his chest.
His heart beat at a rate which made it seem like it would explode, every single drop of the blood flowing within his body could be felt by him, it was an awful feeling which he did not understand, as if a red alarm bell was sounding off.

"????"

He did not know. Right now, what was happening to his body.

This was, something that did not happen in any of the loops till now. Some sort of chronic sickness, or even worse, some sort of magical interference, happened.
Running through all the knowledge he had in his mind, he went thought of the worst case possibilities, and shook his head.

No. This was perhaps, not something negative. The alarm bell, it sounded only because of an issue.

Subaru: "Wah, ~ah....."

Inhaling deeply, he then exhaled.
Till now, Subaru's brain had not been getting smoked by just the worry for Emilia and Julius who were fighting Reid and Batenkaitos in front of his eyes.

In terms of situation, he could do nothing but helplessly watch alone.
In that situation, what smoked Subaru's brain was the proceed of the five obstacles?? that was, the two of the remaining obstacles.

??The five obstacles.
One was the horde of Witch Beasts who surround the tower. Another one was the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, who would launch an attack on the tower. One was Reid Astrea, who starts freely walking around the tower. ??In the current situation, there were three.
The remaining two were, the horrid faced enormous scorpion which wanders in the tower, and the black shadow which swallows the tower at an alarming rate.

In dealing with those two, he could do nothing about the collapse of the tower.
At the moment, with Emilia and Julius were before his eyes, he wondered about the collapse of the tower, this heat in his chest started to rise, and Subaru knelt down.

His heart was beating extremely strongly.
While being conscious about his heartbeats, Subaru breathed slowly, and repeatedly closed his eyes.
He felt he should do what his body felt like doing. Following that, he closed his eyes.

"????"

Seeing Subaru's condition, Beatrice stopped her calls.
Perhaps, she was not supposed to come to terms with it. But, he managed to do that. Understanding comrades were a blessing to Subaru.
And, that odd feeling, now climbed up into the back of Subaru's eyeballs.

??That was, the slight emergence of faint lights within the blurring darkness.

Subaru: "???"

Faint, warm and blurry light.
There was one just by Subaru's side, and two at slight distance from him. Strangely enough, Subaru understood there were lights behind him without even looking behind.

Behind him, were four lights. One of them was at some distance from the rest, and, and, and??,

??He realised that one was approaching overhead.

Subaru: "??Beatrice!"
Beatrice: "Hya ~hk!"

For some reason, Subaru blindly trusted his sensation, and without any hesitation, jumped away with Beatrice and flew away from that spot.
Lightly holding the young girl's body in his arms, Subaru rolled on the floor without any second thoughts-- at that moment, he could sense burning heat embrace his right thigh, making him moan in suffering.

Subaru: "Gha, gho~o~o~o~o!"

He instantly realised that the burning sensation was coming from a deep wound. Perhaps, in an attempt to turn his eyes away from his wounded leg, Subaru looked at Beatrice while hugging her.
And, forcing his eyes to open through the pain and tears, he saw.

"????"

Subaru: "I thought, this'll come, this damn scorpion..... ~hk!"

Disgusted down to his very spirit, Subaru looked at the titanic scorpion, making this his second encounter with it?? with a black shell, and eyes like a dot of red light, climbed up on the wall using it's numerous legs, glared at Subaru and the others.

Beatrice: "??~Ah."

In front of the horrifyingly humongous creature, Beatrice widened her eyes. What Beatrice could see in front of her was, the pincers of the scorpion which had deeply gouged out Subaru's leg. The scorpion ecstatically? upheld Subaru's flesh in it's pincers, dropping a large amount of blood in the passage.

??He was worried, about the obstruction of the titanic scorpion.

The five obstacles he had to overcome, had all assembled here.

"????"

This was bad. This was bad this was bad. This was bad this was bad this was bad. This was bad this was bad this was bad this

brim through his pain.
However, as to what would correctly change the situation, nothing dawned upon Subaru in regards to that.

Batenkaitos was there, Reid was there, even the titanic scorpion had appeared.
If Meili and Shaula do manage to stop the horde of Witch Beasts, the hands here had already failed. This would not do.
This path, will not do. With a more, different way of action--,

"??Subaru!" "Subaru!" "Subaru!!"

Subaru, who was gnashing his own teeth, could hear three voices hit his eardrum, calling for him.
Beatrice's dejected voice, Julius' tensed voice, Emilia's pleading voice, respectively call for Subaru as he hears them, and.

Batenkaitos, Reid, the titanic scorpion, then moved towards each of them respectively.
Seemingly for blocking the road of, the actions of Natsuki Subaru and the others, but, before that--,

"????"

??An impact struck the tower with intense momentum, and the entire tower roared and shook violently.

"????"

That with the same pace, leaving Subaru's fallen body as it was, blew away the fighting Emilia and the others, and crushed the titanic scorpion alongside, fragmented the world.
There was a small body beside Subaru, hugging him seemingly in order to protect him. That, hugging back that soft body, Subaru opened his eyes within the impact.

"??I love you."

??There was, only the darkness which wielded blind love, as it tried to swallow Subaru.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??At that moment, everything in the world, white and black, men and women, love and hate, had been consumed by the shaking impact, but solely Natsuki Subaru escaped it.

???: "??Subaru."

Subaru: "??~Hk!"

???: "Uhya ~hk!"

As if sensing it, Subaru hugged the owner of that voice.
As the body within Subaru's stiff arms struggled, it turned its face upwards and looked at his face.
That was??,

Subaru: "Bea, trice....."

Beatrice: "Yes, yes, I suppose! This suddenly surprised me, in fact. Well it's not as if Betty doesn't like it, I suppose. But, just the worry of returning from the book..... but, seeing Betty's name being called first was relieving, I suppose."

"????"

Yes, Beatrice muttered these words in Subaru's arms. Hearing her words, Subaru looked around himself.
What had happened, just before now, he had fallen in the aisle, his leg had been wounded, and then in that dark, dark shadow??.

Subaru: "....Library?"

???: "For the moment, if you could clear whether you are still asleep or not then we could also proceed to what we have to do, Natsuki-kun."

That voice struck Subaru, who was surprised to find himself be surrounded by books.
Looking at that, smiling bitterly with purple hair, was Echidna. Behind her was the shelf she leaned on and Meili, who raised her hands gesturing "so you're fina~lly up".

"????"

Beatrice: "Wah, wah wah! Subaru! Subaru, what happened, in fact! Are you not feeling well after all, I suppose? Can you tell what you saw in book?"

Subaru: "Ah, well, um. That too, I must do but....."

Subaru tightly hugged Beatrice's petite body, and enjoyed her warmth.
And, recognised the reality that he must recognise.

??He came back. To this moment.

At this moment, the need to overcome the five obstacles came upon Subaru once again.

Arc 6 - Chapter 66, “Second Chance to the End”

by admin - Saturday, February 09, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/02/09/arc-6-chapter-66-second-chance-to-the-end/

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Translated By :

- Ringo

Proofread By :

- Nanashi
- Paper

Art Source:

- Created by Ringo

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? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??The first thing he had to do was to make his heart accept that he had ?Returned by Death?.
"????"

While stroking Beatrice's head, who was in his arms, Subaru thought back to the last thing that had happened to him, and the ?Difficulty? that lay ahead of him in the future.

The fact that he had ?Returned by Death? meant that he had been unable to prevent the crises around his life.
Abandoning the catastrophe he had met with, of which he was fully aware of beforehand, and putting? the lives of his comrades at risk?? no, that would be a miscalculation. That was not what had happened.
He had not put their lives at risk. Subaru, had let Emilia and the others die.

He knew that this would end up happening, but yet he failed.
The existence of the five things which attack the tower, with not a single of one of them that could be neglected. Even though he well understood that, Subaru failed to prevent them due to his own weakness and miscalculations.

At the very last moment, what had perhaps decisively taken his life away was the colossal black shadow, capable of destroying this gigantic tower itself?? that was, the greatest and the final obstacle.
Recognising that, he arranged the five obstacles in his mind again.

First, was the overwhelming horde of Witch Beasts which all push into the tower at once.
The second one, was the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, aiming for Subaru's ?Name? or ?Memories?.
The third was the titanic scorpion, which hid in the shadows and unleashed it's attack on the tower.
Fourth was the rampaging Reid Astrea, who suddenly starts walking in the tower with complete freedom, ignoring all enemies and allies.
The fifth one, the last one, was the destructive black shadow which swallowed everything.

All these conditions proceeded at the same time, and missing even a single one of them causes the entire plan to collapse.
Could it be said that the overwhelming black shadow was a strange and unique way to offer a time limit to Subaru. Expressing or not expressing gratitude here was a tricky question.

Subaru: "The first one, leave the Witch Beasts to Meili and Shaula....."

It could be affirmed that this choice was not wrong.
Last time?? no, it was a bit more than a second ago, a bit more than a second ago, he had witnessed all five obstacles happen regardless of each other in the previous two loops. Subaru had also witnessed the scenario in which the Witch Beasts attacked the tower.
When that happens, crucial fighting forces like Emilia and Julius have to face the Witch Beasts to stop them. The loop just now was the only loop Meili had survived as well.

It was no mistake to say that Meili's existence alone made them have a step ahead.
However, it was still not sufficient enough.

Even if the horde of Witch Beasts could be held back, Subaru and the others were helpless against the following obstacle.
The Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony? that appeared had stolen away Emilia's ?Name?, and though they somehow managed to have Julius successfully fight Batenkaitos, Reid then joined in on the fight.
Due to that, both Emilia and Julius had to face the frontiers of both ?Gluttony? and Reid, and with the valuable time being lost, the titanic scorpion unleashed itself, and the time limit of the shadow was hit.

In other words, that balance was incorrect. It was not sufficient.
On top of that, Subaru was worried if the words of the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony??? Louis Arneb were correct, two of ?Gluttony? are supposed to come.
He had met Ley Batenkaitos. However, the other one was nowhere to be seen.

??This is bad. This is bad this bad this is bad. Regardless, this is bad.

The situation progressed with every second, and though only Subaru had caught hold of all the problems, even after ?Dying? so many times, not everything was clear.
He took too much time to make a move. Then, why was he taking this much time again??.

Beatrice: "Calm down, I suppose!"
Subaru: "Ah ~yah ~hk!"

Suddenly, when Subaru's brain was seemingly overheating and smoking, Beatrice strongly pinched both of his cheeks, and brought him back to the reality by inflicting pain.
With her hands still pinching his cheeks, Beatrice, with distance close enough to feel each other's breaths, said.

Beatrice: "Subaru, tell what happened in the book, in fact. There is no helping in going in it alone, I suppose. Tell Betty and the others, and we think about it together..... because that is where their strength lies."

Subaru: "What happened, in the book....."

Listening to the serious Beatrice's wishes, Subaru gave thought to the situation he was placed in.
He has accepted the truth that he had ?Returned by Death?. And, he must also recognise and admit to the point he had returned to as well.

This place was, the library of the third layer of ?Taygeta?.
With his self being surrounded among the bookshelves containing uncountable ?Books of the Dead?, Subaru's consciousness confirmed that he had returned to the point right after he came back from the ?Book of the Dead? of Reid.
And, speaking of what had been with Subaru in the book??.

Subaru: "??Stand up, that."

Beatrice: "Eh?"

Subaru: "No, I mean I was told to not give up and straighten my back. Shit, this is so pathetic. I haven't made any progress."

Subaru scratched his head in front of Beatrice, whose eyes were filled with confusion.
After that, keeping Beatrice within his grasp, he slowly stood up, and looked at the other two?? Echidna and Meili. The members who had been patiently waiting for Subaru to wake up.
He was already aware of the absence of Emilia and Ram, and what Shaula and Julius were doing.

The situation was already commencing, there was no time to waste.
That was why??,

Subaru: "I'll cut it short. The plan to see Reid's memories in his ?Book of the Dead? failed. Something got in the way. ?Books of the Dead? were connected to a branch of the existence called Od Lagna, and that is

where I came across that problematic bastard."

Hearing Subaru's short and quick explanation, the three widened their eyes in surprise.
Subaru gestured an apology for not giving them the time to halt and give thought to it, and continued his words.
That was??,

Subaru: "??The Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, Louis Arneb has declared war on us."

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Echidna: "Even so, we come to this far in the east and a Sin Archbishop again, huh. In fact, it seems that there is an unclear connection between Natsuki-kun and them."

Listening to his explanation completely, Echidna shamed Subaru with such comments.
As they heard that comment, Subaru and the others descended the stairs from library, and started their move to join their comrades which had left ?Taygeta?.

Subaru: "Unfortunately enough, I have a complete memory loss. That's why I have absolutely no idea about my relationships with these Sin Archbishops you speak of. .....Am I really that connected to them?"

Beatrice: "The least to say, they are the ones responsible for making Betty and the others come here, I suppose. Betty and the others travelled a long journey through the sand and came here, to find a solution to what all they had done."

Subaru: "I thought once that the reason to come to this tower was just to visit it, so it's because of them, huh. So it really isn't my fault or something."

Subaru frowned, being told that he was connected to some undesirable parties.
Although he had not pursued them about it explicitly, both Beatrice and Echidna did not take ?Gluttony? to be the only enemy. If Subaru's ideas were correct, there were probably a total of seven people holding the title of Sin Archbishop, hence, he theorised that the enemies involved were not just ?Gluttony? .

Subaru: "That's a shame, and I don't want to talk about right now..... Oh."

Julius: "Echidna! Subaru as well!"

And, just as Subaru and the others entered the aisle of the fourth layer, raising his voice of surprise while running towards their direction, was Julius.
Last time as well, Julius had come to ?Taygeta? to inform Echidna and Subaru of the atypical situation that surrounded the tower. They had now encountered him a bit earlier.
Seeing Subaru's safe return from the ?Book of the Dead?, Julius said,

Julius: "So you are safe, Subaru. Have you obtained the required information from the ?Book of the Dead??"

Subaru: "Though I gave the same explanation to Beatrice and the others, that failed. I'll give a detailed explanation later, when we are done with these unusual circumstances."

Julius: "What do you mean, in other words?"

Subaru: "Just something about the situation right now?? right now, are the Witch Beasts surrounding the tower coming?"

The moment Subaru voiced his question, a tremendous tremor shook the tower.
With consistency, it reached ever member in this tower. Seeing the truth of the fact that everyone trembled, Julius gasped lightly.
However, he immediately lowered his chin and nodded,

Julius: "Just as you say. Currently, this Pleiades Watchtower has been surrounded by a humongous number of Witch Beasts. At the outer edge of the tower, Miss Shaula is aggressively resisting and stalling the Witch Beasts' takeover but....."

Meili: "If bad animal-chan's were responsible for this tremor the~n, no matter how strongly the naked onee-san may stand, they'll eventually go out of her control hu~h."

Julius: "Henceforth, I want you to lend your strength. What will it be, Meili."

Interrupting in between was Meili, and she was faced with serious words by Julius. Accepting his attitude, Meili landed a meaningful gaze towards Subaru.
That was, the gaze seemed to be asking the advantages and disadvantages of her actions, and at that, Subaru inhaled and nodded.

Subaru: "I'm requesting you as well. Meili, nothing will get sorted if it isn't for you. I know it's wicked to ask this of you right away, but you also cooperate with us for making a step forward."

Meili: ".....Hm? Geez onii-san, sti~ll so pathetic after saying all those grand words. But, I'll accept it obediently and go. Be~ thankful."

Subaru: "Ah, my heartfelt gratitude! I am in love with you!"

Meili: "How pe~tty....."

As Subaru spouted out words of gratitude, Meili strengthened her resolve to fight against the Witch Beasts. With this, one of the five obstacles had been cleared. Till now it had been the same as last time. Hence??,

Julius: "Well then, let's take her to Miss Shaula....."

Subaru: "No, we will be taking a different code of action from that. Meili, do you know where the balcony is? Work together with Shaula there, and somehow repress the Witch Beasts."

Meili: "The end of the aisle, ri~ght? Really, you don't know ho~w to treat people."

Hearing that, Meili sighed and dashed off. Although it did not reduce the weight of the stress that came from the situation, it could be known from the way she was taking steps on Subaru's command. That was, as fast as she could run.
And,

Julius: "Subaru, the Witch Beasts aside, you seem to be confident about something. What are you aware of?"

Subaru: "I guess so. I'll explain it the way it is. Just, come with me for now. ??If we don't hurry, then it'll be too late for helping Emilia-chan and the others."

Julius: "??~Hk!"

Julius, with eyes widened in surprise, and Subaru, who ran after patting at his shoulder. He held Beatrice in his arms, and Echidna hurried behind them as well.
At that moment, the jumbled Julius shook his head, and caught up to his back quickly.

Subaru: "Just now, I told you that the plan of reading the ?Book of the Dead? failed, didn't I. I couldn't see Reid's memories. Instead of that, I came across someone else..... the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?."

Julius: "??No way. Why would ?Gluttony?, in the ?Book of the Dead??"

Hearing the name of the enemy, Julius' expressions froze. Seeing his face, and calling "Julius" out, was Echidna.
She raised a single finger, as she slowed down the speed of her legs,

Echidna: “According to what Natsuki-kun said, the ?Books of the Dead? are the cradle of Od Lagna..... A device for preserving the memories of the dead, and for the recycling of life. And, the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony? eats others’ ?Name? or ?Memories?. In other words.....”

Julius: “Their power, makes use of a part of Od Lagna’s power? .....No, didn’t you say that ?Gluttony? was in the book. If that’s so, then, Subaru, the reason behind your memory loss is.”

Subaru: “Yeah, it isn’t the tower’s trap or stratagem. Absolute FOE..... it means that it was an accident caused by a random encounter. The same way you were victimised.”

It was unimaginable to even slightly expect encountering ?Gluttony? in the ?Book of the Dead?.
If the idea of Subaru and the others was correct, who were at the bottom of this, the ?Book of the Dead? which had the possibility of encountering ?Gluttony?, only one, only Reid’s book could do that as he had been duplicated in this tower.
How terrible must be the luck of the Subaru of yesterday. Enough that he now wanted to believe that he really did have a connection with the Sin Archbishops.

Julius: "In the end, it all comes down to their negative actions. ..... However, if you had come in contact

with ?Gluttony? last night, then this attack by the Witch Beasts too?"

Beatrice: "It means that the opponent got the time of half a day for making preparations, I suppose. If Subaru had remembered..... Ah! The blame for that doesn't go to Subaru!"

Subaru: "I know. But, it's obvious I'd forget. The me of yesterday should have had been more of a hard worker, and the me of today should have had been sharper."

If that would be the case, then they could have had faced the opponent in a better position.
But, that being said, there was no helping it now. They must fight with all the hands they have, that was necessary.
What was needed was willpower, determination and belief in?? yourself aside, in your comrades.

Subaru: "Just as it was said earlier, the horde of Witch Beasts is ?Gluttony's? doing. On top of that, ?Gluttony? itself will come in it's body..... and it will be aiming for Emilia-chan and the others."

And, if Subaru and the others were too late to reach them, Emilia will fight alone and let Ram escape, and will resultantly have her ?Name? get eaten.
That must be stopped from happening beforehand. ??For that, he had taken several shortcuts.

Subaru: "If we don't let Emilia-chan's ?Name? get stolen away....."

??Perhaps, that would make Ram not retreat permanently from the fighting front.

"????"

Last time, the reason why Ram could not do anything was, as a result of Batenkaitos stealing Emilia’s ?Name? away, and Ram had been unable to grasp back to Emilia as the memories of her existence had been erased.
If that threat was to be done away with, it would be plausible to expect the existence known as Ram to fight as well. The one she had with her, Rem, if she was to kept here, she should face no problems either. And, if the tag team of Emilia and Ram could hold Batenkaitos down.

Subaru: “Julius! There’s a job you have to do as well! We’ll do something about ?Gluttony?. Someone who you’ve been against for a while. I understand your emotions to blast him away but.....”

Julius: “But, what? In this place, an opponent more crucial than ?Gluttony?.....”

Subaru: “??Reid will come down. Everything will mess up if he succeeds in doing so. You have the job, to stop that.”

“????”

Faced with that explanation, Julius furrowed his eyebrows in surprise.
However, this time he was more puzzled than plain surprise.

It’s a matter of course.
The invasion of the Witch Beasts and the attack of the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?. He could easily explain both of them as things he heard in the ?Book of the Dead? by ?Gluttony?.
However, it becomes a totally different issue if Reid gets involved in that. The existence of Reid and ?Gluttony? have never come in contact with each other. At the very least, as the operations of the tower and the Sin Archbishops don’t connect to each other.
Hence, it was difficult to provide a reasonable explanation for it??,

Julius: “.....If that is true, we should presume for now that Reid Astrea will descend downstairs. In this situation, what are the chances of him ignoring them?”

Subaru: “Don’t you think so? Really? Does he seem to be the type of guy who would take regard of the surrounding situations?”

Beatrice: “.....Sorry but, Betty doesn’t think so, I suppose. He is someone who’d prioritise what he wants to do at that moment, in fact. No matter how the situation is.”

Held in Subaru’s arms, Beatrice gave her negative impression. At her words, Julius rethought his words, and lastly looked at Echidna, asking her thoughts.
Seeing Julius’ eyes point towards her, Echidna shrugged her shoulders.

Echidna: “I agree with you as well. Regardless, it is hard to believe he would start walking freely in the tower out of the blue. I rather would like to not believe that but..... Nastuki-kun, that information too?”

Subaru: “??. That’s right. I heard that from ?Gluttony?.”

After hesitating for a moment, Subaru nodded and loudly lied to Echidna’s question.
The truth was, the possibility of ?Gluttony? being involved in Reid’s freedom of movement was low. At the very least, Batenkaitos had been surprised by Reid’s existence, and looking at how they acted, the possibility of him being summoned as his ally is also not conceivable.
That’s why, Subaru already was in a position where he could not easily confirm his claims in full honesty.

“????”

Listening to the struggling Subaru’s answer, Julius dived into his own thoughts with a difficult face.
However, the clock was ticking while they were busy with their own worries. Unquestionably, with the hordes of Witch Beasts and Sin Archbishops, the situation of the tower was worsening.
Recognising that, Echidna called out “Julius”,

Echidna: "In the current situation, turning your back towards potential threats and existing enemies is something I want to do as well. But, Natsuki-kun said that....."

Julius: "I should place trust..... Ah, I know, Echidna. To be honest, I think that turning away from the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, my enemy on a personal level, may be something I may later regret. However"

Subaru: "??Reid Astrea, can be left only to you. Just as it had been said earlier."

Julius: "......If I don't win, all calculations will fail, was it. Geez, such incorrigible deathly words."

If their calculations went wrong, and gears of responsibility change, perhaps a great crisis would occur.
Seeing the seriousness in Subaru's black eyes, Julius sighed.

Julius: "Let's make a promise. I shall deal with the matter of Reid. ??However, if he isn't able to get past the second layer, then I shall join you. Any objections?"

Subaru: "Hey. It doesn't mean that you continue of Reid stays there. I leave judging the situation to you, but it's your duty to care of Reid as well, you know."

Julius: "Very well, I understand. Echidna, Beatrice-sama, I shall leave the rest to you."

Subaru: "Leave it to me....."

As Subaru twisted his cheeks as he saw the other two being left responsible instead of him, Julius' palm went through his hair in a fabulous gesture, and at the same pace, he turned their back towards them.
As his white clothes got wrinkled, Julius made a huge leap and sprints towards the staircase leading to the second layer.

Echidna: "??I will not question the reason why you were so sure."

"????"

Echidna: "What is important, is our trust in you. If you don't betray mine or his feelings, I would be truly happy."

Subaru: "I don't know what you're talking about, but I'll accept those words."

Seeing Julius' back, said Echidna in a low voice. The true intention behind her words was to point out how unconnected Reid and ?Gluttony? were.
Drinking down that disparity, Echidna and Julius had trusted Subaru's split up. He must respond to that trust, that expectation.

Subaru: "??~Ugh."

Out of nowhere, just as his mind came across such thoughts, a chilling feeling rose at the back of Subaru's chest.
Beatrice quickly responded to Subaru's state, but looking Beatrice's action, Subaru narrowed his eyes.

??He had memories of this warmth.
It was the warmth he had tasted just before being swallowed by the shadow in the previous loop. As his heart rate increased, Subaru suffered the chilling warmth, and closed his eyes.

At the back of his eyelids, emerged a trembling dot of faint light.
It was in the direction he was facing, and right next to his arms??.

Subaru: "Let's hurry! We all have to go and meet up with Emilia-chan and the others!"

Echidna: "That is all well and good, but will we be of any help? Clearly, you of now and Beatrice, and me, we are all noncombatants."

Beatrice: "Betty can act as a combatant if she wants to fight. Besides, Subaru does not aim to be just a reinforcement either, I suppose."

Echidna and Beatrice voiced their respective ideas regarding the running Subaru.
Echidna's worry was right, and Beatrice's idea was correct.
Sadly enough, Subaru and the others could not back Emilia as combatants. Instead of them--,

Ram: "??Barusu! So you have woken up!"

Subaru: "Ram!"

At the edge of the aisle, the same scene as before?? appeared the figure of Ram, on Patrasche’s back, hugging Rem.
She jumped off Patrasche’s back in front of Subaru.

Ram: “You took too long to wake up! You are responsible for Rem now! You won’t be excused if you hurt her or touch her in a weird way, so protect her with your life. Ram will??.”

Subaru: “Wait wait wait, you’re too fast! I know what you’re saying but, calm down! You are.....”

Ram: “The Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony? has come! Emilia-sama is holding him down, but that won’t go too well. If Ram does not return immediately, it will be too late!”

“????”

At that explanation, mixed feelings aroused in Subaru’s chest.
Ram wanted to return to the fight immediately, but it was delightful to see her say Emilia’s name, and anger boiled up within his heart when Batenkaitos’ hated existence had been confirmed.
Keeping that aside, Subaru gave what he was given to Echidna.

Subaru: “Echidna! I’m counting on you for Rem and Patrasche’s safety! The balcony or the second layer won’t do! You can’t go close to the Green Room right now either. Probably, ?Taygeta? should be the safest.”

Echidna: “Natsuki-kun, what about you!?”

Subaru: “Me and Beatrice, along with Ram will go for the Sin Archbishop!”

Saying that, Subaru looked at the innocent eyes of the startled Echidna. In front of her heavy breathing, Subaru caressed Patrasche’s neck, and pointed his chin towards Rem and then turned his back,

Subaru: “Earlier, you had said. Don’t betray our trust. I’m counting on you for the same. I’m leaving Rem in your hands. She is, a crucial person for ?Natsuki Subaru?.”

Echidna: “??That is quite an odd thing to say. Even though you yourself are supposed to be Natsuki Subaru.”

Subaru: “.....I’m also trusting you for understanding my feelings a bit.”

He had that the existence of Echidna, had borrowed the body of a young lady named Anastasia. It could be said that it was similar to the current position of Natsuki Subaru, who was overwriting the existence of ?Natsuki Subaru?.
Receiving those words from Subaru, Echidna made an expression of relief.

Echidna: “Natsuki-kun, could it be that you are??.”

Subaru: “??I’m counting on you.”

Echidna was unable to complete her words, and Subaru started dashing ahead, leaving her and the others behind.
Ram was already heading towards the front of the aisle. At the very end, he saw the sleeping face of Rem on Patrasche’s back, and used to that to stimulate courage within him.

Ram: “Why, did you come, Barusu. Rem is.....”

Subaru: “Rem would, rather have us do what we have to do rather than being concerned for her! That was yelled at me in the book!”

Ram: “??~Hk! By Rem? What does that mean?”

Ram widened her crimson eyes in confusion at Subaru's words, who was right next to her. It was just that, they did not have enough time for him to carefully explain the details of what happened in the ?Corridor of Memories?.
That's why, Subaru just shortly mentioned the most important things.

Subaru: "We must fight and get Rem back. That's why, I'll go with you too!"

Beatrice: "Of course, don't forget that Betty is there too, in fact."

Ram: "??. Right now, it's fine. You'll be asked about it a hundred times later."

Subaru: "Isn't hundred a bit too scary!?"

In Ram's case, that was no joke, so Subaru trembled with fear. However, her curiosity stemmed only from Subaru not explaining the most crucial part.
And, the situation that needed to be taken care of, was right in front of their eyes??.

Emilia: "Ice Brand Arts!"

At the very next moment, in the middle of the frozen passage, the dancing back of Emilia was visible, armed with weapons of ice in her hands.
Opposing her was the dirty looking Sin Archbishop, Ley Batenkaitos.
Looking at that, Ram shouted.

Ram: "Emilia-sama!"

Subaru assured himself that she said Emilia's name, and that they had made it in time.
And, at the same time, hearing her name being called out from behind, Emilia said "Eh, Ram!?" after turning back,

Emilia: "Why did you come back!? On top of that, Subaru and Beatrice too, I'm glad you're safe..... but! But right now it's rea~lly dangerous! Stay aside! Keep away!"

Ram: "Rem has been evacuated to a safer place. Now on, Ram will also assist you."

Emilia: "But, Ram, you are....."

Ram: "Would you like to say something like get aside?"

Answering Emilia, Ram reached for her legs, and from there, took out a thin wand.
It similar to that which magicians are said to have. It looked to be quite small, but gave off a strange and mysterious pressure.
And, looking at the form of Ram who held that, ?Gluttony?, from close distance to Emilia, said,

Ley: "Haha~! What's this what's this, you came back, nee-sama! Ah, how manly! Why just why is nee-sama so cool? Truly, nee-sama is wonderful ~tsu!"

Ram: "??Irksome. You're getting killed, Sin Archbishop."

With her hand pointing towards him, Ram's low voiced murderous intent stabbed through the laughing Sin Archbishop.
Right next, he said that to himself and glanced at the one he had not looked at yet, and Subaru felt immense anger run up chills in his spine at his gaze. He had made eye contact, but Batenkaitos did not flinch.

Ley: "How nice, so nice, quite nice, as it's nice, isn't it nice, probably it's nice, perhaps it's nice, as we think it's nice! Gluttonous drinking ~tsu! Gluttony ~tsu! Sorry for arbitrarily and overwhelmingly breaking away this connection. Though it was actually supposed to be a mu~ch more grand reunion."

Ram: "What are you....."

Ley: "To have the ?Name? and ?Memory? of a dear person stolen away, sort of feels like you would consider revenge and regard the one responsible as your greatest enemy, no? Even still, in the case of someone who was eaten by us, most of the time even that ends up being forgotten is what it means. Even though we love, we understand nee-sama so much, nee-sama can never understand even a bit of that feeling is what it means! This is, like wasting away a potentially salivating top-class ingredient by spilling it, isn't it."

Blabbering away, the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony? started explaining situations which nobody could relate to.
The truth is, the power of stealing away others' memories which ?Gluttony? possessed, was the same as snatching away lives of people. If they were to attack family members, lovers, benefactors, and in worst case scenario, if they were to erase their victims' existence beyond oblivion, the hatred that was supposed to be felt for them will also disappear.
That will work as somewhat of a safety measure for them, since nobody will plot revenge on them. However??,

Ley: "??Isn't that we~ll, the utmost level of boredom?"

However, Batenkaitos stated that it would be boring.

"??"

Ley: "Originally, the rich hatred that was to be attained, or the dormant and fierce rage, such freshly aromatic negative emotions are denied. That is a pretty big waste for us. .....That is, until the onii-san over there showed up.

Subaru: "Me.....?"

Ley: "Sa~y onii-san, for some reason remembers those whose ?Names? were eaten by us, no? We understand that there would be plenty of possible reasons behind it? Surely, onii-san's birthplace must be a bit different from here but, what's important is its result. Onii-san, is our saviour."

Saying that, Batenkaitos opened his arms wide, and looked at Subaru, making an expression as if all this was a matter of course.
His gaze was completely genuine, he looked at Subaru with eyes so passionate that it gave the impression that he was in love with him.

Ley: "No, it must be said this way! Onii-san is our hero ~tsu! Pitiable, hard working, uneasy unless someone is by his side, mean, thinking about that makes our chest squeeze and hurt and hurt more than we expected, on top of that, a hero who understands those feelings.....!"

Subaru: "Stop saying such horribly creepy things! What the hell do you want by doing all this....."

Ley: "Of course, they are feelings from our heart. How rude, how miserable. Even though we, with such

braveness, we, with only this way left, think about onii-san."

Subaru was completely clueless, about how much what he had said, with such mixed emotions, was actually serious. He couldn't even imagine, neither did he want to.
But, if Batenkaitos' comments till now were to be considered, it became clear.
The existence he had captured, his impressions of Subaru?? No, they needed to be turned away from.

Those were, the thoughts of Rem, who had been captured by him??.

Ley: "How about it! Let's repeat that impression from back then once again! Let us start from here, onii-san ~tsu! From square one, no..... from ze"

Emilia: "??Hiya~!!"

Ley: “Ow ~hk!?"

At that moment, Emilia stalked right behind Batenkaitos' back, and struck him with the powerful ice hammer she held in her hand without any hesitation.
The unforgiving strike, seemingly from a manga or something, cut off Batenkaitos' words midway, and at that moment, made his white eyeballs fall towards the front.

"????"

Subaru: "......Eh, did we win?"

Emilia: "I did it!"

The silent Batenkaitos, and Emilia, who made a pose with her fists up in the air. Looking at both of them, Subaru rubbed his eyes at the terribly anticlimactic ending.

Beatrice: "......The curtain fell really quickly, in fact."

Ram: "......Well geez. Where should Ram take her emotions of wanting to tear him up into bits and pieces now. Emilia-sama!"

Emilia: "Eh, what? D-Did it not work?"

Ram: "??. No, it was splendid. Yes yes, truly, it was magnificent."

Beatrice, who was hugging Subaru, and Ram passed their comments about the fallen ?Gluttony?.
Ram, who was surprised herself at the enemy's fate, and Emilia who had accomplished quite a commendable feat, the situation was quite complex.
However,

Subaru: "No, I have tons of things to say, but first comes Emilia-chan, good job! With this, ?Gluttony? has been....."

???: "??Unfortunately, that cannot be allowed to happen, onii-san."

"????"

In front Subaru, who thought that the second one of the five obstacles had been unexpectedly cleared up, Batenkaitos, who was supposed to stay fallen in defeat, suddenly got up rapidly.
Subaru, vary, looked at his abnormal movement, while Beatrice stiffened her body.
Of course, Emilia and Ram too had alertness in their eyes??

Ram: "Did he go mad by getting hit in the head? Even his courteous words to Barusu, then the situation surely cannot be turned away from....."

???: "Ah, ah, all that's fine. We have already conveyed our thoughts, neither do we intend to hold back or something....."

Intervening Ram's words midway, the standing Batenkaitos, who had previously fallen flat, murmured something, as his long, dark brown hair covered his face.
Overlapping with his murmuring, repulsive sounds of distortion echoed in the aisle.

Emilia: "No way....."

At that, Emilia widened her purple-blue eyes at the abnormality occurring in front of her, along with those terrible sounds. What was reflected in those beautiful eyes of hers was, the meagre body of Batenkaitos letting out sounds as his skeleton distorted?? the small body of the youth, transformed into that of a huge man with thick muscle. It was a scene which could be called a nightmare, but what followed was the true nightmare for Subaru.

???: “Wa~h, onii-san, were you surprised? This is ?Solar Eclipse?…… we~ll, something like a piece of our trump card? Unlike earlier, we’ll make you ours through force this time.”

Subaru: "You're saying, some pretty weird things, transgender bastard. You are....."

Thinking back to his nightmarish terror, Subaru asked as cold sweat ran down his back. Receiving that, the huge man smiled, and bowed, without any effort to conceal the strange pressure he gave off.

Louis: "??Witch Cult's Sin Archbishop representing ?Gluttony?, Louis Arneb."

"????"

Louis: "We cannot stretch this for too long. We must clean up everything, everything, we will secretly eat while onii-chan sleeps."

Arc 6 – Chapter 10, “As if a Flash”

by admin - Monday, August 26, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/08/26/arc-6-chapter-10-as-if-a-flash/

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Translated By :

- Ringo

Art Source :

- Harusabin

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Arc 6 - "Hall of Memories"
Chapter 10, "As if a Flash"

??Jumbled together with the vast land of sand dunes, was a flower meadow with a variety of colours.

It was nighttime, and mysteriously, the light of the stars in the sky of the sand dunes was not visible.
The reason why the look of the sky could not be perceived despite there being no gathering of clouds was that the miasma enshrouding the space above ground covered this vast sea of sand, was the explanation given beforehand.
It was not clear to Subaru, whether the one to give that explanation had been Beatrice, or Emilia or Julius.

But, now, what was clear was, rather than the imperceivable look of the sky, the alarm bell of caution directed from the ground, the ominous bloom of the flower meadow undefeated in front of the darkness of the night.
The vivid, rather venomous flowers were, excessively mismatched in the sea of sand.

Subaru: "The sand dunes', flower meadow....."

Sensing the unsettling feeling while voicing it as well as he pronounced that word, there, Subaru had already been aware.

Emerging at the back of his mind, was the information gathered in the bar of Mirula. The bartender there, who had lost one of his legs, had spoken of the flower meadows that appear in the sand dunes.

If flower meadows are spotted in the sand dunes, run away at full speed, is what he had said.
??Because those are the turfs, of the ferocious, ugly Witch Beasts, Courtesan Bears.

Subaru: "But, even if you say run away at full speed....."

Pointing out the weakness in those words, the muttering Subaru, while gazing ahead, stepped back.
The flower meadow was the territory of a Witch Beast, that information was beneficial. There was also the mention of immediately running from the, henceforth, ferocious and atrocious Witch Beast. But, if there was a problem, it was its scale.

"????"

Keeping their silence, Subaru and the others, who were lined up in a row, held their breaths. In front of the row, having surmounted the menace of ?Sand Time?, broken through the distortion of space, what had appeared was the continuous desert leading to the watchtower?? those lines of sight, were now filled with the stretching flower meadow.
It was, quite literally, dense enough for there to not be a single spot to step on.

Springing forth all of a sudden in the desert, was the paradise of the flower meadow. There were limits even when it came to shadiness.
It was something that would they would have avoided even without the warning of the bar's bartender. That is precisely why, if flying through the sky was an option, then they would have had chosen that and avoided this without any hesitation whatsoever.

Subaru: "Avoiding it, is impossible, you know."

Murmuring it such that there was no difference between it and a hoarse sigh, Subaru aimed his voice towards Meili.
Under the present conditions, regarding their countermeasures against Witch Beasts, relying on Meili was of an unexpected benefit. What she judged controlled their path, but the complexion of her face, glaring at the flower meadow, was quite pale.
With the formation of cold sweat, blood vanished from her light-complexioned skin. Without the need of any words, she understood the negativity of the emergency, as if having picked it up with her own hands.

"????"

Slowly, Patrasche, with her large build, drew closer with unbelievable silence. On her back was Beatrice, seeing the instruction in her eyes saying "Jump on, in fact", Subaru placed his foot on the saddle, and while doing so, silenced all sound and once again positioned himself on top of the dragon.
Whether it was for continuing ahead, or for returning back, it would not be possible for Subaru's legs, who would get swallowed by the sand.
Even if their judgements were made through the reins, they would have to rely upon the well walking legs of Patrasche for fast movement.

Meili: "......For now, it seems everyone is sleepi~ng."

"????"

Holding his breath, how much time had it been since Meili's judgement had been awaited. As if ten seconds had passed, or to him it felt like it'd been nearly an hour, , Meili spilled that out, as if whispering.
Receiving that, Subaru, with energy draining from his shoulders, brought Patrasche closer to the dragon carriage.
Subaru: "That flower meadow is the turf of the Courtesan Bear..... that would be correct, right?"

Julius: "In addition to the received prior information, for now that doesn't seem to be wrong. But..... it is just that, the scale is larger than what even I had thought."

Beatrice: "That difference in scale, is addition of something as cute as it being twice or thrice, I suppose."

Letting out a single sigh, Subaru and the rest, facing each other, exchanged their thoughts.
Julius and Beatrice too, at the great reception surpassing their expectations, were in a state of having lost their voices. The ones inside the dragon carriage, Emilia and the rest, their voices of delight after having broken through ?Sand Time? too, had come to a halt, as they were showing their faces through the small window, wondering what had occurred.

Emilia: "Subaru, did something happen? The sound of the sand breeze can't be heard anymore....."

Subaru: "We did a splendid job clearing ?Sand Time?. And, just when I thought we had cleared the first barrier, we're now standing, expecting the next, second barrier immediately. As you can see."

Emilia: "As you can see you say..... Ah."

Seeing the clearly visible flower meadow at a single glance through the small window, Emilia's throat froze in shock. She had also heard what the bar's bartender had said. Of course, the information she recollected must also have been the same.
Emilia repeatedly blinked her eyes, and beside her, Anastasia and Ram also showed? their faces. The two also gazed at the flower meadow, and grimaced at the cruelty of the trials to reach the tower.

Subaru: "Even after passing through the sand wind and ?Sand Time?, the obstacle this time are the flower meadows, huh. Regarding the territory of these Courtesan Bears, does Anastasia happen to know something?"

Anastasia: "Guidin' is my business, expectin' anythin' more than that'd be a problem. That bein' said, this seriously is a bit of a problem. What should be done."

Holding expectations from the opinion of the unexpressed Eridna, she, while shrugging her shoulders, did not seem to possess a plan to overcome the obstacle. Subaru let out a long breath from his nose, and looked at Meili.

Subaru: "Meili, with your physical constitution, you can draw in the Witch Beasts, right? Courtesan Bears too, can't you pull them out from the flower meadow?"

Meili: "......That's difficu~lt. If it's ten, twenty, or even if it's hundred, I ca~n, but a number more than that and there'll be some children to whom my instructions won't rea~ch."

Subaru: "There's a limit to the number, huh."

Meili: "There's also a limit on the quality~. Even I, can't tell arou~nd the White Whale or the Great Rabbit. The Courtesan Bear is at that point, it's compatibility with me is ba~d. Very different from the Shadow Lion."

Subaru: "Shadow Lion..... Ah, that large one who showed up at the mansion, right."

Putting a limit to their conversation about old memories, Subaru considered Meili's opinion and glared at the flower meadow.
Countless, a vast paradise of flowers?? just as expected, even the estimate of the number of Witch Beasts could not be determined. But, it was clear that it was easily more than a hundred, which was Meili's limit.

Julius: "In the present situation, it could be said that the choices we have are to either ?Continue? or ?Return?."

Facing Subaru, who had drowned in silence, the driver Julius said that lifting two of his fingers, and tilting his neck.
Seeing Julius' fingers, Subaru inhaled.

Subaru: "The choice to return wasn't there from the beginning, you know. It'll be a waste after clearing ?Sand Time? but, with that, nothing of the problem will get solved. Going ahead is meaningless too."

Julius: "If we get under a different ?Sand Time?, or if we take a different path entirely we may able to challenge the watchtower. Putting a halt to consideration and plugging up its path, isn't that simply drawing a hasty conclusion?"

The ?Sand Time? that occured thrice in the day, amongst? them lay the correct answer, and that was Julius' insistence. What Subaru and the others had escaped out from was the ?Sand Time? of late night. Others were the ?Sand Time? of morning and afternoon but, was it possible that the place that would be reached through would differ as different ?Sand Times? were chosen.
No, gesturing that, Subaru shook his head.

Subaru: "For argument's sake, even if a different path was to be taken, I don't think it can possibly guarantee the safety of the path all the way to the watchtower. Here are the flower meadows but, there's the possibility of there being a different obstacle someplace else. Probably, no enjoyable path has been arranged at all."

Julius: "......Certainly. Slightly, excessive hopeful observation, huh."

Subaru: "On top of that, possibly, the situation of Meili being there and the turf of the Courtesan Bears. This one is actually the best path, that's also a possibility, you know?"

Julius: "This time, excessive pessimism, huh. As always, it is your forte to denounce and uplift, isn't it."

Subaru: "I don't remember ever aiming for that. All right then, Meili. What about you?"

Harshly telling Julius, who rounded his eyes at how unfavourable the situation was, Subaru turned towards Meili.
Silent, gazing intently at the flower meadow, Meili, at Subaru's words, said "Hm....." with her gaze cast downwards.

Meili: "The number is painful, but if you tell me to do it then I'll try doing? i~t. It's not like I have to listen to everything which all of the animal-san's have to sa~y."

Subaru: "You don’t need to for everything, you say.....?"

Meili: "For passing through the flower meadow, it would be fine if just the minimum number of Courtesan Bears are quietly gotten rid o~f. If a path is opened up, for the rest I'll have them obediently sleep. If they're not attacked then it can be somehow managed with tha~t."

As if gaining certainty in her thoughts while answering the doubt, strength returned to Meili's voice.
At the very least, she had a stance of respecting Subaru's chance of ?Continuing?. That was something to be genuinely grateful for. Subaru nodded to Meili, and then looked at everyone's faces.

Subaru: "I think we should continue. Regardless of what's chosen, there can be no return without jumping into the risk. It's about there being some solution to the problem rather than just running away from it."

Ram: "Even though you rely on others to attain your own objectives, isn't that quite something to declare with that mouth."

Ram fired bitter words at Subaru, who’d suggested to proceed.
Receiving her "typical" words, Subaru let out an "Oh" and raised his thumb.

Subaru: "Ultimately, it's no mistake that we have to rely on Meili. By any chance, if it ends up being that we have to attack the Witch Beasts, then we'll have to rely on Emilia-tan or Julius, or Beako. How wicked."

"????"

Subaru: "Oh, also, Patrasche too. My bad, my bad."

He caressed his beloved dragon’s head, who’d raised her neck up as if discontent at having her name absent as one of the members he could rely on.
Against that pathetic declaration of Subaru's, Ram, with a frankly astonished expression, shrugged her

shoulders.

Ram: "Having self-awareness will be of no help. At best, in that unlikely scenario, fulfill the role of a decoy."

Subaru: "Hearing that is also pretty nostalgic. You may not remember it though."

"????"

At the words somewhat pertaining to the past, Ram made an anxious face.
Those were words like those in the forest of the Witch Beasts, or on the morning of the day they headed out to the capital for the Royal Selection, which he had been slapped with by Ram. With Rem's existence disappearing from her memories, and accompanying memories altered, now, where must have the back and forth of that day vanished off to.

Subaru: "Let's go, to take it back. I don't want to backtrack for even a second, anymore."

Emilia: "??Hm, I guess that's so. I also think it's just as Subaru says."

At Subaru's decision, who hardened his fist, consented Emilia with a gallant expression.
She touched the pendant on her neck, and stole the feelings of the Spirit sleeping within the Great Magic Stone into her fingers. And, her amethyst eyes earnestly focused on the flower meadow.

Emilia: "Beyond this flower meadow, is the key to precious memories. Let's go without stopping. For sure, I will make sure to protect everyone."

Anastasia: "That, isn't it a bit too uncool coming from a girl?"

At Emilia's majestic declaration, Anastasia said that as she looked towards Subaru.
Keep quiet, he wanted to return that as response but, the truth is, if it turns out just as how Emilia says, he thought that that would be the best, as there would be nothing to worry about left.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

The distance till the Pleiades Watchtower, gauged with his eyes, had roughly decreased several kilometers.
Before crossing through ?Sand Time?, when they had recklessly proceeded through the Augria Sand Dunes, the supposedly visible distance to the watchtower, seemingly of ten kilometers, had not reduced by even a single one.
Compared to that, this reduction of distance was overwhelming, and it could be said that their arrival was right before their eyes.

Subaru: “But anything and everything, comes after escaping away from this nest of the Courtesan Bears.”

Completely filling their field of vision, the flower meadow, on top? of the sea of sand enshrined majesty, strongly abhorrent.
The plants having their roots embedded into the ground, such natural ecology was nowhere here. The slightly floating stems or roots were, not growing from the ground, but from, none other than, the bodies of those repulsive brutes.

“????”

Around when they would be escaping the territory of the Courtesan Bears, what Meili had instructed to Subaru and the others was simple?? to be as silent as possible.
According to her remarks, the Courtesan Bears were currently lying dormant. They would not thoughtlessly? wake them up, but in exchange for that, it seems they would not be able to get an idea of the ferocity of the Witch Beasts getting up after continuing to lay down.

Meili: “The bad animal-san's being active is the most brutal thi~ng. The exterminated White Whale, when appearing immediately after the fog used to be the most enraged and seemed to be most troublesome too~.”

That was the digression Meili spoke of regarding the White Whale.
Thinking about it in accordance with that exposition of hers, the exact moment when Subaru and the rest had encountered the White Whale at the Lifaus Highway. In other words, immediately afterwards it had woken up, it had been the worst timing.
Memories of suffering resuscitated, he painted his own praise for himself for having that desire of his fulfilled.
Regardless of that??,

Meili: “Being angry when woken up goes for everyone, humans, animals, and bad animal-san's. That's why~, stay co~mpletely quiet. If you can do just that, I'll somehow manage from my side.”

Abiding by the remarks of Meili, who possessed such strong will, thus commenced the march of the row who’d clamped down their breathing.
Their battle formation was a substitute for the occasion of capturing the sand dunes, the style of the dragon carriage proceeding further. Sitting as the driver, conveying the intents of the Courtesan Bears was Meili, and in accordance with those aims Julius drove the dragon carriage further. Patrasche, on which Subaru had a good grip on, attached and detached to the rear of that dragon carriage and raced in a single line.

“????”

Feeling himself bend, Subaru, holding his breath, clutched onto Beatrice's petite body. Her body temperature could be felt, it seemed that she had stiffened her body and was feeling nervous.
On the side of the dragon carriage, upon the roof of the dragon carriage was present a figure. A figure who need not be suspected, for the familiar silhouette was that of Emilia.

“????”

Noticing Subaru's gaze, Emilia aimed her amethyst eyes towards him and raised her hand.
The reason why Emilia was lying in ambush like that upon the roof, was so that she could move instantly in case an issue of some sort rose. Though Subaru would have liked her to quietly stay within the dragon carriage, but with the support of Julius' Spirit Arts gone, the only ally capable of long range attacks was Emilia. Though it wasn’t as if Beatrice could not do it if she pushed herself, but with a single large blow, Subaru would exhaust his gas.
It was a part of Subaru's inferiority complex that, in terms of strength, he had to depend upon others, for protecting? him as well, if he was present.

If that wasn't so, if he did not have to do that, perhaps even Rem would??.
The weakness of thinking in that direction, was always present within Subaru.

Subaru: “??~hk.”

“????”

With the rise of such uncompromising emotions beyond his control, the back of Beatrice's head pushed up his jaw. At Subaru's surprise, Beatrice snorted her nose.
Focus on what is in front of you right now, is what she must have had meant. Looking overhead once again, Emilia, too, had pointed her finger towards Subaru, and he understood that she was urging for similar caution.

“????”

Unable to express either compromise or understanding, he exchanged a deep sigh.
The truth was that he wanted to slap his cheek and alter his emotions, but that could put his life at risk, an action that could prove to be deadly.
And, as Subaru's usual detour of thoughts gave rise to his resolution, the party's forefront arrived at the flower meadow practically at the same time.

Meili: “Move.”

At once, Gyan halted pulling the dragon carriage, and Meili's faint voice slipped into the creaking sound of the wheels and was thrown towards the flower meadow.
At first, there being no response to Meili's call, Subaru gritted his molars.

Meili: “Move.”

Once again, Meili called out the order.
Even still, indeed, no change was born in the flower meadow. In the vexing duration, Subaru's stomach lining started to grumble with something similar to itchiness.
And??,

“????”

With that distortion, the ground, as if truly being stripped off, the flower meadow "arose".

“????”

Without thinking, looking straight at the form of the Witch Beast, Subaru's throat seized up.
The Witch Beast called the Courtesan Bear, befitting of its name, possessed a figure like that of a bear.

The height of the Courtesan Bear, was perhaps around two meters to three meters. Short legs, in exchange for that, arms long enough to drag on the ground. Its arms visibly concealed under black fur, and claw-like nails growing at the ends, is what he understood.
From the rear to the armpits of that body, the vivid flowers swaying was the sort of impression it projected but, observing that Witch Beast from close proximity, one's eyes tended to turn towards the front rather than the rear of that body.
Though its physique was concealed by black fur, creeping about that body was not body hair. Closely packed, wrapping the body were the finely jumbled together roots of the flowers. They appeared as if blood vessels that were floating on the skin, the minute roots were covering the body of the Witch Beast.

Subaru: “??~hk.”

On the body covered with closely packed roots, the parts which the roots did not reach were abnormally parched, and both the flesh and skin had withered. Its facial features, its cranium had reached the limit of dehydration to the point where it was visibly obvious, and its circular protuberant eyeballs were bloodshot, wielding hatred for everything in this world.
That seemed to be, as if it was slurping the life of the flowers whose roots it had pasted upon its own body.

The Courtesan Bears could not co-exist with the flowers. Clearly, they had taken away the lives of the flowers.

“????”

The Witch Beast, which gave off an unbearable feeling of revulsion by merely looking at it, followed Meili's words with sluggish movement.
Slowly pulling out its body from the ground, as the roots got uprooted from the desert from which nothing could be absorbed, a thousand sounds of snapping limitlessly chained.
For opening up space just so that the dragon carriage could pass, the moving Courtesan Bears reached a hundred in count. And as if knowing no end, their numbers continued to increase.

Julius: “Hugh.”

Faintly, Julius' sigh was audible, as the dragon carriage resumed proceeding.
Julius, in that state, with his body hair standing up due to the spectacle in front of his sight, must have failed to put up with it. Attached to the rear of the dragon carriage, Subaru and the others as well entered?

the path bloomed open by the Courtesan Bears.

Subaru: "......Ugh."

At exactly that instant, when Subaru's sense of smell crossed the threshold of the Courtesan Bears' turf, a violent aroma of flowers could be felt.
It seemed to be different from the stench of the time of confronting the Sand Earthworm, with respective difference in quality from that, the sweet scent jumbled together in the situation did not mean that the sense of violence had changed.
Their nostrils were invaded, their intracerebral gears simply acquired the hallucination of the sweet scent.

"????"

Developing? serious dizziness, the repulsive stench awakened a headache.
Something so exasperating, that he would not mind the sand gusts at all compared to this. This toxic aroma coiling up within his whole body must be driven away, is what he thought with utter seriousness.

Such wishes of Subaru were fruitless, and in the absence of any flow of wind, the party proceeded towards the interior of the interior of the flower meadow.

Subaru: "??~hk."

As if having noticed something, Beatrice pulled Subaru's sleeve. Looking at her wondering what had come up, she was incessantly concerned regarding something behind them.
Turning around at that gesture whilst keeping that repulsive premonition? in mind, the meaning of Beatrice's reaction could be understood.
The space in the flowers that opened up in accordance with Meili's instructions, looking at the passage of the dragon carriage and Patrasche, from the close proximity to that till the very end, the scenery was steadily returning to how it originally was.

Meili's orders came true, and the dragon carriage being able to pass at this particular point in time according to the instructions had been achieved. Returning to their original positions, and entering into the state of lying dormant, could that be their plans.
Even if they did not intend to return, they were still unable to stop mid-way. Of course, taking a break in the midst of this nest of these Witch Beasts, such jokes needed to be refrained from as well.

Subaru: "???"

The moment immediately after he'd thought that, the dragon carriage's advance came to a pause.
Looking at the front wondering what had happened, the reason behind the dragon carriage's halt was explicit. A lone Courtesan Bear, in front of the dragon carriage, got up and stood still, and turned those hollow eyes towards the two drivers.

"????"

With that one alone making suspicious movements, the movements of the Courtesan Bears in the vicinity

too, started to change. The feet of the Courtesan Bears, who had, till now, stolidly and obediently made way, stopped, and as if tracing the actions of the one staring at the dragon carriage, their gazes accumulated on the dragon carriage.

??*This is bad*, was the intuitive realisation Subaru had.

Looking back, they had already covered several hundreds of meters since entering the flower meadow. With the pathway behind plugged up, it was clear that they had been surrounded by the Courtesan Bears from all directions. Their numbers were in the hundreds, or possibly even in the thousands. A violent difference in numbers.

"????"

Thinking that far, his gaze entwined with that of Emilia’s, who was on top of the roof.
Emilia was looking down onto the Courtesan Bear in? front, and was puzzled over what kind of judgement she should deal it. If the outbreak of a fight, just as till now, could be avoided, then clearing the frontward of the dragon carriage with Emilia's magic, and running through was the optimal way. However, she did not want to mistake the timing and rush things too fast.

Meili: "Shh??"

And in front of Subaru and the rest who were puzzled regarding their judgement, the one with utmost composure was Meili.
Putting a finger on her lips, she calmed the indecisive Subaru and the others beforehand. Following afterwards, she pointed the finger she had on her lips towards the front, and scowled at the Courtesan Bear looking at her.

Meili: "Tch tch tch."

A finger pointing outwards, and a sound, as if flicking her tongue, leaked out of Meili's lips.
That was a sigh, like what humans made to soothe kittens. If the subject truly was a kitten then it would give a pleasant impression? as well, but with the fiendish Witch Beast as the subject, there was no mitigation whatsoever.
However, all of Meili's fingers jolted at her tongue's sound, and gradually, the Courtesan Bear's line of sight shifted, from the two drivers, to Meili alone, and then moved to Meili's fingers.

Meili: "Tch tch tch..... tch~."

At the same pace, obtaining certainty that the Courtesan Bear's focus was on the finger, Meili slowly swung her hand, which had her fingers pointed towards the right of the dragon carriage. Lured to the movement of that arm, the Courtesan Bear, which had brought the dragon carriage to a standstill, turned its face towards that and moved, taking a single step in that direction.

Subaru: "??Ah."

At the Courtesan Bear's conduct, of distancing itself away from the dragon carriage, a reflexive sigh of

relief leaked out of Subaru's throat.
Emilia or Beatrice too, who had stiffened their bodies up, too, loosened their shoulders in relief. When the one who had caused a standstill moved, the other Courtesan Bears too, tried to return to their own movements of distancing themselves.
At the same pace, the march through the flower meadow resumed?? was how it was supposed to be.

"????~hk!!"

At that moment, the thread of tension snapped, and nobody could be condemned for raising their voice. Suddenly, in the situation of enduring under compulsion of utmost limits of the stalemate, the thing known as the heart could not stand strong. That goes for humans, and for Ground Dragons as well.

Showered upon with the pressure of losing to the Courtesan Bear, Gyan, gave out a short growl, and stamped its feet on the ground, as if enraged.

Subaru: "Oh sh?? ~hk."

At Gyan's roar, which abruptly cut off the silence, the Courtesan Bears, which were in a state of lying dormant, reacted altogether at once. The one attempting to distance itself away from the dragon carriage turned back, and that reaction? infected the environs as well?? the Witch Beasts rose, and leapt upon the dragon carriage with their bare fangs.
Immediately before??,

Emilia: "??El Huma!!"

The mana materialised rapidly, and the spearhead of the formed ice lance penetrated through the Witch Beast's cranium.
The sharp vanguard of ice pierced through its large mouth, infringing upon its oral cavity and broke through its nape. Its brain churned, the Courtesan Bear, without raising its voice, collapsed backwards as it faced annihilation. Caught up in that vigour, several Courtesan Bears, without pause, toppled sideways.

Subaru: "Run??!!"

Shouted Subaru, instantaneously after witnessing the attack by Emilia, who was on top of the dragon carriage.
Concording to that call, Julius operated the reins and the dragon carriage started running fiercely at once. Of course, Patrasche, too, followed that, jumping away from the side of the Witch Beasts standing stock still, and broke off in a savage sprint.

"??~hk!"

Subaru:
"They'recomingthey'recomingthey'recomingthey'recomingthey'recomingthey'recomingthey'recoming??ing!!"

Delayed by a single beat, the cutthroat, fierce voice tore apart the night of the Augria Sand Dunes.
The vast flower meadow was shredded apart at once, with fangs and unsightly appearances naked, the flock sloth of Courtesan Bears advanced on, aiming for the dragon carriage fiercely plunging its way through.

Beatrice: "Subaru! Firmly grip on or you will get thrown off, in fact!"

The hallucination bathing in strength, was the pressure of the thirst for blood and appetite of the innumerable Courtesan Bears.
With thick arms endowed with claws turned overhead, their merciless attack struck Subaru as well, who was riding the dragon. A direct hit and his body would get torn off easily, with strength that could assuredly force his internal organs to protrude outwards.
However, just when it was on the brink of striking, a bluish-white glimmer cut in between, and pierced through the Witch Beasts.

Emilia: "Hiy! Yah! Alright ~hk! You..... these, Huma~!"

As always, with the Mana forming a whirlpool and her voice coming from her heart, giving the impression that the bluish-white light was performing a boisterous dance in the dark sky, that was the transformation of countless sharp spearheads pointing above the ground into blades of ice.
That was, immediately after the stagnation of a single moment, firing as if having acquired the propulsive force, tearing the craniums, the arms, the torsos, the legs of the Courtesan Bears swarming upon the dragon carriage into shreds, giving rise to spouts of blood.

Subaru: "O~o~o~o~h! As expected of Emilia-tan! I've fallen for you again!!"

Emilia: "This is not the time for saying such things, is it! Run!"

Subaru: "Yes!"

Having his life saved by Emilia's follow-up, Subaru further accelerated Patrasche.
And with the sudden exchange, Emilia was coping with the fight with such composure that it was surprising. In retrospect, even if Emilia had shirked from fighting, it was not as if fighting intimidated her. The tendency to avoid fighting within her was, the indecision that had been erased once that battle had broken out.

Ram: "Barusu, run till you die. If you do not wish to die!"

Subaru: "Yeah, of course?? eh, Ram!?"

The tough fight being put up by Emilia, the bluish-white light mowed down the frontward of the dragon carriage altogether, and the group of Courtesan Bears, who had taken a roundabout path, were frozen all at once.
Within Gyan's rush and breaking through the ice sculpture, sitting on the driver's seat gripping to the reins, was suddenly now Ram, having moved from the passenger compartment. At Ram, who was

skillfully handling the reins, driving the earth dragon which was in an agitated state, Subaru peeled open his eyes and let his gaze wander around.
Subaru: "What about Julius!?"

Ram: "Even if there are no means for a long range attack, it seemed it would be unhelpful if he were to be the driver. That's why."

At a glance, Ram looked towards the rear at Subaru's call. Lured to that line of sight and looking backwards, Subaru thoughtlessly felt dumbfounded.
Biting the sand, beside the dragon carriage with its wheels roaring, clinging onto one of those ornaments, waving about the grasped knight sword, was the form of Julius, clearing away the approaching Witch Beasts.

Julius: "Burdening Emilia-sama with responsibilities and such, cannot be done either, you see."

Subaru: "Was that directed at me!"

Julius: "That would be??"

Putting a halt to his words there, Julius had his knight sword meet with the claws of the approaching Witch Beasts. The decapitating slash weaved through the gap of those claws, and deeply gorged into the arms of the Courtesan Bears. At the same pace, the dancing tip of the sword pierced through the throats of the Witch Beasts, who let out screams, and as if a flash, it granted death by destroying their brainstem.
That dance, with minimal destruction?, was truly debonair.

Julius: "Wrong."

Successively crushing the Witch Beasts, Julius voiced what remained of his reply to Subaru while dusting away his sword. Subaru made a bitter face at that gesture, tasting reassurance and a sense of defeat.
Simply, having put Emilia in charge of the long range, clearing away the close range was down to Julius.
If that structure were to continue, the concern regarding the dragon carriage could be saved for later.
Rather, the problem was, instead of other affairs, but in this course.

Subaru: "Beako, can you go for it?"

Beatrice: "Subaru too, be careful that you don't run out of gas, I, suppose??!"

Above Patrasche, raising his body, Subaru held the reins with one hand, and the armed Beatrice with the other, and made her small body stand on top of the dragon.
And steadily clasping each other's hands, something throbbed in the interior of Subaru's guts. That something, as if seeming sediment, wielded heat, and slowly streamed from Subaru's body into Beatrice's.

Beatrice: "Minya!"

The crystals of violet materialised with the chant, and aimed for the Witch Beasts? blocking the path ahead of the Ground Dragon's nose. Accurate aiming, momentary advancement, the outcome visible immediately afterwards.
Raising a sound as that of shattering glass, the magical attack directly struck the Witch Beasts, and the crystals fragmented. However, the following moment, the bodies of the Witch Beasts fragmented similarly as well.

Subaru: "Alright, good going, Beako!"

Beatrice: "But, reckless firing cannot be done, in fact! Cautiously saving..... Minya!"

Subaru: "What about the cautiously saving!?"

Beatrice's battle strength, depended upon the mana left within Subaru.
In order to oppose the overwhelmingly? advancing threat, even Beatrice was unable to compromise much. Tasting the seeming sense of loss, as if his soul was being curtailed with every single attack of magic, Subaru, talkative and composed, abated Beatrice's nervousness.
Of course, such consideration was clearly visible to Beatrice.

Meili: "A~h, enough enough! Why did it turn out like thi~s! This, could have been taken awa~y!"

And, the one who had been keeping their silence till now, the final ordnance stood up and trod.
A driver, having been sat beside Ram, Meili, with her eyes tearing up, surveyed the swarm of Courtesan Bears crowding around their surroundings while making a red face. And, she pointed a finger towards the Witch Beasts who would not obey her.

Meili: "I'll give a scolding to the bad, bad animal-san's! Come, Sand Earthworm!"

Subaru: "??No way!?"

Immediately after Meili pouted and declared like a child, the desert that had been turned up thanks to the rise of Courtesan Bears, and with the underneath of that sand being stirred up subsequently, a big frame rushed out.
Swallowed within the vigour of the gigantic beast pushing its whole body out from the underground, the countless Courtesan Bears dragged within were launched up into the sky. Falling on the sand from a high altitude, the Witch Beasts had their bones broken, and the unfortunate Courtesan Bears directly above that humongous mouth, got chewed up.

Thrusting out while tearing apart the desert, the one laying devastation upon the repulsive flower meadow was that Sand Earthworm.
Wafting the stench, raising a strange voice slashing through twilight, the Sand Earthworm determined the Courtesan Bears clinging onto the dragon carriage as its prey, and leaping with that big frame, minced and destroyed them at once.

Meili: "Go~, Sand Earthworm! Crush everyone, everyo~ne!"

Subaru: "Are you serious, hey! Areyouseriousareyouseriousareyouserious, heyheyhey!"

The weight, capable of creating rumbles in the ground, writhed through the sand sea, and the wails of the Courtesan Bears being crushed by the pressure of the humongous frame echoed. Courtesan Bears too, did not possess a petite build whatsoever, but they could not possibly compete with the figures of Sand Earthworms?, whose overall length could be even above ten meters.
The overwhelming masses turned into the outcome of collisions, and the Courtesan Bears got successively turned into corpses.

At the circumstance which was a decisive battle between monsters at this point, Subaru had no words appropriate for it.
Emilia and Beatrice's magic, Julius' swordsmanship, Meili's unusual talent narrowly cleared the way, and the dragon carriage and Patrasche rapidly proceeded through the flower meadow.

Meili: "A~h! The Sand Earthworm i~s!"

Meili's shriek was heard.
Observing it, the Sand Earthworm, possessed by a great number of Courtesan Bears who had their claws gouged into that humongous frame, was shedding large quantities of bodily fluids from its entire body, and collapsed on the ground.
The outer skin of the slimy and soaking wet Sand Earthworm was not something as sturdy as that of snakes or insects. The skin sustaining the soft body easily fell prey to the claws, and a wail of agonizing death reverberated through the sand sea.

Meili: "Next! Nextne~xt! Keep coming fa~st!"

Once a single giant collapsed, Meili clasped her hands with a pallid face. And, lured to that, once again the sand was uplifted, and a different Sand Earthworm made its appearance.
This time there were six at the same time, however, compared to the first one, they were twice as small, and if they were to get enclosed by the swarm of Courtesan Bears, they would get hunted down in the blink of an eye.

Subaru: "At this pace..... ~hk."

They would get out-pushed in the amount of violence. With a sense of terrible hopelessness, Subaru desperately looked at his environs in search of something that could help them break out of this deadlock. And, he noticed.

The watchtower that had been so distant, was close enough to be said that it was right before their eyes.

Subaru: "Just a little bit left! If we can follow up to the watchtower at this pace??"

It was not as if the Witch Beasts would withdraw with this, but it appeared likely that there may lie some fearful power there.

At that moment, it was not as if he had thought something special.

However, if they were to follow up to the watchtower, he felt there may be the strength to break free of the deadlock of this situation.
The spirit of hope was like clinging onto straws. And in reality, that was no mistake.

Subaru: "At this rate??"

However, that strength was not something so convenient.
It was the iron hammer which rained incessantly without bias upon all insolent comrades approaching the Pleiades Watchtower.

"???"

Pushing open his eyes desperately, supporting Beatrice while clinging to Patrasche, Subaru scowled at the watchtower visible in front of him.
Sweat dripping along, the moment he dimly narrowed his eyes, Subaru felt a faint sense of discomfort.

The core of the tower, something was visible there, as if shining.

Subaru: "What's....."

That, he was unable to resume onto the final word.

"????"

??The lustre bolted through the sky, and its aim unchangingly landed a direct hit on Subaru's cranium.
At that moment, everything above the neck of Natsuki Subaru was blown off by the attack, and evaporated with the same unconsciousness.

"????"

There present was nobody who could observe and raise their voice, at the tragic scene of a single moment.
For some reason, those who would have had observed it, and those who would have had screamed at it, had been thoroughly pulled up by the root and branch.

The Earth Ground Dragon which had lost its head, giving rise to a report, collapsed.
Caught up within the vigour of the dragon carriage toppling sideways, the human bodies who had indeed lost their craniums were pulverised, shattered under the pressure, turned into chunks of meat.

Only the pond of blood lay upon the sand, and the parched sand gulped down the blood spilt from the bodies.
Before long, gradually, slowly, the fine particles of sand dragged anything and everything rotting on the sand sea down to their? belly, and concealed them.

The flowers of blood, as if the only visage of their journey, bequeathed the vivid colours.
However, even those flowers of deep red, disappeared within the evermore swallowing sand.

??Here, the party greeted annihilation.

Arc 6 – Chapter 11, "The Audible Tearful Voice"

by admin - Monday, August 26, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/08/26/arc-6-chapter-11-the-audible-tearful-voice/

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Translated By :

- Ringo

Fan Art Source

- Roikumama

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Arc 6 - "Hall of Memories"
Chapter 11 - "The Audible Tearful Voice"

??What had been visible was the lustre, nothing but that.

He remembered, he had tilted his neck upwards.
Also the moment initially afterwards, one section of the tower in front, white lustre, and him narrowing his eyes at that dazzle.
However, what lay in his memories was only till that point. He did not remember anything thereafter.

Neither ache, nor impact, nor terror, he did not feel a single thing.
For Natsuki Subaru, these were all indispensable retinues in the advent of ?Death?.
Neither did he have the ache to make him wail in tears, nor the impact that would scatter his body into a thousand fragments, nor the terror of losing everything.

Otherwise that ?Death?, may have had been a much more kind-hearted ?Death? than what Subaru was normally acquainted with.
Above all, Subaru, who had died and gotten his brain evaporated, did not have any free time whatsoever to think about it, nor could he merely think back to it and absorb himself into it.

As if in the blink of an eye, the moment immediately after he thought his field of vision had been caged within darkness, the lost ?Life? of Natsuki Subaru was resuscitated, regurgitated, and once again, into reality, was abandoned.
??Was abandoned.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

???: "??Tch tch tch."

Subaru: "??~hk."

For a single moment, feeling the weight of gloom upon his five senses, as if clogging up his breath, Subaru opened his eyes.
Discerning the clamorous sound of the whole body of the dragon carriage, his contracting muscles screamed out in pain. The reins he had clenched to so tightly that his nails could eat away into his palm, and the warm temperature insisting their existence, Beatrice.

Subaru: "......Ah?"

Within his faint field of vision, he looked down at the back of Beatrice's head from close proximity.
The violent sweet aroma sliding into his nostrils, was again, different from the one when he had hugged the young girl. Beatrice's scent was like that of freshly? prepared sweet confectioneries, but what wafted in the air now was, as if adhesive toxicity, self-assertive sweetness.

He had memories of this sweetness. It was natural. It was what, just recently, he had continued to smell ad nauseam.
Rather, even if it was only for a limited number of minutes, what was special was that it had been interrupted.

???: "Tch tch tch tch."

Upon Subaru's dusky consciousness, reached a rhythmic sound, as if the clicking of a tongue.
In front of his eyes, was Beatrice with her body stiffened up, and Patrasche who was holding her breath in, watching over what lay ahead of its nose, the dragon carriage carrying Emilia and Rem, and standing ahead of that dragon carriage was a repulsive Witch Beast.

With fine roots stretching across its entire body, the truculent Witch Beast starved of blood?? it was a Courtesan Bear.

For a single moment, unable to express it as a déjà vu, the fresh sense of reality returned to Subaru.
That feeling was not to be doubted. It was ?Return by Death?.

Natsuki Subaru had just now, experiencing ?Death?, returned to this moment in time.

Subaru: "??~hk."

??But, of all things, returning to this moment!?

Rather than the moment of transpiration of?Death?, he cursed at how unfavorable the timing he had

?Returned? by Death? to was.
Inviting the interest of the Witch Beast by the sound of clicking her tongue, the one trying to remove it from the front of the dragon carriage silently, was Meili. That scheme was only barely successful, however, and it fell through in the end.
The Ground Dragon pulling the dragon carriage?? Gyan, was unable to bear the pressure of the Witch Beast, was the reason for it.

"????"

While being aware of that, Subaru instantaneously hesitated in making a judgment.
The state of the vital Gyan was invisible from the rear. But, Julius, who had clenched the reins, would not encourage the unusualness of the Ground Dragon. There simply lay nothing special there for him to turn his eyes towards.
Each one in the dragon carriage was praying for the success of Meili's contact with the Courtesan Bears. However, unfortunately, that was??,

Meili: "Tch tch tch..... tch~."

Meili's voice wielded a faint sense of stress, and her finger pointed towards the right of the dragon carriage. Lured to that movement, the Courtesan Bear slowly stepped its feet ahead in that direction.
An ambience of solace originated within the dragon carriage, and for Beatrice as well. However, Gyan was unable to stand up to the slicing of the thread of tension.

Subaru: "Juli....."

"????~hk!!"

Without being able to make the correct judgement, his call was obstructed by Gyan's roar.
As if going through the recent progression once again, Gyan stomped the ground while letting out a roar, and at that wail and rumbling, the Courtesan Bears' consciousness was awoken at once.

Further exposing their bloodshot eyes, the Courtesan Bears leapt with their drool dripping down. Bluish-white? radiance perforated through those craniums, the flow had been completely the same until the blast.

Emilia: "El Huma!!"

Emilia, standing on top of the dragon carriage, turned over both her hands, as if fluttering in the wind, and created a maelstrom of ice blades in the sky, with movement like that of an elegant dance. The revolving blades of ice successively were fired, with their aim set above ground, as if the encircling notes of a musical saw, the sloth of Courtesan Bears was swallowed within the lethal weapons of ice, as they raised their death wails with their limbs being slashed away.

Subaru: "R-Runrunrunrunrunrun?? ~hk!!"

Pulling the reins and speeding up Patrasche, the dragon carriage, too, moved when Subaru raised his voice.

He glanced sideways at the driver, Ram, who had suddenly appeared?, having exchanged the position of driver with Julius, and at Julius, wielding his knight sword, who launched sword slashes upon the approaching? Courtesan Bears, along with a barrage of kicks, that was what he was able to understand.

??Completely, the same.
Having gone with the flow, Subaru strongly, strongly gritted his molars.

His consciousness being unable to catch up, due to the sudden?Return by Death? would not make for an excuse.
Putting off the impact of having passed away, Subaru's heart covered his remorse.

It could be said that ever since he became aware of ?Return by Death?, up until now, this had been the first time for Subaru that he had wasted ?Return by Death?.
Missing out on the information received through ?Return by Death?, the result was that he was simply heading for another death. However, this was the first time he was tracing the very same situation, despite ?Return by Death?, without even any establishment of a trick of some sort. Subaru's own puzzlement, unrelated to his intentions while thinking that, the rail of destiny was yet the same.

Beatrice: "??Subaru! There is no free time for you to be spacing out, in fact!"

Subaru: "??~hk!"

Lying face down in regret, tightly gripping to the reins was Subaru, and Beatrice struck her back on his chest. Looking ahead at the light impact and voice, he was able to see the truculent Witch Beasts advancing speedily.
At the same time, grasping the small palm reaching out, making Beatrice stand on top of the dragon, thus commenced the counter attack.

Beatrice: "Minya! Minya! One more time, Minya, I suppose!"

Through the palm, the aimless Mana within Subaru's body, was absorbed and resolved into power for Beatrice. The materialised crystals of violet pierced into the bodies of the Witch Beasts obstructing their path, and as the crystals shattered those bodies, Patrasche proceeded while stepping firmly onto the scattered fragments.

Meili: "Held in rese~rve, Sand Earthworm!!"

Hearing Meili’s shout, who had grown desperate, the sand at the corner of his vision spouted up.
The desert covered by Courtesan Bears, making its appearance from further below that, the Sand Earthworm tossed several numbers of the Witch Beasts within its huge jaws, and putting together its humongous frame enough to make one look upwards, proceeded to crush its enemies.

The second great decisive battle of monsters, but Subaru was aware of how unfavourable this was.

Ram: "??Barusu! Run till you die! If you do not want to die!"

At Subaru, who was grilling in formless restlessness, a seemingly reprimanding voice was launched. Controlling the reins at the driver's position, driving the agitated Gyan, was Ram. She? was driving the dragon carriage fully in control with her handling of the reins no inferior than that of Rem but, at this pace, this was no good.

Subaru: "It will be no good if you keep going straight ahead at this rate! Ram, change direction!"

Ram: "??~hk! What are you trying to say? The watchtower is right in front, the surroundings are all territories of the Witch Beasts!"

Subaru: "That is plausible but still, that won't be any good!"

Patrasche lowered her head, and pierced right through the torso of the Courtesan Bear in front. While having the writhing Witch Beast right in front of her nose, the jet black Ground Dragon rushed ahead madly while using the body of the Witch Beast as a shield. The continuous slashes being hammered in tore apart the body of the Witch Beast, and its dancing fallen petals and fresh blood soaked? the sand sea.

Ram: "Barusu, what did you notice! Say it clearly!"

Subaru: "There wouldn't be any problems if I could explain clearly! At any rate, it's a change of course!"

At Ram's words, which had a tone of irritation, all Subaru could do as well was to yell violently back. He himself realised it was a terribly absurd response, but he had no measures other than that.
After all, the current Subaru was unaware of the cause of his death.

His?Return by Death?was unquestionable, and yet, he could not remember the reason for his death. Noticing it, regarding the point of?Return by Death?, this time it was close to how it felt when he had met?Death?for the first time in the Roswaal mansion.
From the point of confirming the cause of death, and eliminating that problem.

Subaru: "The time for that, is nowhere here!!"

Having been caught up by the Witch Beasts, he had fallen prey to those slashes. Just as how the bar's bartender had warned, had he become the cruel bait of having his intestines slurped on. Otherwise, inadvertently falling from Patrasche, he may have unfortunately fractured his neck. It was a thought really, truly difficult but, he may have broken down due to Beatrice utilising his mana excessively, that was not impossible either.

Subaru: "Whichever it may be, the memories haven't cleanly, suddenly stopped till now."

Even if his guts were cleaved open, even if he was put down in ice, even if his head was crushed by a morningstar, even if his whole body was devoured greedily by rabbits, even if he was eaten away by entangling with an absurd Authority, Subaru did ?Return by Death?.
And regardless of what the cause of death may be, eliminating and defeating what had occured right

before his own ?Death? which was stalemating him, it had been used as a method for that.

That fragile string of fate, was nowhere visible this time.
And the time to search for that fine string, was not bestowed upon Subaru and the others.

??This was simply, the worst entrapment of ?Return by Death?.

In the scenario where he possibly passed away by the same method, it would be a completely fumbling restart.
Before that happened??,

Subaru: "Move from here! Whatever you do, don't get close to the tower!"

Ram: "Again, why so....."

Subaru: "The tower will shine! Probably?, that light is dangerous!"

Ram: "Hu~h??!?"

In the situation where they had been nothing but cornered, even Ram did not have the time to varnish the blades of her words with poison. While clashing with the voice possessing a frank tone of repudiation, Subaru pulled the reins and conveyed that to Patrasche.
To not go straight ahead, but divert their purpose at any rate.

Subaru: "The tower may be visible, right in front but.....!"

Right in the middle of the advancement of the Courtesan Bears in great numbers in the sand sea, the watchtower right in front of their eyes was clearly getting closer. However, what awaited them if they truly got close to it was only the scorch of before.
For that to not happen, what Subaru had to choose was??,

Subaru: "Run backwards! It would be better to pass through ?Sand Time? one more time! Let’s go back to that earlier sand dune!"

Ram: "What nonsense have you been....."

Emilia: "Ram! Do as Subaru says!"

At the determination where it could not be helped but think he had lost his mind, Ram raised a voice of repudiation, which Emilia detained. While she purged the Witch Beasts with countless ice shards, she nodded at Subaru.

Emilia: "Because there's no way Subaru would say something ?weird without giving thought to it!"

Ram: "Barusu ordinarily lives by wetting his pants with thoughtless words and nonsense."

Emilia: "Because there's no way Subaru would say something weird without giving thought to it in a dangerous situation!"

Subaru: "Thank you for going out of your way and correcting it!!"

Whether he should lament being treated as a young wolf in sheep's clothing, or be delighted that he was a man who could be relied upon in times of a pinch.
Keeping both introspection and conceit for later, Patrasche, moving according to Subaru's intentions, thrust her feet on the sandy soil and suddenly turned round. Her tail cutting through the air mowed down the abdomen of the Witch Beast, and kicking down one of the Courtesan Bears with her leg, she ran backwards.

Ram: "??~hk! The two of you on the top and side! Make sure you don't fall off!!"

Seeing their sudden turning around, Ram, too, had Gyan turn around by skillfully handling the reins. Naturally, the dragon carriage, having to eat the centrifugal force at that moment, inclined greatly and turned sideways but??,

Julius: "Emilia-sama! The foothold!"

Emilia: "Eh? Ah, is that so! Yes!"

Thrusting his sword fiercely into the body of the vehicle and supporting? his body, Julius brought aid to Emilia's attention to the inclining dragon carriage. Emilia rounded her eyes at those words, and magical power headed instantaneously towards directly underneath of the dragon carriage. As if assisting the wheel that had tilted due to the inclination, a slope of ice was born, and the dragon carriage, as if painting a semi-circle, rushed and evaded toppling sideways.
Furthermore, at the same pace, without killing off the vigour, commenced the backward dash which followed Patrasche.

??Immediately afterward.

Subaru: "Wha..... ~hk!?"

The moment following the commencement of the backward dash, echoed a metallic shrill as if slashing one’seardrums.
Thoughtlessly shrugging his shoulders was Subaru. From the rear, a sudden gale was born.

Subaru: "The one right now was..... eh, heyheyheyhey!"

Beatrice: "What, I suppose..... huh!?"

Sensing the enigma arise behind, Subaru and Beatrice, turning back at the same time, expressed astonishment.

On top of the dragon carriage racing immediately behind them, Emilia and Julius, too, widened their eyes.

Meili: "Sand Earthworm, -chan is..... ~hk."

Leaning forward her body on the driver's seat, with her throat trembling in astonishment, was Meili.
In front of her eyes, in that shape, a visage behind the dragon carriage, as if concealing it, with the large build of the Sand Earthworm being thrown up. With the frame of a span over ten meters, with thickness of body such that two men may not be able to rotate it with their arms. Protruding its head above the ground, the form lording over its prey seemed as if it was the ruler of the sand sea.

The body of that Sand Earthworm, receiving the direct hit of that something, was blown off into fragments.
That slimy body skin suffered a thousand pierces, and the thick body of great length was splendidly divided into two. The body that had lost its head toppled sideways, and the head, having lost its support, slowly, slowly, headed towards them, trickling??.

Subaru: "Get aside, dodge i~i~i~t??!!"

The fallen head of the Sand Earthworm had excess mass which could crush the dragon carriage under its pressure.
With the death agony of the Witch Beasts crushed under the pressure of the body that had, just now, fallen behind, Subaru and Ram subsequently transmitted instructions to the ground dragons, overbearingly averted their routes and escaped the course of the Sand Earthworm's direct hit.

"????~hk."

Raising a shrill tearful voice, the Sand Earthworm’s head fell onto the sand sea with great vigour.
The sand whirled up, the bones of the Courtesan Bears, injured while escaping, crumbled into fragments and fell and their limbs, having been caught up in the impact, were blown off. At the same pace, the head of the Sand Earthworm bounced, while entangling with the inevitable future of the Witch Beasts, tumbled, and finally suffered countless slashes, quickly turning into fragments of flesh.

Subaru: "Danger, danger, ous, ous!"

Beatrice: "Subaru, this was a mistake, in fact!"

He’d felt relieved for evading the crisis of the moment but, instantaneously, Beatrice rejected that relief.
Looking at the young girl at his chest wondering what had happened, she cleared away the fallen, fluttering petals with a troubled expression, and surveyed the rear,

Beatrice: "From the one just now, the dragon carriage on the other side has gone astray, I suppose! There is only Betty and you!"

Subaru: "What did you say!?"

Pursuing her gaze in panic, Subaru confirmed the absence of the figure of the dragon carriage in the

surroundings?.
Only the distant radiance of bluish-white mana and roars of Witch Beasts, furthermore, discovering a place slightly exposed to the sandy gale, he was able to understand from his view through the immense distance, the hard fight being put up by Emilia and their new servant, Meili.

However, even if they tried to meet up with the other side, the space between them was overflowing with a countless number of Courtesan Bears. And for Subaru and the rest, with diminished number of moves, there were no indications that the fierce attack of the Witch Beasts had been weakened.

Subaru: "Simply, half the war potential! The number of enemies are double!"

Beatrice: "Compared to earlier, it has increased to four times, I suppose!"

Brandishing the claws, at the face of the Courtesan Bears attacking, the cusp of the whip let out a roar. The striking impact, fortunately, crushed the eyes of the Witch Beast and breaking through the one trembling in violent pain, Patrasche dashed once again. However, that course of direction had a different direction than that of the dragon carriage of Emilia and the others.

Subaru: "Patrasche! Not this way....."

Beatrice: "It is this Ground Dragon's own judgement to be left alive, in fact. Rather than Subaru or Betty, leaving it to its instincts would be better, I suppose!"

Interrupting Subaru's outcry, Beatrice kicked and dispersed away the Witch Beasts standing in their way with magic. Patrasche marked the points where the tight besiegement and broke through them, risking her own life for protecting the two on its back.

Subaru: "Shit! This again..... this shape again! What am I doing!"

Swinging the whip, he struck the faces of the Witch Beasts trying to get closer. However, with this, he would not be able to stop the power of the Witch Beasts, having an expression of having lost reason. Inflicting fatal wounds with the sabre, he sharpened their dynamism with magic. ??The power Subaru chose, even with any of those, it would not be even remotely attainable. All craftiness, would get crushed under the pressure of overwhelming power.

Doing what he could do, augmenting whatever he had the ability to do, it had become slightly easier, is what he had thought, and yet.
The mere superficial cleverness of Natsuki Subaru, was fate only going to exhale a laughing sigh at it and trample upon and crush it.

Subaru: "I had somehow managed better at the time of that shitty bastard Regulus.....!"

Beatrice: "There is no time for such deep thinking, in fact! Are there any ways to....."

Subaru: "Beako, Murak on Patrasche! Lighten her weight, then we can cross over the swarm!”

Beatrice: "??! Murak!"

Accepting Subaru's directions, Beatrice used ?Murak? on Patrasche?? a magic that abateds the effect of gravity, and the speed at which they ran further accelerated. Stepping and racing ahead, the distance doubled, and the leaping Patrasche used the Witch Beasts as a place to stand on, and tried to withdraw from the writhing flower meadow.
But??,

Subaru: "The li??!?"

In close proximity to his eyes appeared a white purge, and the moment he turned his voice inside out, ?That? dashed through the sky.
The white purge above ground ran through, and the sand sea was blown off by the terrific force. Facing the swift bolt of the purge, the bodies of the Witch Beasts were torn apart, spouting out blood, as they leapt, leapt, leapt.
And that aftermath swooped down upon Patrasche as well, agitated by the wind pressure of ?That? which was closing on the large build of the ground dragon, and got easily flipped.

Subaru: "Beatrice! Hold tight!!"

Beatrice: "Subaru too, make sure you're hugging firmly, I suppose!!"

Patrasche: "????~hk!"

Patrasche neighed, and Subaru hugged and clung to Beatrice's body.
Spinning and revolving in the air, the large build of Patrasche pranced overhead of the Courtesan Bears.
As if pursuing that Patrasche, the corona continuously downpoured incessantly.
The sand was burst open, the Witch Beasts who got dragged into it and had to receive it were burst open, and the appearing and quickly disappearing Patrasche raised an echo of distress.

Subaru: "O~a~a~a~a~a~h??!?"

In the midst of the attack, the ?Divine Protection of Wind Evasion? failed, and Subaru tasted that impact altogether.
Grasping the reins and Beatrice, he had firmly interposed both his feet in Patrasche's saddle but, rubbed by the force, with his body being struck hard in parts here and there, he barely managed to grasp to his consciousness.
However, regardless of even that state, the pursuit of the claws of the Courtesan Bears under his eyes continued to shoot.

Swallowed in the terrific attack, he floundered without being thrown off. Now, if he were to fall, no way would he be saved. What barely connected his life, was precisely because he had not given up.

Subaru: "But, at this rate??"

Beatrice: "Not good, in fact..... ~hk!"

Subaru: "??Patrasche!?"

With the remarkably strong impact, Patrasche's roar of anguish pulled back her tall tail.
Looking at it, at the side of Patrasche, who was flipping around lightly through the effect of Murak, had been exposed to the claws of the Courtesan Bears and had been slashed. With the scars of the claws etched into the jet black scales, painful to even look at, from the mouth of the deep gash flowing and spilling was fresh blood.

Subaru: "??~hk, kh, ah!?"

Tumbling down with the same pace due to that force, Patrasche? suddenly fell on top of the desert. At the same time, Subaru and the others were thrown onto the sandy soil as well, and were left behind on the feeding ground of the Courtesan Bears crowding their surroundings.
Shaking his head, his body rose. While continuing to hold Beatrice's hand. She, too, dusted off the hem of her dress and stood up, and quickly observed the surroundings with no negligence in her eyes. However, their advantage was undeniable.

Subaru: "You bastards! Don't you dare lay a single finger on Patrasche!"

Beatrice: "Minya!"

Wounded, Patrasche groaned in agony, as magic pierced through the Witch Beasts flooding towards it.
Subaru pulled Beatrice's hand and rushed over to Patrasche, and kneeling down, touched the wound.
The claws had not reached her intestines but, if she pushed herself, her guts might brim out. She could not be allowed to push herself. He also needed time to heal it.

Subaru: "Beatrice! Shamak! Deceive the perceptibility of the Witch Beasts around!"

Beatrice: "Now!? Even if that's done, it'll do nothing but buy time, in fact! On top of that....."

Subaru: "That time is needed for now! Hurry!"

Bending their stance with bloodshot eyes, the Witch Beasts awaited for a gap to swoop in.
Coping with them would be impossible if they assailed from all directions. The Witch Beasts eventually became impertinent, and what would be their cue depended on their patience. That could perhaps, not be expected.

Beatrice: "??~hk! El Shamak!"

Beatrice joined both of her hands together, and something entirely fell out of Subaru's interior.
It rolled towards the whirlpool within the hand of the girl beside, becoming quiet power it swept through

the sand sea, and with Subaru and the rest as the center, tens of meters in its radius, were wrapped up in black mist.

With the foundation of Shadow Magic, this was the invocation of Shamak.

Producing discord in perception, the expanse of Shamak, brought the Courtesan Bears' conduct to a standstill. Conception vanished beyond understanding, and even the instinct to chase after prey gets forgotten.
Of course, it did not show effect on Subaru and the others, who had executed it. However, it did not last long.

Beatrice: "If the ones beyond the scope of efficacy get in, it would eventually be laid to waste, I suppose. Before that, escape along with that Ground Dragon!"

Subaru: "I know! The effect of Murak is still left, right? If that's so then I'll carry Patrasche on my shoulders, at any rate, continuously fire Shamak and joining up with the dragon carriage on the other side is what we should??"

Withdrawing from the gambling room, judging to prioritize that, he extended his hands to Patrasche. Normally its large frame would weigh several hundred kilos, but in the interval it was adhering to Beatrice's Murak, that body, like a feather?? would be an exaggeration, it had become light. Not enough to be able to shoulder it and run.
Her yellow eyes were intently looking at Subaru. The emotions passing by in those eyes were complex, eloquence such that nobody could ever imagine being a Ground Dragon's expression.

Those eyes, were telling them. *??Please leave*.

Beatrice: "??Subaru!"

Immediately after his eyes were robbed by the glint in Patrasche's eyes, Beatrice raised a sharp voice. She, rushing over, aimed for Subaru's palm, the surging magical power took form of a shield, and right next to Subaru arrived a magical wall of violet?? and it, averted the fired white lustre.

Subaru: "Gho~ah!?"

Reverberated the sharp sound as if an exchange of blows of steel, and Subaru's body, receiving the impact, flew backwards. Tumbling over and falling with limbs stretched out on top of the sand, the violently coughing Subaru noticed after trying to lift his body up.
Blood was dripping out of his right side, which had suffered the impact, and that it had his right leg thickly soaking.

Subaru: "What did I, receive.....?"

Grasping the side overflowing with blood, exhaled Subaru reflexively with one of knees knelt down. At that moment, the impact which had ransacked his internal organs gives rise to vomiting, and gastric juices and blood ceaselessly gushed forth out of the edge of his mouth.

Air exited out of his fissured abdomen, and a goofy sound like that of fart leaked out along with the foaming blood.

Subaru: "Ah, hf....."

Beatrice: "??baru! Subaru!"

As he exhaled hoarsely, his field of vision simultaneously inclined right beside him.
Toppling sideways, he understood he had lost the ability to move his body. He had understood, but nothing more than that could he continue. The wound on his side heated up, and there lay the pain as if his body was melting away.
Desperately, he heard the voice calling for his self.

Beatrice: "Subaru! Subaru, don't I suppose! Dying is..... don't, don't die..... don't leave Betty, alone..... ~hk! Sto~p..... ~hk."

His shoulder was being shook. At the audible tearful voice, he wanted to stretch his hand out, but he could not move.
His brain tissues were burning, he became unable to remember the young girl in front of his eyes.
An adorable face, but it was crying, she shouldn't make a crying face, is what he thought.

"????"

On the other side of that, a large, large lizard lay collapsed.
Black, it was a lizard with a beautiful appearance. In that body, a white long and narrow something of an unknown source, unknown origin was lunging through, with no movement whatsoever, it was clearly dead.

Perhaps, his ownself had received the same thing, is what he thought.

???: "Don't leave Betty behi~nd, plea..... ~hk!"

Sobbing, the young girl desperately hugged Subaru's body.
With that petite frame, Subaru's body, who had lost his strength, would be too heavy.
Tears streamed down her cheeks. He wanted to at least wipe away those tears.
He searched for a part that was still mobile in his body, but he was unable to find anything. That is why, he hauled something mobile from someplace else, not in his body.

Subaru: "??~hk."

???: "Subaru?"

Invisible to the eyes, the ?Hand? only his self could see, wiped the tears on her cheeks.
Black fingers caressed her teardrops, and the girl looked at him, making an expression as if she had

noticed something. The strength to smile and reassure her, even that, he did not possess.

???: "Suba??"

For a single moment, the young girl tried to say something.
However that was, interrupted by the white purge that came flying behind her from a distance.

"-???"

The second attack, lunged through Subaru's chest.
Slowly turning his gaze towards that, it had perforated through the back of the young girl, furthermore, piercing through Subaru's chest, it came out from behind.

???: "Ah."

Leaving behind a dusky sigh, the form of the young girl, hugging Subaru, disappeared.
As if she did not belong to this realm, the form of the young girl was rendered invisible.

Losing support, Subaru collapsed on the spot. He could not move. He did not have the reason to move.

Subaru: "Kh, oh."

His weakly moving fingers scratched the sand, that was all.

Losing its caster, the black fog which was interposing the environs and space, was dispersed by the breeze.
Divulging from the magic that deceived perception, all what remained was only the corpse of a Ground Dragon and a young boy on the verge of death. The flock sloth of Witch Beasts slurped on their tongues, and advanced closer to that prey.

"????"

His breath stopped, the focus of his eyes blurred.
Excessive blood loss, was not how it felt. Something, which felt fatal, poured upon him.

He was rendered unable to understand, anything.
In close proximity to him, the Courtesan Bears, with their claws sharpened right overhead, he could hear their roars.

Those claws had swung down, and his cranium had been crushed.
Or instead, now, on the edge of his field of vision, which was on the verge of vanishing, ?That?, which had faintly shined, was the one to blame.

Despite not knowing which one of the two was the reason, Natsuki Subaru’s life came to an end.

Arc 6 – Chapter 14, “Faith Built atop the Sand”

by admin - Tuesday, June 18, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/06/18/arc-6-chapter-14-faith-built-atop-the-sand/

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Translated By :

- Ice

Contributions By:

- Erifuru

Proofread By :

- Graced
- Azeem

Fan Art Source

- Rekurororo

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The warmth coming off from Ram’s palm contrasted with the scorn of the cold sand. Both of those were the realities which Natsuki Subaru was faced with now; that was the?present?that he should accept.

Subaru?……Ram.?

Ram:?What??

Subaru:?Your fingers sure do feel nice and smooth…..It’s as?? bbubeeeeh!?

Ram:?This Barusu sure pushes his luck, doesn’t he??

Subaru:?Will you ever stop using people’s nicknames as curses!??

Subaru voiced out his complaints with tears in his eyes after having had his cheeks slapped in recompense for his careless remark. However, Ram, who held a lantern in her hand, did not reply to him. Instead, she hurriedly moved off, keeping her distance away from him.

It was something cold from her, even though up until now, she had shown him a kindness which was seldom seen. ??Though, if things stayed like this, since Subaru would be unable to even have an awkward conversation about it. Part of his true intention had been to go back to how they usually interacted.

Subaru:?Right here, we're……?

Ram:?It's pitch black absolutely everywhere. You remember the crevices opening up in the sand sea, and our dragon carriages being swallowed up by them, I presume? I don't want to have to explain more than that.?

Subaru:?Nono, I'm fine with hearing just that. I get it.?

Ram:?……Okay?

Subaru received an outline of the current situation from Ram as he took a deep breath. He understood that he had?Returned by Death?and that his?Returned by Death?point had been changed already.

??Subaru had met?death?three times in these sand dunes with this.

Twice he had been killed above-ground by the flashes of light, which had likely been fired from the Watchtower. However, this time, this third time was far different to the other two. He had died from being attacked by a monster at the underground.

He could barely keep his body from shaking as he recalled the manner of his death that he'd experienced just a minute ago.

Subaru:?I never thought I'd die like that……?

The manner in which Subaru had died now was what you would call a fiery death. His whole body had been scorched by crimson flames, and he had been burnt to death still without understanding everything that was going on. It was hard to forget that his whole body had been licked by red-hot tongues, and that every part of him had melted rather than burnt.

He knew from knowledge that the human body was a lump of fat. However, was it really something that melted away so easily and runnily like that? That his burnt remains were tragic, was something which he would indeed agree with.

Ram:?Barusu, have you calmed down yet? If you've settled down, we need to talk.?

Subaru:?Ah, aah. Yeah, I'm okay…...Is it just me and you here??

Ram:?If that was the case, Barusu, I would be ditching you and running away for my own safety. Since I

haven't…...well you understand what that means, don't you??

Subaru:?Did you just show a Part Two to the kindness you seldom show??

Ram:?You sure do say a lot of disrespectful things towards the bundle of love and compassion which is me, don't you? ??She came back whilst you were spouting out nonsense.?

Looking to his left at the lantern?? and then looking at where it was pointing from Ram's right, he saw the glow of a lamplight approaching from deeper within the cave. The lantern was swaying back and forth at around head-height; and just as he expected, the source of light was held by Anastasia who was riding Patrasche.

Anastasia:?Ram-san, Natsuki-kun, 't seems yer conversation's finished, right??

Subaru:?……Anastasia, Patrasche, is that you??

Anastasia, who was riding on Patrasche, spoke out the same greeting as she had before as she flashed him a grim. And, to those words, Ram pinched the hem of her skirt like before and bowed.

Ram:?Thank you for your thoughtfulness, Anastasia-sama. May I ask, what do the surroundings look like??

Anastasia:?I jus' went ta look a lil' further inside, but I couldn' find any of the other young'ens. It's jus' the three of us who were hurled down aroun' here…… 'n this young'en lookin' one.?

Ram:?I see.?

Anastasia:?Ya gotta keep yer chin up, though mayhaps that in itself ain't gonna be of any use ta us.?

Ram:?Thank you for your concern. Indeed, I understand.... I'll make sure to do so.?

Anastasia voiced her apprehensions from dragonback. To which, Ram replied in the likeness of how she would usually speak, different to how she spoke to Subaru. Anastasia's face was clearly visible this time since Ram was the one holding the lantern.

Everything Anastasia had said was exactly the same as last time. She had come to tell them the reality of the situation, namely that the others were lost and scattered about with Rem.

(TL Note: In the Japanese it certainly is, but I may have translated things differently to Chapter 13 since that Chapter had a different translator.)

Subaru:?So for now, the only ones that were able to join up is just us four? ….Pretty damn awful that we have no fighting strength.?

Anastasia:?We ain't as scattered as we thought, eh, Natsuki-kun? What special good luck charm did ya even get Ram-san to cast us??

Ram:?Unfortunately, nothing would happen even if it has to decide between just me and Barusu. Only Barusu would end up dead when he would be found the next day.?

Subaru:?What do you mean? Do you mean like the werewolf in a game of werewolf? Scary.?

Their comments were not meant as a show of bravado, but rather, Anastasia and Ram exchanged words in such as way as to calm Subaru, who had just woken up. Though his grasp of the situation was quick since it was the second time around, they were still in a place where it paid dividends in getting a move on immediately, even now.

Subaru:?Ram, just to make sure, you don't know where Rem is using your synthesia, right??

Ram:?That's correct, it's no use. Since I feel the link, I have no doubt that at least she's alive….. But, I don't know any more than that. All we can do is pray that she's not alone.?

Subaru:?Given that my everyday deeds are tied to fortune and misfortune, Rem's deeds will just be good ones, make no mistake in that...… I absolutely believe in her safety.?

If this theory was right, it was entirely because of his own deeds that he was going through an absurd amount of suffering and death. He wanted to go and close his eyes to that.

Subaru?On top of that……?

Subaru absolutely couldn't let Ram and Anastasia know; that was his greatest anxiety. It seemed like everyone he wanted to save had been scattered away from him thanks to his?Return by Death?point having been updated. It was just like when he couldn't use his?Return by Death?to get Rem's name back.

What if tragedy had struck his companions due to his?Return by Death?updating now?

Subaru:?I absolutely won't allow that…..!?

For those who weren't here. Emilia, Beatrice, Julius, Meili. And Rem. He prayed that nothing disastrous had happened to them. Natsuki Subaru prayed that they weren't hurt, even if they weren't in his reach.

Ram:?Barusu. ??Aren't you connected with Beatrice-sama??

Subaru:?I've tried, but it's no good. As long as there's a path between us, Beako herself should be able to sense me….. But even if I try to call her, the connection is pretty weak.?

Anastasia:?Might be due to the miasma. Even spirits can't keep their breath held long, even my Echidna's grumblin' every so often…...It was jus' Emilia-san who was fine ta it.?

Subaru:?I guess it was the same for you as well, eh, Beako??

Beatrice, stout-hearted as she was, probably wouldn't let out any complaints even if she was in a bad

state. Were that to happen, Subaru would have absolutely noticed it. Beatrice being in a bad state would influence everyone else's safety as well. When they safely reunited, he'd have to tell her off.

Subaru:?That's why, for that too, we need to rejoin with the other guys. ??Let's go deeper into the cave!?

It was likely that they'd come across the monster which had burned him once again if they went towards its depths.

But, even so, there was no other way but to go forward.

So to reunite with his precious companions as well, there was no other way but to go forward.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Anastasia:?Yer the only one walkin' Natsuki-kun, ain't yer footin' gettin' worse??

Subaru:?I'm fine. Do take care though since Patrasche won't welcome anyone with open arms except me. Every time, it seems like she's about to bite off one of Beako's drill curls.?

Anastasia:?Ahahaha, what a great joke. Patrasche-chan is a good girl, she wouldn' do that. Ain't that right??

Patrasche:??????

Patrasche gave a quick grunt at Subaru, who was leading them with his lantern whilst they made their way deeper into the cave. Her grunt was the sort she made when she had no complaints.

Patrasche was still a hard-worker, even in spite of her carrying other people who weren't Subaru, since she knew it was an emergency. As expected, she was a woman worthy of being part of the Emilia Camp.

Having placed Ram and Anastasia on Patrasche, Subaru was the only who traversed the maze of sand on foot. They followed the same way as last time, with the four of them moving forward towards the depths of the cave. They may have left dozens of minutes earlier than last time, but since he didn't know when that monster would appear down here, it'd all be down to nothing more than a margin of error.

Subaru:?Its lair is way over there…..Maybe it's its feeding ground, or its playground…..?

What couldn't be called "Feed" was the sheer amount of burnt corpses which had littered that area. The charred corpse which Subaru had accidentally grabbed had probably been an animal's?? From its shape it seemed like he'd grabbed the hind-leg of a four-legged creature, but there weren't any indications that it had been eaten. The amount of charred corpses over there had been countless.

He could even have appreciated its cuisine as being *Simply Gourmet Witchbeast* if it was using fire to just prepare its meal. However, it merely burnt its prey and left their corpses behind untouched. That monster

possessed a cruel nature that delighted itself in burning its prey to death; it made sense that it had a way to capture it and a place to burn it.

It was a grotesque figure, munitioned with abnormal amounts of heat. Subaru also feared the Witchbeast itself which existed with a wrong form as a living creature, at the same time as he recalled the moment he had burned to death.

Anastasia:?……From what I can see, we should still be in the san' dunes aroun' here, but maybe underneath it. What'dya think, Natsuki-kun??

Subaru:??????

Anastasia:?Natsuki-kun??

Subaru:?Eh? Ah? Aah, that's right. I think so too.?

Ram:?Did you actually hear what she said? You're being rude if you think that response adequate.?

Ram swiftly exposed Subaru's mindless agreement. However, Subaru hastily shook his hands and head in denial.

Subaru:?No way, I heard everything properly. And what's more is that I'm sticking with my stance of absolute agreement.?

Ram:?Really, when you take off your bra when you go to bed, your breasts don't sag an inch, is that what you're saying? You're affirming it? Disgusting.?

(TL Note: Roughly in Japanese, that's what Ram is saying, she's basically calling Subaru a bullshitter with this colourful anecdote.)

Subaru:?Isn't the way you're bringing that up to me disgusting!? Or rather, it's not like what she's saying, don't you agree with me!??

Subaru, in a state of disbelief, turned towards Anastasia for help. She gave him a wry smile, and then spoke out saying,?You shouldn' worry?

Anastasia:?Ram-san was messin' about jus' now. I don' think it's proper to speak like this in this terrible situation.?

Subaru:?Y-yeah? Yeah, that's right. I was in a hurry. And in the first place, neither Ram or Anastasia's breasts would sag, nor do they have enough to even notice…..?

Anastasia:?Whoopsy, sorry Natsuki-kun. My hand slipped.?

Subaru:?Why the past tense, and why so hot!??

Her lantern was pressed to the nape of his neck, and the heat coming off from its Magical Ore burnt his neck. With the sensation of his fiery death resuscitated within him, he shuddered and rolled down onto the cold sand, shouting and screaming as he relieved himself from the pain. And as he did so, still collapsed with the back of his body lying on top of the sand, he glared at the two of them on dragon-back.

Subaru:?I-isn't that cruel doing that all of a sudden? I would have liked at least a chance to explain.?

Anastasia:?You can't go criticisin' people's physical characteristics 'n then showing contempt for 'em. You absolutely can't do that unless yer masochistic. If this was Kararagi, yer'd lose all yer reputation 'n become broke. Don't ya agree, Ram-san??

Ram:?I don't mind. Besides, Rem's are bigger, so we keep the balance between us. It's no issue for me.?

If he went and spoke out on their beautiful sisterly love which complemented each other, he'd once again provoke their ire. Thus, he kept quiet. Subaru grimaced, his nape tingled in slight pain. He stood up and coughed, brushing away sand.

Subaru:?Anyways, let's get down to business. We're underground here, that's what you said right??

Anastasia:?What, y'actually heard me? That's right, I think so. The reason why is 'cause the air is heavier than above ground, 'n the temperature is lower. Don't ya agree??

Ram:?Underneath the sand dunes…. We'll have to pray that this isn't a Sandworms' burrow.?

Subaru:?……It could also be worse than that.?

Anastasia pulled her robe in tighter, appealing to the chill, a gesture which Ram followed suit in. Subaru subtly weaved in the reality of the situation, while he agreed with their opinions.

Of course, even if there were Sandworms here, it would be a herculean task to beat them back with the meagre fighting strength they had available amongst them. Even so, Sandworms were still better as they somewhat had a strategy to deal with them.

That Witchbeast?? which for now he'd call a *Centaur* for convenience, was something which Subaru had no idea of how to deal with in battle. He had come across it and been immediately burnt on the spot.

He was sure he'd meet the same manner of death, if he bumped into it like last time.

Subaru:?Practically, it's likely we'll come across Witchbeasts other than the Sandworms. Even though they're Witchbeasts which roam these sand dunes, I think it's a good idea if we came up with a plan for them for later.?

Ram:?Yes…… Nonetheless, I can only say that I just know what I heard Meili speaking about on the way here. And other than that, perhaps how a typical Witchbeast lives.?

Anastasia:?The Witchbeasts of the Augria Sand Dunes are far more aggressive due ta the effects of the miasma, and there are also Witchbeasts that shouldn' be livin' here in the first place. Even so, knowin' is better than not knowin'.?

When Subaru put out his suggestion, Ram and Anastasia both nodded in agreement. As a result, they talked about the Witchbeasts whilst they continued their search forward into the depths of the cave.

Ram:?Sandworms stand out due to their stench and ugliness, but in contrast to their aggressive nature, their bodies aren't that strong. Even if their bodies are large, my magic can kill them easily…If anything, your whip may actually be useful, Barusu.?
Subaru:?Seriously? My whip would damage them??
Anastasia:?It's said they tend ta be cowardly and if they feel pain it'd seem like they'd back away. It'd depen' on the type of pain they'd feel, but at least the chance ain't zero, wouldn't ya think??

Ram:?I don't want to come across a Banassi, if possible.?
Subaru:?Is that a vicious Witchbeast despite it having the name of a rodent??
Anastasia:?Nah, it ain't got any fighting strength. Buut, it fights dirty. It puffs itself up until its body goes *Kapow*, blowin' up anyone near it. An' with that, its blood 'n guts will shower its enemy. ?
Subaru:?……Then, is its blood poisonous or something??
Ram:?It's not like that. It's just pestering…..But, once one of them does that and their stench pours out, other Banassi flock over and do the same thing. You end up becoming smeared in blood.?
Subaru:?Scary!?

(TL Note: ?? is the Kanji for "Banassi" which is a term used for Opossums. I am guessing Tappei gave these Kanji special Furigana when they were introduced, as that's how it's written on the Wikia. But that is why Subaru mentions the word rodent.)

As expected, there were a lot of Witchbeasts which were unfamiliar to him, and there were many things which made him want to frown when listening to their composition. After they finished their discussion on those Witchbeasts, Subaru felt like the time had come, and chose the topic.

Subaru:?So, the next one is about a Witchbeast I saw in the distance back at the sand dunes…. Do you know about a Witchbeast which has a human body attached to the body of a horse that spouts flames from its back??

Ram & Anastasia??????

Subaru told them about the Centaur, keeping in tune with the discussion which they'd had so far regarding the mode of life of Witchbeasts. It was a distinct Witchbeast. Even if this Witchbeast was one of the more aggressive varieties which were native to these sand dunes, if there was an origin to it, he should be able to make a breakthrough on it. It'd be ideal if there were weak points to it which were easy to understand, such as being weak to water due to its fire??.

Anastasia:?……Sorry, but I ain't got a clue. What about ya, Ram-san??

Ram:?I'm sorry as well, but this Witchbeast invites only revulsion even in just listening to this. ?

Subaru:?You both don’t know, huh…..?

However, he only got those answers from both of them. It seemed that neither of them had any knowledge of the Centaur or a different kind of them with those abnormal characteristics.

But, that was the Witchbeast they’d likely first come across. He didn’t want to give up on finding a breakthrough with only the answers he’d received now.

Subaru:?You really don’t know? Like, part of Patrasche’s head becoming a human body, and two arms sticking out from there. And a mouth stretching vertically across part of its body. And finally, a horn growing from its neck of its human body instead of a head…..?

Anastasia:?Eeeh…. What the hell. That’s soo gross….?

Ram:?Honestly, that’s so off-putting.?

The more details he put into his explanation, the more he put off the women. Seeing even Patrasche’s face looking disgusted after she received Subaru’s semblance of an explanation, Subaru dropped his shoulders in defeat. It genuinely seemed like they all had no clue about it.

Ram:?If you happened to catch a glimpse of a Witchbeast like that in the first place, you needed to report it back then. Why did you let such a seemingly dangerous Witchbeast go by??

Subaru:?No, that’s not…. It’s because it was nighttime. Maybe it was because Meili’s Divine Protection was active, so I just saw it in the distance not approaching us from all the way over there. It was like, when you were being treated by Emilia-tan inside of the dragon carriage.?

Ram:?Disgusting.?

Subaru:?So that’s all you’re gonna be saying??

Subaru was discouraged by the lack of a response as he fumbled around for a suitable excuse. With it ending up like this, they had no means capable of striking first against the Centaur. All he could do was search for a plan to avoid meeting the real thing whilst he spelled out its danger in anticipation.

Subaru:?For now I’ll call it a Centaur, but…. I reckon it’s a really dangerous thing. A mane grew from the back of its human body, and it was burning like fire. It had quite a tenacious look to it…. I don’t know how since it didn’t have a face, but that’s the feeling it gave off, so it’s likely that if we don’t take care, it’ll come and chase us.?

Ram:?Then why did you ignore it? Do you have a death wish??

Subaru:?I think there were misleading words in the explanation right now as well.?

He couldn’t deny that his explanation had become fairly absurd in wanting to let them know of the danger. However, by telling them this as a precaution, the girls would likely be able to keep themselves

on guard for danger in regards to an encounter with an actual Centaur.

That's all he had managed. He hadn't managed to tell them about when he had really met the Centaur, and they had no counter-measures against it. Subaru thought about a more fundamental approach as well. That was??

Anastasia:?Natsuki-kun, Ram-san. ??Can ya stop the chatter for just a mo'??

Anastasia said that, and motioned for Patrasche to stop. The clever Earth Dragon had stopped before she had been told to, but she drooped her head as if she understood what Anastasia meant. And then, Anastasia held out her lantern in front of her and said,

Anastasia:?There's a fork 'n the road?

??Before his eyes was the first part of his plan to avoid meeting the Centaur.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

As before, a dread hung in the air at the fork, enough to make one grimace. And, that dread came clearly flowing in from the right path.

Anastasia:?Left or right, which way do ya want ta go??

Subaru:?If we follow Kurapika's theory, going to the right is the correct option.?

Anastasia:?Who's that??

(TL Note: Kurapika is a character from HxH. I haven't watched that anime, so I don't know exactly what the reference is, but it's easy enough to figure out what it means.)

As before, Subaru's knowledge was nothing but foreign in this other world. Subaru had already experienced it with his body, so his words weren't unsubstantiated.

Subaru:?In times like these, people tend to unconsciously want to pick the left side. Though various factors are at play like one's dominant hand or eye, ethology has shown actual evidence of that, especially when there are no additional conditions attached.?

Ram:?Ethology… What a smart word came out of your mouth….. However, are you ignoring this horrible presentiment which you can feel coming from the right path? Isn't this a condition??

Whether it would be correct or not to take the right path?? this time, they had to take it. Having deemed so, Subaru would have to try and persuade the others with logic, however he felt a strong feeling of aversion to the horrible sensation that was drifting in from the right path.

If they could, both Ram and Anastasia, didn't want to take the right path; he could see that from the look in their eyes. Persuading them and making them take the right path was what Subaru had to do. He

wouldn’t let them go towards their?death?so easily after getting the chance from?Returning by Death.?

Subaru:?It’s true that a blatantly horrible atmosphere is coming from the right. But, I think it’s just a little too blatant. It’s as if it’s saying, *don’t come here*, right??

Ram:??????

Subaru:?It’s exactly like the mechanism which breaks through that?Sand Time?and the flower garden of Witchbeasts before the Watchtower. They’re far too intricate to be something that cropped up naturally. Didn’t you think so??

Anastasia:?’n other words, Natsuki-kun, ya want to say that the San’ Time, the Flower Garden and this cave as well are things of artifice??

In contrast to Ram who had sunk into silence, Anastasia followed what Subaru had been trying to say. Subaru cracked his fingers at hearing her response and voiced his agreement with a?That’s right.?

Subaru:?They’ve set a bunch of traps since they want to keep us away. Why haven’t we come across a single Witchbeast here in nearly an hour if this wasn’t something artificial? We all seem to agree that this is part of the Augria Sand Dunes. And though Meili’s not here, we haven’t encountered any Witchbeast lairs. That’s unnatural.?

Ram:?So, here we’re in a place where someone’s hand…. No, where the Sage’s hand came into play.?

Subaru:?With that, we know that the Sage’s personality isn’t very pleasant.?

Ram:??????

Although it was an opinion which was half coated in truth, Subaru admired that even if he spoke himself, it didn’t mean that he hadn’t been able to sound persuasive. In fact, when he looked back on the journey through the Augria Sand Dunes up until now, there had been many things set which could certainly be called traps that were there to impede their journey towards the Watchtower?? It could even be called a?Trial.?And, it was a fact as well that they hadn’t come across any Witchbeasts yet in this cave.

Of course, Subaru’s thoughts were incorrect in the end as he knew that they would come across the Centaur at the end, however??No, perhaps that Centaur was the last guard. There was a chance that its presence was a mechanism that denoted a last show of strength to those who came to enter the Watchtower.

In that case, he just had no way to express the malice in their choice of guardian; however.

Ram:?……There’s certainly logic even in Barusu’s point.?

Subaru:???! Seriously??

Anastasia:?Why are ya actin’ so surprised? ‘s it strange??

Subaru instinctively reacted with surprise at Ram's words, who had sunk into pensive silence. And after that, Anastasia, who had seen that response, gave a wry smile and lifted up the pom-poms on her hat with both of her hands.

Anastasia:?To tell ya the truth, I really don't want ta go to the right. But, now that ya said that our opinions have been induced ta form up 'n pick the left…… I don't want ta go with it anymore.?

Subaru:?That's an opinion that doesn't seem like you, who lived by your do-or-die intuition. You sure have been swept away.?

Anastasia:?Are ya jus' sayin' even I'll do it if yer opinion becomes approved??

The wry smile on her face grew deeper, which as a matter of fact, probably indicated that Eridna was unable to imitate the vital point that had been Anastasia's?Do-or-die Intuition.?This was a last resort for her too. She should have had a difficult time deciding whether or not to get on board with Subaru's point.

Subaru:?So, what about you Ram??

Ram:?It's as I said. I can understand Barusu's point too, considering how things went in the Sand Dunes up until here. We can just agree that apart from the Sage's wicked disposition, there's also the harsh environments that those who can't reach the Watchtower are subject to one after the other……. That's why it's obvious that someone has meddled.?

Subaru:?Mhm, I sure don't agree with calling them natural things…?

Ram:?So, although I don't fully agree with your point, Barusu, it doesn't mean that I don't agree with some parts of it. With that said, there's no hesitation in checking the right path.?

Subaru:?……What do you mean??

Anastasia:?It's annoyin' for her ta do what Natsuki-kun says, but she's goin' to go along with it, is what she's sayin'.?

Anastasia politely interpreted what Ram had meant to say. In fact, it seemed like it was the correct interpretation considering that Ram didn't correct any of it. In short, it meant that both Ram and Anastasia had accepted Subaru's cajolery.

Subaru:???Alright! Excellent, *muchas gracias.* I won't make either of you regret it.?

(TL Note: Subaru actually says "Thank you" in Engrish. Decided to use Spanish to mark the difference in language here considering this is an English Translation.)

Ram:?I will take at least some share of the responsibility in my choice. Don't you go trying to carry my share of the burden on your back as you please. Focus your useless resourcefulness only on Rem.?

Anastasia:?Ah, if you make me regret it, I'm gonna let ya take the responsibility for it. If that happens,

we'll hafta consult with the abacus for how much it's gonna be, don't ya think??

Subaru:?Both of you are so damn scathing!?

His delight was short lived, and his speech in which he had taken responsibility for the choice was quickly assailed by the both of them. Although he didn't know how serious Eridna's trace of Anastasia was, Eridna was putting in great efforts so that things wouldn't end up in regret. Only that feeling was genuine.

Subaru:?Plus, it's not like the obstacles end with just their persuasion.?

Indeed, that was right. In the end, all Subaru had got was the right to make a challenge. The challenge against the real hurdles started from here on out.

??The fork in the road awaited their decision as it exuded an overwhelming negative atmosphere out.

They were going to take the right path where the air lay thick and visible, ever worsening. If this was a trial which the Sage had prepared, he wondered what they were thinking by opting to make this path its start.

Subaru:?If he's waiting for us beyond this point, then let's give him as much of a surprise as possible. ??I'm gonna slap his face and make him apologise over and over, and after that, I'm gonna make him find Emilia and the others.?

(TL Note: No gender pronouns are included when talking about the Sage, a more accurate TL would be using "they", but if I am recalling correctly Subaru presumes the Sage is a male at this point in the story.)

Determining that, Subaru turned towards the right path and brandished his lantern there, having declared that. And then, Ram gave a soft sigh, behind Subaru's back,

Ram:?I agree with you, but there's still a chance that Emilia-sama, along with everyone else, will make it to the Watchtower before us.?

Subaru:?Honestly, wasn't this a good spot to show off...??

Subaru, whose spirit was being strained even before the challenge began, voiced out his disgruntlement.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

After those exchanges, the three of them and their earth dragon?? the group of four went into the right path. He still had a bad feeling, even now. That feeling seemed to make even the sand underneath his feet feel different. Whilst tasting this discomfort, Subaru wiped the cold sweat that trickled down his forehead and grinned at Patrasche.

Subaru:?Come to think of it, I was wrong to decide which way to take without hearing your opinion.?

Patrasche:??????

Subaru:?*Huh? Where you're going is the road I will take? And whatever road it is, no matter how harsh, you'll believe in me since I always weather through? Heyhey, you're way too handsome, I'm falling in love!*?

(TL Note: When Subaru is pretending to speak for Patrasche he's using ? as Patrasche's personal pronoun whilst using his usual ? to refer to himself.)

Ram:?He's being nonsensical, but he doesn't seem to be doing it by mistake, so he's being sinful, don't you think? What good do you see in him??

Ram muttered that out as if she were shocked when she saw Subaru rambling on about Patrasche's feelings as if he was her, whilst she remained taciturn. Though Patrasche would usually immediately rebuff such talk, right now she had remained composed as if he hadn't said anything wrong. Or, she had thought it foolish to waste strength doing that, so she was saving it for until they reached a safer place. One of the two. Likely the latter.

Subaru:?Even if so, can you go easy on me, if possible??

Patrasche:???????

Subaru:?Was that a voice of denial just now??

Despite having chosen silence until now, she abruptly let off an impatient bark of denial at what he'd said. But then, having the mettle to first of all escape safely from here before berating him was quite the good thing. Because that meant Patrasche believed that they could get out of here safely.

??????

They kept on walking without any change, with Subaru at the head, and Patrasche at the back. The lantern's light illuminated the way several metres ahead; making sure to tread carefully, their exploration continued.

Their pace, however, had definitely slowed down compared to their way here. It was even slower than when they'd taken the left road before he had?Returned by Death.?The reason why was simple.

Subaru:?My body… is so heavy……?

It wasn't that his weight had increased, or that an invisible Y?kai had climbed onto his back. And, in practice, it definitely wasn't any sort of issue that affected his actual corporeal self.

(TL Note: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Y%C5%8Dkai Roughly, spectre, but I wanted to keep it like in the Japanese.)

That both his body was heavy and his feet unmoving was entirely a mental problem.

Sure enough, the right path was brimming with a negative sensation that had caused his feet to seize up. He hoped this was one of the Sage's detestable trials, and that if they came out of the forked road, they'd find a safe spot awaiting them ahead?? Of these hopes, he didn't hold a single one. But unfortunately, even those hopes were fleeting and quickly turned. Rather, his negative thoughts, which felt like a curse, grew ever stronger.

Subaru:??????

Gulping down some saliva, still keeping his silence, Subaru took a step forward so to move his leaden feet from the sand. His feet were frozen in place; he wouldn't move. Even if in his heart, Subaru knew just how weak and fragile he was, he shouldn't have felt like cowering in this passageway of sand, where nothing had happened yet. *Indeed*, he felt no fear at heart, and even his head felt clear.

Just, his limbs didn't try to move in line with that purpose. His flesh and body, only, were acting against his reason and the course of his soul. His body instinctually rejected it, and tried to stop him from moving forward.

It cost Subaru twice as much time, strength and willpower to move forward. And even he couldn't help but feel tired.

Subaru:?Fool. Can I really whine this much??

Violently shaking his head, Subaru tried to forget the feeling of tiredness that ladened his body. Choosing the right path had been no one but Subaru's decision. Even though it had been, he couldn't permit himself to try and whine, or such, before the two behind him did.

Subaru:?Well, this walk sure may be a little difficult, but it's no big deal. Surprisingly, our goal may be getting closer……?

Ram:?Barusu?

Subaru:?Oh, what's up??

Ram:?Shut up.?

Subaru:?Ah, Oh……?

His attempt at trying to drive away his whining with a show of bravado was shot down by Ram's curt toxicity. Their pace had fallen drastically, and their fear of the surroundings had also only increased. It seemed like probably even Ram was being taxed mentally. That her words were more toxic and curter than usual was proof of that.

Subaru:?Heey, I get what you're feeling, but I think I suck at walking in silence.?

Ram:?Are you walking to enjoy yourself? Remember why we're doing this.?

Subaru:?Well, no, but like…?

Ram:?Be silent and walk.?

An unapproachable, obstinate attitude. Of course, though Ram's opinion was correct, Subaru had a point as well.

Right now, the weight of his body was pulling into sync with the weight on his mind. In other words, it had become a vicious circle where the heavier his mood got, the heavier his body became. He'd wanted to take their minds off it a bit so that things wouldn't end up like that.

Keeping on guard was important, as well as wanting to show some consideration, but he wanted them to show that they'd understood that and taken it on board. Or rather, Ram especially should take it on board. She always showed consideration. Still, she might be really struggling.

Subaru:?Do you reckon we should move faster??

Ram:??????

Subaru:?Ram??

Subaru called out trying to determine how urgent the conditions had got, but Ram didn't bother to reply to his words at all. The light from the two lanterns, one of which was illuminating the path ahead of Subaru, and the other which was illuminating their surroundings from Patrasche's neck, didn't allow the particulars of Ram's expression to be seen.

With her hood pulled over her head, Ram cast her eyes down to look at Anastasia's back. Her face wasn't visible.

Subaru:?Ram??

Anastasia:?Natsuki-kun, is that quite enough??

Subaru:?Ah??

Stopping in his tracks, Subaru turned his head around to try and look at her expression. But Ram, stubborn as she was, didn't let him see her face, and on top of that Anastasia had defended her. Seeing Subaru's lips bend in frustration, Anastasia scratched her cheek, with a troubled expression adorning her face.

Anastasia:?I hadn' mentioned it but, Ram-san was considerably flustered after she woke up in the undergroun'. Her composure seemed ta have come back because of how plucky she is, but I guess it still looks like she hasn' fully regained it.?

Subaru:???*tch*! You're saying too much……!?

Anastasia:?Look, will ya leave this ta me??

While Anastasia had put some consideration to Ram's feelings, her words lacked in it. Having just had her hidden innermost thoughts divulged, Ram gritting her teeth could be heard all around them, but Anastasia took no notice of it. She raised one of her small hands and pointed it in front of her so that Subaru could see it.

Anastasia:?We shouldn' talk right now. When yer nerves are frayed ta the limit, no matta' who says what, nothin' good will come out of it. Isn' that right??

Subaru:??????

Anastasia:?Isn' that right??

Though it annoyed him, Anastasia = Eridna had a point. He had put too much priority in trying to move forward and getting out of the cave safely. Subaru this time definitely hadn't been able to consider Ram's feelings much. The price for doing that had come to bite him back here, and mayhaps had ended up expressed in Ram's attitude. Now that he thought about, it was overly hasty of him to assume that there was a problem there because of Ram.

Subaru:?……You're right. You're definitely right. It was my bad.?

Ram:?Reflect on it.?

Subaru:???*tch!* Hey, you!?

Anastasia:?Stop that, no fightin'. C'mon, Natsuki-kun, keep movin' forward, keep movin' forward.?

Subaru's nerves had become frayed on seeing Ram's attitude, which gave no signs of letting up. However, Anastasia had gotten in between them and somehow stopped him there. She then pointed at Subaru motioning him to move forward. She nudged the lantern that was fastened around Patrasche's neck with her feet, rocking it about.

Seeing the silhouettes of the passageway of sand flickering across his sight, Subaru clicked his tongue.

Although he couldn't stomach her attitude, there would be no point in them falling into strife here. Fortunately, he could excuse it as the unpleasant atmosphere influencing the highs and lows in their mood. While he could lay the blame on something, there was no need to worsen their relations with such an unnecessary thing. They could talk about their current foul attitudes when they made it safely out from here.

Subaru:?……Let's get going.?

Once again, the search spearheaded by Subaru resumed. However, their pace was still slow, and didn't get any faster. In the end, his so called attempt at picking up their spirits and removing the loads from their body had failed. Since nothing had changed for the better, the chances of the situation improving

had naturally become zilch.

Even so, when it came to change, there had been some. And it wasn't a change with Subaru and the others, but rather a change with the maze of sand itself.

Subaru:?No matter how you look at it, the path has become narrower.?

They had probably spent nearly an hour steadily advancing through the right path. The pathway of sand was narrowing from the left, right, top and bottom. The height and width of the path was reaching a size that would make it impossible for large Witchbeasts to pass through. There was just enough space for Patrasche to squeeze through.

However, it was at a size where it wasn't wide enough to accommodate the Dragon Carriage which Gyan pulled. Likely, it was impossible for Sandworms and Centaurs to pass through too.

At least in other words, when it came to the worst situation, i.e. a Centaur lying in wait ahead on the path?? that situation seemed to have been avoided. Compared to that, no matter what was awaiting ahead, at least they seemed to have avoided going towards that terrible direction.

Subaru:?But, it looks like we'll have to be more cautious since the path's become narrower. We'll probably end up unable to move without any warning; you guys will need to be on your guard too.?

Ram:?……*tsk*?

Subaru:???Hey?

Subaru, who had said that thinking about what would happen soon, raised one of his eyebrows at the sudden sound. Turning his head back, he looked at the two on dragonback who were illuminated by their lantern. No one responded to his shout. However, he knew that Anastasia, who was sitting at the front on top of Patrasche, had covered her face with the palm of her hands.

That seemed natural for Anastasia who wanted in one way or another to move forward and keep things rolling along smoothly. Anyway, what Ram had done now was that she had *tsk'ed* at Subaru's words.

Subaru:?What have you really been planning from the start??

Ram:?Nothing.?

Subaru:?It ain't nothing! I asked you what have you been planning!?

Raising his voice at the limit of his patience, Subaru kicked at the wall of sand beside him. Part of the surface of the fragile wall came loose, but Subaru didn't care at all about the sand which sprinkled down on him. All that Subaru saw right now was the insolent Ram.

Subaru:?All I can hear is you butting in over and over again when people are walking in silence. It seems like this isn't the first time you clicked your tongue at me, isn't that right? Hey, **OY**, what are you

planning!?

Ram:?Nothing in particular. I have nothing at all to say to you, Barusu.?

Subaru:?Nothing at all, and yet aren't you clicking your tongue at me year after year going *tchtchtchtchtchtch*? Aren't you doing that? There's got to be a reason for you to be saying that you aren't doing that, even though you are, hasn't there?!?

Subaru's fervour continued to grow stronger than before, in contrast to the cold Ram's attitude. It seemed natural. Everything which Ram had shown was cold and one-sided in contrast to the exertions which Subaru had made up until now. Subaru did not know why he was being looked down upon and rebuked.

Subaru:?If there's something you want to say, then say it! Go and say it since I'll listen!?

Ram:???That's why I have nothing to say.?

Subaru:?LIAR! ARE YOU STUPID? IF YOU FEEL LIKE HIDING STUFF THEN HIDE IT ALL! NOW THAT YOU'VE SLIPPED UP, FLAUNT IT ALL OFF... YOU SAY THERE'S NOTHING? THAT'S A FUCKING IDIOT'S EXPRESSION, HUH, DUMBASS!?

Ram:??????

Ram's mood changed at seeing Subaru hurling insults at her, spittle flying from his mouth. Sat behind Anastasia, she leaned her body out and glared at Subaru. He was unsatisfied with where she sat as well. Hiding behind others, looking down at him from above.

Was she planning to rise above them all by borrowing something's strength?

Ram:?It seems like you've really gotten yourself all worked about moving forward, haven't you, Barusu??

Subaru:?THAT'S TO BE EXPECTED THOUGH ISN'T IT! WHAT DO YOU THINK WE CAME HERE FOR? WE CAME TO MEET THE SAGE, DIDN'T WE!? ALL THE HARDSHIPS WE FACED FOR THIS, AND ALL THE PROGRESS WE MADE, WHAT'S SO FUNNY ABOUT IT!??

Ram:?You're wrong. ??We didn't come here to meet the sage.?

Subaru:?Aaaah??

Ram:?We came here to return Rem back to how she was.?

Ram clearly asserted this, all the while glaring at Subaru. Overwhelmed by the sharpness and pressure that emanated from her eyes, Subaru (who had been seething)'s conviction weakened a little.

Saving Rem = Meeting the Sage, wasn't it like that?

Subaru:?IT'S THE SAME THING, ISN'T IT!? MEET THE SAGE AND THEN SAVE REM! IT'S CONNECTED!?

Ram:?IT ISN'T. SAVING REM COMES FIRST, AND MEETING THE SAGE COMES AFTER THAT. YOU'VE GOT YOUR PRIORITIES WRONG……Yes, you've got them all wrong.?

Ram's voice trembled as she spoke the last of those words. The fury she had voiced was a wrath that burnt like an unquenchable raging fire that brought together everything the emotionless girl had felt up until now. In the underground area of these cold sand dunes, Ram continued to speak, her words still full to the brim with the fever of wrath.

Ram:?I came here for Rem, I came here to remember my little sister. And yet, what are we doing now? Rem isn't even here….. so stop messing about idly in this place.?

Subaru:?No one's messing about…...! Because things ended up like this; now that things ended up like this, there's nothing else we can do at the time it did. Am I wrong??

Ram:?Yes, maybe so. But, before we make sure of that, Barusu, have you ever worried about Rem even once??

Subaru:?……Ah??

Ram:?Ever since you woke up below ground, Barusu, have you ever worried about Rem? Or about Emilia-sama? Or about Beatrice-sama? Have you ever at all worried about those who are missing??

Ram showered those questions at him, but he kept silent, speaking not a single word in return. Certainly this time around, unlike the last, Subaru hadn't tried to check how everyone else was doing, after he had woken up from?Returning by Death.?

However, this absolutely wasn't because he wasn't worried about them, but rather because he knew that Ram and Anastasia didn't know anything about them. It was Subaru's consideration. It was care. And despite that,

Ram:?No, you never did, did you. You never did, Barusu. You don't care at all about Rem, Barusu, because your head is full of Emilia-sama and Beatrice-sama. Well, so be it, you're just that kind of man. But, I feel bad for Rem.?

Subaru:?……Shut up.?

Ram:?Didn't Rem believe in you, Barusu? Ah, though I don't know since that too is a convenient story which I've just heard from you, Barusu. Maybe you were just saying whatever popped into your head. You only say what's convenient in front of women. I feel bad for Emilia-sama and Beatrice-sama as well, deceived by such a man!?

Subaru:?SHUT THE HELL UP!?

Ram:?No, I will not. How many times must I repeat myself. ??Barusu, you don’t care about Rem at all. Even if she isn’t found, you would just feel glad.?

Subaru:???DON’T YOU MESS ABOUT WITH ME!!?

His field of view was died in crimson, and his nerves had flared up hearing her vent those thoughtless remarks. His anger at the arrogant woman, who had vented out those selfish words whilst looking down upon him from her perch, exploded.

He would grab her and drag her down?? Though the time it would take to do that wasn’t quick enough.

Subaru:?INVISIBLE PROVIDENCE??!!?

Ram:???KH, AH!??

Subaru dropped that darkish sensation which swirled through his brain down to his chest, and let it loose. The black palm which had come into being cried out in joy and smoothly stretched itself out. It crept up to the rear of the Earth Dragon’s back, where it threw down the pink-haired girl who had denounced him.

Letting off a shriek, Ram wildly tumbled onto the sand. Confusion racked Ram’s face, indicating she had no idea what had happened after she had been hit by the demonic hand which wasn’t visible to the naked eye. Subaru rushed over next to where Ram was lying down atop of the sand. And then,

Subaru:?Don’t you mess about with me.?

Saying that he didn’t think at all about Rem, saying things like that, was no joke. Consumed by anger, everything had become like whichever way he looked at it from, following his overheated thoughts.

Ram:???*urkh*?

??Subaru leaned down over the supine Ram and began to strangle her slender neck.

Creak, Creak.

Creak, Creak, Creak.

Arc 6 – Chapter 15, “Scattered to the Sand”

by admin - Saturday, June 22, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/06/22/arc-6-chapter-15-scattered-to-the-sand/

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Translated By :

- Ice

Contributions By:

- Erifuru

Proofread By :

- Azeem

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Subaru’s fingers wrapped around the slender, white neck. As Subaru tightened his hold using all of his strength and felt their neck bones creaking underneath his palms, he felt like something was quite out of place?? like it was a girl’s slender neck.

Ram:?……a, ukh?

Ram was being straddled, and her neck was being strangled by someone with all their might. A groan escaped from her lips. Her noble features were warped in agony, and drool could be seen dribbling down from the corner of her rosy lips. Her red tongue danced from side to side searching for freedom inside of her mouth. She thrashed her arms and legs about, desperately resisting him.

Ram:??????

Subaru couldn’t possibly put up a fight against Ram if she put up a serious resistance. She had managed to strike Garfiel down for a bit back at the?Sanctuary?by herself, and even if she hadn’t, she was a woman that should be well acquainted with the art of self-defence. It would be reasonable to assume that she should possess multiple ways to restrain him and deal with a situation of this ilk where she was seized

from above by a man like this.

However, that would boil down to whether she could at least get one of her limbs free or not.

Subaru:???Invisible Providence?

Ram:?……*gh*?

Subaru set free the dark emotions within his chest as he strangled her neck with a *Creak-creak*. The dark, invisible sediment took shape and helped keep Ram's arms and legs firmly pinned down now. With her limbs pinned down, Ram was unable to struggle about effectively. Her breath would soon stop so long as he continued to put his strength into strangling her neck.

Ram, too, would have regretted her reckless remarks from earlier if she stopped breathing. Subaru would be able to make her pay with her life for having wounded his heart with her misdirected callous remarks, and for her ungrounded thoughtless remarks which had been spurned by her selfishness, and for having spoken light of Rem, for thinking he never cared for her.

Subaru:?It's you who's at fault. It's you, you, you!?

Ram was detestable. Ram was detestable. Ram was detestable.

All of those little things that piled up poured out one after the other. He put his hatred into the fingers which were strangling her neck; his nails dug into her pale skin, and blood trickled down.

Ram:?Hhh……*hk*?

Ram turned her eyes full of hate at Subaru who was breathing heavily and relishing the touch of hot blood at the end of his fingernails.

What was with that inflexibility in her light pink irises that gazed at him while the light of her life was about to be snuffed out? It's as if they were complaining saying: *"I won't truly die by having my life taken."*

He decided that he would gouge out her eyes after he strangled her to death.

Subaru:?Gonna rip you apart piece by piece, bitch……You, when I think of you looking at me with that face which is a spitting image of Rem's, it makes me wanna hurl.?

Ram:?…….?

Subaru:?Ohh? What is it, I can't hear you. If you got something to say, then say it clearly???

Ram:?……*la*?

Ram wheezed something out that overlapped with the last syllable of Subaru's abusive tirade. For a split

second, Subaru narrowed his eyes to the echo of that sound. Then the sand beneath Subaru, who was pushing Ram down, exploded and both of their bodies were blown away.

Subaru:?WH...A!??

Ram:?Ghha……!?

Subaru was showered in sand by the sudden blast which got inside of his mouth and eyes. He toppled down towards the back to the taste of sand and pain. Ram too had been caught up in the explosion, and her small body had taken the brunt of it as she tumbled away from him.

Bearing cuts from the explosion, the blood Ram spilled had spattered across the sand. However, Ram had escaped from Subaru's clutch. That was the fact of the matter.

Subaru:?Ram! You used fucking magic…..!?

Ram:?I had enough time…. To take a gasped breath. That's all I need… to be able to, chant…..*gh*?

Ram picked herself up from her knees, her breathing was in a feeble state. She had barely managed to chant out her?Fula?wind magic whilst her neck was being strangled. Unable to afford to miss, and unable to aim accurately, she had instead aimed underneath her. As a result, she had dragged both herself and Subaru into the blast and escaped from danger??.

Subaru:?*Tch*????

Ram:??????

As soon as he came to that realisation, Subaru turned his hand to the back of his waist and pulled out his whip. At the same time, Ram pulled out a short wand from her bosom, letting her fighting spirit well out showing that she was prepared for battle.

Ram as a magician had the capacity to deliver one strong blow, but even Subaru wouldn't be bested when it came to the speed which he could attack at. The swift nature of the whip was one that was favoured even by the big guns of this world.

He should crack his whip straight at her unperturbed looking face so to make it one that he'd never have to see again.

Subaru:?Even if you start crying and apologising, it's far too late!?

Ram:?That's my line. There's no value in letting an uncaring sex freak like you Barusu meet Rem. Turn to pieces and wither upon the sand.?

Subaru:?Whatever you say!?

Subaru's resolve in dealing with Ram, who had softly let her murderous intentions flare up, stiffened as

well. Making use of the light of the lantern which had dropped down between them, both Ram and Subaru continued to glare at each other, moving around each other in a circle as they slowly tried to get within striking distance.

And just as the lid was about to be blown off on them slaughtering each other?? Just a few seconds before that happened.

???:???Alrigh', that's enough!?

Subaru & Ram:???!??

The sound of violent applause echoed throughout, and both Subaru and Ram's faces jerked up on hearing its withered timbre. The one who had interrupted them, Anastasia, was looking down on them from dragonback.

She glared at the two who had been on the verge of trying to kill each other in turn, still sat alone on top of Patrasche.

Anastasia:?That's enough. I don't think it's acceptable that yer both glaring at each other with such angry looks on yer faces despite us all bein' on the same side. There oughta be limits no matter where ya are.?

Subaru:?Limits? AAH, OF COURSE THERE'S LIMITS. AND THE ONE WHO STEPPED OVER THEM AND SAID SOMETHING THAT SHE NEVER SHOULD'VE IS THAT GIRL THERE, ISN'T IT!? THAT'S WHY I'M MAKING HER PAY FOR IT!?

Anastasia:?Ugh, since I ain't getting through to you, what about you, Ram-san??

Anastasia looked on in shock at Subaru as he jabbed his finger at Ram, and spoke with spittle flying out of his mouth. She had turned her flow of talk towards Ram, but the response she received from the pink haired girl wasn't all that different from Subaru's.

Ram still warily kept the tip of her wand pointed at Subaru, keeping herself on guard for battle.

Ram:?What a foolish question. It's Barusu's attitude that's intolerable….. I'm rather at the limits of my patience. If all he cares about is himself, then why don't we go and drop him in the pitch black darkness alone just like he wants.?

Subaru:?I HAVE NO WORDS FOR THIS BULLSHIT, FUCK OFF!?

Anastasia:?No good from her too, huh? Jeez, why. 'T seems like I've got too much on my shoulders…..?

Seeing Ram's attitude, whose anger remained unrelenting, Subaru's anger also showed no signs of disappearing. Anastasia shrugged her shoulders with a gesture that indicated she'd given up on the two of them, who continued to exchange sharp looks of murderous intent.

Looking at her from the corner of his eye, Subaru began to feel irritated at Anastasia as well.

In the first place, why was Anastasia alone making a face that looked just like she was an outsider?

He wondered who the hell it had been that was behind everything that had happened. He wondered who the hell it was that had first told him to travel to the Augria Sand Dunes and aim for the Sage's Watchtower.

Who the hell did they think they were leaving everything to others despite unmistakably having the strongest incentive for setting out to the Watchtower?

And on top of that, they were sitting alone, even now, looking down from the top of his Patrasche??

Subaru:?HEY, YOU. WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU PREACHING TO ME FROM UP ABOVE. GET DOWN. ?

Anastasia:?……Huh, it's come to that??

Subaru:?Get on the same level as me before you run your mouth with your arrogance. I'll hear what you have to say after that. I ain't gonna let you run your mouth at me unless you can do that!?

He swung his whip down, scattering sand up with a woosh. His whip caused skin to split open if it hit its target; even by looking at it, his whip was a weapon designed to inflict cruel wounds. It probably wouldn't matter if he hurt her host body regardless of whether Eridna was inside of it.

As a matter of fact, Anastasia complied with Subaru's orders and slowly climbed down from Patrasche's back. Right after she landed gingerly onto the sand, she cocked her head and asked:?Now what??

Anastasia:?There, I got down too, but…… Natsuki-kun, what is it that ya want ta do??

Subaru:?That should be obvious. I'll let that idiot take back what she said before and if she doesn't want to, then there'll be just one thing left to do.?

If Ram changed her attitude and apologised from the depths of her heart, taking back everything she had said up until now, then Subaru would consider taking into account the extenuating circumstances.

However, Ram's reaction, who'd heard what he'd said, was something that was easy enough to understand.

Anastasia:?Well, that's what Natsuki-kun's sayin', but, what do ya think of it, Ram-sam??

Ram:?That's out of the question. You're leaping to conclusions, for I have nothing that should be taken back. I'm having a hard time understanding what on earth I'd be saying differently.?

Ram snorted, declaring that with an attitude that looked like she was making a fool out of them from the depths of her heart.

That was her answer. Thus, with that, she had forever lost her chance to be forgiven.

Subaru:?You heard her. Back off. I'm gonna make it so that there's only one face which is the same as Rem's in this world.?

Ram:??????

Subaru:?AAH, HEY? You got nothing to say??

Ram:?I'm talking to myself here, but idiocy is a contagious thing when speaking with idiots. That's why I am not say anything.?

A vein bulged across his forehead, Subaru's remaining patience got closer and closer to its limit. In that state, Subaru gathered his strength and tried to get to where Ram was (straight ahead of him) so he could tear her limb from limb. Anastasia rushed out spreading out her hands in front of Subaru.

Anastasia:?Whoawhoawhoa! Hey, calm down! You're jumping to conclusions again.?

Subaru:?Get out of my way! Do you want me to pummel the life out of you first!??

Anastasia:?Ya left this to me. Remember? Hey, Ram-san, just a sec'…..?

Holding Subaru back, who was trying to step forward, Anastasia turned towards Ram. The taciturn Ram glared at Subaru, before reluctantly moving her gaze slightly towards Anastasia.

However, it didn't seem likely that she would change her opinion. In fact, the look in her eyes betrayed that she had no intention to do so. It seemed like she had stepped towards Anastasia just out of obligation.

Anastasia:?Look, Ram-san. I get that 'cause the air's bad 'n such, various feelings end up gettin' frayed, but……?

Ram:?Such talk doesn't matter right now, don't you think? More than that, go say it to that idio???

Anastasia:???Alrigh'. It doesn' matter, jeez?

Giving off a fidgety impression, Ram tried to end her conversation with Anastasia as well. For the first time, she had moved her face away from Subaru and looked dead on at Anastasia.

The reason was because she'd felt a sudden impact. The impact which had pierced into her body, more precisely, the left part of her chest was?? Was due to the thick knife which Anastasia held in her hand.

Ram:?*Ah, gh*……??

Anastasia:?I had ta eyeball a decision of which of ya would be useful. Can ya forgive me??

She twisted her knife and pulled it out from the wound. Ram looked down at the fatal wound that had

been birthed on the left side of her chest as blood tricked out from the corner of her lips. Then, she looked up at Anastasia, who had raised her hand up with a smile on her face, and collapsed in front of her.

Ram feebly fell down onto the sand. The blood that gushed out of her continued to be soaked up by the parched sand.

Subaru:?H- hah??

Subaru looked at the scene with his own eyes, at a loss at what had occurred. His palm which he held his whip with trembled and his molars creaked in anger.

Subaru:?WHY DID YOU…..!?

Anastasia:?Since ya were goin' about it slowly Natsuki-kun, didn't it seem like ya'd have ended up killin' each other if Ram-san's vigilance couldn' be loosened? What would I do if both of ya got injured, or both of ya died? I can't escape from this place all alone, y'know??

Anastasia cocked her head at the angered Subaru, her face showing no ill will. Her words made logical sense, but what could he, who was crushed by logic, do about this fury of his? His urge that he should have attacked Ram was still uncontrollable, and his rage was still bottled up.

Anastasia:?Or…. Are ya feelin' like takin' out yer annoyance on me??

Subaru:??????

Anastasia:?Don't ya think it's stupid to get seized up by yer current rage and lose sight of the goal? I think that's enough of gettin' rid of companions for the time bein'.?

Anastasia's words continued to quench his fury as if she was slowly pouring water on them. It was certainly as she said; continuing to get rid of the thinking minds which had come this far was foolish. Moreover, Anastasia = Eridna was their guide for their journey to the Pleiades Watchtower. It was dubious whether her knowledge had come in use, but casting her aside would be regrettable.

She was different from Ram. The latter's words only made him sick to the stomach and had no use to him. Anastasia was a piece that would be bothersome to lose; yes, that's how it was.

Subaru:?……Alright, I'll get on board with your persuasion for now.?

Anastasia:?Mhm, that's great with me. No, thank goodness. What a relief?

Making a show of patting her chest in relief, Anastasia smiled from ear to ear. And then, she stepped through the sand, giving off a perilous impression, and came towards Subaru, proffering her hand out.

Perhaps she wanted them to shake hands?

Anastasia:?A reconciliation; a handshake, ta show that from here on out, we'll treat each other well,

won’t we??

Subaru:??????

Subaru faltered for a moment in thought as he looked at the hand she had offered out to him, her face showed no traces of maliciousness. Anastasia’s true feelings?? Or rather, right now it was Eridna’s true feelings. He didn’t truly know what she was scheming. He was neither comfortable or optimistic enough to think that everything she’d spoken was the truth.

To start with, Anastasia had killed Ram with the knife that she’d kept concealed, whilst she expressed the same smile as she was showing now. Indeed, with a knife that she had kept concealed.

The thick knife she was holding looked like it could cut all the way to the bone depending how it was handled. Since it had been put in their survival kit along with their lanterns, the kind of utility of an item that was presumed to be for survival was pretty high. However, she had kept it concealed all this time, and had used it in self-defence at her time of need. ??No, it may not have been self defence.

Anastasia:?Natsuki-kun??

Subaru:??????

Anastasia:?Ya ain’t takin’ my hand??

The hand she had offered out, her right one, was empty. However, her left hand was still holding the knife, even now. The range at which he’d be able to shake her hand was also the range at which the knife would be able to reach him. At least one of his hands would be occupied if he took her hand. He didn’t even need to consider which out of his whip and her knife would be more effective at this distance. Taking her hand: wasn’t that in itself a trap?

??Shouldn’t he kill her before he was killed?

Anastasia:?Natsuki-kun??

Subaru:?Don’t worry, it’s nothing.?

Subaru gave a weak smile and reached out for Anastasia’s right hand. The moment in which she lowered her guard completely would be his chance, after they took each other’s hand.

??Invisible Providence.

He once again invoked his?Unseen Hand?, and the black hand slowly fixed its sights onto Anastasia’s slender neck. He wouldn’t make the same mistake as he had with Ram. Next, he would make the black palm mercilessly crush her throat. He would teach a lesson to the woman who had kept belittling him ever since she had managed to secure the upperhand with her knife.

Although, even if he wanted to show her, this palm wasn’t visible??.

(TL Note: I lost a bit of the nuance in translating ?????????? as “to teach a lesson”. Literally it reads “To show it to her eyes” which is why the part after that paragraph references “wanting to show her”, more or less.)

Subaru:??????

Then, Subaru slowly took her outstretched hand with his own whilst he put the fingers of his black hand around Anastasia’s neck. The touch of slender fingers; Anastasia’s smile’s grew deeper. And at the same time, Subaru’s lips broke into a sad smile too.

Anastasia:?Well then…...?

Right here. Thus, he believed.

He would use the strength of his demonic hand before Anastasia could finish speaking and raise her knife. He would grasp her slender neck with his black fingers, and crush her neckbones in an instant??.

??Just before that happened however, a blade of wind came streaming in and cut Anastasia’s body in two from behind.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

He felt like he’d hallucinated that a wind had blown, straight after that.

A spray of red gushed out right in front of his eyes, a daft voice let out an?Eh??and Anastasia’s body was cut in two across the middle.

A heapload of blood was strewn out onto the white sand. Steaming shit and warm guts mingled in with the cold air, leaving behind a putrid smell to hang over the inside of the cave.

Pink small and large intestines, along with many other internal organs that still showed faint traces of activity rolled onto the sand. The sand itself had turned into a showcase of organs, in which the items on display were the raw ingredients that made up a young girl.

Subaru:???Ah??

Seeing the spectacle in front of him, Subaru cast his gaze down to his own hand. What he saw there was Anastasia’s upper body swinging about; she was still firmly grasping Subaru’s right hand with hers. She opened her eyes and speechlessly looked up at Subaru.

Behind her, the lower part of her body which had been cut at the waist, was flopping about. Her legs were convulsing like a marionette, and shit was pouring out everywhere as her muscles had relaxed.

Subaru:?A-AHHHHHHHHHH??!??

Subaru let out a scream at Anastasia's horrific condition. He immediately tried to shake her arm away, however she was holding on with inordinate strength. Unable to shake her off, Subaru just swung the now half in weight Anastasia about. More blood spewed out of her as she was swung about, and the intestine that still connected the upper half of her body with her lower jolted about, scattering body fluids everywhere and emitting a foul odour.

Subaru:?Hah, LET GO! LET GOOOOOOO!?

Anastasia:?NOOOOO! **I** DON'T WANT TO DIE…..!?

Subaru:?YOU'RE ALREADY DEAD! CAN'T YOU GRASP THAT YOU'RE BEYOND SAVING!??

(TL Note: "Anastasia", i.e. Eridna has been using ?? *exclusively as her personal pronoun. However where I've marked in bold here, she emphasised it by saying* ??*. This essentially is saying to the reader that she's dropped her act as Anastasia now, and is speaking as Eridna. I will still be marking her with Anastasia as speaker since I don't believe Subaru would realise. Either way even Tappei mentioned it in Ana's latest Q/A.)*

Her vivid laments were far more clear than imagined, leading Subaru to scream in return. The upper and lower half of her body had now separated and so much blood and guts had flooded out. It was wrong for her not to have died immediately. It was also wrong for her to still keep grasping his hand. It was all so ridiculous.

Subaru:?LETGOLETGOLETGOLETGOLETGO???

Anastasia:?NO, NOOO! I WON'T, I ABSOLUTELY WOOON'T…...*hk*?

Subaru:?EVEN IF YOU SAY THAT NOW, I CAN'T DO ANYTH?…...GHAA!??

The upper half of Anastasia clung to his arm, and pain shot through Subaru's shoulder as he tried to throw her off. Anastasia was still holding the knife in her left hand, and had thrust it into Subaru's body in an attempt to hold on to him.

The sharp blade easily pierced through Subaru's left shoulder, and cracked his collarbone beneath it. Bleeding and scorching pain caused Subaru to scream.

Subaru:?GHAAAAAAAAA??!? FUCKING IDIOT, HURRY UP AND DIEEE!!?

Anastasia:?NOOOO…..*hk*?

Subaru fiercely grabbed Anastasia by the face and forcefully tore off her body. With great difficulty, he held the girl who had shouted something out whilst in tears, and threw her away.

From the start, Anastasia's body had been quite petite. And now that she had become half, and with all

the blood she had lost, she felt as light as a feather.

Subaru:?Haaah, haaah, haaaaa……..!?

(TL Note: Panting/Gasping SFX)

Without taking any notice of that, Subaru put his hand on his wounded right shoulder. His sight flickered in pain, and his heartbeat accelerated like it was going to explode. However, it wasn't a life-threatening wound.

Subaru sluggishly reached into his thoughts whilst besieged by an unchanged sickening tension.

The blow that had killed Anastasia before was??.

???:???Barusu.?

Subaru:?Gh-a?

A shadow swayed up in front of Subaru, who had fallen onto his backside and was gasping in pain.

A slender girl with blood covering half of her body came into view from the dim light of the lantern which was half-buried in sand?? Ram.

Since she had been stabbed in the chest by Anastasia's knife, he'd taken her for dead. Yet, the girl still breathed. And keeping ahold of her tenacity, she had killed Anastasia with her magic.

Subaru:?……This fucking idiot. If you're gonna die, then fucking die on your own.?

Subaru declared that with annoyance in his voice as he looked up at the staggering Ram. It wasn't as if Ram wasn't covered in wounds. Anastasia's attack had been fatal for sure. The bleeding from the wound in her chest hadn't stopped, and even now, blood was endlessly soiling her skirt all the way down to its hem. It looked like she'd soon die due to blood loss.

However, before that happened, she could take Subaru with her.

Subaru:?Sh...it…...?

Subaru looked around his surroundings, trying to find his arme de guerre, his whip. However, even if he located it, his right arm which he used to wield it was injured from the shoulder. He couldn't wield it with his left arm like he did with his right.

Then, he had just one choice left.

Subaru:?INVISIBLE PROVIDENCE…..!??

His trump card, which he'd already relied on many times in this short period of time. Once again,

Subaru's brain throbbed in burning pain the moment he tried to unleash the strength of his invisible black palm. An agony like his skull was being bored through by a drill exploded within him.

Subaru:?GHA! AAH!? GHHHUGH!??

Puke trickled out from the corner of Subaru's mouth due to the agony that visited him in waves.

In exchange for trying to use his trump card past its limits, his consciousness was broken up by the hellish banquet that had woken up inside his skull, starting from his cranial nerves. The pain of his right shoulder and such wasn't even comparable to this.

Whittling at his brain and skull, the sense of loss froze Subaru's will like it was gnawing at his soul.

Speaking nothing of the resistance he offered with his crappy whip, Subaru, who was writhing in agony, was prime prey. The dying Ram moved her body fuelled only by hatred and slowly made her way towards Subaru, raising her bloodstained wand.

Ram:?Fuuu?

Subaru:?AAAAAH! GHAAAA! OOOOAAAAAAH!??

Subaru rolled over to where Anastasia lay in her pool of blood, still holding his head. Looking down at him, Ram's lips stirred, and she began to chant her spell. And then??

Ram:?la???

Subaru:??????

She completed her chant, and the blade of wind which she created hewed Subaru down. But before that came to be, the sound of something hard being chewed echoed out across the cold cave of sand.

That horrible grating sound continued, and it changed into the sound of flesh and water being chewed.

Subaru:?AH……Ah?

That he would die, that he would be hewn down; Subaru had been convinced of that. However, the?Death?that should have come to him didn't come at all. Finally, Subaru (who had been breathing heavily and rolling around)'s headache and feeling of loss slowly started to subside.

Subaru:?AH, HAH, ah, AH??

He covered his face with his left hand and briskly shook his head which was drenched in cold sweat. Though a dull ache remained, the sharp blade-like agony had faded. Taking deep breaths, he lifted himself up using the strength of his entire soul. Subaru wiped his moistened cheeks whilst he foolishly took the time to raise only his upper body.

He noticed that his palm was covered in bright red, the source of which came from his own eyes?? It seemed like he had shed tears of blood.

A lot of blood dripped from his nose as well; the lower half of his face was probably in a horrific state. There was likely no doubt that the drilling pain which pierced directly to his brain was in recompense for his?Unseen Hand.?It was a familiar story. The feedback from having used his special superpower had come.

Subaru:?What happ……?

Briskly wiping his face with his sleeve, Subaru looked around his surroundings. He had no idea how much time he'd spent in agony. Nevertheless, he had hardly even thought it possible that he had it in himself to spend his time like that.

Something had happened, and with that he had been??.

Subaru:?Patrasche??

Patrasche:??????

Subaru's jet black Earth Dragon nestled up beside him as he sat in blank amazement. Crouched down on the sand, she heard Subaru's call and shook her long tail, indicating that she was in good health.

Subaru:?So you were uninjured? Hmm, let me think…..?

Just now, he recalled what had happened before. He recalled the scene in which Anastasia had been cut in two by Ram, and the latter aiming down at him. Subaru should have been ripped to shreds by Ram's doing.

Subaru:?And yet, why….. Did Ram...??

Perhaps she had used up all her strength and collapsed?

Though it was a really convenient development, Ram had been bearing fatal wounds. It wouldn't be farfetched to think that she'd collapsed.

Subaru:?Is that lucky, or unlucky..……?

He didn't want to say that he was lucky since she had been no less than almost dead. However, if he thought about it, he still couldn't say he was unlucky since he ought to have been dead if things had gone south.

In any case, now wasn't the time to go on about these things. Given that everyone who had gotten in his way was gone, he had to get out of this place as soon as he could and make his way to the Watchtower.

Subaru:?Patrasche…..Sorry, let me hop on.?

Patrasche:??????

Subaru:?Patrasche??

Subaru called out to her and touched her back, but the Earth Dragon didn't obey his instructions. On the contrary, Patrasche, who had crouched down, still didn't make any move to show her face to him.

She was sitting next to him on the sand, looking rather at peace, merely breathing heavily over and over.

Subaru:?Hey, Patrasche. Are you listening? HEY.?

His irritation slowly started to increase. It was a spiral of negative emotions which built up at supersonic speed, similar to those which he had felt against Ram and Anastasia. He felt like he wanted to teach the unresponsive Earth Dragon her place.

Subaru:?HEY, PATRASCHE, YOU, LOOK OVER HERE! HEY! ?

Patrasche:??????

Subaru:?BASTARD, LISTEN TO WHAT I'VE BEEN SAYING FROM THE START…….?

Patrasche lifted her head up at Subaru, who had raised his voice and furiously slapped her back. He realised that she was trying to come face to face with him to try and express her words, breathing heavily out of her nose.

Patrasche's mouth looked far from normal and was dyed in red.

Subaru:??????

That crimson colour was one that he had become used to seeing already in this short period of time. That colour coated parts of Subaru's body as well, and still streamed down from his right shoulder even now. The foul smell which drifted around the area lay thick in it, along with that of piss and shit; there was no mistaking it.

However, he hadn't wanted to notice something, he shouldn't have noticed it.

Subaru:??????

?Pink Hair?innumerably entwined itself between the fangs that lined Patrasche's mouth, who had now turned his way.

Subaru:?*Eep*?

On the other side of the crouched Patrasche's large body, Ram, whom he had lost sight of, fell down to the ground. Though the body of the girl fell, he couldn't tell whether she was lying face up or face down. Checking that would be easy to tell if he looked at her head, but it was precisely because of that which he

couldn’t. He couldn’t assess that because everything above her neck was chewed and its original shape was lost.

Ram’s skull had been crushed by vicious fangs and her brain juice had spilled out leaving her dead. Just like Anastasia who’d had her guts spilled out before dying, Ram had had the contents of her skull spilled out.

And, the one who’d done that, Patrasche, was staring intently at Subaru now.

Her yellow eyes which resembled that of a reptile were sharply and cruelly tinged with madness.

Subaru:???Sto?

The last thing he saw was her maw opening up millimetres from his eyes.

All that Natsuki Subaru heard was the sound of his own body being chewed up all the way until just before he slipped out of consciousness. Even after his head was crushed and his ears stopped working, the sound continued.

He almost ended up laughing, wondering where he was hearing the sound from. However, he had no mouth to laugh with, no life that he could merely laugh at, and nothing which he could laugh at.

He was chewed up by his companion, and died.

(TL Note: Though I have not translated it, Tappei left a note after the chapter warning readers about how what he depicted in this chapter may be intense. He recommended that readers who lost themselves to their own power of imagination should skim over the chapter. Then he said "I went ahead and wrote it in the afterword", referring to that warning. So I believe he was being sarcastic/witty there. Because readers would already have read the chapter to get there.)

Arc 6 – Chapter 17, "The King of the Sand Sea"

by admin - Sunday, July 07, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/07/07/arc-6-chapter-17-the-king-of-the-sand-sea/

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Translated By :

- Ice
- u/WintryOne

Contributions By:

- Erifuru

Proofread By :

- Azeem

Fan Art Source

- FrYUZdd3RukWhMk

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? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

The?Non-Combatant?Team unanimously opted to take the left path in the fork.

It was evident that if they progressed down the right path, they'd end up being swallowed up by the miasma, resulting in discord arising that would develop into them killing each other. That's why there was no mistake in that choosing the left path was the most natural thing.

That, and for Subaru, the questions were providing him answers too. Though, since the left path wasn't exactly a safe bet either, the one who was setting him those questions was of ill nature.

If he labelled the right path as an emotional snare, then he'd have to label what awaited them on the left

path as a physical snare. That grotesque Witchbeast clad in flames?? He would prefer to avoid meeting the Centaur, if possible.

Even if he engaged in battle with it, his odds of success were slim, that much was obvious. Their difference in strength wasn't the only issue. The reason being that when the time came to encounter the Witchbeast in his current emotional state, he didn't hold any belief in himself about whether he could fight alongside Ram and Anastasia.

Subaru:?To tell you the truth, there was a time back at the sand dunes where I saw a damn weird Witchbeast in the distance. It had a human body sprouting up from the neck of a body that looked like Patrasche's, and it had a huge mouth gaping from abdomen to chest there. And finally, a huge horn sprouted up from its human body, where the head should be…...?

Anastasia:?Eeeh…. What the hell. That's soo gross…..?

Ram:?Honestly, that's so off-putting.?

They followed the same flow of Witchbeast-related talk as last time in which he naturally included his explanation about the Centaur's particularities. The reactions from the two female members of the group in response to his description?? Three, including Patrasche, were once again unpleasant.

It's not as if Subaru wanted to give this explanation because he wanted to. Nevertheless, he had to consider that there was a 70% chance that they wouldn't be able to avoid an encounter with that thing now that they were going down the left path.

Subaru:?I'd expected all of you to be charmed by it, but in any case, it definitely seems like a dangerous creature. For the time being, I'll go ahead and call it a Centaur, but it ain't just that its appearance looks disgusting, the mane on the back of its body burns up into flame…. It seemed crazy strong. To say the least, it doesn't seem like we'd be able to beat it.?

Ram:?Why did you ignore a Witchbeast like that after spotting it? Do you have a death wish??

Subaru:?Aaah??

He had explained it whilst keeping his emotions from billowing out as much as he could, however anger had welled up in him the moment Ram had replied in her usual frivolous manner. Despite him having expressly warned her, *who did she think she was?*

She always arrogantly looked down on others, thinking that, he felt his anger morphing into hatred. Subaru took a deep breath. He did everything he could to keep his violent emotions in check, to settle himself down.

Subaru:?Damn this…..! This place is the worst.?

Ram:?It sure is demanding, isn't it? Even I have to pay attention to the words I choose.?

Subaru:?If you're going to choose them now, then you know, perhaps, they ain't gonna make anything better?

Both Ram's voice and expression were tinged with sympathy for Subaru who was overwhelmed by his emotions. However, as her sympathetic attitude kept irritating him, he had to say that what she'd done too had ended up producing the opposite effect.

Anastasia:?It's easy ta talk about the effects of the miasma, but that's all that's scary about it, don'tcha think? In reality, me 'n Ram-san ain't affected.?

Subaru:?What do you mean by that? If you're thinking flowery thoughts like *only we will be okay*, then you'd better stop. If we scratch off the surface, me and you are the same.?

Anastasia:?What haaarsh words. I didn' mean that even I've got that much self-confidence. One's capacity for judgemen' and determination, and so on, are different issues ta the strength of one's mind and body……. Hooowever, goin' about it like yer completely paralysed by the scariness of the miasma is pretty bad, don'tcha think??

Anastasia offered her candid advice to him, phrased with an air of superiority. Though her words were rational, Subaru grew irritated that she hadn't gotten the point. Standing at the head of the group, Subaru had pressed his prior point to her as he marched on through the passageway of sand.

On hearing that, Anastasia cleared her throat with a small *Hem-hem*, and said,

Anastasia:?What I have to say is related to the miasma…..Though since it's not like even I know too well about it, can ya forgive me if what I say is gonna be rough??

Subaru:?I imagine the only ones who really know all the details about it are the Witch Cult, right??

Anastasia:?Indeed, but in the world, there's also the kinda people who like ta poke into things which people despise. For example, there's the weirdos who go aroun' studyin' stuff like miasma, eh? Though, what I know about it is somethin' which barely resembles the truth from a rumour of a rumour of a rumour.?

Was what Anastasia had brought up surmised to be a Witch Researcher?

It had a strange ring to it, but it would be pretty silly to presume they didn't exist, if he thought about it.

This world likely had people like researchers too. And of course, all such individuals who possessed this thirst for knowledge would rationally avoid searching for taboos and keep in line with the flow of the world??No, there was no way they'd have such an upright, pious nature.

There would be incarnations of curiousity who wouldn't fit in with the mould, whatever world or era it may be.

Anastasia:?Though before I dive straight inta what I know from that rumour, we hafta ask first of all,

what *is*?Miasma???

Ram:?It's…… the contaminated mana which the Witch and Witchbeasts let off, right? I've also heard that Witch Cultists let off the same thing like that.?

Anastasia:?Ram-san's answer is the prevailin' view. The miasma's somethin' which the Witch gives off, so even the Witchbeasts which were created by the Witch emit it in a similar fashion….. However, have ya heard of this??

Ram:??????

Anastasia:?Have ya heard that Witch Cultists 'n Witchbeasts in fact really detest each other.?

Anastasia = Eridna spoke without pause. Knowing what the creator was like, they were fond of flaunting off their own knowledge, perhaps. It looked like Anastasia's gilded plate had been torn off and underneath it, the white fox's true nature had showed through.

Ram's eyes widened at Anastasia's words, in stark contrast to Subaru, who had harboured that impression. Both Witchbeasts and Witch Cultists were creatures that she thought were leal to the?Witch of Envy.?Perhaps she was surprised to learn that in the truth they didn't get along.

Ram:?I can barely bring myself to believe that… But, is this for real??

Anastasia:?Unfortunately, I don't know for sure since I ain't acquainted with either any Witch Cultists or Witchbeasts. That's why I introduced it as somethin' from a rumour. But, don't ya think it'd be interestin' if this was a true story??

Subaru:?Interesting…...??

Subaru responded, having gotten the impression that she shouldn't have described it that way to begin with. Anastasia replied to him with a curt nod, saying?Mhm?

Anastasia:?Everyone in the world thinks that the?Witch?'n the Witch Cultists 'n the Witchbeasts are good friends, right? 'N yet, it ain't known that in fact, the two of 'em under the Witch are hostile with each other. This misunderstandin' has gone on overlooked for 400 years…… No one knows the actual truth. ?

Ram:?Surely that's…...?

Anastasia:?I apologise for bringin' this rumour forward too, but it seems like there's many misconceptions about the miasma too. For example, the relation between the Witchbeasts and the miasma is the exact opposite than what is known, in that the Witchbeasts loathe it. 'N it's said that they hate the Witch in their true feelin's as well.?

Ram:???No way could it be like that?

*(TL Note: All throughout this dialogue, except where translated as such, they were referring to the term "Witch" with just ?? so to me it felt a bit unclear whether this meant Witches in general, or **the** Witch which the world knows too well about. I opted for the latter based on the context, but the world does have an understanding of the old Witches, so we can't discount that they were using the term to refer to Witches in general.)*

Ram kept piling Anastasia with her doubts, drawn in by her story. Behind the two of them immersed in this exchange, Subaru grasped that Anastasia = Eridna's words were substantiated by a rather undeniable factor.

The relations between Witches and Witchbeasts were in fact poor, and Witchbeasts do hate the Witch.

That possibility made complete sense to him, considering how much he'd made use of the ?The Witch's Lingering Scent?until now. If it wasn't like that, then why would it have made the Witchbeasts seethe so much, making them frantically pursue him, who was covered in the Witch's Scent.

He had used his lingering scent against the first Witchbeast Invasion after he had been summoned to this parallel world. And he'd even used it against the White Whale. It was impossible to disregard the relatedness between the Witch's Lingering Scent and the miasma if he gathered all the evidence he'd seen up until now.

???The Witch's Lingering Scent?that surrounded him seemed to be miasma itself.

Subaru:?There's no way that all of these Witchbeasts would have Petelegeuse-like yandere attributes. He wouldn't be able to allow the Witch's scent from these creatures, other than from the Witch. It'd be like having another woman's scent.?

It was disgusting to think about, if that was the case, but the aforementioned possibility was suitable in regards to a logical explanation. In other words, the Witchbeasts hated the Witch's miasma and strongly looked on at it in hostility.

And to start with, most people shouldn't know that the theory which stated that?The Witch of Envy?created the Witchbeasts was actually incorrect.

The one who created the Witchbeasts wasn't?The Witch of Envy?but rather?The Witch of Gluttony.?

Since that hadn't been circulated around, it seemed like nobody noticed the relations between the Witchbeasts and the miasma as well. Anastasia's source of knowledge?? Rather, he didn't know whether there really was a researcher who studied the?Witch?but if they did exist, they sure did make a good point.

Subaru:?……What a complete farce, huh??

Subaru sighed at his own lack of concern, having thought about it to this extent. It was more natural to think that she'd just spewed out the knowledge that Anastasia = Eridna had known from the start, rather than doubting whether said researcher existed or not. When Subaru's train of thought moved to that, a

different form of anger gradually started to take root in him.

Why did Subaru have to hide the circumstances around Anastasia being Eridna like this? There was his consideration towards Julius and the?Iron Fang.?In particular, Julius in his current state had completely slipped out from the memories of the world.

Julius tried to act his same old self as much as he could, but even in him, there was a part that was careless about it. Taking that into consideration, Subaru had decided that he should avoid any extra mental burdens.

He should avoid them, but why was it that he had to bear the burden instead?

Subaru:??????

Everybody was selfish.

Why was it just him who had to do everything to cover those guys' asses?

It was irritating. It was annoying. He might as well just spill the beans about everything, shouldn't he? He might as well tell them about Anastasia's spirit, his?Return by Death?, everything??.

Ram:?……Barusu. Stop sticking your head in the sand all of a sudden, it's strange.?

Subaru:?It's just my natural defensive reaction to stop our relations from getting any worse. *Phaaah.*?

Since Subaru's anger was reaching its boiling point, he had stuck his face into the wall of sand before he hurled abuse at them. The wall of sand was unexpectedly brittle, and it appeared like he'd be able to dig through it with his hands.

In return for finding that out, Subaru spat out sand from his mouth. There was something to think about in Ram's cold expression, but since he was responsible for his own actions, he kept any retaliation to himself.

Anastasia:?Could Natsuki-kun's eccentric behaviour also be from the miasma's influence….. perhaps??

Ram:?Nope, Barusu's behaviour is as usual.?

Subaru:?It ain't as usual! It's just an aftershock from the miasma's influence!?

Anastasia:?Well, regardin' the authenticity of things there, if we get back to what we were talkin' about whilst ya were cryin' out…. The Witchbeasts in truth hate the Witch. If we presume that, then there's gotta be an explanation for the Witch Cultists 'n the Witchbeasts bein' hostile with each other, no??

Anastasia, who deliberately found a lull in their conversation to shift the topic back to the main point, ponderously inclined her head. However, Subaru's like-minded opinion didn't reach her words. Instead, Ram nodded, and said,

Ram:?Whether they’re hostile with each other or not, I’ve never heard….. of the two of them acting together. To begin with, there’s also that rumours of the Witch Cult don’t spread.?

Subaru:?I see…..Then it’s really the type of secret organisation where those guys keep it hidden and move about in secret. I wonder why they don’t leave any impressions at all, though.?

Ram:?Barusu and Emilia-sama come across those guys far too often.?

All the Witch Cultists which Subaru knew strongly craved the limelight, and were absorbed in an inflated sense of their own self-worth. He couldn’t even say that Petelgeuse’s movements had been kept surreptitious, and what’s more, the other Sin Archbishops had went all the way up to making a broadcast after having hijacked one of the Great Cities.

How could those guys claim that they were an evil organisation that operated in the shadows?

Subaru:?Ah, but wait up. What about the White Whale? That thing was cooperating with the Witch Cult…...Though now it’s a bit suspicious whether it was or not, there was still that time.?

Anastasia:?Hmm? Even though I know that the Witchbeasts definitely do hate the Witch Cult, I’m not too sure whether the Witch Cult hate the Witchbeasts…...Though, either way, even if it’s not like that, I ain’t gonna fuss over it.?

Subaru:?That’s what I’d told you..…?

Providing a suitable rebuttal to Subaru’s objection, Anastasia threw down her personal opinion straight away. That she didn’t cling to it was perhaps indeed proof that she’d heard it from the rumours of another’s opinion.

However, she'd thoroughly used it as the basis of her conversation. In the end, Anastasia closed one of her eyes, and said:

Anastasia:?In the end, we can just put it as that we don’ understand the connection between the miasma well. There’s also the way Ram-san looks at it, in which it’s like contaminated mana…..But, well, doesn’ it seem like there’s no one aroun’ who can explain what goes on for the mana to get contaminated like that??

Ram:??????

Anastasia:?Mana is mana, regardless of whose body it goes through. Even if its nature changes in magic or when ya craft with it, it ain’t possible for anyone to add a lil’ extra to the mana itself.?

Subaru:?That’s…..?

Anastasia:?Why is it that the mana can jus’ get contaminated with the?Witch of Envy??And also, why da heck do Witch Cultists acclimatise to that contaminated mana??

Quite unusually, Ram kept her mouth shut as Anastasia launched this barrage of questions. It was rather strange that she didn't raise any words of objection and kept silent. At the same time, Subaru was experiencing a sense of déjà vu along with his feeling of revulsion.

The way she had presented it made both her point and conclusion vague. Everything about her attitude felt like she was speaking in riddles. That she seemed to overlap with Echidna left him quite the sour taste.

Anastasia:?Alright, alright, alright, it seems like we've spent too much time idly gossipin', don'tcha think??

Anastasia suddenly spoke out without any consideration for Ram's silence or Subaru's cathexis. The tone she'd been speaking in up until now suddenly changed, leaving them behind with the abrupt change of subject. Leaving the two of them in her wake, Anastasia shone her lantern at the front part of the passageway. Subaru also stopped in his tracks, imitating her. And as he held his lantern up, he noticed what was up.

Subaru:??????

In front of them, the passageway gradually turned to the left, and a faint breeze blew towards them. The wall of sand still hadn't changed in any respect, but he vividly remembered that?Smell of Burning?that mingled with the breeze, along with that sudden bend in the path.

Ram:?It smells like something burnt, like grilled meat, doesn't it??

Ram let out her candid impressions about the breeze which carried a tinge of hot-air to it. The smell of over-cooked, charred flesh streamed in from the depths of the passageway. Maybe it was possible that this aroma was proof that there was someone cooking, and that they'd be able to meet a friend party up ahead ??However well-intentioned his thoughts were, they were tantamount to ignorance.

Ram:?Emilia-sama and the others carelessly set up a fire and are taking a break….. I think something along those lines??

Subaru:?I do agree that Emilia would be the one that'd seemingly set up a fire without any care, but with me mentioning the Centaur, I can't at all imagine it being that. You too have to believe that this isn't your head filling up with overly optimistic thoughts, right!??

Ram:?I'm looking forward to how you're going to come up with excuses for all these reckless remarks after the influence of the miasma is gone.?

Everytime he replied in a snappier manner than was necessary to Ram's questions, he'd get toxicity scathingly thrown back from her too. Letting out a snort to that, Subaru reassured himself that the one he needed to turn his hostility to was not her.

There was no doubt about that, considering they'd already made it here. There would be a large cave up ahead, and right there, the blasphemous Witchbeast clad in flame would be awaiting them.

The time they'd spent getting here seemed to be a little quicker compared to last time. Nevertheless, considering that they were going to encounter it, perhaps that place was the Witchbeast's burrow. He held no fleeting traces of hope that it would've moved from there. If possible, they would have to??

Subaru:?We've got no choice but to kill it to get past, huh??

Ram:?I think it'd be productive of us to come up with a plan that can be put into motion with our current fighting strength.?

Anastasia:?We ain't got any fightin' strength even if I use my trump card…..and even then, I want ta keep that gruellin' thing as a last resort if possible, since I can't undo its effects.?

Both Anastasia and Ram opposed Subaru's course of action. Though Subaru was annoyed that he'd been denied, even he had no intention of pushing his own opinion on them. In fact, it would be absurd. He hadn't dubbed their group as the?Non-Combatant?Team for nothing. All the choices which entailed confronting the Witchbeast would probably end up being reckless.

Subaru:?On the other hand, there's no way we can go back and take the right path.?

Ram:?After looking at all the different faces you've made up till now, Barusu, I can see that you wouldn't have the guts to go down the right path, isn't that right??

Anastasia:?But, by sayin' that it means we're cornered. It wouldn' work ta do such a laudable thing as ta go back to where we started from 'n wait for the others to come look for us……. Right??

Ignoring Ram's flippant reply, Anastasia's reply hit the nail on the head. If he still feared the Witchbeast enough to turn back, then he should have resorted to spinning those words from the beginning and stopping back there. Since he hadn't, his conclusion had left him with just the option of passing by the Witchbeast.

Thus, that didn't mean they couldn't find a way to accomplish that.

Subaru:?First things first, we need to gather information on our opponent. If everything goes to plan, we have a chance.?

Subaru spoke out, reaching a conclusion before the other two, who were puzzling over a plan, did.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??Subaru hardly knew anything anything about the Centaur Witchbeast's mode of life.

That was due to the fact that he'd come across it for only a few dozen seconds before being burnt alive. All that remained pitifully carved into his soul from that experience was that its grotesque-looking figure made him feel sick to the core, and that it had tremendous firepower. If he briefly thought about it, his manner of death had been such that it felt unavoidable to perceive it as anything other than having been a death in vain.

However, it’d be bothersome if he got worked up about it over that. When it came to unexpected?Deaths?Natsuki Subaru was a veteran.

Subaru:?First of all, we need to pay attention to the Centaur’s appearance.?

Its repulsive appearance was something which you couldn’t forget once seen. Though he’d seen it only for a few seconds, its grotesque appearance was seared vividly into his mind. That would give him a helping hand in his reflection.

It had a human body on top of a horse body, with its head transformed into a horn. In addition to that, it had a gaping maw across its body. It looked shoddy, like something half-assed a child would have made out of clay whilst playing. However, there was something he’d taken notice of when he racked his brain without averting his eyes from his memories.

Subaru:?It definitely didn’t have eyes.?

In essence, it didn’t have a head in the place where you’d usually find one. Thus, he was certain that there hadn’t been any organs on that Witchbeast’s body that provided it with a sense of vision.

Or, since there was no light down in the cave systems underneath the sand dunes without being in possession of a lantern, perhaps the negative effects of moving about down there had caused it to de-evolve.

Subaru:?Something like a mole? It adapted to living underground and lost its eyesight.?

Or, he wasn’t sure whether it had an eyesight to begin with; but at least that Witchbeast probably didn’t rely on it and went on about its business without it. Back then, the Witchbeast didn’t seem to have noticed him due to the lantern light. It had noticed him from the noises and indications he’d let off from his own carelessness.

Namely, from either a sense of smell or hearing which the Witchbeast would have developed instead of eyes.

Subaru:?If I’m recalling correctly, I once heard that moles have a good sense of hearing to make up for their rather poor noses.?

It wasn’t something he’d heard from Anastasia earlier, but rather surely some odd knowledge he’d picked up somewhere. However, Subaru’s guess ended up far more useful than what he clung to in his groundless thoughts. The Centaur’s forte was in its sense of hearing; having come to that conclusion, Subaru sprung into action.

Thus...

Subaru:??????

Without uttering a single word, Subaru swung his arm up and down as quietly as he could. From the

moment he'd stepped onto the sand, he'd taken care so that his footsteps wouldn't make any sound from crunching against the sand.

The thing he'd thrown from the extremity of his arm was one of the flasks of water that they'd put in their survival kit. Without any particular aim, the flask flew straight forward to the end of the large cave?? Drawing the attention of the fiery Witchbeast in the middle of the cave to where it had landed.

Centaur:?????? ? !!?

As soon as the flask of water landed on the sand with a quiet clunk, the reaction of the Centaur, who heard it, was dramatic. Shaking its blazing mane, the Witchbeast leapt up with its horse body and galloped forward to the source of the sound. It ferociously rammed its body there with no trace of hesitation.

Centaur:?????? ?!!?

Sand billowed up, and flickering sparks flew about around the cave. Thrashing about violently, the Centaur skidded around. It gnashed the fangs inside its huge gaping maw together and continued to let out a shrill yowl which sounded like the cries of countless babies crying.

It stamped on the flask of water, crushing it flat, and set it aflame over and over again. Once the Centaur reduced its original shape to nothing, it let off more flames which were brimming from its mane onto the sand. And when everything other than the parched sand had been burned to a crisp, the Witchbeast stopped in its tracks with a hint of satisfaction.

It did seem to look satisfied. Whilst looking at its handiwork from the corner of his eye, Subaru shook the string he had attached to his waist and motioned them forward. The sound of them carefully stepping on the sand was drowned out by the shrill cries of the Witchbeast that permeated all across the cave. Taking absolute care with each step, they crept on forward one step at a time??

??????

Subaru tugged at his string, indicating a halt to their march, stopping his advancing Earth Dragon in its tracks. To his surprise, the Earth Dragon, who shouldn't have been able to understand human speech, had faithfully followed his instructions. It had slowly trodden along the sand with a prudent gait that was not befitting of its large build.

?? Subaru and the others were conducting a march along the precipice of death in the cave that was coated in darkness.

Come to think of it, the width of the cave was probably around the size of a school gym, or thereabouts. They were in an area where the charred corpses of the creatures that had been incinerated by the Witchbeast had fallen just about everywhere.

Subaru and the others were trying to move across and get past the Witchbeast by trying to silence their footsteps and breathing.

??????

The area wasn’t such that only quietude like that of the grave would descend upon. The Centaur’s ridiculously large maw was panting wildly over and over again. The sound felt like the awkward sort you’d get from air coming out of a balloon.

It wasn’t just its appearance, but also its behaviour that was repulsive?? Nevertheless, he was thankful that it was behaving so plainly right now. Thanks to that, he’d managed to come up with a plan that wouldn’t involve fighting.

??????

Once again, Subaru took out another flask of water and threw it behind the Centaur. The simple-minded Witchbeast reacted to that sound and once again fiercely assailed the empty flask.

Flames and the cries of babies permeated the cave, and the flask of water burst open thanks to the Centaur’s immense heat. With a parched sound, the flask turned to black charcoal.

Regardless of that kerfuffle, Subaru and the others moved forward and managed to shorten their distance to the passageway during that time.

??This simple diversion was the conclusion Subaru had reached from observing the Centaur’s mode of life.

Having deemed that it didn’t have an eyesight, Subaru determined that the Centaur relied on its sense of hearing. Leaving Ram and Anastasia behind him, he’d attracted the Witchbeast’s attention by using the same method of throwing stuff. He’d repeated this demonstration a few times until he won over their confidence.

The Centaur was a Witchbeast that sought its prey using its sense of hearing. And on top of that, it was a simple-minded creature that could be tricked a bunch of times with the same method.

So long as he’d been able to ascertain that, the rest came easy. He’d made Ram gather the items for the diversion as well as made her read where the exit was using the wind, for after they made their escape past the Witchbeast. After that, he’d scrupulously told Patrasche about their covert plan, and the need to keep a strong heart so not to succumb to stress or anxiety, and to just put her game face on.

??????

In actuality, Subaru’s tactics were working really well to the point that it felt anti-climatic. The distance between the cave and the passageway had already been half-cleared, and the time they’d spent stressing wasn’t all that much. Since it had no capacity for intuition, the Witchbeast would probably be clearable by repeating the same thing over and over.

??????

Of course, they had dropped the lantern-light, and the only thing they could see was the Centaur's blazing mane that was crackling in the distance.

The lantern-light likely wouldn't have affected the sightless Witchbest, but still, they'd made the bourgeois decision of narrowing down anything which could trigger its senses as much as they could.

??????

Feeling the string being pulled, Subaru's attention, which had wandered off in thought, was brought back to the present. He was holding two strings as he put the diversion into effect. One of them was fastened to Patrasche, whilst the other was held by Ram who was riding on her.

The instructions he'd set to Patrasche were "Stop" and "Go". However, its connection between him and Ram hadn't been particularly well stipulated. It was just there to get each others attention.

Even so, their connection using the string that merely conveyed their presence, without being able to look face to face or exchange words, was something that settled Subaru down a rather surprising amount.

Having this for now made it so that Subaru wouldn't bear any ill feelings towards Anastasia or Ram. He was in a state of mind where it felt easier for him to not look at someone else's face.

On the other hand, it didn't mean that there wasn't any anxiety in his heart, which had grown at ease to such solitude. Subaru had convinced himself that it was partially due to the miasma's influence?? However, many parts of the story which Anastasia had told them earlier regarding "What Miasma is" had become cloudy.

Would he be cured from its effects when they left this place? In truth, that also felt doubtful now.

Supposing he wasn't cured from it, would he end up being unable to get rid of these unpleasant feelings even when he met Emilia and Beatrice...

Subaru:???!??

The string was suddenly pulled with strength, causing Subaru to unintentionally pitch back. The string that had been pulled was the one that was fastened to Patrasche. The Earth Dragon had made a snap decision to stop him by force.

And right as he lifted his face up, he immediately saw why??

Subaru:???*ukh*?

A clump of fire hurled past a step ahead of Subaru. The clump of fire was approximately the same size of a football, but it hurtled past spraying waves of heat to its surroundings. It crashed against a wall of sand a few metres away, letting out a violent booming noise, followed by an explosion.

A hot wind gusted out that scorched Subaru's cold body; he barely managed to stop himself from

screaming.

It would definitely have landed a direct hit if Patrasche hadn't stopped him. He didn't know whether it had enough power to kill him, but he was sure that it had enough firepower to injure him. Subaru gritted his teeth realising that he'd barely escaped with his life as a shiver ran down his spine.

Why had the fireball been thrown at him?

Subaru:??????

Subaru reflexively turned to look behind him. The Centaur should have been deceived by his diversion, and should have been messing around with the water flask on the other side of the cave. However, the Witchbeast now had turned its horned head to where they were, snarling.

Just like it knew that Subaru and the others were standing there.

Subaru:??????

No way could that be it, Subaru shook his head.

Subaru unfastened a water flask from his waist and took hold of it so he could set up the diversion again. The string which connected him with Ram was constantly being tugged, calling him, but he took no note of it. His highest priority now was to lure the Witchbeast's attention away from them.

He swung up the flask of water into an arc and threw it far to the left of the Centaur, where it dropped onto the sand. And just as he'd expected, the Witchbeast's attention turned to that spot and the clumsy beast was attracted to the obvious diversion.

Once again, flames gushed out and the lament of crying babies echoed out. And whilst the shrill echo reverberated across the cave, Subaru urged Patrasche onwards towards the exit.

(TL Note: The exit is another passageway by the way, sometimes I just translate it to "Exit" because it sounds more clear in English than using the ambiguous word "Passageway" that could refer to where they came from.)

They just had to keep repeating this predetermined routine over and over again. With just that, they ought to be able to break past, however??

Subaru:???*hk*!?

Once again, the fireball thrown by the Centaur hurtled past next to where Subaru was walking. It had gotten even closer than last time, with the shot being so accurate as to graze his skin.

Subaru's breath was instantly taken away from him by the fireball's explosion, and he was buffeted by the wave of heat.

Subaru:??????

Bathed in the illumination of the newborn orange lightsource ahead of him, Subaru locked eyes with the Witchbeast in the distance. Their eyes didn't actually meet, through, so saying they locked eyes wasn't quite right.

However, the Witchbeast's attention was clearly focused this way. The Witchbeast had no way to track them except by sound, so why was it able to find them in the middle of its own cry??

Subaru:?It's own… cry…?

Ram:?Barusu, the echo…?

As the question and answer came together in Subaru's mind, Ram, who was still pulling the string, finally called to him and made a sound. At the moment they both came to the same conclusion, the Centaur kicked the sand.

Its hooves kicked the surface of the sand, and the Witchbeast, which was so large they had to look upwards at it, flew lightly through the chilly air. The heat of its blazing mane increased as it moved, and all at once was streaking towards Subaru's group.

The human torso attached to the horse's body raised its arms, and pulled away pieces of its own flaming mane. While held in its hands, those pieces changed into balls of fire, and after the blink of an eye, became explosive flaming bullets.

Subaru:?...! Runrunrunrun!!?

At this point, avoiding a fight with the Centaur was no longer possible.

Discarding the plan to move with as little noise as possible, Subaru slapped Patrasche's haunches, ordering her to run immediately to the corridor.

Subaru's group was currently in the exact center of the cave, far from both the corridor they entered from, and the one they were moving towards; a position so advantageous for the Centaur that it seemed likely this had been the Witchbeast's plan.

Subaru:?Was it playing about with us…!??

Ram:?.....!?

Subaru's mind froze in amazement, but the Witchbeast didn't let up. Hurling the fireballs as it created them, the Centaur blew clouds of sand into the air around its fleeing targets, as if playing with them.

The Witchbeast had expected that they would run straight for the corridor. Having said that, even if they tried running a zigzag course to confuse it, its hearing captured every sound, and wouldn't fall for such a trick.

Subaru:?Woah! Wah!?

Grazing their lowered heads, the fireballs were thrown one after another.

Out of sight, the Witchbeast ran circles around them as they fled, not letting up with its explosive barrage, hurling bursts of sand into the air.

Subaru:?Gah??!??

The heatwave of an explosion at his feet lifted Subaru easily into the air, and sent him flying.

He quickly protected his head with both arms, but the rush of hot air burned the inside of his nose and throat. Breathing was painful, and with the inside of his nose scorched, he temporarily lost his sense of smell.

He rolled on the ground from the agony in the center of his face, then raised his teary-eyed face.

The mouth in the Centaur’s torso was open wide, and the toothy maw was emitting an ear-splitting noise, almost looking like it was laughing. No, it was actually laughing.

Laughing at the weak human plaything, that couldn’t even win a battle of wits with a Witchbeast.

Subaru:?Damnit, argh…!?

Hatred boiled in him, and gave Subaru the strength to stand.

Compared to suspicions and mistrust, what a wonderfully healthy feeling it was to hate the vermin that opposed him. As he was swallowed up in a blackness of distilled fury, Subaru snorted at the Witchbeast that looked so pleased with itself.

Acting like it had won was laughable.

How could a lowly miasma-hating Witchbeast think it could ever hope to beat Natsuki Subaru?

Subaru:??????

Putting a hand to his waist, he took out his whip.

Letting his hand remember the feel of the handle, he lightly flicked the sand with the end of the whip; the Centaur immediately stopped its roaring laughter, and intently turned its ears towards the crack of the whip.

Most likely, it was the first time it had ever heard that sound.

However, that wasn’t Subaru’s real plan. The whip was nothing more than a diversion.

Subaru:???Invisible Providence?

In response to the Witchbeast's violence, a roiling, seething black emotion formed in Subaru's heart.

Given direction, it turned into strength to tear the Centaur limb from limb. Using it this way made him look like a one-trick pony, but he didn't care. It was a trick that would work on anyone.

Subaru:????

Swinging the whip above his head, he let the Witchbeast listen to the sound of it splitting the air.

Taking care not to alert the Centaur, which was paying close attention to the first sound, the invisible magic hand advanced like it was slipping through the darkness, infiltrating the Witchbeast's shadow, aiming for the horn atop its human torso.

Between the human body and the horse body, he couldn't tell which one had vital organs. With its head being a horn, if there was a brain stuffed inside it or not was a mystery. Despite that, there had to be a vital organ of some kind inside. With that decided, he would crush the horn in the palm of his invisible hand.

If the loss of the horn happened to make the Witchbeast obedient, he'd simply have it kill itself. That would be much more pleasant…

Subaru:?...!? Gu… agh… Gah!??

With that thought, it happened just as he was about to carry out his plan.

Focusing on the Centaur, his?Unseen Hand?reaching for its head, Subaru's own head was filled with a burst of unimaginable pain. Feeling as though something had stripped away his scalp and was drilling directly into his skull, his eyes rolled back and yellow foam frothed from his lips as he fell to his knees.

Subaru:?Gah...ah!? Guh...Agh!!?

Bringing both hands to his head as he knelt, he struck himself on the side of the head to try and fight off the pain. Rubbing his head, holding his head, nothing else helped with the pain. To fight the pain, he tried to inflict a sharper, stronger pain. He struck himself again, and again, but no matter how hard he hit himself, he couldn't overcome the pain.

He rolled on the sand while his head felt like a hell full of thorns piercing his brain, and nearly fainting from pain, he ended up swallowing sand without understanding why.

Subaru:?It hurts! Augh! It hurts it hurts it hurts! It hurts!?

He shouted like he was spitting blood.

With a mouth full of sand, chewing it with his back teeth, Subaru thrashed on the ground, fighting against

the mysterious pain to keep it from blocking his throat. He couldn't fight it, he was losing.

Of course, Invisible Providence had vanished instantly.

With that dispersed, he had no way of affecting the Centaur. The Witchbeast, as though disappointed with his lack of resistance, prepared to turn him into a smoking corpse.

A huge ball of flame drove away the chill in the air as the explosive heat warmed the world around them.

Just like that, Natsuki Subaru would be changed into charcoal…

Patracshe:?????? !?

At the last moment, the jet-black Earth Dragon charged in fiercely, tearing away the Witchbeast's arm.

Patrasche:??????

With a body colour that blended into the darkness, the Earth Dragon had soundlessly approached the Witchbeast, and landed a biting attack. Losing its balance along with its arm, the Witchbeast dropped the fireball it had raised above its own head.

In other words, the heat of the fireball the Witchbeast had created exploded at its own feet, and the point-blank blast wave blew it into the air.

As it was thrown away by the explosion, blood dripped from the Centaur's wounded arm, and it fell over on its back. Without sparing it a glance, Patrasche sprinted over the sand, and, holding Subaru's clothing with her teeth as he thrashed in pain, she immediately began a sprinting retreat.

Held by Patrasche's teeth near his waist, swinging left and right as he dangled, tormented by poor circulation and the continuing headache, Subaru looked behind him.

Behind Patrasche, the Centaur unsteadily rose to its feet.

The wound on its human torso foamed, and the left arm that had been bitten off grew back in an instant. Its monstrous regeneration ability was at work on its other injuries as well. The wounds all over its body, inflicted by the explosion moments ago, closed one after another. The Centaur returned to full health in a matter of seconds.

With that done, there was nothing left to slow it down.

Screaming viciously at Patrasche, who had struck it by surprise, the Centaur sped up to pursue the madly fleeing Earth Dragon, and its mane blazed brighter as it leapt.

Patrasche's running ability was impressive in even the worst terrain, but the Centaur's was in its own habitat, and its acceleration was a step ahead. Along with their difference in size, Patrasche was weighed down by Subaru, and the Witchbeast was soon running side by side with her.

A burning fireball appeared in the Witchbeast's hand, but this one was stretched tall. Looking closer, the fireball changed in the Witchbeast's hand to a long-handled weapon, and in the blink of an eye, it had become a spear, covered from end to end in flame.

Centaur:????? !!?

Raising the flaming spear, the Centaur drove the tip towards Patrasche. The black Earth Dragon ducked as the spear approached, almost diving into the sand to avoid the attack and using that as an opening to speed up further.

However, just when it looked like they could get away, the Witchbeast's hoof drove straight into the Earth Dragon's torso from the side. The force of the attack passed through her hard skin, and she cried out as the impact smashed into her guts. Even then, she refused to drop Subaru, still dangling from her teeth. The heat he could feel near his waist was from the blood Patrasche was coughing up from her internal injuries.

That was the only sign she was badly injured.

However, she still wouldn't let Subaru go, and Subaru had no way to care for his loyal dragon's wounds. All he had was the seemingly eternal torture of the unending pain in his head.

Ram:?...EL FULA!!?

Anastasia:?JIWALD…!?

A second strike from the flaming spear was aimed at Patrasche, who was clearly slowing down.

However, before it reached the Earth Dragon's body, it was interrupted from two different directions.

From one side came an invisible blade of wind, from the other was a convergence of white-hot rays of heat.

Both of the incantations came from familiar voices, but that was all Subaru could say for sure.

Both spells landed direct hits on the Witchbeast, blowing holes through its body and cutting through the human torso at an angle… those wounds, too, closed instantly.

Ram:?Barusu…! Oh, fine, if you're dead, you should say so!?

Anastasia:?That's a nasty one, that Witchbeast…...I won't be able ta do much ta that thing.?

Even though it sounded normal, one of the girls' voices carried a trace of desperation. On the other hand, despite being in a desperate situation, one of the girls' voices lacked any sense of stress.

Feeling his loyal dragon's breath and blood on his skin, Subaru was on the verge of falling unconscious. If he was going to go through this much pain and torment, maybe dying wasn't so…

Ram:?Don’t you dare die, Barusu! Rem would cry!?

Subaru:?...oh?

That voice, shouted right in his ear, cut through the pain and reached his brain. What the voice awakened was a hatred no less than the one he held for the Witchbeast.

They had forgotten.

Not a single one of them remembered that girl.

...Don’t talk about Rem and I like you know anything about it.

Subaru:?...INVISIBLE PROVIDENCEEEE!?

Releasing his feelings of anger towards the Witchbeast passing through the edge of his tear-stained vision, Subaru struck at it with a pitch-black magical hand in an outburst of rage.

Partway there, another raging pain tore at his skull?? before he was swallowed by it and lost consciousness, Subaru’s?Unseen Hand?hit the Witchbeast’s spear head-on, breaking it as a token act of defiance.

...That was all the resistance he could muster.

Centaur:??????

The reward for his angry counterattack was another burst of furious pain.

The Centaur planted its front legs in the sandy ground and pivoted on them, turning itself around forcefully, and then its rear legs lashed out like a catapult.

Its solid rock-like hooves kicked sand into the air as they sped towards Subaru’s group?? himself, Patrasche, and Ram and Anastasia who were likely nearby as well, intending to tear through them all at once.

In an explosion of leg strength sufficient to bring down part of the cave, everyone was sent flying different directions by the wave of sand. Subaru was even torn away from Patrasche’s jaw, rolling helplessly on top of the sand, and thrown by the aftermath of the impact against a destroyed, burned body.

Subaru:?Ah, uh…?

A headache that couldn’t be described, and a body trampled by the Centaur’s kick.

Assaulted by continuous pain from the inside and out, Subaru could no longer hold on to his consciousness. Somehow, as he rolled loosely on the sand, he could feel the approaching darkness of death.

Destruction, annihilation, futile death, death in battle.

Heartless words like that roamed the back of his mind, but…

Subaru:??????

In a situation where his lungs had forgotten to even breathe, Subaru saw someone standing in front of him.

It was a small, delicate shadow. In a world with too little light, he couldn't see it clearly. Even then, it was a familiar shape that he knew immediately. It was Ram. She was wobbling as she stood.

She had both arms outstretched, to protect Subaru.

Stop it. It's stupid, impossible, useless…

He tried to say it, but his throat would no longer listen to him, as though it was filled with sand. ??No, it actually was filled with sand. Because of the sand he'd stupidly swallowed trying to fight the pain in his head, Subaru could no longer even speak clearly.

Subaru:?...wh...y??

With all his strength, Subaru managed a weak cry. Despite all the pent-up dissatisfaction and anger he had felt towards Ram and his other friends, that surely they must have known about.

Ram:???Rem would… cry.?

Ram made only that quiet response to Subaru's words.

For the little sister she couldn't remember, for the person most dear to that unremembered sister, Ram stood.

What pushed her to go that far, Subaru couldn't understand.

He couldn't understand that, but there was one thing he did understand. At this rate, Ram was going to die. Subaru would die too. There was no way to avoid it.

Subaru:??????

The Centaur bellowed, swinging both its arms and creating a blazing sword in each of them. They didn't really look like swords, though, so perhaps it had meant to make hammers or axes.

Regardless, they were both weapons wrapped in flame. It stood on the verge of using them to cut Ram's much smaller frame into pieces, and roast Subaru as well.

Subaru:?...come, come on. There's gotta be...something.?

Staring death in the face, Subaru reached down through the depths of his pain.

Fighting against the relentless pain was like diving deep into himself. Looking outside himself - to Ram, Patrasche, or Anastasia?? was unrealistic.

Even if it would be derided as a dream or delusion, Subaru looked inside himself for something, anything. This unrealistic approach was the most realistic hope he had left.

Diving inside, reaching into the murky depths of his body, pulling aside the writhing black thoughts, Subaru looked inside himself for anything that could help. Not the?Unseen Hand? he had overused. Something different, something, something new, some way to pull through this mess.

His last-ditch search yielded…

Subaru:???ah?

Nothing, and Subaru watched as the Witchbeast in front of him raised its swords. The flames crossed above the Witchbeast’s head, and after a moment’s pause, descended towards Ram.

Burning the very air, the oncoming slashes would heartlessly cut a burning path through the girl’s slender body, burn her away, leave nothing of the path she had walked, the memories she had held, or anything at all except black charcoal…

At that scene, Subaru cried out against his own powerlessness.

??????

The next moment, white light unleashed with tremendous speed blew away the Witchbeast’s upper body.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

The body of the Witchbeast which had wielded those swords of flame vanished from the world thanks to that tremendous light. The light didn’t bring forth such simplicities like crushing or severing its body, but rather it was the literal meaning of annihilation.

??????

The Centaur was a monster that had a human body on the head part of a horse’s body. And the light had blown away, the part which was construed as its human body from chest up. Of course, that included the arms on its shoulders, the horn which was in place of a human head, and the fanged maw that gaped across its chest.

Blood soundlessly gushed out from the Witchbeast’s wounds from the impact?? And immediately after, its wounds started to foam, readying itself to use the same hyper-recovery technique it had used thus far.

Its squirming flesh swelled up, and its obliterated human body re-formed anew. The human body regenerated right away and explosive balls of fire quickly surged into life on both of its arms.

Centaur:???????!!?

The Centaur roared, and the alluring voice of countless babies filled the chilly air. Turning its body around, the Witchbeast paid no heed to Ram or Subaru, and instead leapt straight up towards the dangerous enemy that had blown away its upper body.

The Witchbeast summoned a heapload of fireballs on its arms and cast them one after the other as it rushed forward. Consumed by its heated frenzy, the Witchbeast prepared to unleash its own battle cry. However??

Centaur:?????!??

The fireballs brought into existence by the Witchbeast were all intercepted from in front of it one by one. The things responsible for that were the flashes of white light that pierced the fireballs head on with tremendous accuracy. The speed of the flashes of light were out of the ordinary, and its strength was clearly superior to that of the fireballs.

The lumps of flame were struck by the light dead on, pulled in by the power of it, and clashed against the body of the Witchbeast itself. Immediately after Subaru had thought the Centaur had ended up like a hedgehog with quills of white light, the flames exploded all around the Witchbeast’s body.

The Centaur’s arms were obliterated to nothing, its maw was torn to shreds, its horse body was burnt and finally it had collapsed. It thrashed about on top of the sand, letting off a shrill cry in sheer anger.

However, the Witchbeast’s wounds squirmed over, and it refused to die. It was as if it was telling them to grow stronger, to change their approach, and that they should evolve their manner of bestowing death, since they couldn’t achieve it by blowing away parts of it into nothing.

??????

The Witchbeast’s appearance transformed as it regenerated its lost parts.

The human part of its body changed, now its arms had increased from two to four, and sharp, long fangs jutted out from its maw. Its lower horse-half also had more legs, numbering eight in total. Doing a simple calculation, they had doubled in quantity.

As well as that, its charred skin had hardened, now shining with a black lustre to it. At a glimpse, it maybe looked like a being that was clad in armour.

And it held an axe, a hammer, a spear, and a sword of flame in each of its newly added arms. The Witchbeast had managed to evolve itself in an unbelievably short period of time, all to alter itself so it could face the being casting the white rays of light.

??????

Raising its four forelegs, the Centaur thunderously let out a roar. It clacked its raised hooves together with a piercing clang and began to spur forwards.

Its huge figure was similar to that of an armoured train decked in steel. Its weight and acceleration would easily turn any opponent to mincemeat, causing them to meet a vicious end.

The being that had put the Witchbeast to shame would end up being completely annihilated if it was treated to a fiery finishing blow.

Centaur:???????!!?

Kicking sand up into the air?A white light pierced it?and trailing up?A white light pierced it?a plume of fiery heat, the Witchbeast fiercely?A white light pierced it?broke through.?A white light pierced it?The heat of its flames?A white light pierced it?had flared up?A white light pierced it?hotter than ever before, it was like?A white light pierced it?the hellfire?A white light pierced it?of the abyss. Its grotesque and atypical figure?A white light pierced it?made it so that you couldn’t avoid?A white light pierced it?breaking into shudders when?A white light pierced it?you caught a mere glimpse of it,?A white light pierced it?regardless who you were;?A white light pierced it?that was what the King of the Sand Sea was.?A white light pierced it??A white light pierced it??A white light pierced it??A white light pierced it??A white light pierced it??A white light pierced i??A white light pierced i??A white light pierced i??A white light pierced??A white light pierced??A white light pierced??A white light pierc??A white light pierc??A white light pierc??A white light pi??A white light pi??A white light pi??A white light??A white light??A white light??White light???

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Subaru:??????

There was nothing left behind anymore right after the crazy amount of light had streamed out. The Witchbeast, which had wielded such menace, had been completely obliterated by the light all the way up to the smithereens of its flesh. The Witchbeast had completely been blown away somewhere far out of this world.

The only thing that was left on the sand was the countless number of light rays which had been fired at the Witchbeast to erase its existence?? The source of that came just from those white, elongated stingers.

Those too instantly turned to powder as if they'd effloresced away.

(TL Note: Opting to TL ? as stinger this time instead of needle. Literally, it can refer to any needle like object.)

Subaru:??????

Subaru had even forgotten his headache as he gazed aghast at the spectacle with his own eyes. He realised that a feverish, slender body had happened to leap in between his arms. It was Ram. He didn't remember what had happened, but it seemed like he'd been embracing her body in their final moments.

Though it should've been a meaningless gesture, it looked like Ram wasn't conscious.

Subaru:??????

Subaru could hear the sound of someone stepping on the sand. That someone was ever so slowly approaching Subaru and the others; they were definitely approaching them.

The inside of the cave was still enveloped in darkness along with a frigid silence.

The only source of light came from the scattered fiery scraps that had been spewed out by the Witchbeast earlier. There was one such fiery scrap right next to Subaru that allowed him to look around a few metres.

Someone's foot entered the very edge of his field of vision.

Subaru:??????

Lifting his face up, Subaru looked up to where the owner of those feet?? And perhaps the one behind that light was. Gradually lifting up his field of vision, what he saw reflected in his bleary eyes was... a human being.

Subaru:??????

It was… a woman. A woman with a rather queer air to her.

Her legs were audaciously bare all the way up to her thighs, and the only thing that covered her crotch was the hem of her shorts that were just barely cut down for that task. Above that, her waist and belly button were exposed. A piece of cloth was wound above her slender waist like a muneate to keep her breasts concealed.

(TL Note ? Muneate: Literally a device that acts as a chest protector for women. E.g. Female archers may wear a chest protector called a muneate to prevent their breasts being struck by their bowstring.)

However, she wore something akin to a cloak from her shoulders which barely protected the greater part of her body (exposed from her pale shoulders) from the wind.

Her hair was a brown that was closer to black to the point that it seemed to blend in with the darkness around them. Her long hair was tied into a ponytail that collected all of it together.

She gazed at Subaru and the others with moist eyes which were chock-full of thick emotion. Her thin lips curved up, breaking into a rather bestial smile.

???:???I found you.?

At least I can understand what she's saying, Subaru thought to himself. And just as he thought that, his consciousness reached its limit.

Tasting the feeling of sand, Subaru let go of his consciousness still without uttering a single word. At least, it didn't seem like he'd have to let go of the girl wrapped inside his arms; he held her tight.

He only had enough willpower left to persevere to that point.

Arc 6 – Chapter 18, “The Keeper of the Sand Tower”

by admin - Friday, November 16, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/16/arc-6-chapter-18-the-keeper-of-the-sand-tower/

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Translated By :

- Ice (/u/Ice_Occultism)
- Furuta (/u/GracedHarperd)

Contributions By :

- Nana

Fan Art Source

- HaruSabin

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ALL RIGHTS BELONG TO TAPPEI NAGATSUKI, THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR OF RE:ZERO STARTING A LIFE IN A DIFFERENT WORLD FROM ZERO, THIS IS A TRANSLATION OF THE **FREE** JAPANESE WEB NOVEL INTO ENGLISH: JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

?Out of the dregs of murky darkness, consciousness emerged.

It had been a long time since Natsuki Subaru visited here. Like the several previous times, it was an empty dark world where only darkness, eternal sky and endless lands reside. It looked like he had been summoned to this place just like when he?Returns by Death?.

If he were to think about it, it was a truly mysterious place. At any rate, it wasn’t like Subaru could pull out his memories of this place, and bring them to the outside. Despite it not being his first time visiting this place, he sometimes even forgot entering it after leaving. A transient feeling, just like as if he was a mere bubble floating by in a dream.

Within this pale darkness, in the narrow gaps of his faint recollections, the consciousness known as

Natsuki Subaru moved his arms into strokes, and slowly swam amidst the jet black darkness.

Using only his consciousness, he rose to the surface; of course when it came to his body he had gotten used to the feeling of not having his limbs, his eyes, his ears, his mouth. As well as that, the fact that he didn't know what was top, bottom left or right, and the anxiety towards not being able to see anything, including the depths below. But that didn't matter to his consciousness, which was dominated by just one thing.

There was an unbearable, unending passion at the core of his consciousness, or perhaps within the formation of his consciousness itself? no, more so, it was familial love, platonic love, deep unconditional love.

When he comes here, he can be with the source of this love. His consciousness had learnt just this thing, that it was delighted that it could visit this place once again. Before he began to even relish that long awaited encounter, the feeling pounded in his rightfully nonexistent chest was one of such joy that he wanted to open his rightfully nonexistent lips to sing.

However, the emotions of this consciousness were?

Mysterious Voice 1:?We finally welcome the conclusion of this period of joy.?

Mysterious Voice 2:?Good grief, it's no joke. Acting all smug due to just a bit of luck. Have some restraint, even shamelessness can go so far, how unbearable. Do take a long, objective look at yourself; maybe then, you will see just how far your impudence has gone.?

Suddenly, he heard them; he was disturbed by voices which by all rights he should not be able to hear.

???:??????

His consciousness turned to look behind. If neither face nor body exist in this directionless world, then what's the significance in the act of looking behind, was there any? It was not to find a meaning in this, rather it was an act for the sake of giving meaning to it. You needed a body to look behind. If he consciously thought so, and acted, then the jet black darkness has no choice but to give that to the nothingness that was Natsuki Subaru.

Thus, the consciousness which looks back became Natsuki Subaru, who had been bestowed vision so he could look around his surroundings, and a body which he could turn back around with. Yet, that alone was still insufficient, and his body was far off from being complete. This Subaru was an imperfect recreation; the real Natsuki Subaru couldn't be reproduced at all.

Would it be better if he had hands, or legs, or perhaps a nose and mouth? ?No, making a human being out of nothing was not that easy.

Natsuki Subaru didn't know nearly enough about himself to recreate himself. It wasn't easy for Natsuki Subaru to complete himself using only his own memories and knowledge.

Therefore, it was impossible to make any more of Natsuki Subaru. However, in that lacking state, the incomplete Natsuki Subaru wasn't even able to recognise this. And that was why the incomplete Natsuki Subaru only gave his transient body some transient eyes. Whilst existing in a state in which he can't even place a foot down onto the ground, he looked around at his surroundings, and noticed something.

There was something other than the "consciousness" of Natsuki Subaru coming to the fore within the depths of the darkness.

Mysterious Voice 1:?Disgusting and shameful, nothing more than the result of self... CONCEIT. Aah, how very sinful, how dirty you are! Just so so so so worthy of... DISDAIN!?

Mysterious Voice 2:?Subpar, way off from a human, we could say we have the ultimate imperfection here, doesn't it feel like that? Liiike, what were they thinking making this version of me serve such a guy? Shouldn't it have been obvious from the beginning whether we could count on him? Who are you to stand in my way, a nuisance! A hindrance! Pretty much everything! So lacking! Not enough! Liiike, if you think like a logical, human being…! You're a subhuman, liike the likes of human cattle.?

His "Consciousness" rose to the fore in the darkness, where jeers rained down upon the very much imperfect Natsuki Subaru. On one side was insanity, and on the other was annoyance, both respectively venting out their hatred towards Natsuki Subaru.

However, unfortunately for Natsuki Subaru, being a mere speck of consciousness, he could not comprehend that hatred.

The heart, the brain of this Natsuki Subaru were not prepared at all to comprehend it. If he were to try and gain an understanding of those words which the "consciousnesses" uttered, then just like he materialised some flesh, and just like he created a sense of sight, he had to create organs to allow him to understand them.

???:??????

?But, somehow, those organs felt unnecessary.

At least, in order to grasp what those two "consciousnesses" were saying, the meaning behind trying to produce such a thing was weak, above all, he didn't want to memorise the urge. It was not easy to drag out his existence from nothingness. At the very least, if Natsuki Subaru's consciousness didn't truly wish for it, then he could neither create nor acquire it.

So as things were right now, he couldn't help but to postpone bringing forth a mind to understand them, as well as words to reply to the "consciousness" of those two. No, actually, there was no ulterior motive behind it.

Mysterious Voice 1:?What insolence! What contempt! What disdain! Here I am, preaching with such diligence, and yet you don't even bother to consider… CONTEMPLATING IT. How very... how very, aah, aah, aaah... ! Slothful. You are truly... slothful!?

Mysterious Voice 2:?How far will you go in making a fool out of others until you're satisfied…! Listen well, just who do you think I am? I am the most satisfied man in the world, one who worries about nothing and only wishes to pursue his simple joys and live a fulfilling life, undisturbed and free of greed, and yet you would interfere with that? This a violation of my rights. An act of wickedness. One such as you, who would crush the dreams of others so easily, must be stopped!?

Feeling that he wasn't making any progress, he turned his back to the "consciousnesses" of the two. It was convenient, with this body, to indicate that he has no intention of talking to them. Behind the scenes, he felt that their abusive words would still echo, but he didn't mind because if he showed that he cared, it would be plain enough to them.

Without even looking back, his vision laboured. Right now, what he needed was not "Sight", but "Eyeballs". Should the chance present itself, he would remember to create eyes.

However, right now, he had no time to deal with such trifles.

???:??????

Because, right in front of of Natsuki Subaru's consciousness, the silhouette of his purpose was being shown.

???:??????

In the jet black darkness, where nothing should have been visible, the silhouette clad in deeper black than the midst of the darkness he was in was far more vivid. Sometimes, she would freeze Natsuki Subaru's heart, both arms with such graceful fingers would dangle loosely. Though slender, those limbs possessed such tenderness, garbed in a dark dress. As usual, her features are unclear, as everything above her neck was covered by a thick mist. But, Natsuki Subaru understood deep within his soul that there was "someone" there that inspireed such deep emotions of love.

Her appearance was far more clear than the previous encounter, and he was far close to her, distance-wise. In his previous encounter with her, only her arms and body could be seen, a silhouette, but now she was wearing a dress, and he could see up until her bare feet peeking out from underneath the hem of her long dress. Nearly all of her body was perfectly reproduced; what wasn't visible to Natsuki Subaru was just her face hidden by the darkness.

How irritating. But for now, that was okay. Stronger than before, he felt her presence ever nearer. However, Natsuki Subaru, though clearer she may be, was not yet prepared to go out and meet her.

Right now, he was simply content with being in her near vicinity. In any case, reach out and touch those fingers, embrace her slender waist, and exchange love.

???:??I love you?

Faced with this confession, Natsuki Subaru strained his newly manufactured jaw to respond. Through that mere action, the shadow's delight could be felt; accompanying it, a feeling of shyness sprang up.

Next time, a “Mouth” and “Tongue” will be necessary so that he can express his words of love from there. While committing these emotions to memory, Natsuki Subaru’s consciousness started to leave this garden of shadows, and?

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

To Subaru, getting up was always rather easy, for he had that kind of a nature; on the other hand, falling asleep tended to be a struggle.

For Subaru, waking up from sleep felt as if he were raising his face above the water’s surface. No matter who may be submerged underwater, if their face breaks up to the water’s surface, they will not forget how to breathe. For Subaru, that breathing signifies the waking of his consciousness, it’s fairly natural that he can “breathe” when waking up.

Emilia:?Ooh, you get up so well, I’m jealous. I… am reaaaaaaally bad at getting up.?

This had been Emilia’s comment from when they had this conversation before. Incidentally, when it came to Emilia getting up, there was no exaggeration or humility when she said these words, it really was that bad. Speaking of what he just imagined, Emilia did have very low blood pressure, it took her about an hour to wake up and get herself out of bed.

When Subaru wakes up in his bed in the mornings, in his drowsiness he waits for to get back to his senses and then finally he gets out of his Futon, washes his face and fixes his hair? that’s his style. On the other hand, Emilia’s sleep quality differed from Subaru’s, it was exactly like a child’s. A stark contrast.

Emilia:?When I was in the forest, and I only had Puck beside me, since Puck didn’t come out much at night… I could only do stuff like sleeping...?

This had been Emilia’s comment from when they had this conversation before. And regarding the details of how Subaru had replied to this. But now that she has someone to keep her company late at night, she should have forgotten how she had been prior in life.

In any case, Subaru was honestly quite envious of her quality of sleep. No matter what, when Subaru gets into bed and closes his eyes in the middle of the night, he can’t stop thinking about all kinds of stuff. In particular, what he thinks about includes all the things he could have done differently, and all the regrets he has. Whether it was about what happened during that day, and sometimes as well what happened the day before, regret torments Subaru without any heed for either time nor means. When fighting with stuff like that, he can’t fall asleep at all. That’s the source behind his poor quality of sleep.

?So, even the events which happened beneath the sand sea became a newly planted seed of regret as far as it concerned Subaru. It’s practically assured that this would become something that would greatly disturb Subaru’s sleeping quality from now on.

Subaru:?…where… am I??

At the moment he woke up, Subaru understood that his waking had differed to the usual one from?Return

by Death.?First of all, there was light in the surroundings. Quite unlike the underground area beneath the sand sea that he had awoken in submerged by darkness, the fact that he can look around his surroundings serves as evidence of things having changed. In addition to that, the chilliness had also faded, and his body was embraced by a feeling quite different to that of lying on top of the sand. The soft feeling against his back was perhaps that of a bed. Below his head there was also something like a pillow there, in other words, Subaru was?

Subaru:?I'm lying down in a bed...?

If he were to check and say it out loud, resting on top of his body was a white cotton blanket. The feeling of a bed with a pillow was not a feeling he wasn't familiar with if he were to really check. Rather, he was really familiar with it, he immediately realised that it was the bedding that came from the dragon carriage. Thus here, he was inside the dragon carriage that they had used in their attempt to seize the Pleiades Watchtower.

Subaru:?What's this doing here…!??

Subaru sat himself up, understanding that he had been laid down within the dragon carriage that was supposed to have veered off course. In that moment, he noticed that someone was clutching his right hand. If he were to turn to face his right hand side? there was a young lady kneeling on the floor right next to the bed, her body sprawled out across the bed, sleeping. It was the silver-haired Emilia who was clutching Subaru's hand, with somewhat of a look of relief on her face.

Softly breathing, with warmth radiating from the palm of her hand. Subaru let out an exhausted, hoarse breath seeing that she was definitely here.

Subaru:?Ah, ahhhhh...Emilia, that's you right? Safe...?

Emilia's form, nestled beside him, left Subaru with no feeling of reality. Since his right hand was being held, he stretched out his left hand and placed it against her cheeks. Her white cheeks are hot, as if she was developing a fever; her skin was quite unlike its usual soft and smooth self. Just by touching them, it felt like love and affection are about to burst out of them, stroking them as much as he dared, just to make sure.

Subaru:?Oooh, there's no doubt, it's Emilia… Cute, delicate, warm.?

???:??You wouldn't be happening to be doing something inappropriate, in fact. Emilia was terribly worried for you, I suppose. She didn't sleep for two days, in fact.?

Subaru:?Huuuuuuh!??

When stroking Emilia's cheeks, having his fill of her soft breathing, Subaru had reflexively flinched at the voice that had abruptly interrupted him. And in a panic he tried to turn his head around; standing by the door which connected this living space with the bed he found the little girl leaning on it, with a look of disgust on her face.

Subaru:?Bea??

Beatrice:?Shhhhh, I suppose. I dislike this unreasonable Subaru, in fact.?

Subaru:??????

Instinctively, he had raised his voice, delighted in seeing her again, but he had been interrupted by Beatrice. Subaru placed his hand over his mouth, and quietly looked down below at the still sleeping Emilia. Whilst letting him chew on his words, her stiff expression loosened, leading her to look somewhat more happy.

Subaru:?It's dangerous, it's dangerous...Beako. Come over here. Let me hug you.?

Beatrice:?What a foolish thing to say…well, it can't be helped, I suppose.?

If he can't show his happiness at this reunion using words, then he has no choice but to show his happiness at this reunion using actions. With Subaru beckoning her, Beatrice sighed and drew closer to him. The little girl was indifferently playing with her drill curls, and when she came beside him, Subaru hugged her with his free left arm, firmly embracing her against his chest.
Subaru:?Thank goodness… seriously, thank goodness. I was really really worried.?

Beatrice:?...That's Betty's words, in fact. We couldn't find Subaru or the older sister anywhere, and we were all frightened to the core, I suppose. We were totally numb in fear, in fact.?

Subaru:?Is that so. Were you worried that I was about to die??

Beatrice:?Not entirely… I suppose. That's right, I was worried, I suppose. Really, really… really... ?

While embracing Beatrice's light body, the little girl cast her gaze down and her words faltered mid-sentence. He continued to stroke Beatrice's hair who nuzzled her head against his chest and cherished her reunion with him in silence for a moment. And after a little bit of time, the silence was broken; Beatrice moved her face away from Subaru's chest, with a feeling of relief traced across her features and hopped off of the bed with a boing.

Beatrice:?Anyway, other than the sleepyhead Emilia, I have to tell you what happened Subaru. Because in your final moments, everyone was worried, I suppose.?

Subaru:?Everyone… Oh yeah, is everyone safe? Even those who got separated from me, and those who were with me??

Beatrice:?You can rest assured, in fact. Everyone is safe and sound, I suppose.?

Subaru:?I see… I seee!?

Subaru's unease faded as he heard Beatrice's guarantee. He had heard that everyone was safe, her unexpected answer had set his heart at ease. But, straight afterwards, Subaru jerked his head up, an

unpleasant feeling of deja vu resounding from that guarantee.

Subaru:?Wait, Beako. I'm sorry for how short-lived my happiness is. But, is everyone really all right??

Beatrice:?Huh, it's upsetting being doubted by Subaru, in fact. There would be no sense in Betty deceiving Subaru like this, I suppose. I am not joking, in fact.?

Subaru:?I get that you're in a huff, but this isn't the reason why I am doubting you. Even if you weren't looking to deceive me, that doesn't mean that I haven't been fooled, didn't we just experience this torment in Pristella??

Beatrice:??????

Hearing this, Beatrice seemed to notice the source of Subaru's concern. Even in the battle against the Witch Cult in Pristella, after their battle Subaru had received an identical report. Everyone had been told that it was safe, in fact, that been a correct presumption to make, but?

Subaru:?Let me review it. With me there's Emilia and Beatrice. In addition there's Rem, Ram and Patrasche. Anastasia, Meili, Gyan, and finally… Julius. This is everyone.?

Beatrice:??????

Subaru:?You're saying that everyone… that everyone is here??

Beatrice:?They're all doing good, I suppose. Everyone, in fact. Betty forgot one of them, it's just you who remembers them… guess it's no big deal, I suppose.?

Subaru:?I see… I see. Well, I'm really really glad, everyone's okay...?

Having confirmed that everything that was necessary, Subaru carefully thinks about whether there are any more pitfalls remaining. He determined that he hadn't overlooked anything, and finally he found strength in those words which had said that everyone was safe.

Subaru:?That's good. Aaah… that's good!?

Beatrice:?Good grief, you sure like to over-exaggerate, in fact. In the first place, when we found out that you, the most likely to attract danger, was okay, we guessed that everyone else was too, I suppose.?

Subaru:?Idiot! That's not always true y'know! Even if I know that's so, I'm still anxious… anxious and worried… very worried. Were you crying after finding out I was safe??

Beatrice:?I wasn't crying or anything, in fact. Just because Betty was pressing her face against your chest, it doesn't mean you should look at it like that, I suppose. You can't prove it, in fact.?

With a hmph, Beatrice puffed out her delicate chest, however her words seemed to be brimming with emotion. On top of that, there were traces left on the bed that someone other than him had slept there at a

space of the lower part of the bed which took up about half of its size? Subaru pointed at it and said:

Subaru:?There’s evidence right here that someone crawled in next to me and fell asleep, but even with seeing this dead giveaway are you still going to say that you weren’t worried? ?

Beatrice:?That wasn’t Betty, I suppose! This is completely a false accusation, in fact. I have no idea what you’re talking about, I suppose.?

Subaru:?No one but you would act like this! Don’t feel embarrassed.?

Beatrice:?You’re wrong, in fact! Ahh, jeez, we’re gonna wake up Emilia, I suppose.?

Beatrice forced a change of subject as was the norm when they exchange such frivolous conversations.

Everyone was safe, he was relieved for now to hear those words. When they were at the sand dunes, they had been pursued by a herd of Witchbeasts and they had split up, Subaru had repeatedly?Returned by Death?in the underground area of the sand sea. He had no clue how Emilia and the others were doing and what would have happened if he couldn’t have undone it?

Subaru:?...now that you mention it, it’s like feeling suspicious about everything will only raise bogies, is that what it is??

Beatrice:?????

Looking dumbfounded, Beatrice cocked her head at Subaru who had placed his left hand on his head. For Beatrice, the meaning of that behaviour felt cryptic, but to Subaru there was a meaning to it. No, there was no meaning to this behaviour itself, but it could be said that the subjectiveness of it all was the greatest factor.

Subaru:?Beako… you’re the same as always, Beako. Emilia as well is as cute as always.?

Beatrice:?What are you even saying...?

Although she fixed him with a deadpan gaze, Subaru felt no extraordinary sense of discomfort or anxiety at her words. Toward the sleeping Emilia as well, he felt nothing but trusting love. Not a trace of the inexplicable hatred that had tormented him underground was left.

Subaru:?Since I was getting more deranged with the miasma, am I okay right now? We have no idea how to treat it or what causes it, I’m scared to just leave it just to chance, especially given how irritable I am, but... ?

Beatrice:?Subaru, if you still aren’t feeling well or you feel anxious about your health, it would be better for you to lie down, I suppose. There’s no need for you to get up all in a hurry for now, in fact. In one way or another, just Betty and everyone else will manage to undertake the trials, I suppose.?

Subaru:?...huh??

Placing her hand against his forehead, Beatrice had showed concern at Subaru, his eyes downcast. Amidst the concern in those words, was something that he hadn't heard before. Subaru listened attentively.

Subaru:?What did you just say now??

Beatrice:?So you can rest, I suppose. It's not like you're taking the day off with no good reason, Betty won't get mad at you when it's about you not feeling well, in fact.?

Subaru:?Though I remember saying such terrific stuff in this feverish talk, it wasn't that part I was referring to y'know? After that… you said something about a trial??

Beatrice:?Ahhh, yeah, I did say that I suppose.?

At having heard Subaru hounding her, Beatrice slipped out a?Damnit?in response. It's not like she had really wanted to hide it from Subaru, rather, it more so came from her concern from worrying about wanting Subaru to rest for a bit. However, it wasn't enough to make him have peace of mind, Subaru was not much of an obedient person, and Beatrice knew that well enough.

Subaru:?Beako?

Beatrice:?I know. I will give you a proper explanation, I suppose. Really, I thought that it'd be better to talk about it after you settled down… despite that, my mouth slipped.?

Subaru:?It's one of your cute points that you can't hide stuff like this. ?In the first place, I've looked the other way on stuff that I ought to have asked you from the start.?

He flashed a faint bittersweet smile at Beatrice who had admitted defeat, though the smile quickly disappeared from his face. Subaru more or less lowered his voice and opened his mouth, and naturally questioned her with:

Subaru:?Where are we? And don't go butting in saying something silly like inside the dragon carriage.?

Beatrice:?Subaru, I think it's no long stretch of the imagination, I suppose?

Beatrice gave a quick sigh, putting her arms together. And so, with a click of her heels, she looked up to the other side of the room? the little girl looked up to the ceiling.

Beatrice:??Pleiades Watchtower.?

Subaru:??????

Beatrice:?The watchtower at the end of those sand dunes, we are in it, I suppose.?

And that was what she said.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

He carefully let go of Emilia's hand; she was lying down on the bed, fast asleep since she had stayed up for two days. Subaru slipped out of the dragon carriage after giving her forehead a quick stroke.

Within the dragon carriage which they'd spent over a month in, it seemed like there were no changes to it from before it had veered off course. Without so much of a scratch on its body, it looked just as if it was new.

Beatrice:?Unlike those who were with Subaru, the ones who were with Betty, swallowed up by the?Sand Wind?chasm were safe, I suppose. We were hurled away to a different place from that flower garden… everyone with us turned pale when we realised that Subaru and some of the rest had been separated from us, in fact.?

Subaru:?You as well??

Beatrice:?Emilia and Julius too, I suppose. Betty isn't the only one, in fact.?

With a hmph, Beatrice pouted and turned her eyes away from him; she opened the door that led to the outside of the dragon carriage. The sensation of the wind outside felt rather like the one present in the sand dunes, the darkness outside was close to that of the one in the underground area of the sand sea. However, unlike back at the sand dunes, there's no sand mixed in with the wind, and the darkness was less profound when compared to the underground area. The cause of this came from some magical lamps which had been installed all the way around the area, as well as some densely packed luminous moss which lined the walls around them. The moss near him certainly reminded him of the kind he had seen inside?Sanctuary's?graveyard. It grows quite superflously wherever he may go, it's certainly quite a handy piece of vegetation to have around.

Subaru:?This place is...?

Beatrice:?The sixth floor of the Pleiades Watchtower… well, the lowermost floor, I suppose. From looking at the tower from the sand sea, it looks like the sixth floor seems to be partially buried beneath the tower, in fact. The fifth floor is above the sand… although you might say it's hard to tell, I suppose.?

Looking over the circular area, Subaru widened his eyes at hearing Beatrice's explanation. The reason why he can't really get the gist of her explanation was probably because Subaru was completely unfamiliar with the interior and the structure of the Pleiades Watchtower.

As far as he can see, the inside of the Pleiades Watchtower was fairly vast and spacious. In the place Beatrice had mentioned as being called the sixth floor, the floor was on one side made of stone, and right in the middle of it rested the dragon carriage. The circular area that spreads itself around from where the dragon carriage stood was probably about 200 or 300 metres in radius. If the tower was built exactly in the shape of a circle, rather than something more crude like an ellipsis, then he can hardly believe it, mouth agape, at the enormity of the handiwork it would have taken to construct it.

Subaru:?...Thinking about the pointless work done back in the olden days, doesn't this remind you of stuff like the pyramids? It's such a massive waste for just one person's tomb. Hmm, wait, no, I've heard stories where people were thankful for stuff like public works projects, but...?

Beatrice:?I really don’t get what you’re muttering about, in fact.?

Subaru:?I’m talking about tombstones. Even burying people alive was once popular, thinking they were taking preventative measures about what would happen to them after death, that’s how they thought back in olden times, the idea is similar?

Beatrice:?...Stories about what happens after death aren’t good omens, I suppose. Ridiculous, in fact.?

Hearing Subaru’s thoughtless remarks, Beatrice turned her eyes away from Subaru, as if in a sulk. Stroking his cheek, Subaru realised that he had said something he shouldn’t have, and so he started petting Beatrice’s hair. Suddenly, he wrapped back around to the front of the dragon carriage, having remembered something.

Subaru:?Ohh, Gyan! You’re also safe and sound! Gyan, you aren’t dead!?

Beatrice:?Why are you saying such stupid things all of a sudden, I suppose!??

Subaru:?Huh, no, I must’ve barely noticed. But, I am really glad that he’s safe heh.?

At the front of the dragon carriage, reined to the carriage itself, was the reliable earth dragon, Gyan. Of the Gyrus species which are adapted for the desert, resilience was their strong suit. Gyan had splendidly managed to survive the difficult circumstances; he showed a particularly shameless obstinance to those words.

Subaru:?By the way, everyone else aside, you're my first survival asset, saying so sounds kinda flippant...?

Gyan:??????

Subaru:?Oyoy, don’t make such a long face. Be happy. Hey, I will give you a larger share of food later?

Gyan:??????

Subaru:?What is it? Look, I’m a money-on-hand kind of guy.?

Beatrice:?It’d be high time for you to calm your little act down any time now, in fact. You sure went from being tired, I suppose.?

Beatrice glowered at Subaru, showing a face that indicated that he was being overly-friendly as he performed this pantomime alongside Gyan. In response to Beatrice’s reaction, Subaru with a twist of his neck said?My bad, my bad.?

Subaru:?Come now, I didn’t mean to embarrass you, but there’s something I wanted to check. ?

Beatrice:?What is it??

Subaru:?No… even though Gyan's here, Patrasche is still nowhere to be seen.?

His fellow earth dragon, Patrasche, it would be normal for her to be reined here to the carriage if she was safe. However, even when he checked the other side of the dragon carriage her jet-black beautiful figure could not be seen anywhere. Not being in an ideal situation, Subaru was uneasy, but,

Beatrice:?Don't jump quickly to conclusions, I suppose. That earth dragon… Patrasche, as we couldn't keep her on the sixth floor, she's on the fourth floor, in fact.?

Subaru:?Fourth floor? Is that above? Why??

Beatrice:?She's getting treatment for her wounds, I suppose. The younger of that pair of sisters from the dragon carriage... Rem, is also there, in fact. Everyone who is in a poor state was brought up to the fourth floor, I suppose.?

Subaru:?Getting treatment… will… Rem be cured!??

Subaru jumped at Beatrice's unexpected words. A faint look of surprise flitted across Beatrice's face as she saw how forcefully Subaru had reacted, but she kept him at bay by pinching his nose as he drew near to her.

Beatrice:?Ca… calm down, in fact! Don't be so impatient, I suppose!?

Subaru:?Is this the time to be calm!? Will… Rem be cured? What sort of state is she in if even Patrasche is being treated there too??

Beatrice:?Let me start from the beginning! I can't just say everything all at once, in fact. Just, we put her in place that is better than just laying her down, I suppose! The earth dragon is like so, too, in fact!?

Subaru:?...Ohh, I see?

Subaru, having tried to press for answers, hung his head down despondently, seeing the energy sap out of him, even Beatrice gave him a sad look. But, the little girl clenched her small fist, and said:

Beatrice:?Look, this isn't a situation where you should feel down, I suppose. Surely, there has to be a way to manage it, in fact. In order to make sure of that, everyone will challenge the trials of the watchtower now, I suppose.?

Subaru:??????

In order to cheer up the downcast Subaru, Beatrice clumsily attempts to urge him into rousing his spirit. Seeing her attempt, the poison in the air faded, and he pulled his chin up with a:?That's right?

Subaru:?My bad, I'm really sorry in retrospect. I'm sorry about worrying you.?

Beatrice:? If this worry is from Subaru, then for you I'll be forgiving, in fact. But at least let me worry in

a place where Betty keep an eye on you, I suppose?

Subaru:?I'll consider it carefully?

Subaru ruffled Beatrice's hair and expressed his gratitude at hearing her sympathetic words. Beatrice's hairdo was completely unyielding, and even his attempts at ruffling and disturbing it in this manner were in vain, such was its strength. In any case, under the encouragement of Beatrice, Subaru turned his eyes towards the top of the tower.

Subaru:?This is the sixth floor… at any rate, is it okay if we go up??

Beatrice:?Perhaps, Julius and the others are in the middle of the trial right now. So, beforehand, it's best if we meet with the?Sage?face-to-face and listen to a detailed account, I suppose.?

Subaru:?Sage...? Huh, now that you mention it...?

In the middle of Beatrice's words, Subaru caught hold onto the word,?Sage.?In spite of in the first place having come to this watchtower to meet with the?Sage?, Beatrice hadn't mentioned anything to do with the?Sage?up until now.

Subaru:?Beako, did you already meet with the Sage? What sort of guy was he? Did you talk to him and complain about the white light beams which zinged towards us??

Beatrice:?...I don't really want to talk about the Sage too much, in fact. Well, no, I suppose.
Perhaps, when it comes to the sage, it'll be simpler if you met them in person, I suppose?

Subaru:?Y'know... I don't remember ever having met face to face with any normal guy by the way you're speaking about them. Sure, I feel like I was told something similar by Emilia-tan when I first met with Roswaal.?

It had already been more than a year ago, but he remembered the conversation back then vividly. He remembered that she had explained it like this:?I think meeting and talking to him will be easier to understand him than talking to each other about him?in relation to Roswaal. In reality, she thought that he wouldn't have received the impact unless he met with him in person, and he'd be on the same wavelength if they spoke, but, well, what happened back then was now repeating.

Beatrice:?If you meet them, you'll understand, in fact.?

Subaru:?...Understood. In any case, it'd be good if we try and meet them. How do we get above this??

Beatrice:?Stairs, I suppose. If you look closely, on the other side of this wall there are stairs, in fact.?

If he squinted his eyes to where Beatrice's words had pointed him to, he can just about make out that there's something like steps? a staircase, on the outer edge of the circular room indeed. However, there were a huge amount of steps forming a spiral staircase that wound its way around the big, circular tower.

Subaru:?Eh…? Does this lead up??

Beatrice:?Climb up this, I suppose. If you keep going up, it won't take too long, in fact.?

Subaru:?Even if you say to keep going up… how many steps is it until the top!??

Subaru shrieked this out, as it looked likely that he'd be made to get some heavy exercise, being made to go up and down all over again. His voice echoed around the tower in vain, most likely it echoed all the way up until to the top before sorrowfully fading away. Beatrice shrugged her shoulders uttering a?Good Grief?at Subaru's lamenting.

Beatrice:?It can't be helped, I suppose. If we could use something like a bit of magic for this, it may be possible to fly upstairs in some shape or form, but...well, Subaru you have no other choice, in fact.?

Subaru:?No, look, we can like use Murak here. How about we use something like that to climb all the way up to the very top without stopping with ease??

Beatrice:?I can't do that other than if it were an emergency, I feel we'd be in danger… since I'm running low on mana… ?

Subaru:?Even if we go up the stairs normally, won't running low on physical strength be dangerous in an emergency!??

Even though Subaru's physical strength compared to back when he had been a hikikomori was stronger, he was still a feeble boy who still has some ways to go before he reaches the standards of strength of this other world, and thus he can't escape from it. He doesn't know how high above the fifth floor was from the lowermost floor, i.e. the sixth floor, but at least when he looked above at he couldn't even see a ceiling. With how high he thought it is, climbing up would be a deed as respectable as on the level of mountain climbing.

Subaru:?Damn it! Even so I have to go up and make sure that the likes of Rem and Patrasche are safe. I have to. Ah, goddamnit.?

Beatrice:?That's the spirit, I suppose. It's your fight, in fact. Betty will cheer you on, I suppose. It'd be really helpful if you call out to me when you reach the top, in fact.?

Subaru:?Don't let me do it, isn't there a shortcut!? You come along too with me. Walk! Break into a sweat!?

Beatrice:?I'm sorry, but Betty is a cute spirit and sweating would be??

Subaru reluctantly steeled himself, preparing to tackle the stairs. But, in the middle of their argument, Beatrice suddenly broke off mid-sentence, and looked up overhead.

Subaru:?Beako??

Beatrice:?Oh no, I suppose. Subaru, get down in fact?!?

With her sudden change in attitude, Subaru's voice trailed off, as both Beatrice's expression changed as well as coming to jump up to him. Catching Beatrice by her chest, he lifted her up into his arms. And, Beatrice was open-mouthed, and then she beat at Subaru's chest.

Beatrice:?Idiot! That doesn't mean you can hug me, I suppose! Get down, in fact!?

Subaru:?It was by mistake...?

As he held Beatrice within his arms, Subaru gently moved her body towards his back. He doesn't know what's happening, Beatrice's alertness was the only thing he had to work from. In preparation for that, he tried to think, but it was too late.

?Immediately afterwards, a terrible sense of pressure emanated from above them; Subaru held his breath.

The source of that pressure came ever closer with ferocity, and in the next moment something blasted towards Subaru, right in front of his eyes? a violent quake shook the enormous tower, Subaru was blown away by the shockwave which raised sand and dust up. He would have probably been thrown about over and over if not for Gyan's enormous frame just behind them. Protected by the weight of the earth dragon and the dragon carriage, Subaru desperately pushed his eyes open in the midst of the sandstorm that was blowing against him.

And then, on the other side of the smoke plume, from where the impact had been which had been, the cloud of sand and dust that had risen up abruptly cleared. Something like a gust of wind tore through the smoke, and soon after from the other side, a majestic figure of a person could be seen. Tearing through the dense sandy haze which had enveloped them, the person's figure started to become visible. Subaru's cheeks stiffened, he was frozen in place.

That figure, their appearance, he recognised it.

Subaru:?Are you...??

A tall woman was walking briskly across the hard floor, stepping ever closer to him. Her brown, moreso black, hair was tied up into a ponytail, she was marching forward boldly, her belly and back were exposed by her clothing, it's safe to say that she was half-naked. Her chest and crotch area were just barely covered up, and she donned a black mantle over her clothes. She was a person who wore rather odd clothing.

In Subaru-speak, she was a slut-whore that donned her mantle over a black bikini top and hot pants.

Long, slender, white arms and legs, along with large breasts which were liberally swinging about. She was around the same height as Subaru, maybe a little taller. A well in order face sat on top of her white shoulders, her eyes conveyed a strong sense of purpose, in all she had quite the beautiful face.

?That was definitely the last thing he saw before he had lost consciousness.

She was the one who had attacked and slaughtered the centaur without mercy. And those countless flashes of light that she had launched towards the centaur was something Subaru knew only too well.

Subaru:?...Are you the?Sage???

???:??????

Remembering how parched his throat was, Subaru hoarsely raised this question to the woman who was approaching him in silence,. However, the woman did not deign to answer Subaru until she came right up to where he was stood, she stopped herself in her tracks at a spot where if Subaru were to stretch out his arm he'd be able to touch her, she was just… looking at him intently.

Her gaze felt as if she was scrutinising his entire body, honestly, it made Subaru feel quite uneasy. He hadn't even heard the voice of this person, but her strength was such that she had made short work in burying the centaur that had attacked him, it was at an inhumane level. Even if you were to try and sucker punch her, this peculiar person would instantly turn you into nothing more than charcoal. He can't really figure out what her attitude was showing, all he knew was that the only emotion he can feel about her right now was fear.

???:??????

In Subaru's arms, Beatrice's body remained unchanging, as she clung onto him tightly. Even in her, anxiety starts to seep throughout her small body. At least, he was lucky enough for the circumstances to have allowed him to come across Beatrice. In the worst case, it wouldn't be impossible that they'd have to get into another fight. Of course, there was no need to come to the point of initiating a fight for the sake of it. He shouldn't be all willy-nilly about such an exertion.

Subaru:?Are- Are you… listening? Hey, um, I heard my friends are being looked after, you don't intend to become hostile or stuff to us... right??

???:??????

Subaru:?Um, your silence is making me anxious, if you could say something… or perhaps do you communicate with something like telepathy, rather than words? If it's that, don't worry! Hahaha.?

???:??????

Staring at him, the presumed?Sage?did not reply to Subaru's words, she just continued to stare. He felt extremely uneasy. The extent to Subaru's bewilderment and confusion could be seen from the confusion in his way of speaking. If things stay like this, they'd end up being killed by the uneasiness itself.

?Suddenly though, Subaru's anxiety was torn away.

???:?...Three?

Subaru:?Eh??

???:??????

While staring at Subaru, the woman suddenly muttered something that way. Her voice was a little husky, but if he could continue to listen to it, he could probably say that the huskiness in her voice was quite beautiful. However, it was relatively mysterious, with unreadable emotions coming from the voice of the woman who stood in front of his eyes; he thought there was a faint charm to it. In front of Subaru, the woman sighed quietly,

???:?Well, that's no problem. More importantly, my search ends.?

Subaru:?Uhh… Eh??

Swiftly, the woman's expression changed, and she blurted out something. Her attitude looked as if she was trying to peer inside of Subaru, slowly, and steadily, time stood still as if it something frozen was melting away. The woman's lips then spread to the sides, forming a shape which you could call a smile. The woman stared at Subaru and said...

???:??Master.?

Subaru:?...Wha??

She uttered a word which he had never heard being said to him before, and emotions which seemed to come out of absolutely nowhere. Subaru turned to look behind him, in mute astonishment at her unexpected outburst. As expected, there was only Gyan's figure there. Then… was Gyan the aforementioned Master?

Subaru:?Did you come here to suddenly setup important character flags!??

Beatrice:?I don't think it's that, I suppose. Look at the facts, in fact.?

Subaru drew nearer to Gyan as Beatrice grew angrier, still in his arms. Even though her words were reasonable, Subaru doesn't turn his head around to her. Instead, he turned around to face the woman, still standing there as if nothing had happened, without having a clue what had been said,

Subaru:?Wait, no, my bad, but perhaps you're mistaking me for someone else or something like that… mmmmph!??

???:?Master! I have already beeeen waiting waiting waiting~!?

In the middle of her words, the woman jumps emotionally and embraces him with her arms. Rather than receiving her tackle in full as she came barging in, he was pushed down. Letting out a shriek,?Mkyaaaa?, Beatrice fell from his back, onto the floor. The woman, bouncing in joy, doesn't detach herself from Subaru, who was darting his eyes back and forth in confusion.

The woman swished her long ponytail about, and while hugging Subaru with unnatural strength, she kept repeating over and over with delight in her voice:

???:?Master! Master! It has been so long! I missed you so much! I thought that life was just meee shooting those approaching here!?

Subaru:?W-Wait! Wait wait! What!? What are you talking about!??

Shaula:?It was crueeel! Master ordered me, no? You said to stop anyone from getting near to the shrine… well, as for how I handled it, that's a different matter, buuuut?

Subaru:?No… I'm your Master...? What are you insinuating!??

He was pressed against her soft skin, but he had no time to enjoy that lucky lewd encounter. Subaru desperately tried to escape from her clutches. However, there's a saying that goes that women will always be women after all, and she doesn't let go of Subaru. As a result, Beatrice ended up being sandwiched between Subaru and the woman on the floor.

Subaru:?Anyways, let go of me, you... This is ridiculous…!?

???:?No way! There's absolutely no waaaaaay! As soon as you say that, you'll disappear again as soon as I lose sight of you! Master hasn't chaaanged at all!?

Subaru:?I don't know what you're on about!!?

The stubborn woman clung to Subaru as if she had gone through some sort of trauma. Whilst he roughly pushed her face away, trying to keep her away, Subaru snapped back at her.

Subaru:?In the first place, who are you?! What's with all this!?

Shaula:?What are you even saying?! I'm Shaulaaa! The Star-Keeper of the Pleiades Watchtower! I am Master's cute apprentice, Shaulaaa!?

Subaru:?I don't remember you what so ever?!?

A woman?called Shaula, who's name was supposed to be that of the?Sage?of the tower. The great so called?Sage?in the Pleiades Watchtower could not be such a strange woman who doesn't know such thing. Subaru firmly objected to this idea. However, in this place where there was no such thing as progress, a sudden interruption came about. That was...

Emilia:??Oh no! Oh no! When I woke up Subaru wasn't there! I need to hurry and tell everyone, we have to go look for him...?

Subaru:?Ah.?

Having said that, a sleepy-looking Emilia jumped out of the dragon carriage's door. Exiting the carriage she found Subaru and Shaula entwined with each other. Of course, Beatrice was there too, her eyes widened as she saw the two.

Subaru:?Emilia...Tan! It’s great that you woke up! This is actually...?

Emilia:?Hey!?

Subaru:?That hurts!? Emilia-tan, what was that kick for!??

Emilia:?I really am not sure, but I was reaaaaaally upset there!?

With Emilia awake, the shouting and yelling continued for a while?. Eventually, when Julius noticed the noise and joined up with them, the hard battle with the (assumed)?Sage?of the Pleiades Watchtower continued.

Arc 6 – Chapter 19, "The Sage's Whereabouts"

by admin - Friday, August 30, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/08/30/arc-6-chapter-19-the-sages-whereabouts/

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Translated By :

- Ice_Occultism (/u/Ice_Occultism)
- Ringo (/u/Ringo_17)

Proofread By :

- Gracedharperd (/u/Gracedharperd_

Art Source

- Owari_su

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Arc 6 - "Corridor of Memories"
Chapter 19 - "The Sage's Whereabouts"

At the unforeseen fight against heavy odds, spread out were the winds of the aftermath of the battle at the sixth floor of the Pleiades Watchtower.

An enshrouding cloud of dust, the man and woman grappling with each other were covered in sweat and mud.

And, looking at those two with cold eyes, from every other direction??.

Subaru: "What's with that look in your eyes!? You're saying that I've... That I've done something? wrong!? I've done nothing wrong, I've done nothing wrong??!!"

Julius: "Subaru, don't try to fool us so much."

Ram: "There are some good sides to him is what Ram thought, but in the end, Barusu is Barusu."

Those were the comments made by the newly-arrived Julius and Ram in regards to Subaru, who had been grabbed by Shaula.

Regardless,

Julius: "We were fortunate to be able to reunite safe and sound. It’s also good news that you woke up, but..... the situation is difficult to comprehend unless you explain it with words."

Subaru: "I would if it was something I could explain..... shit! Let go!"

Shaula: "No~pe~!"

Seeing Shaula clinging to Subaru's arms, Julius, whose hand was at the grip of his sword, shrugged his shoulders. He must have perceived that she didn’t have any intentions of attacking them. Even Subaru understood that point, but it was true that he was having a hard time trying to get her away.

Subaru: "Don't just watch, help me get her off.....! She has goddamn super-human strength....."

Ram: "Your lips are curving into a smile, Pervusu."

Subaru: "They're not, don't team up with her! Don't take it at face value! Emilia-tan, that hurts! I don't think it’ll be too much of a help if you pull my hair!?"

Emilia: "Ah, I'm sorry. I wasn’t trying to help you, at all."

Subaru: "You're apologizing for that!?"

The stubborn Shaula did not let go of Subaru's arm, and Emilia, with a somewhat blank expression, continued pulling Subaru's hair. Aside from that, Beatrice, who got trapped between the jostling Subaru and Shaula, was turning her eyes in all directions, in a state of being crushed, saying "Kiyyuu".

Anastasia: "What's this..... Even after all that trouble, seems it's? all been changin' into a pretty good mood."

Meili: "What's onii-san doing just after waking u~p? I don't do well with noisiness, but I'm gla~d onii-san woke up."

Having slowly come down the stairs, Anastasia and Meili had also joined up with them. With this, all except? Rem and Patrasche, who were supposed to be undergoing their treatment, had gathered here.

It was all well and good that they’d been able to reunite, but at this rate they wouldn’t be able to calm down and have a proper conversation.

Subaru: "A-ny-way! Everyone, calm down! ??Let's talk!"

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Overworking his throat after just waking up, Subaru managed to get everyone to follow his lead, as he tried to take control of the situation.

With that being said, within the group sitting in a circle, Shaula kept latching onto Subaru's right arm, and on his left was Emilia, sitting seiza style, at a distance enough to make him shiver. And Beatrice was settled on his lap; it would be an extremely extravagant battle formation in the eyes of an outsider.

Ram: "Repulsive?."

Subaru: "Did you even see the disaster a minute ago? Does it look to you that I wanted this to happen to my right side? My bones hurt real bad. At this rate, my arm’s gonna necrotise."

Saying that to Ram, who‘d spat those words out, Subaru looked at his constricted right arm.
Being hugged by a half-naked girl, would be a dream-like experience for many, but in reality, rather than experiencing the softness of her skin, the flesh of his arm that had been squeezed and the pain of his joints that went to the limits had a scary effect on his bones and nerves. Frankly speaking, they could have been torn off.

Subaru: "Well then, before my arm gets torn off from its roots I would like to proceed with the conversation, but..... before that, first of all, everyone, thank goodness you’re all alright. Though it’s scary that Patrasche and Rem are unconfirmed....."

Beatrice: "You’re still being doubtful, I suppose. It's alright, in fact. Everyone is alright, I suppose."

Julius: "It is just as Beatrice-sama says, though your uneasiness and concern are justified. You can properly visit them afterwards. ??As you’d expect, this time we were all scared to death."

Beatrice and Julius nodded at Subaru, who was delighted at their reunion.

Julius, once again, put on a grim expression on his face, as if reflecting back upon the moment straight after they had been separated back at the sand sea,

Julius: "Immediately after the space fissured, all of us, except for you, Anastasia-sama and Miss Ram, fell onto the other side into the flower garden of the Witchbeasts, you see. There, after many twists and turns, we arrived at the Watchtower and were able to get shelter."

Meili: "Bu~t, onii-san and the others weren't there, and since we knew they couldn't fight, we were worrie~d."

Julius traced Beatrice's earlier explanation, and Meili agreed as well, pouting.

Their uneasiness was only a matter of course as well. When they had fallen into the underground area of the sand sea, Subaru and the rest had been outside and disappeared, which had made them worry, though that went for both sides.

Meili: "Onee-san really lost her composure. We had a tough time when she snapped a~t that Sage-san. Such that, when thinking back to it now, it sends shivers down my spi~ne."

Emilia: "Hey, Meili. You don't have to say all that."

At Meili's flirtatious glance unsuitable for her age, Emilia objected, her face going red. Her comments were no exaggeration: that could be easily understood by looking at Emilia, who was blushing all the way up to her ears.

Though imprudent, he was genuinely happy to see her worry for him.

Subaru: "I see~ I see~, so Emilia-tan was worried. It looks like Beako was worried to the point of crying her eyes out as well, I'm such a lucky guy."

Emilia: "Geez, Subaru, joking about again like that..... Also, Beatrice wouldn't have cried her eyes out. Just around half of that. Yeah that's right."

Beatrice: "If you want to look out for others then do it properly till the very end, in fact, you natural airhead.....!"

Emilia: "???"

With the truth that she'd been driven to tears exposed, Beatrice pouted while Emilia remained clueless. Loosening his cheeks at that pleasant exchange, Subaru looked up at Julius.

Subaru: "If that's so, then you must have had gotten pretty worried too, isn't it. It's unfortunate I couldn't see that expression of yours."

Julius: "Of course, I was greatly agitated. Regardless of you, because of Anastasia-sama and miss Ram. It was regretful to lose the two frail ladies somewhere beyond reach. Without showing you all my form of having a pale face and walking about in worry, currently I am only experiencing relief in my fragile spirit."

Subaru: "Why'd you make a conversation about you getting scared so graceful?"

Subaru twisted his lips at Julius, who was touching his bangs as if out of habit, with a bittersweet smile on his face.

Without him putting up a strong front, and without even showing a weak side of his, it was an absolutely boring result. With that, Meili started laughing lightly at the exchange of the two.
When they questioned her by merely gesturing through their eyes, she placed her braided hair against her mouth, and

Meili: "Oh it’s nothi~ng."

And, she deceived them with a smile which seemingly held deep meaning.

Subaru: "Well, from this I get that everyone who got separated was worried for us. Nobody is missing in the end, so it's something which we can look back on and smile now."

Ram: "Only Barusu can be so boldly shameless. Even now, Ram's petite figure and soft heart is about to break apart with uneasiness and fear just by thinking about it."

Subaru: "Is the nee-sama who, among all the people I know, the one which seems to have the toughest heart, saying something?"

The truth is, amongst all of Subaru's acquaintances, Ram was the one who wielded the utmost mental strength. Her remarks seemed to be a silly joke as if a matter of course, but he ended up intently looking at Ram's face, who was sitting right in front of him.

White skin with light crimson eyes. And of course well ordered facial features, along with refreshing beauty. Beautiful facial features like a suspicious berry found in the valley of sweetness and elegance. No matter how you look at her, she was the same Ram as always.

Ram: "??Put an end to that unpleasant gaze. Looking so intently, what do you want?"

Subaru: "Well, I was just thinking that you're really Ram."

Ram: "This is totally hopeless now, isn't it?"

Subaru: "Stop making judgements without any proper subjects! Not that, I mean....."

Subaru replied in a flummoxed manner back at Ram who’d cut off and cast aside Subaru’s words.

The incident that had occurred just before he had lost his consciousness in the underground area came up in his mind?? Ram had protected Subaru with her injured body by standing in front of the Centaur.

Her delicate figure seen from the back, which had been peppered with wounds, had faced that formidable enemy without any prospects of victory. Back then, he’d felt the terror of losing her, seeing her figure that showed no fear of being wounded; and now, both of them had made it back alive safely.

He’d realised that fact by talking with the usually fearless her.

Subaru: "Sure enough, there’s still this sense of distance between us. It did get strangely loathsome and worse, but when I think back on it, that too was…....No, that still shouldn’t be a good memory to reflect back on."

Ram: "I don’t understand what you’re trying to grumble out. Spit it all out. Like a man."

Subaru: "*“I’m glad we’re both safe”* is what I mean. And in the end, for having protected and saved me."

Ram: "……That was a waste of time."

Subaru: "How can you say that!?"

Even though he’d honestly expressed his gratitude, it meant absolutely zilch to her.

Following that, Emilia let out a stifled giggle seeing Subaru get miffed like that.

Emilia: "It’s okay, Subaru. It’s just because Ram’s a little embarrassed."

Subaru: "Nee-sama’s embarassed……? Wouldn’t the heavens and earth switching places be more believable?"

Emilia: "N-not really. Perhaps it’s because you kept hugging Ram till she woke up, so she’s like to be embarrassed. Even when separated, ‘twas rough."

Ram: "Emilia-sama!"

Emilia, had secretly whispered that into his ear, but Ram had reacted angrily to her words. She raised her eyes up unusually in anger as if she’d read Emilia’s lips or something,

Ram: "I think it would be better that you didn’t judge things using your own criteria. Because I don’t think I want to work for a dunderhead who doesn’t understand people’s feelings."

Emilia: "……When you say *“dunderhead”*, you aren’t referring to me right?"

Ram: "I’m not. Emilia-sama, you do properly think about people’s feelings, if there’s anyone who’s got nothing to do with being a dunderhead, it would be you; it’d be so ridiculous of me to say otherwise."

Emilia: "I see. Erm, wait up, let me think for a bit."

Emilia began to brood in earnest thought at what Ram had said, whose words had been plastered with great sarcasm. Meanwhile, Ram glared at Subaru with a glint in her eye as sharp as a blade, and then stirred her lips into speech, saying, "Forget this."

Subaru reflexively nodded at her threatening attitude. When he’d woken up, he remembered that there’d been the traces of someone who’d been lying on the bed together with him. He’d thought for sure it’d been Beatrice, but it seemed like according to what she’d said now, it??.

Subaru: "Uh-oh, I’ve forgotten it, I’ve forgotten it. I said I’ve forgotten it."

Ram: "Good. You’re not a dunderhead….. Emilia-sama. Let’s leave it here."

Emilia: "Ergh, has it come to Ram gradually becoming more outspoken about me..…?"

Emilia looked at her with reproach, but Ram turned her aside with a look of feigned ignorance.

In any case, Subaru turned his eyes away from Ram, who seemed like she didn't want to touch on this subject anymore, and looked towards the last of his companions, at Anastasia.

She sat beside Julius, fiddling with her Pon-Pons that adorned her hat as usual. But, when she noticed Subaru's gaze, she gave him a graceful smile.

Anastasia: "Aah, so yer done talkin'? Natsuki-kun, I thought yer'd forgotten about me."

Subaru: "I hope you can forgive me for my ego in prioritising my own. I'm glad that you're safe too. Speaking of the last battle in the underground area, I haven't got a clue about what happened after"

Anastasia: "Are you goin' ta make me remember those scary thoughts where I too was thrown down into that pitch black darkness? Natsuki-kun 'n Ram-san, 'n….. Ah, 'n Patrasche-chan were fightin' their damndest, so the Witchbeast was ignorin' me. I wasn't of any use there, but I was goin' to be of use for the negotiations."

Subaru: "Negotiations?"

Anastasia: "With the "Sage-san" who helped us, ya know."

Anastasia pointed at Shaula, who was still nestling her face against Subaru's right arm.

When he heard *negotiations with this,* Subaru frowned, but Anastasia gave him a wry smile.

Anastasia: "Ahnono, we're also quite confused. 'Cause, she wouldn' answer anythin' till only a few minutes ago regardless of me pushin' 'n pullin' her, but with you Natsuki-kun, she's madly in love."

Subaru: "She wouldn't speak with you? This thing?"

Shaula: "It's not this thing, it's Shaula. Master~"

Subaru: "Shut up……"

Subaru responded dejectedly at Shaula getting miffed, and Anastasia shrugging her shoulders.

Certainly, when he only looked at the situation, she had barely said a single word to Anastasia and the rest. However, she'd been nattering away at Subaru. So in reality, just about everything of this situation was unexpected.

Subaru: "When someone suddenly nestles over to you with 100 Favourability, even if they happen to be a beautiful woman, this one's Favourability is zero, so it isn't something worth me getting perplexed over….."

Shaula: "??! Just now, did you say that I'm a beautiful woman!?"

Subaru: "You sure have sharp ears when it suits you, HEY!"

Once again, Subaru tried to push Shaula's head off with his empty left hand. However, the more he struggled to do that, the more Shaula's strength increased, eventually leading Subaru to give in.

In the end, the out of breath Subaru shook his head, saying, "It can't be helped" with Shaula still clinging to his right arm.

Subaru: "For now, let's put off all these trivial matters and talk about what should be talked about. I don't want us to keep going around and around in circles with a lack of explanation. I want you to tell us about various things."

Shaula: "Suuuuuure thing, if it's something Master has to say, then let's hop to it!"

Julius: "Indeed, your collaboration is a great help. So, I wish to ask about this. You are the "Sage" who retired to this Pleiades Watchtower.... Is my understanding correct?"

Shaula: **Turning away SFX**

Subaru: "Answer him! Didn't you just say you'd talk!"

Quite in contrast to her friendly smile, Shaula turned her face away sharply from Julius' question. Straight after Subaru got pissed off at her poor attitude, Shaula turned her pouting face towards him.

Shaula: "Mymy, what happened Master. Master didn't you hammer it into me not to tell, speak or say anything unnecessary to anyone no matter what they ask. I'm just loyally abiding by what you told meeeee. I can't believe you're angry! I'm gonna file a case against you!"

Subaru: "Your Master is absolutely awful!"

Shaula: "Yeah, yeah. Master's suuuuch an awful person. I should demand an apology from him, and for him to deeply reflect on himself."

Subaru: "So, calling people *Master Master* as you please is just……. Huh, Emilia-tan, what's with those eyes?"

Emilia had narrowed her round eyes at Subaru and Shaula's strange spiel. Subaru braced himself in case it was another inexplicable outburst, but Emilia continued by saying, "Well,"

Emilia: "It may not really be a big deal, but….. How can I explain it. Isn't the way you both talk quite similar?"

Subaru: "Does it look like I'm talking with such a chavvish tone!?"

Emilia: "That's not what I mean, the expressions you both use is what I meant. You see, you always joke about even during serious conversations, right? That's the feeling I'm getting."

Subaru: "You think of me like that!?"

Subaru was horrified by that completely unexpected evaluation of hers, but Emilia paid no heed to him. On the contrary,

Julius: "Hmmm…..Surely now that you mention it."
Ram: "Barusu's typical conversational ability? There's trouble lying in wait ahead, then."
Meili: "But I really li~ke Onii-san's way of talking?"
Anastasia: "Though, everyone's got some manner that sits heavy on yer stomach, dont'cha think?"

Subaru's mouth gaped wide open as everyone appended their own evaluations on top of each other. However, a little girl had furiously lost her temper in Subaru's stead?? And that girl had been Beatrice.

Beatrice: "Really, don't go saying just whatever you feel like, I suppose. Not only are all of you acting way too familiar with Subaru, you're also acting far too clingy ever since a while ago, in fact. How hard you think this is for Betty, despite taking Subaru's hand, I suppose! It's unfair, in fact!"

The topic had changed quite a bit midway, but Beatrice's had a gleeful disposition to her. However, Shaula turned Beatrice's protests aside, with a look on her face that a beautiful girl shouldn't be making.

Beatrice's already lacking amount of patience reached its limit when she saw Shaula's complete lack of concern completely expressed on merely her face.

However, before that, Subaru's karate chop hit Shaula square on her forehead.

Subaru: "That's enough!"

Shaula: "Ow…. Though it doesn't actually hurt, isn't that abuse!? It is abuse…..! Master used violence against meeeee! I'll be seeing you in court!"

Subaru: "Pipe down! You can speak with other people properly from now on! Or this talk will go nowhere!"

Shaula: "……Would that be okay?"

Subaru: "Yes it would! Rather, I recommend it! It's about time for you to start speaking seriously!"

Shaula's face turned to one of complete surprise towards the frowning Subaru's complaints. And then, little by little, her facial expression changed, first surprise, then comprehension, then assent, and finally deep gratitude.

Then, she said,

Shaula: "Yippeeeee! Yaaaaay~! I got permission to taaalk! Now I don't have to play the act of the deeply mysterious femme fatal anymore~! Hip, Hip, Hoooooray!"

Subaru: "Now not even a fragment of it is left behind when it comes to that factor!!”

Her face was lit up in a deep smile, if she had a tail, she’d probably be wagging it around in full swing.

Though as a matter of fact, Shaula’s ponytail was swinging about in delight as she still held on tightly onto his arm, with her ponytail smacking against his forehead, his cheeks, and god knows what else repeatedly.

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Subaru: "??So, it’s okay to say that you’re the "Sage" from the rumours, right?"

The racket had died down for a bit, and finally, they’d truly reached the discourse that they should have undertaken before said racket.

Shaula, who’d let go of Subaru’s right arm, was sitting cross-legged in the middle of the group, now sat in a circle, surrounding her. Incidentally, his right arm had become numb, and he couldn’t raise it. Nor would it move.

Shaula: "????"

Subaru: "Answer me. You’re the "Sage" right?"

Shaula: "Hmm~ The answer to that question is difficult."

Having been greeted with silence to his question Subaru had once again repeated the same query. Following that, Shaula replied vaguely, putting on a sour expression as if she’d ate a pickled plum.

Subaru frowned on receiving that answer, revealing his bewilderment. However, it was Emilia who raised her hand up, in place of him. She spoke out, prefacing her words with, "In which case"

Emilia: "Setting aside whether you’re the "Sage" ..... The one they say guarded the Sand Dunes all this time inside of this tower would be you, right?"

Shaula: "Ah, that’s meeeee for sure. For 400 years, every single day forever and eeeever guarding the midst of this sand, and each barren day I’ve spent would be something that would make both the one reciting it, and the one hearing it cry..…..!”

Emilia: "Poor thing……*tch*"

Subaru: "Emilia-tan, don’t get affected by it. And you as well, don’t go exchanging unnecessary feelings."

The empathetic Emilia's eyes teared over at Shaula who gave her response as she shook her fist. As he calmed Emilia down, Subaru, based off Shaula's current answer, exchanged looks with Julius.

Julius gave a nod at that exchange of looks, and took charge of the conversation, speaking out a: "So,"

Julius: "Would I be right in recognising you as having bore the burden of working as a "Sage" for 400 years, as is typically well-known? Shaula-sama."

Shaula: "You're making me blush, attaching stuff like "Sama". I'm not used to it, so you can address me without using any honorifics like normal. Using Shaula-sama…...Dhehehe"

Julius: "Then, I shall correct myself. Surely the one that is typically known as the "Sage" is you? Shaula."

Shaula: "Weell, I'm not so sure about that? Even if that's what's typically said, I don't ever leave the tower, so I don't know anything about rumours from the outside. It feels unexpectedly strange, doesn't it? Like I'mmmmm being called a "Sage." "

Shaula's facial expression, which had been completely at ease, completely changed to one tinged in thoughtfulness, and the atmosphere did too. Julius also narrowed his eyes, facing the depth of her gaze which seemed like it was searching for that.

Her current remark wasn't the kind which you could ignore, even if you weren't Julius. *Because, what if Shaula's words were the truth...*

Julius: "If you aren't the "Sage" , then it'd turn out that the legend of the "Sage" Shaula is a completely incorrect rumour. Or, is it saying that there's a Shaula who's considered to be a "Sage" besides you?"

Shaula: "The "Sage" Shaula from those rumours is someone I'm not aware of, buuuuut, as far as I know, there's no acquaintance of mine named Shaula other than meeeeee. I was given this name from Master as well, so Master must've given it just to me…..Buuut"

Shaula's gaze had fleetingly turned towards Subaru, but Subaru hadn't ever named anyone Shaula in the first place, nothing nor nobody.

However, it was a fact that there was a certain ring to the name, "Shaula" . Shaula too was the name of a star, it was the star name that formed Scorpius?? and its meaning was "The Stinger" .

Naturally, his thoughts extended to the true colours behind the white rays of light which had been fired from the Watchtower, however, when it came to getting that information out her, he wouldn't mind postponing it until later. Right now, what had to take priority was a different issue.

Shaula: "Since Master seems like he has no clue, Shaula is just myyyyyy name of course. Master gave that name just to meeeee….. There's no need for any other Shaulas."

Julius: "I see. You seem to be really fond of that Master. ??Must've been a sinful guy, huh."

Subaru: "Quit looking at me when saying that. Those are false accusations. Innocence presumed."

Ram: ""Guilty as proven"..... That's what I think."

Subaru: "Don't you take pride in being a lawful nation!?"

Setting aside the interruption, he couldn't catch any glimpses of there being a lie in what Shaula was saying. If that was the case, then was she different to the one from the legends?

Suddenly, Anastasia started to rummage through her chest pocket, without any consideration for the individuals conversing with each other. Then, lo and behold, she pulled some coins out from her purse for some reason or other.

Subaru: "Don't tell me….. you're suddenly counting your money?"

Anastasia: "Even though it's my hobby, 'n feelin' my change makes me work better when I'm deep in thought….. That ain't my intention. Here ya go, you'll get what I mean when ya properly see the coins of the Kingdom."

Saying that, Anastasia tossed the coins on her palm over at the befuddled Subaru. He hurriedly caught them; what she'd thrown over to him were 4 coins: a copper coin, a silver coin, a gold coin and a holy gold coin.

There was probably no way that it could be something like a bribe for Shaula, or an alternative of a tip. Making sure to check the coins as she had told him to, Subaru noticed the designs engraved into them.

He hadn't really taken a good look at their money up until now, but??.

Subaru: "So it's common just about everywhere to engrave pictures and designs and stuff on money. How strange."

Anastasia: "I don't see what's strange about it? We've gotta know from where the money comes from….. Besides, it's 'cause money always comes with the history of its country. That's why stuff that's intrinsic ta the country's history is engraved on it."

Subaru: "Hmmmm……?"

Subaru turned his attention to the engravings on the coins whilst he listened to Anastasia's explanation. And when he looked closely..., *I see, the coins each have different designs engraved on them??.*

Emilia: "The Holy Gold Coins have the "Divine Dragon" , the Gold Coins have the "First Generation Sword Saint" , the Silver Coins have the "Sage" and the Copper Coins have "Lugnica's Royal Castle" on them. Didn't you know?"

Subaru: "E-Emilia-tan is speaking like a super-learned character with what she's saying……!"

Emilia: "Or more so, it’s obvious stuff I’d say. Were you so unaware when you were shopping that you never looked at the money properly?"

Subaru whistled innocently, covering his tracks, at Emilia’s painful inquiry. And just after he checked them as he did that, the engravings on the money were exactly as she’d seemed to explain them.

A Dragon was engraved on the Holy Gold Coin, a man with a sharp look was engraved on the Gold Coin, the Royal Castle was engraved on the Copper Coin, and finally, engraved on the Silver Coin was a…

Subaru: "A young, handsome dude, I guess. They don’t bear the slightest resemblance to Shaula."

Beatrice: "But, the guy on this drawing is what appears as Shaula to the world, in fact."

A handsome man with long hair, and intrepid features was carved there on the coin. Naturally, even if you were to try and change the angle of it, it seemed unlikely that they’d be mistaken as a half-naked hottie of a woman.

Shaula herself was pestering him with a "Lemme see!", so he handed the coin over to her. When he did so, she gazed at the Silver Coin close up, and said,

Shaula: "Heeh, rather well made huh? It looks exactly like Master."

Subaru: "Where are you seeing that!? Ah, no, if the "Sage" that’s engraved there is your Master, then what do you mean by me resembling the Master inside your memories?"

Shaula "Geez, what are you talking about? Myyyy Master is the only Master."

Subaru: "So, let me restate myself once again. WHERE ARE YOU SEEING THAT!?"

He cleared his throat, and shouted at the top of his lungs at Shaula, who was comparing him with the design that was engraved on the Silver Coin. Even if they differed in hairdo, their expression and in the first place even their race seemed to be different. The thing they matched in was their gender it seemed. Were he to judge it only by the category of having a good-looking face, then Julius would be much closer than Subaru was to it.

(TL Note: I know a lot of you will see the word race and think. Huh, Flugel may not be human? Deep lore? Well, let me clarify that I mean race simply as like Asian, Black, White, etc.)

However, Shaula looked at him with dissatisfaction, saying "Eeeeeh" to Subaru’s opinion.

Shaula: "Looks fairly accurate from what I can seeeee. You have hair, two eyes, two ears, and a nose and mouth."

Subaru: "That sort of level!? Aren’t you complimenting it like a preschooler's portrait!?"

Emilia: "I guess that I too still don’t think that Subaru and this Sage resemble each other..."

Though Shaula had grown sulky, Subaru's verdict, and of course, Emilia's came out. Their verdicts were reasonable. However, still didn't look convinced,

Shaula: "It's because I'mmmm not very good at comparing people's faces. Men and women are just about different, but after that, isn't stuff roughly the same? ……. After that, it'd come down to size, wouldn't it?"

Beatrice: "She looked at Betty right now and came out with that, I suppose, this woman."

Subaru: "It's okay, since Beako being cute and small is unique. Putting that aside, you have such a sense of telling beauty and yet you call me, out of all people, your Master. You're mistaking me completely for someone else!"

Taking advantage of Shaula's excuse, Subaru shook off some of the dishonour he'd accrued so far from the false accusations. It had been a ridiculous suggestion in the first place. Of course, he didn't even need to consider it, Subaru had nothing in common with Shaula, and that was a relief.

Or so he thought, but Shaula shook her head at that, and said,

Shaula: "Ah. Meeee having found Master wasn't a question about appearance, so there's no issue with that."

Subaru: "*Not about appearance*, you say, then how did you find out? By aura?"

Shaula: "Your smell."

Subaru: "????"

Shaula: "Well no, I mean, I can't think of anyone except Master who'd let such a dark, pungent smell, to the point that my nose seems to scrunch up, hang off from them."

Subaru: "Honestly, that the first time I've had my feelings hurt like that! What, am I that bad!?"

When that keyword, *smell*, had come out, Subaru had readied himself up for just a moment. However, his readiness was shattered in one blow by Shaula's choice of words straight after.

Shaula had a mystified look to her set towards Subaru, whose face had turned red at her unexpected evaluation.

Shaula: "Why did you get mad? Ah, is it because I said "*pungent*"? It's fine! Master's smell is really bad, but it's the type of smell I wanna keep smelling and smelling! It's that of the unusual cooking variety, not the sort that makes you spew, so it's cool!"

Subaru: "Girls don't say "spew" and "it's cool" together! You didn't need to follow it up after that!"

Subaru covered his face with his palm, about to break down crying on the spot, feeling rather ashamed.

Subaru: "Urghh..... I thought I'd just about gotten used to people saying that, but being humiliated like this is far too much. What did I ever do to you….."

Emilia: "I-it's okay, Subaru. I perfectly understand. So, shall we bathe properly afterwards? "

Subaru: "Perfectly understand it my ass!"

The anguishedly, dented Subaru had become useless. Beatrice let out a sigh as she looked ath Emilia consoling him from the side. And then, she grabbed ahold of Subaru's underarm, and leaned her weight on his back,

Beatrice: "I understand the reason why you mistook Subaru as a complete stranger, I suppose."

Shaula: "I haven't mistook him. You sure are impertinent for a lil' ankle-biter, arentcha?"

Beatrice: "Sorry, but that lil' ankle-biter is your precious Master's partner, in fact. Oops, you mistook him for someone else, so he isn't actually your master or anything. Pardon me, in fact."

Shaula: "????"

Beatrice: "????"

Silently, sparks from their gazes flew up between Beatrice and Shaula.

The subject of their talk had ended up completely scattered all over the place, but even if they tried to get it back on track, the people they had who'd put the conversation back on course were too few. Given the situation, the face of common sense would get the short end of that stick.

Ram: "Beatrice-sama, let's leave the strife until after we're done. After our important discussion, you'll be free to decide who owns Barusu."

Beatrice: "Subaru isn't owned by anyone, I suppose. That is the point, in fact."

Ram: "……Yeah, yeah."

Ram let herself take in Beatrice's anger whilst her eyes filled with shock. And after she replied, Ram narrowed her eyes and called out to Shaula, who was still looking at Beatrice with a thorny look in her eyes.

Ram: "In any case, if you could speak to us, then that would be a godsend. Up until now, you couldn't go along with having a serious conversation with us, but don't you think now would be okay to do so?"

Shaula: "Mhm, I have Master's permission, so that would be OK. Saying that though, even I'mmmm not so nice as to answer absolutely everything. Or rather, I should say I don't know that much stuff."

Ram: "Merely that answers makes it clear to me that you being called the Sage is a mistake."

Proudly puffing out her ample chest, Shaula unabashedly declared her ignorance all the more. Ram puffed out her small chest as if she were rivalling Shaula's. She snorted her nose showing an air of superiority more than anyone else here.

Ram: "You're Shaula, but not the "Sage" . Then, I wonder, do the "Sword Saint" and "Divine Dragon" ring a bell?"

Shaula: "Sword Saiiin' and Divine Draagon?"

Ram: "Their names are Reid and Volcanica."

Shaula: "Ewwwww!"

Shaula stuck her tongue out at Ram's question with a face that looked like she'd chewed something sour.

It was easy enough to understand from her response that both of those names rang a bell. When Ram silently urged that knowledge out of her, Shaula rocked her body from left to right, still sat cross legged, and said,

Shaula: "I know them. The Stick Swinger Reid, and the Cynic Volcanica are old friends of mine. I haven't at all seen them since we parted, but they must be doing great, right?"

Ram: "One of them…. Reid is dead; a long time ago."

Shaula: "Seriously!? He's dead, even though he was a guy who was nigh unkillable!? How did he die!? Did he eat something strange!?"

Ram: "His lifespan. No one can go against the decree of the heavens above."

Shaula: "His life span……. Ah, I see. That's right. Reid was a human being, wasn't he?"

Having been told about the "Death" of her acquaintance, Shaula had cast her eyes down with a solemn attitude to her. She seemed somewhat sad, having dropped her shoulders, drooping down in dejection all over all the way to her ponytail.

Regardless of what she'd been saying and her behaviour up until now, her figure mourning her friend's death was neutrally, a sad thing.

Whilst he finally regained his footing, Subaru too felt something panging inside his chest when he looked at Shaula's face from the side.

Shaula: "So, Volcanica is doing well?"

Subaru: "It's because they're a Dragon."

Shaula: "Aah, a Dragon, huh. Though, it would have been better if Volcanica had died rather than Reid~"

Subaru: "Those words seem to be way too much, Hey"

Having shown only a mere touch of sadness, Shaula quickly went back to herself. Her face had gone clear, as she bitterly spoke about her other acquaintance.

To that, Ram closed one of her eyes in thought, and said,

Ram: "You remember Reid and Volcanica…… In that case, you should know your Master's name, right?"

Shaula: "????"

Subaru and the others all held their breaths on hearing Ram's question.

Only the questioned Shaula's face remained blank, replying with an "Obviously."

Ram's question was indeed quite effective at unravelling the mystery of the "Sage" .

The "Sage" = Shaula system had collapsed now, so if there was someone who had accomplished the deeds required to be called a "Sage" other than her, naturally, they would need to meet that individual.

Shaula mistook Subaru as that individual for some reason, but a name probably wasn't something which could be falsified. Subaru prayed that a miracle where a "Sage" with the name Natsuki Subaru wouldn't come out of her here.

And, his prayer would be fulfilled. ??In a strange way which he couldn't possibly imagine.

Shaula: "That's weird that Master's name is on your mind. Considering he's right there, and though all of you are Master's companions, you don't know it?"

Ram: "I'm sorry, but your Master hit his head on the toilet bowl, and forgot a bunch of stuff."

Subaru: "Is there a meaning behind having restricted it to toilets?"

Shaula: "Master, you did it again…..?"

Subaru: "Again!?"

With Shaula looking at him sympathetically, Subaru tasted humiliation which he shouldn't have received. However, she hopped up as if she'd understood that reply, and said,

Shaula: "Then you'll hear it from meeeee. Master's name….. That's right, even that name is that of the famed Great Erudite. Certainly being called something like a "Sage" is only befitting of Master!"

Subaru: "Get to the point!"

Shaula: "You're so impatient~ But, that too is like Master."

Shaula gave off a gaudy gesture which contained irritation, but she stuck her tongue out with a pouty face at Subaru's demand. And then, she placed her finger on her cheek, and said with an awfully childish gesture,

Shaula: "Flugel"

Subaru: "……Huh?"

Shaula: "Master's name is Flugel. The Great Erudite Flugel, Shaula's Master."

(TL Note: Erudite!? Don't you mean Sage? So this was a difficult decision, but the term that is typically translated as "Sage" is: ??. Shaula however uses the term ??, which is actually the same term used in the title of the "Council of Elders" or "Council of Sages" it's sometimes translated as. I'm going to translate it as "Erudite" from now on, because Elder might give the false impression that Flugel was an old geezer, when in fact the word just refers to someone who is wise, whilst giving it a less role-y feel to it).

Shaula's whole face lit up into a smile and she delightfully puffed out her chest the moment she spoke those words.

There was no shadow of a doubt that Shaula was putting deep love, gratitude and pure respect into that, and held reverence and affection towards Flugel.

However, Subaru and the others' reactions varied in respect to that name.

At any rate, he knew that name.

Subaru: "……Isn't that the name of the person who planted the tree?"

Saying that, Subaru craned his neck at hearing the name of that historical figure whose fates had crossed only once before.

Arc 6 – Chapter 20, "Shaula ? Sage = Flugel"

by admin - Tuesday, September 03, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/09/03/arc-6-chapter-20-shaula-%e2%89%a0-sage-flugel/

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Translated By :

- Ice_Occultism (/u/Ice_Occultism)

Proofread By :

- Gracedharperd (/u/Gracedharperd)

Art Source (Edited by Gracedharperd)

- Flugel Source
- Shaula Source

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Arc 6 – "Hall of Memories"
Chapter 20 – "Shaula ? Sage = Flugel"

??The eminent “Great Erudite” Flugel.

As soon as Shaula had mentioned his name with a proud puff of her ample chest as she gave them an open-looking smile, Subaru and the others had exchanged looks with each other, wrapped up by an uncomfortable feeling in the air.

Shaula: “Huh? What’s up with that response? Did I say something weeeeird?”

Subaru: “No, it’s because, what the?”

Shaula widened her eyes blankly on hearing Subaru and the others’ dismal response. He felt bad for her,

who was the very picture of confidence, as if to say that there was nothing mysterious to her words. However, the emotions that Subaru and the others harboured towards the name of that “Flugel” were rather complex.

“The Great Erudite” Flugel.

Though the title she’d given him was unfortunately different, Subaru was familiar with that name.

It was the name of that individual whom he’d crossed fates with just once ever since he’d been summoned into this different world. However, he didn’t have any acquaintanceship with that individual, he only had a one-sided “Debt” with him.

In any case, the reason he knew his name was down to the fact that he’d had an experience where his life had been saved thanks to that individual’s deed.

Subaru: ”Flugel’s Great Tree…..That Flugel-san, right?”

Everyone except Shaula gave a curt nod at the keyword that slipped out from Subaru’s mouth. Although, Meili had inclined her head in doubt as if she didn’t know, saying: “Wh~at’s that?”

Meili: ”I’ve never hea~rd that term before. *“Great Tree”*, does it just mean tree?”

(TL Note: Right, ????????? is of course “Flugel’s Tree” or more accurately “Flugel’s Great Tree” when translated in English in the anime/other translations. But because of Meili’s confusion, this passage may not make complete sense. So I will just explain it here. Meili doesn’t understand the term ??, and because of the anime/other TLs always using “Tree” I can’t really just change it to Subaru saying it in Latin, or something. So when you read that passage keep in mind that it’s like as if Subaru was using a very fancy word Japanese that your average Loli wouldn’t understand.

Also, a very interesting point about that word, which is read as: *????, it shares a homophone with the word: ?? which means “Great Scholar/Erudite”. I am too lazy to look into the etymology of how these words originated but I think this double meaning is important.)*

Subaru: ”Yeah. Right, there’s a damn huge tree that grew on the Lifaus Plains in the Kingdom of Lugnica, and it was called Flugel’s Great Tree. It’s so huge that it’s said that it may have almost reached past the clouds; it was something that could really tickle at your male instincts.”

Meili: “Heeh, I se~e. When you say it like that, I’d very much li~ke to see it.”

Subaru: ”Sorry. About that, I cut it down.”

Meili: “Onii-san’s so mean!”

He’d ended up swiftly shattering Meili’s wish, and as a result, treated as something less than human.

Strictly speaking, cutting down the tree hadn’t been Subaru’s responsibility. However, it had been

Subaru who'd proposed cutting it down and using it, so when it came to talking about who was the most responsible, Subaru was the one.

??Flugel's Great Tree had ended up being his trump card a year ago during the "Battle to Subjugate the White Whale".

The Great Tree's existence had been cardinally important in subjugating that Witchbeast of "Fog", the White Whale, considering that the tree was larger in size than that colossal beast. In the end, he could say that they'd cut down the Great Tree, pinned the White Whale underneath it so it couldn't move, and finally delivered to it its finishing blow.

Subaru: "I do feel bad for Flugel-san, who they say planted it, but….. In no shape or form did I ever think I'd hear his name in a place like this."

Emilia: "It's the spot where you can see the stump where the negotiations that followed the subjugation of the White Whale took place, right? I've heard that they used the chopped tree for various stuff, though….."

Julius: "At the present, only the stump is left there known as the "Vestiges of Flugel's Great Tree". It's in a status-quo where it's protected as an important historical landmark, but after several 100s of years, it ought to go back to how it was before, one should think."

Emilia and Julius replied about what had happened after following Subaru's wonderment.

Straight after the subjugation of the White Whale, they'd subjugated "Sloth" as well, and the attack of the Sin Archbishops that had dragged Crusch and Rem into it had overlapped with that. And to make matters worse, straight after he'd joined back up with the Emilia Camp, there had been that commotion that he'd ended up right in the middle of in the "Sanctuary". However, after all these unfortunate series of events, the spoils of war negotiations had taken place.

There, a discussion regarding the great deeds against the "White Whale" and Sloth" had been the pièce de résistance, but naturally they'd also ended up discussing compensation for the damage they'd incurred. One of the matters they'd discussed was Flugel's Great Tree, namely taking care of the remaining stump and effective uses of the felled tree itself.

Incidentally, they'd deemed the White Whale as having no practical use, so its huge carcass had been cleaved up by a bunch of people and incinerated. Only its skull had been presented to the Royal Castle as evidence of its subjugation.

In any case, setting aside the Great Tree's treatment, and moving back to the more crucial Flugel-san.

Subaru: "Come to think on it, I've definitely heard him referred to as the "Sage" Flugel."

Beatrice: "But, he's a "Sage" who no one really knows what he's done, in fact….. So, speaking of strange to begin with, it's strange that he's being treated as a "Sage", I suppose."

Ram: “When you consider his achievements alone, it’s true that his accomplishments pale in comparison to the title of “Sage”. Perhaps he liked to toot his horn too much on his achievements….. A guy just like Barusu, eh?”

Subaru: “When have I ever exaggerated my achievements!?”

Subaru grew rather sullen at having received that unexpected evaluation. However, Ram’s faced remained nonchalant.

And whilst listening to that exchange, Anastasia spoke out with an: “I see.” She was the only one whose face showed some understanding,

Anastasia: ”Certainly, from what the story that circulates aroun’ says, Flugel-san may be lackin’ in bein’ called a “Sage”, but….. I wonder if things ended up bein’ like what I suspect now that Shaula-san, whose been treated as the real “Sage”, turned out to be a person like this.”

Emilia: “What do you mean by *“Things ended up being like what you suspect?”*”

Anastasia: “The achievements that are circulated are the opposite…… Hmm, no that ain’t right I suppose. They’re weighted ta one side, rather than bein’ the opposite. I reckon it may be very likely that they were more or less pushed onto her on purpose.”

Emilia: “So, in other words, you mean that it was made to look like Shaula-san did those things that Flugel-san actually did?”

Emilia opened her eyes in surprise as she heard Anastasia’s hypothesis. After Anastasia nodded at her understanding, she turned around to face Shaula once again.

Anastasia: “I’ve got my suspicions about this, but Shaula-san, what do ya think? I wonder, was yer Master the sort ta try ‘n do these sorts of things, Shaula-san?”

Shaula: “Yeah~, though I don’t quite understand this difficult talk.”

Subaru: “*You better not be.....*”

Shaula: “Nononononono! You’re jumping to conclusions! Let me continue properly with what I was going to say!”

Right after Subaru narrowed his eyes at her vague reply, Shaula shook her head as if in fright. And then, she lifted both of her hands up and as she nonsensically blinked her palms open and closed, she said,

Shaula: “If I’mmmm being honest, there’s much that I don’t understand about Master’s thinking. But, when it comes to Master, he was a person who didn’t really like to stand out. So, I think~ it’s quite like Master to aim the brunt of the annoying gossip onto meeeee and run away.”

Subaru: “I don’t think a person who didn’t want to stand out would've planted a tree called the Flugel’s

Great Tree, though….."

Julius: "Subaru, you've got the wrong idea. It's not like Flugel's Great tree was a Great Tree from the moment it was planted. Many months and years passed by, until finally it attained its majestic appearance from its growth into full bloom. Given that the name of the person who planted it was left behind, it's not that strange that future generations began to call it like that."

Subaru: "……I don't even know what to say to that."

Subaru's face grew sour as he comprehended Julius' explanation.

Indeed, back then, it would have been one of many, but after many long years, it had ended up growing into a magnificent Great Tree. They'd probably wanted to give it a name, and when they came to do so, they'd gone with the: "*Then, let's name it after the person who planted it*" option. That felt like what would've been natural.

If that was the case, then he felt like it had been an oversight of Flugel's to have left his name behind.

Subaru: "If he feels like hiding, then I feel like he should've avoided leaving the name Flugel behind in the first place. Isn't there something missing here?"

Julius: "I read this in a book, but if I'm not mistaken, the reason why we know Flugel-san's name is… because "Flugel was here" was carved onto that Great Tree, right?"

Subaru: "As if there's something missing! He's like a student on a field trip!?"

Subaru was taken aback by this episode where it seemed like he had craved the limelight more than expected.

He recalled that he'd wanted to do something similar back when he'd been standing next to the Great Tree, however when it came to him actually putting that into motion, well, that was another story. When Flugel would have carved it in, the Great Tree still shouldn't have been a Great Tree in the first place.

Julius: "That name stood alone, and thus, the "Sage" Flugel ended up being passed down in legend as an enigmatic historical figure that has next to no information about him other than having planted the tree."

Subaru: "So, isn't the belief that Flugel was the one who planted the tree unclear too!?"

Julius: "With that, time passed, and it was verified as being correct from the mouth of a different "Sage". Now that I think about it…. Hmmm. We're standing in a place which is chock full of missing history, doesn't it make your heart leap just a little?"

Subaru: "Don't start talking as if you're a history otaku….."

Being acquainted with obscure historical facts from several centuries, Julius was deeply moved.

Julius had the tendency to speak too much when explaining things regarding magic rather than him having deep insight into it, however perhaps he did have a knowledgeable otaku side to him here.

Emilia: “But, even though I get that the “Sage” of antiquity was actually Flugel in reality….. this still doesn’t change much, right?”

When their opinions came to match each other in regards to Flugel doing that, Emilia diffidently glanced over everyone’s faces. Receiving her gaze, Subaru nodded his head in agreement.

As Emilia said, the fact that it had actually been Flugel who’d really been behind the legendary exploits of the past didn’t hold much meaning for them at the present. ??No, that wasn’t true at all.

Subaru: “Nope, Emilia-tan. This fact is a pretty big problem.”

Emilia: “Huh?”

Subaru: “I mean, shouldn’t it be? Our purpose from the start was to come here to hear various things from the famed “Sage-san” who is said to be omniscient. But, since the “Sage-san” from the rumours has turned out to be a different person, and all he’s left behind is this obviously air-headed girl, we.....”

Shaula: “Oooh, Master~, I want you to not shake my head. You’re making it go *clatter-clatter*.”

Shaula gave off that reaction, full of jest, as he shook her shoulders.

If he put it without mincing his words, she was far off being omniscient by any stretch of the imagination.

Subaru: “To start with, our original purpose can’t be fulfilled. ??If the “Sage” isn’t here, then it means we came all the way here for nothing.”

Everyone: “????”

Emilia and the others kept their mouths shut at Subaru’s conclusion. Subaru gritted his back teeth at his own conclusion whilst he looked at everyone’s reactions.

Over a month had passed, and Subaru had already died four times.

Only a guardsman who was a “Sage” in name only had been left behind in the Pleiades Watchtower, which they’d surmounted so much hardship to get to. They wouldn’t be able to bring back any results due to this.

The reality of history, the true state of the “Sage”. Those things weren’t of any value to him.

Since Subaru only desired for a way to save the people important to him.

Subaru: “Shaula. This may be a long shot, but just tell me this. Your Master….. The one who should be the real “Sage”, Flugel, where is he?”

Shaula: “Right now, If I were to answer with… “*Right in front of myyyy eyes”*, I get the feeling you’d be mad at me! But, I gotta answer it! The one right in front of myyyy eyes is my Master, Flugel!”

Subaru: “I thought you’d say that.”

Subaru could merely sigh at Shaula’s undiscouraged response.

In fact, Subaru’s current feelings were similar to that of a barren wasteland, overwhelming any urge he had in wanting to burst out in anger at the upbeat Shaula. Their circumstances were such that they could say their leads had come to nothing.

The glimmer of hope which had been the “Sage” had blinked out, and it looked like things would just go back to them fumbling around blindly. However, the subsequent darkness that came after they had seen a dazzling glimmer once in the dark had a different weight to it.

Hope gave people the strength to step forward, but perhaps the dark when hope covered it was something which dyed people’s vision in black, rather than always being in the darkness.

Either way, for Subaru it meant that??

Emilia: “Subaru, listen. It may surely be like that, but in truth it doesn’t mean that we’re at an impasse.”

Subaru: “Huh?”

Emilia placed her hand on Subaru’s shoulder and spoke out to him from the side of his face, which had been drooping down gloomily. Turning his face to look at her, he saw that Emilia’s amethyst eyes were full of unwavering hope.

Giving Subaru a short nod whilst she still touched his shoulder, Emilia continued speaking, saying “Isn’t that right?” to Shaula.

Emilia: “Although you’d barely spoken anything to us until a little while ago, the current you should be able to speak to us in a quite a bit more detail, right?”

Shaula: “Sure thing. I dislike it when Master’s feeling down tooo, but also I was all alone for such a long time, so I’d love to chat.”

Shaula replied to Emilia’s meaningful questioning with a genial look to her, keeping her attitude unchanged. She sat cross-legged, swaying back and forth; then, she moved her right hand up, and pointed it up overhead.

Shaula: “I said a bit of this to the others, but we’re on the bottomost floor of the tower here. This is the Sixth Floor, “Asterope”. As you go up, there’s the Fifth Floor “Celaeno”, then the Fourth Floor “Alcyone”, and at the tippy-top there’s the First Floor “Maia”.”

Subaru: “You named each of the floors? Wasn’t that a hassle?”

Shaula: “Didn’t you name them Master?”

Subaru: “I ain’t got such bad taste, but I don’t want to talk about that right now. So?”

There was hope in Emilia’s eyes, and Subaru’s mood grew in impatience at the flow of Shaula’s conversation that promoted that. Shaula broke into a delighted smile as if she’d perceived that change in his expression.

Still pointing up above, she stuck out her other hand, her left hand, and showed him her five fingers,

Shaula: ”The Fifth Floor “Celaeno” is straight above, on that floor you’ll find the doorway that leads outside. The Sixth Floor “Asterope” is underneath it, so in fact it connects straight to the underground area. If you hit it in the wrong place, you’ll end up buried alive, so It’d be best that you don’t do anything reckless like trying to break the wall.”

Julius: “Incidentally, the wall and floor seem to look like they’re made out of stone when you first look at them, but they have an unusual strength to them. Let me just say now that they wouldn’t be chipped even a bit with either Emilia-sama’s magic, or mine of course.”

Of course that probably didn’t mean he’d tried to destroy them, but Julius nevertheless supplemented Shaula’s explanation. He didn’t have any intentions of destroying the tower at all, but he nodded with an *“I see”*, just to be safe.

Subaru: “So, I get that the Fifth Floor has the doorway, but what about above that?”

Shaula: ”The Fourth Floor “Alcyone” is like myyyy dwelling area, a simple place for my ins ‘n outs. I like to leave it messy, so I’m gonna get embarrassed if you look at it too hard~”

Subaru “????”

Shaula: “Master, your eyes look serious. How scary…...U-Usually I stand watch over the Sand Dunes from here. And, then I take aim and fire fire fire at anyone who gets near to the tower!”

Subaru: “So it indeed was you then.”

He’d already half-guessed it before, but he could be fully convinced now thanks to her testimony. White light from that Pleiades Watchtower had killed Subaru twice in the Sand Dunes, and it had also been the cause behind their team being separated into two after?? The culprit had been, as he’d thought, Shaula.

Subaru: “We went through so much suffering thanks to that, how the hell do you plan to make up for that?”

Shaula: “Sorrysorry, I was juuuust following Master’s instructions, when you say that, you’re just fussing about what I’ve been doing here for the past hundreds of years~”

Subaru glared at her, speaking in a harsh tone, causing Shaula to quiver back, her face growing dishevelled. There was no ill will showing on her face, and moreover, she showed no signs of remorse either.

Rather than lacking in a sense of guilt, she didn't seem to have one in the first place.

It wasn't an issue where she lacked emotions, but rather...

Beatrice: "Subaru, there's no use in this, no matter what you say, in fact. There's no sense of remorse or guilt in this one, I suppose. They just do as ordered…..It doesn't make sense to ask a tool their uses, in fact."

Shaula: "Yepyep, I'mmmm Master's tool! The lil' ankle biter says it well!"

Shaula had a big smile which said *"That's exactly what I thought"* all over her face as she heard Beatrice's savage opinion.

Her moods and facial expressions changed fickly, and with that, his understanding of her current way of being?? Perhaps Shaula just had different values. That was probably why they seemed to keep conversing as if they were on different wavelengths.

In other words,

Subaru: "It's getting real tiring talking with you."

Shaula: "You used to say that all the time before! It's been aaaages."

Subaru: "Is that so? Y'know I used to say that all the time, donkey years ago."

He felt like he still did now, but Subaru brushed aside that point.

In any case, he understood that the white light that had come from the Watchtower had been Shaula's doing, as well as that he'd never get any kind of apology or remorse from her.

In that case, there was no meaning in cutting their conversation short. He'd just have to move the conversation forward.

Subaru: "About the Fourth Floor, your dwelling area…… Like, your living quarters. What's above that?"

Shaula: "The examination hall from the Third Floor "Taygeta". ??To test one's rights to enter the library."

Subaru: "……The library?"

Subaru frowned, repeating the word back to her as a question. Shaula calmly nodded back at him saying "Yeah" without paying heed to Subaru's change in attitude.

Shaula: “A library. From the Third Floor “Taygeta” and up, there’s trials, and each one has a corresponding library. If you fulfill the conditions to enter the library, then you can read the books inside at your leissssure.”

Subaru: “What’s written in those *“books inside”*?”

Shaula: “Errrrr?”

Subaru: “Errrrr!?”

It was frustrating that she’d finished with an “Errrrr” considering that she’d told him this much whilst assuming an air of importance. Shaula reluctantly shook her head, along with her hair, at the frowning Subaru, and said: “It’s because~”

Shaula: “I can’t read the books ‘n stuff, I’ve not been told more than to guard the tower.”

Subaru: “Was that from your Master….. From Flugel as well?”

Shaula: “Yeah!”

It would be impossible for Subaru to answer, regardless of how she had put it so proudly.

Though Subaru had only inclined his head in doubt at Shaula’s words, Emilia and the others’ still kept serious looks on their faces, the hope they held in their eyes was still there.

Beatrice: “Subaru, what lies inside the books of the library is knowledge, I suppose.”

Subaru: “By “*knowledge*” you don’t mean it in a literal sense, right?”

Subaru asked the obvious back after he heard Beatrice’s expression.

Typically, what was written down in books was knowledge, barring fiction of course. What you got out of books was either a wealth of knowledge, or deep, moving impressions.

But that probably wasn’t the meaning behind what Beatrice was trying to say.

Beatrice shook her head on top of Subaru’s lap.

Her long drill curls traced her head’s movement, she spoke out to Subaru, who was following that motion with his eyes.

Beatrice: “This is the place where the knowledge written down by the “Sage” known as being omniscient sleeps. I’ve heard that the Pleiades Watchtower is a name used in the outside, in fact.”

Shaula: “Yeah. Since Master’s came back inside, the tower will go back to its original role. A Great Library where you can search for anything you like, be it something you want to know or something

you'd like to be aware of?? You can do that in Pleiades."

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Subaru: "So that means the Third Floor is at a Beginner Level. The Second Floor is at an Intermediate Level. And that you can get access to the top class information on the First Floor, I think. So it must mean that the Trials are Qualifications Trials to obtain the clearances, right?"

Shaula: "Ohhh, as expected of Master! Even I keep getting more and more confused with what you're talking about! But perhaps it's *Mucho mejor* that you keep it simple."

??The Great Library Pleiades.

The name of the Watchtower had gone from something quite affable to something quite suspicious. Subaru and the others, line astern, had left the Sixth Floor and had started climbing the stairs up towards the upper floors.

The spiral staircase carried Subaru and the others up towards the upper floors, coiling around circularly within the tower. However, since there was no manner of railing, the higher he got, the more his blood ran cold.

Subaru: "This is scary."

Emilia: "Subaru, if you're scared, then hold my hand? Since you still haven't fully recovered, and you're unsteady on your feet, you might actually fall off.…."

The ground of the Sixth Floor was getting far in the distance, and Gyan along with the Dragon Carriage looked pretty small down there. Emilia called that out to Subaru, who had looked down below, holding his breath.

To tell the truth, he wanted to take her hand and enjoy the feeling of her pale fingers, but...

Subaru: "Thanks, Emilia-tan. But, I'm alright right now. For the time being it doesn't seem like I'll fall off since the stars are fairly wide, that, and I'm also still full of vim and vigour, don't you think?"

Emilia: "Really? But, if you think it's getting tough, you'll tell me straight away, right? I can carry you on my back if it comes down to it."

Subaru: "Is that so…… Then I won't make it come down to that."

The impression of being carried up the stairs on Emilia's back was as expected too horrifying. He would rather make that loan out to Julius, were he to make such an unmanly move.

Julius: "What is it?"

Subaru: "That'd just be the worst way too though. Oh, it's nothing in particular. Keep moving, keep

moving!”

Noticing Julius’ eyes on him, who’d just turned his head around, Subaru shook his hand at him. He shrugged his shoulders and continued to lead them up the stairs, still holding Anastasia’s hand.

Right now, they had their eyes set on the upper floors of the tower, progressing on foot. They weren’t in a rush, so they went about it at a leisurely pace, which contrasted their feelings of apprehension. Julius and Anastasia were at the front, then after them came Ram and Emilia line astern, with Subaru and Beatrice walking behind them. And finally, Shaula and Meili were bringing up the rear.

Meili: “Who~a there, naked Onee-san, don’t shake about so much.”

Shaula: “Huuuuh, you sure are a bossy lil’ ankle-biter for someone whose riding on my shoulders~”

Meili: “Be~cause, I’m sle~epy. We’ve been wa~lking for ages, and I can’t make it up and down the stairs with how many stairs there a~re.”

Shaula: “Yes, but why do I have to carry you..…..! Quit pulling on my hair!”

Fussy as she may be, there was no sharpness in their exchange.

The Shaula/Meili group bringing up the rear was, rather incredibly, such that Shaula was carrying Meili on her shoulders as they climbed the stairs. Initially, when they’d decided to move up, Meili had taken the opportunity to complain that her feet were tired. However it had been Shaula herself who had said she’d be okay with carrying her on her back, so he’d left it down to her.

Subaru: “When it comes to actual physical strength, it looks like Shaula is likely the strongest...”

Beatrice: “That’s for sure, I suppose. ??Subaru, don’t let your guard down, in fact. Despite her appearance, we don’t know when she’ll show her fangs, I suppose.”

Subaru: “This woman? You get that impression from her?”

Beatrice: “We don’t know how she will react if it comes to light that you’re not Flugel, in fact.”

Subaru: “That’s……”

Subaru ended up stammering his words as he heard Beatrice’s reponse, her having urged him caution in a low voice.

It wasn’t that he hadn’t thought about it, but he didn’t think it was a problem if he left it at the edge of his thoughts. In fact, Shaula was acting pretty friendly towards his group??No, towards Subaru, and that was only because she kept mistaking him as being her Master.

And, Subaru and the rest knew that his relation with him was something she was completely misunderstanding. He’d denied it to her many times till now, but Shaula would just smile and disregard

it. Actually rather than disregarding it, it was more like she didn’t care at all no matter how many times she heard it. But, in any case, it hadn’t gotten through to her.

Therefore, Shaula’s attitude hadn’t changed, and he could even consider it a security??

Subaru: “That means that we won’t know what trigger will bring everything crumbling down.”

Beatrice: “There’s no doubt that things will end up quite worrisome if she were to become hostile, I suppose. We’d have no choice but to combine mine and your strength, as well as Emilia and that knight’s….. Julius’, in fact.”

Subaru: “Shaula’s strength, huh?”

He took a quick glance back at Shaula messing about with Meili.

She had a friendly, and defenceless look to her improper appearance?? Ever since their first encounter, all the way to their conversations afterwards, she had been an individual that had been difficult to judge in every manner.

However, although Subaru currently couldn’t decide what attitude to hold against Shaula, there wasn’t any harboured animosity which stood out in her, that much is what it looked like.

Although she was acting friendly to them due to mistaking him for someone else, and although they’d been met with such an unguarded reception from her, it was more difficult to dislike her than be bewildered by her.

However, he mustn't confuse such touchy-feely emotions with there being a lack of looming danger.

Subaru: “????”

Turning his eyes at their defenceless limbs whilst sneaking glances at Shaula’s condition, Subaru broke into thought.

She’d confessed that it had been her who’d set her aim on Subaru and the others back at the sand dunes and thrown those flashes of light at them from the tower. The speed of those flashes of light, along with the accuracy of their aim had been unnatural, they’d been plenty enough to give him an impression of the height of Shaula’s true strength. Right now, Subaru didn’t even know whether those things had been magic or not.

And to add on top of that, there’d been those final moments back at the underground area of the sand dunes.

That which remained in his awfully turbid consciousness, just before he had lost it, must have been Shaula who had come to blows with that repulsive-looking Centaur.

That monster was one which could only be thought of as being either the embodiment of absurdity or

outrageousness was abruptly torn to pieces by a more powerful force, and he witnessed it being blown away out of existence with his own eyes.

He didn't want to admit it, but if he ended up in direct combat against Shaula, any visions of being able to win against her were all but gone.

Regulus, Petelgeuse and such had been far easier opponents.

Subaru: "....Urgh I don't know why I start to pretty repulsed whenever I recall those guys. No, feeling that is perfectly reasonable, but it's a familiar repulsed feeling that I'm getting."

Beatrice: "I don't know what you're thinking, but we need to be careful, I suppose."

Subaru: "Yeah. If that's the case..., then I guess asking her is quicker."

Beatrice: "Huh? In fact."

Straight after Beatrice replied in confusion, Subaru turned both himself and her around at the same time. Whilst swivelling his feet around on the stairs so they faced back, Subaru faced straight towards the double-stacked Shaula and Meili.

Shaula stopped in her tracks and tilted her head.

Shaula: "What's up Master? It couldn't be that Master's also tired right? It wouldn't be an issue for me to carry you, but my back is already taken by this girl who acts like a little princess, you know?"

Subaru: "That in itself would make quite an impression, so I'll pass. Ah, though I'm sorry to get in between you happily playing with your ponytail with Meili…."

Shaula: "It's not a ponytail, it's a scorpiontail."

Subaru: "????"

Shaula: "It's a scorpiontail."

Shaula repeated herself to the taciturn Subaru as if she was a broken record.

Grabbing ahold of one of her ponytail's tufts, Shaula readily moved it in front of her face, and said,

Shaula: "A scorpiontail….."

Subaru: "I understand! What's up with this insistence! Anyways, I'm sorry to get in between you making friends with Meili, but there's something I want to ask you."

Shaula: "Mhm! If it's something Master has to say, I will listen to anything! I'mmmm glad that you're speaking to me like this, Master~"

Shaula swung her ponytail… Er, rather, her scorpiontail about delightedly.

As a result of that, Meili, who was on her shoulders, was hit by one of the tail's swishes. Subaru had already experienced that unexpectedly soft, good feeling tail, but putting that aside,

Subaru: "You'll listen to what I say right?"

Shaula: "Not lewd stuff, right?"

Subaru: "Don't even begin to go there. What are you braindead?"

Shaula: "It's pretty dumb of Master to say so, isn't it? Now we're even!"

Subaru was left floored as he couldn't keep up pace with Shaula who'd had a comeback to spare. Usually, most people ended up getting thrown quite out of sync when they mixed in with the pace of Subaru's conversations. Because of that, suitably finding a thread to start a conversation came down to Subaru, but it would be tough to do this time.

The difficulty in this line of approach would still be different than with aberrations like the Sin Archbishops. In their case, it was difficult to establish a conversation with them in the first place, but it was different in Shaula's case.

He felt a delay in proportion to not understanding his opponent whatsoever, whilst she understood him.

Truly as if Flugel, Subaru, and god knows who else had a lot of points in common.

Subaru: "Anyways, I have a question and a request. I need you to answer them as honestly, and obediently as possible."

Shaula: "That doesn't seem like a request. They could be an order, though."

Subaru: "I ain't that bossy. So, about the question….. You attacked us from the tower, right? What the hell was that?"

Shaula: "It was Hell's Snipe, a sniping attack used so that pesky flies don't get near to the tower."

Subaru: "……What?"

Shaula: "Hell's Snipe."

With her having said it in English whilst beaming, Subaru's face grew sullen.

Well, uhm, it was a name he knew.

Shaula: "Thoooough, if I think about it now, I'm so glad that Hell's Snipe didn't hit Master. If the Dimension Gate didn't get lifted, I may've flung blow after blow until they struck Master."

Subaru: “Waitwaitwaitwait, there’s too much new vocab! Dimension?”

Shaula: “Dimension Gate. It’s a trick to prevent people from reaching the tower.”

From Shaula’s way of talking, Subaru grasped that this Dimension Gate, and whatever else, had cut off their path to the Flower Meadow thanks to that “Sand Time”, but even so, the space distortion had been lifted by the efforts of E?M?T in the end.

Shaula: “But, thanks to that, I knew that Master was actually Master, so everything turned a’ight in the end. If Master’d been struck, Master would definitely have been mad at meeee, wouldn’t he?”

Subaru: “Uh huh, yeah, probably. I hope you’d get away with just me being mad at you.”

In actual fact, he had been struck and died twice, so he was uneasy about whether he could even get up to those anger levels.

It was rare for his anger to not spike up rapidly when meeting the culprits who killed him. Part of the reason why it hadn’t now was because he understood that it had been some kind of accident, and that it was pointless even to pursue Shaula’s responsibility.

Meili: “Bu~t, if you’d managed to strike him, Onii-san would’ve ended up dead, wouldn’t h~e? If that happened, then I don’t think we’d be talking about getting mad or not he~re.”

Perched on Shaula’s back, Meili interjected into the conversation in place of Subaru, who was half embroiled in his forgiveness. Upon hearing her words, Shaula let out a fit of rather unlady-like, uncontrollable laughter.

Shaula: “What are ya saying lil’ ankle biter? There’s no way myyyy Master would die from something like that? Cuz’ from the start, Master’s always been someone who you can never tell whether he's dead or not dead.”

Meili: “Butbu~t, Sandworm-chan got hit so much, and he ended up dying, s~o….”

Shaula: “I don’t really give a damn about stuff like Worms or Bears ya know. Myyy Master wouldn’t die, that is what’s important. ??If he’d died, then it’d just mean he’s not my Master.”

Smiling absentmindedly, Shaula gazed at Subaru with delighted looking eyes. Subaru’s spine shivered when she’d turned her innocent, smiling face towards him.

Innocence like that of a child’s, and faith tantamount to defencelessness. That which she put into Flugel was an ideal that she’d rigidly built up at her core more than he’d dared to imagine.

In accordance with Beatrice’s worries, if there ever came a time where she’d come into disagreement with the current Subaru, then...

Shaula: “I apologise that I was late in picking you up from the Sand Palace afterwards. Whilst I let in the

other group into the tower, Master and the rest with him ended up advancing into its depths, so I was all in a fluster."

Subaru: "Aah, no, it's fine…. Though, wait, you said *"Sand Palace"*?"

(TL Note: ?? - Could mean either Sand Palace or Sand Shrine in English. It does not use the same Kanji as the Shrine where the Witch is sealed, which is: ?, but there may be an etymological relation between them if anyone feels like researching.)

Shaula: "Indeed. It's really dangerous over there, so it's better if you don't go into it. It's reckless to approach without having all the keys, even if it's you Master. There are Hungry Horse Kings prowling about there too."

Subaru: "Hungry Horse Kings…..You mean those horse-like monsters?"

Sand Palace, Keys, Hungry Horse Kings. There were a lot of words which were weighing on his mind, but his mind wandered to the last one of them, the Hungry Horse Kings.

Perhaps it referred to that Centaur.

Shaula nodded at his question.

Shaula: "Those things weren't here around the time Master was here, so I thought you'd be surprised. In essence, they just prowl about inside of the Sand Palace, so you won't come across them unless you go to there. But once in a while one of those guys will venture outside, so I go and destroy them without any mercy."

Subaru: "Is there a lot of them?"

Shaula: "There's tons and tons."

Subaru felt truly revulsed from the bottom of his heart hearing Shaula confirm that without any hesitation.

The Centaur = Hungry Horse King's fighting strength, and of course it's appearance and ecology were all things which brought feelings of indescribable unpleasantness. He'd hoped that there'd been just one specimen of them if possible, but that didn't look like it was the case. She'd told him that from using the expression *"tons and tons"*.

Meili: "Hungry Horse King….. I'm also not familiar with that na~me. I'd like to see one, ma~ybe."

Subaru: "Stop it! That's not something a kid needs to see….."

Meili: "O-onii-san….."

Subaru gave Meili a very stern warning, who'd spoken out those rash words. Maybe those words had tugged on Meili's heartstring who was something like a Witchbeast Collector, but he wouldn't

recommend her trying to get in contact with them to fill them in for a picture book.

Shaula nodded in agreement at Subaru's words.

Shaula: "I think it's best not to. The Hungry Horse Kings are a Witchbeast with the concept that their horns can regenerate over and over again, so you can't make arrangements with them like with other Witchbeasts. Kill all enemies on sight, this is their justice."

Meili: "Blegh, I understa~nd."

Pouting with a gesture appropriate of her age, Meili retracted her curiosity.

Whilst feeling relived by that situation, Shaula once again spoke out to Subaru, saying "So,"

Shaula: "Master, was that all you wanted to talk about?"

Subaru: "Aah, for now that's a-….. No, wait, that's not all."

Shaula: "???"

With her head still inclined, Shaula prepared to receive his question with a "Bring it on!" attitude. Considering that she had opened her heart to them till now, it was quite insincere of him to continue keeping his guard up. But sometimes you had to steel your heart no matter how painful it was.

If he could change something by just saying one thing in preparation for the future, then doing so would be fortuitous.

Subaru: "Shaula, this is my request. Don't cause me, or my companions any harm."

Shaula: "????"

Subaru: "Your Master's order was to attack anyone who approached the tower….So I would think? Since we're inside, we are not covered by that. So, there's no need for you to attack us anymore. Don't cause us any harm. Absolutely none."

Shaula: "????"

Shaula narrowed her eyes at Subaru, who'd repeated his words once more to make absolutely sure.

As he looked on at her narrowed eyes, he saw that their colour was of a deep green hue. Shaula, whose expression had been pretty much all smiles since they'd met her, had stopped smiling as if she was in deep thought for the first time.

For a while, there was silence. Subaru, who'd been holding his breath due to this strange tension, couldn't stand it any longer, and let out his breath. Then,

Shaula: “Mhm, OK. I’veee memorised it word for word as a new command from Master~”

Subaru: “????”

Shaula: “Master?”

Immediately after she decided to accept it, Shaula’s features changed, turning back to her frivolousness. Shaula brought her face super close to Subaru’s, whose eyes had widened without following her sudden change in attitude.

Their eyes stared at each other’s at point blank range, but he couldn’t find any deception or dishonesty in her green eyes. At least, as far as Subaru could see.

Subaru: “Is it okay with you?”

Shaula: “I have no choice. It’s what Master’s said. It’s not particularly hard. Non-violence, non-obedience.”

Subaru: “Since you’re going to follow the order, don’t you mean that you’ll obey?”

Shaula: “Even if you could do as you pleased with my body, I wouldn’t let you snatch away my heart!”

Subaru: “What a pain in the ass you are…..!”

He prodded Shaula in the forehead, whose face had tensed up, so to make her take a step back. Shaula fell back letting out an “AAUUUUH”, causing Meili to panic on her back, even though she was safe.

In any case, Subaru’s request somehow looked like it had been readily accepted. It wasn’t clear how effective it was going to be, but, at least….

Subaru: “Like, as long as I don’t let her down, the promise should be kept.”

Beatrice: “If that’s the only requirement, then things will be fine, in fact. You expect to let her down, but you won’t, I suppose.”

Subaru: “I’m really grateful for being held to that high esteem, but in this case, isn’t that part of your expectations where you think I won’t let her down being far too optimistic? What would Flugel do? Should I grow wings? He sounds like he’s German.”

On that topic, to Subaru it felt like Flugel was a German word that meant “Wings”.

He’d never expected that he’d be pulling stuff out from there, but that was suspicious as well. At any rate, this Flugel, altogether with Shaula’s name smelled fishy as hell.

Subaru: “That’s right, Shaula. I’ve got just one last question to ask you.”

Shaula: “What is it~?”

Shaula’s cheeks were getting pinched by Meili, her face looked completely vapid.

With his back still turned to Shaula, Subaru spoke with a casual gesture,

Subaru: “Maia, Electra, Taygeta, Alcyone, Celaeno, Asterope.”

Beatrice: “.....Subaru?”

Beatrice, who was beside Subaru, had a puzzled look on her face as she heard Subaru reciting those words out.

They were just a string of words which should have no meaning when hearing only their sounds.

Of course, they had just heard about four of those words a while ago, but they wouldn’t be words which were so easy to remember as to recite them from memory. ??Given that they were unfamiliar words.

Subaru: “All of those, in order from top to bottom, are this Pleiades Watchtower’s…..Err, I mean this Great Library Pleiades’ floor names right?”

Shaula: “Correct~”

Subaru: “So, where’s Merope?”

Shaula: “????”

Shaula once again kept her silence on hearing Subaru’s question. However, this silence was different to the one before, it was a silence of surprise like she’d been caught completely unaware.

You could faintly hear the sound of her breath being taken away; Subaru deemed that he’d managed to touch on the truth.

Beatrice: “Subaru, what did you ask her, in fact? What does Merope mean, I suppose.”

Subaru: “It’s the name of the last one of the seven sisters. It’d be strange to not have seven in Pleiades.”

The floors had been allocated six names from the first floor to the sixth. However, the names that followed that motif were from the start, the seven sisters?? A floor with the seventh name attached to it should exist.

Subaru: “If it’s not the Seventh Floor….., then I guess it would be a Floor Zero.”

Shaula: “There’s a Floor Zero. Master named them, so it’s natural…… However, the place was made after Master left, so you shouldn’t know where it is.”

Shaula replied to Subaru's guesswork with a hoarse voice. Subaru felt Beatrice beside him startle in surprise, but he licked his parched lips and narrowed his eyes.

He felt no sense of achievement at having found something hidden. After all, it was because it wasn't something that was hidden for Subaru.

Subaru "If the First Floor is the highest floor, then Floor Zero must be the super-highest floor? In regards to entering it, h-……"

Shaula: "??No."

Shaula quickly interrupted Subaru's words, who was about to ask her how to enter it. Feeling the strength in the tone of her voice, Subaru took a quick glimpse back at her. When he did, he saw that Shaula's facial expression hadn't changed.

She was still smiling with a look of honesty about her. However, there was a faint look of loneliness plastered around her eyes.

Shaula: "You haven't fulfilled the conditions yet. Master came back to see me in the middle of his journey, and I'm satisfied with that. That's why Floor Zero is a No."

Subaru: "????"

Though her tone of voice still hadn't changed, it instead felt like a firm wall to the point that it felt queer.

The promise they'd exchanged a few minutes ago, and the pervading danger that was quite capable of shaking him even at his core, strongly appealed to him of the sense of danger that was drifting off her.

Thus, Subaru gave up on inquiring her further about this place.

Subaru: "Gotcha. I won't speak such nonsense anymore. We'll just keep to our earlier promise."

Shaula: "Roger Roger~ I shall keep it~ I shall super-keep it~"

Shaula broke into a broad smile, in high spirits as if she'd forgotten their current exchange. Subaru let out a deep sigh as he listened to her upbeat voice from behind him.

Beatrice: "Subaru, if it gets too much, you'll say so, right?"

Subaru: "Mhm, it's alright. Just so much stuff is on my mind."

He gave a weak smile as he heard Beatrice's words of worry, before then affectionately patting her head. When he did so, Beatrice couldn't say anything, but this was also a rite for Subaru to settle himself down.

Flugel's abnormalness had become apparent in his conversation with Shaula. It was no big deal. He too was the same as Subaru.

Subaru, Al, Hoshin, and Flugel.

A person who'd craved the limelight who'd brought knowledge that shouldn't be in this world, and ostentatiously left it behind. He had no more doubt, Flugel was a person from the same place as him.

Subaru: "Centuries ago, huh?"

After reflecting back on that for a long, long time, Subaru violently scratched his head.

What had he felt in this different world, what had he thought, what had he aimed for, what had he sought for??.

What had this man, who seemed to have renounced the name "Sage" and planted the tree, desired?

Whilst he thought about those kinds of things, he wondered whether he still lived on in this world.

Then, coming from Subaru's back, was??,

Shaula: "Master"

Subaru: "Mhm?"

Shaula called out to him casually. Without stopping in his tracks, Subaru just turned his face around to glance at her. Shaula looked up at Subaru looking a little bashful.

Her expression was adorned by a truly delightful looking smile,

Shaula: "Welcome home again, Master. ??This Shaula has been awaiting the "Great Erudite" Flugel's return with all her heart."

Arc 6 – Chapter 21, "The Monolith Challenge"

by admin - Saturday, September 07, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/09/07/arc-6-chapter-21-the-monolith-challenge/

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Translated By :

- Ice_Occultism (/u/Ice_Occultism)

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Arc 6 – “Hall of Memories”
Chapter 21 – “The Monolith Challenge”

Regarding Shaula’s welcoming words?? While Subaru did understand that they’d been misdirected to a different person, he decided that he’d receive them without denying them in the end.

There was also Beatrice’s advice.

There was no doubt that in practicality allowing Shaula to mistake Subaru as Flugel was rather convenient for them. With this in place now it meant that an outcome where Shaula became hostile and commenced battle wouldn’t necessarily end up in them being scattered about by her overwhelming strength.

Since she was treating them favourably for now, Subaru could at least dullen his hand of attack. Though if he were to do that, considering that he lacked in actual strength even under the best of circumstances, it’d probably be enough to end up as a main factor in him making a colossal blunder.

Emilia: “You needn’t worry, Subaru. Even if Shaula realises that in truth you’re not her Master, I’m sure she wouldn’t do anything awful.”

Those were Emilia’s words, who seemed to have been eavesdropping on their conversation behind them.

Emilia, who had her silver hair styled in long braids, confidently assured that to Subaru, whilst she

fiddled with the end of one of her braids with her fingers.

Subaru: “I’m glad of Emilia-tan’s seal of approval, but…..What’s the rationale behind it?”

Emilia: “I don’t really fully understand what you mean by the expression *“What’s the rationale behind it”*, but, Shaula’s a good girl, isn’t she? She saved you, and us as well, so I can say that we will all get along. If we do, there shouldn’t be any need to fight, right?”

Subaru: “…...Right.”

Her opinion was a little too optimistic, but he could say that being too pessimistic was also enough of a bad habit.

Even if Shaula found out the truth, it didn’t mean that she’d get aggressive straight away. Even if the facts came to light, Shaula should keep herself from coming to blows at her own judgement. So, Emilia’s thoughts that they should all get along weren’t so misguided, at least he could allow himself to think so.

The reason behind that intent wasn’t a calculating goal like appealing to one’s emotions, but rather because he didn’t want to fight against her.

Ram: “Don’t take Emilia’s rough ideas word for word, Barusu. We’re in the “Sage’s” Watchtower here, and we need to challenge it to even make our way back to the sand dunes. We lose nothing by keeping our guards up as much as possible.”

Emilia: “Jeez, you sure were quick to put it like that, Ram. You should really loosen up a little…..”

Ram: “The result of having let down my guard was that I ended up being thrown down to the underground area with Barusu and Anastasia-sama. With how delicate I am, that feeling of despair was unbearable……perhaps that’s why Emilia-sama you have no clue about that.”

Emilia: “Mhm, I guess so. But, surely if it’s an underground area around this place you’re talking about, then shouldn’t it be no big deal for you? I don’t know why, but I’ve been in reaaally good shape since coming to the Augria Sand Dunes, ya know?”

It seemed like Emilia had replied to the sharp Ram’s words in a rather relaxed manner. Emilia and Ram’s relationship as master and vassal had been pretty good since a year ago. The way Ram spoke and behaved towards Emilia showed a little lack of respect, but Emilia looked like she couldn’t help but be happy receiving that treatment.

Emilia, who should have experienced the trauma of discrimination and contempt, may have contrarily felt that Ram’s words didn’t contain that sort of animosity.

Subaru: “At any rate, Emilia-tan, what do you mean by you being in good shape?”

Emilia: “How should I put it, the air goes well with my skin, I guess. Mana too has a slightly different tone to it depending on the country or region you’re in, so I think something like that’s happening,

but…...The mana in this place especially seems to go well with my skin. Though I guess I shouldn't be very happy about that."

Subaru: "Well, I suppose so. But considering that this is the place where the Witch is sealed, full of these Witchbeasts..."

Emilia had clenched her fist as if she'd felt a surge of strength go through her. However, straight after, a bitter looking smile appeared on her dismal-looking face. Her opinion had been an emboldened one, for sure, as he sympathised with the mood she was in.

Following what he'd mentioned above, he was silently grateful that Emilia's strength had grown in this area they were in, which was chock-full of danger with the Witch and the Witchbeasts. Yet even so, the figure which Shaula had defeated had been engraved in Subaru's mind, so that wasn't a reason that could end up giving him some optimism.

Subaru: "Though, the conditions have changed. Unlike before where she could attack us from the tower without us being able to do anything, now that the distance is such that you can see each other's faces, Emilia-tan shouldn't end up losing against her."

Shaula: "What is it? What is it?"

Subaru: "Nothing, was just talking about how you have crazy good eyesight. You managed to throw attacks at us from the tower with pinpoint accuracy when we were really far off, didn't you? How the hell does that work?"

Shaula: "Ohhh, that's just done by linking myyyyy aim and myyyy stingers with mana, and that makes it so it's pulled to where you are. Hell's Snipe was Master's invention, ya know?"

Subaru: ".....I see, you didn't even have to train her, eh, Flugel."

He'd gone through hell and back again thanks to that. He'd probably never get a chance to talk to Flugel, but if he did get a chance like at the tea party, he'd definitely be giving him some very colourful, choice words.

Subaru let out a sigh as he heard the upbeat Shaula humming. Then??,

Julius: "Sorry to interrupt you in the middle of your chat, but we've arrived."

Subaru: "Oh?"

On the spiral staircase which led to the upper floors of the tower??He heard Julius' voice, who'd been at the front of the group, leading them up.

Lifting his face up at the knight's words, who was escorting Anastasia by the hand, he could suddenly see the ceiling from the other side of Julius who was standing diagonally up from him.

Subaru: “No, it’s not the ceiling, but the floor part of the floor above, I should say.”

Beatrice: “We must be on the Fifth Floor, “Celaeno”, I suppose. All there is here is a door to the outside, Betty and the others first entered from here, in fact.”

Betty, who was next to him, commented that to him just as they neared the Fifth Floor. As he nodded in agreement to her words, Subaru immediately noticed that something was out of place, and said, “Uh?”

If she was implying that after they’d been separated Emilia and the others had entered the tower from the Fifth Floor, then....

Subaru: “How did the Dragon Carriage and Gyan get down to the Bottom Floor? I mean, there’s no way that this staircase is wide enough to let a Dragon Carriage roll by, right?”

Spreading his arms out across the spiral staircase he’d walked up, Subaru checked its width. The width of the staircase was reasonably wide, but even so it wouldn’t fit two Subarus with arms stretched out abreast. It might have been barely possible to let the huge body of an Earth Dragon pass down it, but there was no way that the carriage part of the Dragon Carriage was getting through.

And of course, letting the Earth Dragon walk down this long staircase itself was a path which really shouldn’t be trodden even if it was theoretically possible.

Subaru: “Is there some sort of contraption like an elevator poking around here in fact? If there is, then we need to use it next time. Keeping healthy is great and all, but it ain’t good to always disregard modern conveniences.”

Emilia: “Sorry, I don’t really get what you’re saying…. But, how the Dragon Carriage got down there is simple. Shaula lifted it up and carried it down.”

Subaru: “……Pardon?”

Subaru felt like he’d missed something, and so he asked her again. Emilia frowned at his reply which had been said in English, but she nevertheless grasped that he seemed to have asked her to repeat herself, so she continued her words by saying, “So,”

Emilia: “Shaula effortlessly lifted the Dragon Carriage along with the Earth Dragon up, and simply brought them down to the bottom.”

Subaru: “Nonononononono, there’s no way. Wouldn’t a Dragon Carriage weigh over a ton with how huge it is? And you said she did it as a set with the Earth Dragon too…..”

Subaru peeled his eyes wide open at those horrifying remarks, but no one from his companions denied it. Finally, Shaula puffed out her ample chest in pride, and flared out her nostrils.

Shaula: “It’s as she said, the one who carried them down was meeee. Oh man, it was a piece of cake. If I’d left the lizard near the doorway, he may have ended up becoming loopy due to the miasma streaming

in from the outside, dontcha think? I was just a lil' worried. You can praise me you know!"

Subaru: "I do feel grateful, but now I know that your slender arms aren't actually slender arms, and it weirds me out. A person with superhuman strength….. I imagine even Reinhard wouldn't be able to do this!"

Though in Subaru's mind the most frightfully-shocking human was indisputably Reinhard, but wouldn't it likely be impossible even for him to lift up something that weighed over what you'd expect a human could lift?

Even if he could cut the world into ribbons with his sword pressure, even if he could walk on water, even if he could revive himself again, carrying a Dragon Carriage with one hand for him would be??,

Subaru: "I guess he'd be able to do that. That makes me feel just a bit uneasy. Is that guy really human?"

Shaula: "Hmmph, despite myyyy story, Master's thinking of someone else. Jealousy."

In any case, he now understood how the Dragon Carriage had been carried to the bottommost floor. He hadn't in actuality seen her carrying it, so the impact of the scene was diminished, but he had to take it as a new threat potential in the eventuality that the *enraged Shaula problem* cropped up.

And, just as they'd finished talking about that, the group arrived on the Fifth Floor. "Celaeno", as had been pointed out many times, was where the entrance that led to the inside and outside of the tower was.

A huge door was built in one place at the back of the tower which was cylindrical in shape.

It was large enough that you had to look up at it, and its width was easily close to 10 metres. It was an unnecessarily huge door, but how much strength it would take to open it, that too was an issue??.

Subaru: "Doesn't it look difficult to enter this via the trial door way?"

Julius: "At least, when I tried pushing it, it wouldn't give an inch. Thanks to that, we weren't able to search for you, Anastasia-sama, and the others."

As he gazed at the super-huge door, Subaru let out a sigh, and Julius nodded at him. With it being as heavy as it looked, it seemed like this door would stop any challengers in their path.

Opening it may have been possible for Shaula, who could easily carry a Dragon Carriage in one hand, but for the average Joe it would have been impossible. Therefore Emilia and Julius had ended up being unable to leave to search for Subaru and the others, and that looked like it had ended up worrying them a lot.

Beatrice: "But, it sure does look like it's a bit creaky here and there, I suppose."

Anastasia: "I think it's 'cause the Sand Wind's kinda strong, the sand that gets blown up by the wind must be streamin' in, don'cha think? When ya take a bit of a deep breath, it immediately feels like the

inside of yer mouth is fulla' sand, 'n so it's darn unpleasant."

Sticking her tongue out, Anastasia traced it with her finger and cleaned some sand grains from it. Just like she had said, the inside of Subaru's mouth too felt like it had sand in it. He'd taken notice that minute grains of sand always whirled around the Fifth Floor that led to the outside.

Julius: "The sand from the sand dunes is full of miasma. If you don't take it seriously because you think it's just a small amount, it could end up eating into your body from the inside. We should move away from here as quickly as possible, so long as we have nothing to do here."

Subaru: "In that case, let's hop to it! My goal isn't here, but rather on the Fourth Floor "Alcyone"..... Though yet more stairs sounds exhausting."

Shaula: "The same ol' weakness~. But, you needn't fret. The staircase between the Fourth and Fifth Floor is way shorter than the one between the Fifth and Sixth Floor. If they were too far apart, even I'd feel tired going back and forth, so that was taken into consideration~"

Meili: "Stop shaking me abo~ut."

Shaula, who'd spread her arms out wide inside of the sand cloud and ran about in it, was met with a karate chop to the back of her head from Meili. Looking at that scene from the corner of their eyes, the group went through the Fifth Floor and headed to the staircase that led up to the Fourth Floor.

The breeze gently streamed in, and through his sight that was clouded over in a yellow haze by the gloomy above, where he looked up, there was a ceiling that didn't look so far away?? He could see the floor of the floor above, and it looked like her opinion had in fact been true, in that it wasn't too far away.

And so, as they set their sights on the Fourth Floor "Alcyone" whilst chatting, the group continued to march on upwards?? And before long, they reached their target floor.

The constitution of the Fourth Floor itself wasn't too different from the Fifth or Sixth floor.

The cylindrical constitution of the tower hadn't deviated from what it had been, and even its size hadn't changed dramatically. ??Nevertheless, there was still an obvious change of atmosphere.

First of all, the size of the floor that went up the stairs was quite different to that of the lower floors.

The circular floor had become much narrower compared to them. And that wasn't too surprising, because a circular wall had been built up as a partition like the main one of the building, and it used the space differently compared to the lower floors which had just been one big floor with nothing else to them.

The spiral staircase from the lower floors had connected straight to the heart of the Fourth Floor, and a great number of doors were dotted across the wall that encircled the surroundings, indicating that there were multiple rooms on this floor.

(TL Note: If the explanation is hard to digest, then just imagine it like two concentric circles, the inner

one far smaller than the outer one which is of course the tower's main walls. In the inner circle, there's a lot of doors, that leads to a bunch of different rooms compared to Floor 5 and 6 which were like one giant circular hall)

Shaula: "This is the Fourth Floor, "Alcyone", that I use as myyyy dwelling area. And, the "Green Room" which I think is what Master came here for is right here."

Subaru: "The Green Room…..?"

As Subaru stood in bewilderment looking on at the Fourth Floor's new look, Shaula, who was standing on the floor after having come out after him, pointed out one of the doors in front with an overly-dramatic gesture.

The doors that were on the Fourth Floor were all of a normal size compared to the doorway on the Fifth Floor. It didn't look like they'd need any special powers to open them, but there was a strange feeling floating about the door she had pointed out.

Just like the name "Green Room" implied, the door was covered in countless green ivy, and it had ended up in a state that looked similar to what an unexplored region of a jungle might look like that had been left untouched for centuries.

Subaru: "By saying this is what you think I came here for, do you mean that Rem and Patrasche are here?"

Shaula: "I don't know their names, but the girl and the lizard are here."

Ram: "You needn't worry. You can rest assured that Rem and that Earth Dragon are inside."

For the hesitant Subaru, Shaula's testimony felt like it had lacked in reliability just a tad. Ram snorted her nose at them as if looking down at them like idiots, cut into the lead of the group, and headed towards the Green Room.

She stretched out her hand over to the door that was covered in ivy and pushed it (which looked like it was made of stone) without any hesitation. Even with how thin her arms were, the door opened readily as if gliding open, and therefrom the Green Room came into view.

Ram: "Aren't you coming in? Barusu."

Subaru: "I'm coming, I'm coming."

Subaru let go of his apprehension when he heard Ram's question, which had felt like she was testing him, and moved forward. Then he confidently entered inside of the Green Room, following Ram who'd entered ahead of him.

However, straight after Ram and Subaru entered inside, the door slammed shut. Subaru turned to look behind him in surprise.

Subaru: “Oy, we’ve been split up.”

Ram: “There’s no need to be scared. ??This room seems to have a limit on how many people can enter it. The proprietor of the room seems to hate having more.”

Ram said that about the debacle that had happened behind them, and brisky kept on moving forward. Subaru scratched his head at her explanation, and then immediately set out after her.

The Green Room didn’t betray the bizarreness of that door, its interior was covered in a copious amount of green. Wriggling plants stretched out just about everywhere you looked, across the ceiling, the walls and the floor. Every so often, he would need to stoop down to avoid the dangling ivy that got in his way, and side step it.

And, laying at the depths of this room dominated by such greenery was??.

Subaru: “Rem…. And Patrasche.”

There was a small plant-free space at the far back of this room immersed in greenery. Green grass grew dense and thick there, and some beds had been made, covered in small flowers that had taken bloom there.

Rem, her sleeping face ever the same, lay on top of the bed which was made up from greenery and flowers.

Her white cheeks hadn’t changed in colour, and neither had her sleeping face. Her chest was rising and falling with each faint breath, but when it came to proof that she was alive, those were her only vital signs barring the warmth she gave off.

Yet even so, he felt a great sense of relief to the point that his strength fizzled out of him.

Subaru: “She really was safe huh……”

Ram: “I did tell you so. Or, did you think that I’d lie about Rem or something? What meaning would I have in doing that.”

Subaru: “I ain’t saying that, but I couldn’t help worrying until I saw her with my own eyes you know…… And Patrasche, I’m glad that you’re safe too.”

Subaru gave a faint bittersweet smile as he heard Ram’s words, and then he walked further in towards where Rem was sleeping on her bed of grass and Patrasche sat crouched down.

She too was lying sprawled on a bed of green, just like Rem. The situation wasn’t all too different than when she’d lie down on top of her rushes in a barn. However, one thing was definitely different??,

Subaru: “……This grass is different to ordinary grass, isn’t it?”

Patrasche: “????”

Patrasche nuzzled her nose against Subaru’s palm, who’d stepped over to her to make sure she was alright. Whilst affectionately receiving his beloved dragon’s response, Subaru felt a faint surge of warmth coming from the sprawled bed of greenery which Patrasche was on?? he cocked his head in thought.

Ram: “It appears like the Spirit’s power can speed up the healing process.”

Subaru: “There’s a spirit here? Where?”

Ram: “You’re a Spirit User and you don’t know? This whole room is the Spirit.”

Subaru: “????”

Subaru briskly looked around the room at Ram’s words as he stroked Patrasche. He couldn’t see the Spirit’s existence reflected in his eyes amongst the moss that grew on the walls or in the overgrown ivy, however straight after he’d been told that by her, Subaru took notice of the overwhelming amount of Mana there was.

His breathing and body felt at ease as if he was in an area which was rich in oxygen.

There may have been a similar effect to that in the Healing Mana. Even the uninjured Subaru felt like he was receiving that grace when he relaxed himself and took deep breaths.

Subaru: “I think I get it. This is the Spirit for sure…. Can’t it talk?”

Ram: “The Spirit here is of a different kind….. Though, I guess you could easily say that there's no such thing as spirits who don’t differ in some capacity. Emilia-sama’s esteemed Great Spirit, and Beatrice-sama….They’re special, it doesn’t seem like the Spirit over here has any sort of volition. It just tries to cure the wounds and illnesses of anyone who enters inside.”

Subaru: “H-eehh.”

Ram: “What’s the matter?”

Subaru: “It’s nothing important. I just thought that sounded like a Witch I know of.”

Ram snorted her nose at that, as if she’d thought hearing the word “Witch” was just some nonsense of his, then she walked over to Rem’s side. Following that, ivy started to grow right behind her, rapidly knitting itself together until it became a green chair that propped her body up, as if it had been cognizant of the elder sister’s intentions to watch over her younger sister.

Ram bowed her head in consideration for the Spirit, and said: “I really appreciate it” as she let herself slump on the chair.

Subaru: “Whooooa, awesome.”

Ram: “At least they’re certainly the most gentlemanly amongst the Spirits I’ve known up until now, don’t you think? You too should follow their example just a tad, Barusu. From both this Spirit, and that Knight Julius.”

Subaru: “I’d rather not from either of them.”

Subaru drove both of those individuals away from his head, and stroked Patrasche. He stroked her head, and tickled underneath her chin with his palm, before slowly letting her drop her raised head.

Subaru: “Get some rest now. You saved me once again, and overworked yourself. There’s no drawback in taking some paid leave every once in a while ya know.”

Patrasche: “????”

Patrasche curled her body up, closed her yellow eyes and fell asleep after she heard Subaru’s gentle words. She’d brought them all the way to the tower, and they’d been able to confirm each other’s safety.

Just that had been plenty, Patrasche’s work had been plenty.

Subaru: “Any changes to Rem? If curing people is this room’s raison d'être, then I wonder if it can have that sort of intervention on how Rem is right now…..”

Ram: “I’m sorry, but that’s a slim hope. It’s neither good nor bad…. But there’s been no progress in her treatment. It can’t cure something which is neither a wound or an illness. Seems like that sort of judgement, doesn’t it?”

Subaru: “.....I guess so.”

Even so, it didn’t look like the Green Room’s spirit was unwilling to take care of the still sleeping Rem. It was also devoted towards Ram, who watched over the sleeping Rem.

Subaru: “In the end, this means nothing’s changed still, doesn’t it?”

Ram: “……If we want things to change, then we have to fulfill the aim that came up in the tower, don’t you think?”

Subaru: “The Great Library Pleiades, its trials, huh?”

Their original purpose had been to get in touch with the “Sage” who was in the Pleiades Watchtower, borrow her sagacity that had been stipulated to be omniscient, and save Rem and the victims of “Lust” and “Gluttony” that they’d left behind in Pristella.

However, Shaula, the “Sage” of the Pleiades Watchtower had been one in name only, and in actuality what they’d encountered was just one weird girl who’d mistook Subaru as the “Sage” Flugel. The Pleiades Watchtower had turned out to be the Great Library Pleiades, and the knowledge that had been stipulated as Shaula’s omniscience was sleeping inside countless books that were kept in the libraries, or

so had been said.

That's right, their purpose had become really distorted, and their end-goal had shifted in a direction which they couldn't even predict.

Subaru: "I'll get ahold of this knowledge and get Rem back. ??I haven't wavered in that purpose."

Ram: "……Yeah. So I hope."

Ram cast her eyes down at Subaru rotating his shoulders, and nimbly stretching. With that, she tenderly took ahold of the sleeping Rem's hand without glancing at Subaru.

Closing one of his eyes at Ram's attitude, Subaru pointed his finger at the ceiling.

Subaru: "I've decided to challenge the trial above. What about you?"

Ram: "Don't you think it'd be too much of a cause for anxiety if no one is looking after Rem? Considering that, I will take on that duty. Since from the start it was for watching over Rem that I came on this journey and even went as far as asking such unreasonableness from Roswaal-sama."

Subaru: "That's, well, yeah I guess so. In that case I'll entrust Rem to you."

Ram: "I can't really do much other than watch her, though."

Subaru: "You watching over has meaning you know."

Saying that to Ram, who had unusually disparaged herself, Subaru looked over at Rem's sleeping face just before he exited the room. She was in a dream where her facial expression had been extinguished, and he couldn't say she looked either peaceful or anguished.

He stretched out his hand to her forehead which her fringe rested against, and gently touched it as if he were tickling her.

Subaru: "Well then, I'm off, I'll see you later."

Rem: "????"

Of course, she didn't reply.

Ram understood that he'd been talking to himself as well, so she didn't callously interject. Satisfied with that, Subaru turned towards the room's exit.

He couldn't help himself from stretching his hand out to the wall, and as he touched the ivy, he asked the spirit, "Please take care of Rem and Patrasche", lest the Spirit forget.

Then, just before he exited the room, he suddenly stopped in his tracks.

Subaru: “By the way, you said something like you couldn’t leave Rem alone, but just now you’d left the room empty. Why did you bother to come downstairs?”

Ram: “????”

Subaru: “No way, could it be that when you heard that I’d woken up, you came to see me as quickly as you could? If there was something up, then please let me know…..”

Ram: “Get a move on and leave.”

Subaru: “Huh? No, but, if there’s something on your mind, then won’t you tell me.”

Ram: “Hurry up and leave.”

Overwhelmed by the ghastly aura that was spouting up from her, Subaru couldn’t say anything more to her, and thus was left with no choice but to flee from the Green Room crestfallen.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Subaru: “I never really get what Ram thinks about, but I especially don’t understand her well as of late.”

Emilia: “Hmm, I don’t think so, Ram is surprisingly open with that sort of stuff. I find it cute that she tries to hide that open part of hers.”

Subaru: “It’s quite rare for you to speak as if you’re her elder….. Though I guess you *really* are her elder.”

Emilia: “Yeah, it’s a little bit like I’m her big sis. I’m older than anyone else here…..Oh, wait.”

Beatrice: “Mhhhm, Betty is definitely the big sis here, in fact. That’s carved in stone and no one can paint over it, I suppose. You should all adore me, in fact.”

As soon as he’d left the Green Room, he’d joined back with everyone waiting outside, which had led to this conversation.

Emilia looked a tad frustrated at having had her seat of being the oldest in the Team taken away from her, whilst Beatrice puffed out her flat chest in satisfaction. Though, to be honest, neither of them had big sister like demeanours.

Besides, a conversation of who the oldest was in light of their circumstances was in fact quite a delicate matter.

Anastasia: “Hmm? Natsuki-kun, what is it? D’ya have somethin’ ya want ta tell me?”

Subaru: “Not really. Just meant to say that there’s many faces here that don’t match their real age in appearance.”

Anastasia: “Oh? I get told *“You look younger than you actually are”* quite often. It’s a lil’ hard for me ta take ‘em as a compliment, but I look down on bein’ looked down on, so dependin’ how they say it, I may accept it.”

Though Anastasia smiled with a strong look of business about her face, how she was really feeling was unclear.

Anastasia was just over 20 years old, but she looked about 14 or 15. However, what Subaru had wanted to point out wasn’t what lay on the outside, but what lay on the inside. Anastasia still had her body hijacked by Eridna currently.

If Eridna’s birth had been the same as Beatrice, then it wouldn’t be difficult for her to enter into the race for the oldest. However, it’d be impossible for him to reveal what he’d concealed up until now over such a trifling matter, so Subaru didn’t say anything else.

Moreover, there were other prominent candidates for the race for the oldest when confined to the present.

Shaula: “Hey, what’s up Master? Uh huh, hm, didn’cha like the grassy smell of the Green Room? I get that. I toooo find that room nasty and dislikeable~”

Subaru: “Didn’t you say there was a pungent smell coming from me too? You’re cool with mine!?”

Shaula: “Master’s is a smell I’ve gotten used to. Truly. This time it ain’t no lie!”

Subaru: “Shut your trap.”

Keeping Shaula away from him, who had nestled up close to him and sniffed him, Subaru looked up at the floor above. Those left on the Fourth Floor would challenge the trial above barring Rem and Ram??.

Subaru: “What about you? Are you coming with us?”

Shaula: “Meeee? Weell, I don’t particularly *need* to, but since it’s been so long, I do think I want to come with you. Cuz it gets lonely not being able to talk despite being perfectly able to. I’ve been cooped up in silence for centuries, so I want to talk and talk and taaaalk~”

Subaru still couldn’t get cold at her with her having said such a heartrending thing with a friendly smile plastered on her face. He imagined that Emilia and Beatrice both knew that sort of loneliness all too well. His feelings towards Shaula were deeply tinged with sympathy, so he didn’t really have any intentions of actively keeping her away.

Meili: “I rea~lly like this Onee-san, so I thi~nk she should come with us.”

Julius: “It’s only natural that the examiner is present there if we’re going to take the trial. It’s just for her to accompany us to make sure that we don’t commit any irregularities.”

Support for that came in an unexpected form from Meili and Julius. With them having done so, it meant

that the majority of them backed Shaula accompanying them.

Lastly, Subaru looked over at Anastasia, who hadn't made any comments about it, so to unite their consensus.

Receiving that gaze, Anastasia tilted her head and said "Me?"

Anastasia: "I don't think there's any meaning in just me opposin' this here, 'n I ain't got any reason ta oppose it in the first place, 'n it's not particularly a problem? Besides…"

Subaru:"Besides?"

Anastasia: "That girl seems way too attached ta ya Natsuki-kun, so if we take her with us, she may tell us stuff about the contents of the trial. She may inadvertently come ta our side."

Shaula: "I'm sowwy, but I haven't the foggiest about the contents of the trials, so I'm gonna have to let you down there."

Subaru: "Jeez, did you really have to say it like that."

Anastasia laughed with a *Tahaha*, and Shaula looked smug as if she had been praised.

It was questionable whether Anastasia's anticipations boded good fortune or bad, but for now, no one seemed to have any objections to Shaula accompanying them.

Although he couldn't deny that it was a little careless, leaving her alone was also an anxiety in itself, so the only difference came from leaving the danger far away or near at hand.

Subaru: "Okay. We shall go together. It doesn't look like we can count on you, but I have high hopes of you coming up with ideas."

Shaula: "He's talking to you, lil' ankle biter. Do your best!"

Beatrice: "He's talking to you, I suppose! What were you listening to, in fact!"

Shaula curled her lips with a look on her face of having brought up a topic that she shouldn't have. Whilst listening to Beatrice's angry yells, the group opened the door of a room opposite to the Green Room?? and when they peered inside, they found the stairs that led up there.

Subaru: "We're done with spiral staircases?"

Shaula: "The Fourth Floor "Alcyone" and the Third Floor "Taygeta" are directly connected. I don't really go up unless I got business, so I've seldom been."

Subaru: "What this business you refer to?"

Shaula: “It’s a young maiden’s secret.”

Moving his gaze away from Shaula as soon as she started to show signs of her inanities, Subaru looked over at Julius. Him and the others should have already challenged the Third Floor whilst he’d slept.

He expected that he’d be able to hear something useful out of him, but that knight calmly shrugged his shoulders.

Julius: “I apologise for this when you have expectations, but we we understood very little about it. Immediately after you climb up to the Third Floor, you’ll come across the room that’s referred to as a trial, but…..”

Subaru: “But?”

Julius: “What lies there is an unintelligible enigma. The honest truth is that we weren’t able to find any clues to solve it, and we ended up having no idea what to do.”

Subaru: “An unintelligible enigma…..?”

Subaru shifted his attention to the top of the stairs without getting the point in Julius’ words. The floor above was dark, and he wasn’t able to tell how it looked from below. However, that stillness made it look more sinister.

Emilia: “But, it doesn't look like you can just enter and see what to do. Nothing really changed even when we went in and out…… We were simply just given the cold shoulder.”

Beatrice: “It makes me so irritated when I think on how we were ignored, I suppose.”

It seemed like Emilia and Beatrice also agreed with Julius’ impression.

In reality, although it was said to be a trial, none of them had been able to challenge it. His levels of wariness had just shot up as the word “Ordeal” closely resembled it.

(TL Note: So to describe the trials of the tower I’ve been using the translation “trial” following the way the Wiki did it. Which is of course not incorrect, but this line immediately loses its nuance in English, so let me explain. The word: ?? which is used to describe the trials in the tower could also be translated simply as exam/test, and honestly if not for backwards compatibility is what I would have chosen myself. Meanwhile, the word trial in Re Zero as used by Petelgeuse, Echidna, etc. is the word ??. This was also translated as Ordeal in the anime, so that’s why I went with that Translation. What’s key to know is that the words are slightly different in Japanese between the “trials” of the tower, and the “trials” Petelgeuse and Echidna mentioned.)

Subaru: “Well it can’t be helped. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. ??Then let us go?”

Emilia: “Yeah, that’s the spirit.”
Beatrice: “That’s the spirit, in fact.”

Shaula: “That’s the spirit.”

Receiving all three of their affirmations each in their own manner of speaking, Subaru took the initiative and put one of his feet on the stairs. Then, step by step, he headed up towards the floor above?? Unlike the spiral staircases from before, the number of steps to get to the Third Floor was about the same as an ordinary building.

Thus, in contrast to his preparedness, Subaru stormed straight into the Third Floor “Taygeta” to the point that it felt he’d gotten there way too quickly.

Subaru: “I’m in a…..”

Immediately after he entered, Subaru felt an overwhelming sense of unease. A clump of unease, *or rather should he say that it was an expanse that invited nothing but unease?*

??It was a white, white expanse.

Although it must be an extension of the tower that had up until now been cylindrical in shape, what greeted Subaru after he’d climbed the stairs was a strange expanse completely dyed in white in every direction.

The expanse-like vastness shouldn’t have been that different in size to the tower so far, but neither its walls, nor the end could be seen in this incredibly white expanse. When he looked up above, he couldn’t tell where the ceiling was, when he looked down at his feet, only the part where the stairs were was a slightly ajar black. Other than that, the floor was so white that it made him scared to walk on it.

He couldn’t tell that the floor was the floor, or he’d end up being hit by an illusion that felt like he was in continuous free fall just about everywhere. The ceiling and the walls were the same?? Subaru felt like he’d probably end up going crazy if he lost sight of the stairs that led downstairs here

And, at the front of this white expanse??right in front of the stairs, there was a strange object floating up.

Subaru: “A stone slab…..?”

That was the impression that slipped out from Subaru’s mouth when he looked at that object. In fact, the object was such that it could only be expressed like so.

It was a single, black slab, that had been built in the shape of a quadrilateral, and had an incredibly smooth feeling to it.

He couldn’t call it a “Stone slab” if it wasn’t built from stone, but he had no other way of calling it considering that it wasn’t metallic as well.

If he really had to call it something else that was more flashy, then he’d probably use the term “Monolith”.

The silent Monolith had acquired a strange floating power and was floating up dozens of centimetres above the floor.

Or at least it should be. His eyes were thrown completely out of whack in checking how far it was off the ground due to the whiteness of the floor, and it became more and more unclear to him. However, the Monolith that was floating in mid-air was there cool as you like.

It was roughly the same height as Subaru, and its width was about the size of two people lined up together?? If he had to put it as something that was similar in size to it, then the impression he got was like as if a tatami was floating up.

Subaru: ”What the heck is this strange thing?”

Julius: “If I were to try and put it into different words, I’d say this is the contrivance that stuck out this enigma before us.”

Julius glared at the Monolith, standing beside Subaru, whose awareness had been gripped by this strange spectacle.

Julius’ face looked sterner than usual, as if he’d been already made to experience great hardship by the Monolith many times over. The rest of them had made it up to the Third Floor now, and were huddled together in an effort to ward off the indistinct atmosphere present inside of the white expanse.

Subaru: “This ain’t a room I want to stay long in.”

Julius: ”That I agree. If we stay here too long, it’s quite likely that we’ll lose our sense of balance. And if you end up running towards the stairs and your feet slip, I imagine your life could end up being cut short, wouldn’t you think?”

Anastasia: “Yoohoo, Julius. Stop with the unnecessary prattle.”

Anastasia puffed out her cheeks in protest at Julius’ prattle. It looked like she’d slipped on the way back before, which is what Julius was referring to.

However, Subaru had no intention of laughing at that mishap. In actual fact, this room had been clearly made with the goal of putting people’s senses out of whack. The room seemed like it embodied the wickedness of the nature of the person who’d made it.

Subaru: “So, what should we do about the main mystery?”

Beatrice: “You should touch that slab, in fact. The trial begins if you do, I suppose.”

Subaru: “Should I really touch the Monolith?”

Julius: “Monolith? That’s a name that fits quite well with its mysteriousness. Let’s call it like that from now on.”

(TL Note: Monolith is an English loan word in Japanese, ????, so of course Julius didn't understand it.)

Subaru stepped away from Julius, who was in admiration of that strangeness, and moved forward on their behalf. Since no one stopped him he walked all the way over to the Monolith.

He'd expected the Monolith to let off a strange, ominous feeling when he approached?? But it wasn't like that, it was pretty much just a plain old slab of stone other than the fact it was floating. When he thought of it like a tatami floating about, he felt the fear he'd had at first fade just a little.

Subaru: "Anyways, so I'll go ahead and touch it? Can I get a countdown?"

Emilia: "Ah, right, I'd like to do it. Three, two, one….."

Subaru: "So damn quick! I got this, though. "

Emilia raised her hand up and volunteered to Subaru's appeal; then her countdown began. As she counted down, Subaru panicked and turned around to face the Monolith.

And then,

Emilia: "Zero??!"

Subaru touched the Monolith at the same time she counted zero?? And the next moment, the surface of the black slab glowed from the inside. Just as it did, the scene in front of his eyes grew blurred.

No, it wasn't exactly blurred.

The Monolith which Subaru had touched started to grow in numbers whilst glowing with a black radiance.

The Monolith shot out replicated Monolith after Monolith from its back whilst making their surface glow. They were all hurled across the room at an incredible rate of knots, scattered in strange positions, all floating.

Countless Monoliths had been strewn out across the white expanse, and Subaru had been taken by surprise by that change. Then, passing through the awestruck Subaru's eardrums?? straight to his brain, a voice echoed.

???: "??*Touch the brightest of the hero destroyed by Shaula*."

Subaru: "??*hk!?*"

Subaru jerked his hand away from the Monolith in surprise when he heard that voice ring out so abruptly. And, as he staggered back, someone propped his back up from behind.

He turned around to look at them. There, he found Julius' face. Julius touched his fringe with his left

hand as he propped Subaru up with his right, and said,

Julius: “Well look at this. Our first surprise, can I count on you sympathising with it, I wonder?”

Subaru: “What an assholish thing to say??!!”

Subaru’s protests only made Julius’ sardonic smile grow deeper.

In any case, the “Trial” had genuinely started now.

The trial of the Great Library Pleiades, Third Floor “Taygeta”.

Time-limit: “No Restrictions”. Number of attempts: “No Restrictions”. Challengers: “No Restrictions”.

??Trial, start.

Arc 6 – Chapter 22, "The Asterism of the White Starry Sky"

by admin - Tuesday, September 17, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/09/17/arc-6-chapter-22-the-asterism-of-the-white-starry-sky/

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Translated By :

- Ice_Occultism (/u/Ice_Occultism)

Art Source :

- reWISTERIA_993

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Arc 6 – “Hall of Memories”
Chapter 22 – “The Asterism of the White Starry Sky”

After he untangled himself from Julius, and stood unaided, he turned to face the “Trial”.

In front of Subaru’s eyes, the figures of countless replica Monoliths were spread out across the white expanse from the heart of the Monolith he’d touched. To be honest, there were so many of them that he’d get sick and tired were he to count them.

Subaru: “This would be the “Trial” you meant….. right, Shaula?”

Shaula: “Looks like it right? I wanna see Master flaunt his forte!”

Subaru: “Don’t start saying stuff like a band would at a drinking party…..”

He wouldn’t know since he’d never been to one, but that was probably how things went there.

Subaru looked around the room behind Shaula, who’d cheered him on with her easy-going manner. The floor was still enveloped in white, with everything from their ability to tell distance to their ability to tell

height going haywire.

The only change that stood out were the Monoliths that were dotted about the place, but those too weren't particularly different from the first one. There seemed to be a bit of a difference in size between them, but other than that, they were the same in that they both floated in mid-air and were made of a strange material.

Subaru: "Speaking of stuff that we were given as a clue other than those, there's still that thing from before."

What he'd recalled was the voice that had echoed inside his brain when he'd touched the Monolith.

???: "??*Touch the brightest of the hero destroyed by Shaula*."

The sound hadn't come through his eardrums, but rather it'd been whispered straight to his brain inside his skull; it'd been closer to that. The voice he'd heard hadn't been a sound, so the general concept of it being "Someone's voice" couldn't be applied here.

If he were to put it in other words, it was like the words had been jammed into his brain like a sentence that he'd thought of. There was no sound in his thoughts. Thus, you couldn't comprehend who the voice belonged to. If anything, it was from himself.

Subaru: "That voice which could be heard was the trial question, you reckon? If that's the case….."

Julius: "Subaru, I'm sorry to interrupt whilst you're thinking, but there's a few important things I have to say. I don't think it'll hurt to go ahead after hearing those."

Julius, who'd played a practical joke on him earlier, said that to Subaru whilst he racked his mind. Nearby the stairs which led down, Emilia and the rest of them were circled around the Monolith frozen around it. Everyone of them looked puzzled. Subaru shrugged his shoulders in appreciation of Julius, who was beckoning them to his side, and said "Oh?"

Subaru: "Is that so? All of you challenged it before whilst I was sleeping. Did you make any progress?"

Julius: "I guess I can't really call it progress. Anyways. Subaru, please try and touch the stone slab…… I mean, the "Monolith" that's right here."

Subaru: "Does doing this please you that much? Well, sure whatever….."

Subaru narrowed his eyes at Julius, who'd stuck to referring to it as a Monolith, and walked over to the Monolith that was on his right hand side. The slab was one of the replicas of the original Monolith. As he got closer, he could see that this one was just a little smaller than the original.

Subaru: "What if it's a trap, where the moment I touch it my arm gets swallowed up?"

Beatrice: "It's okay, in fact. If something like that happened, Betty would become your right arm for the

rest of your life, I suppose."

Emilia: "Ah, then I'd become Subaru's left hand. You can rest assured."

Subaru: "Both of my arms would be gone if we suppose that though!"

Thanks to Beatrice and Emilia's reassuring pledges, Subaru summoned up his courage and stretched out his hand to the Monolith. He wasn't really worried about the act of touching it in itself.

So long as his companions had recommended him to do this, and didn't try to stop him, he had no reason to doubt his safety. The issue was simply the chance that they were concealing the truth as with the Monolith's replicating themselves??.

Subaru: "Oh?"

Still full of anxiety, as soon as his fingertips brushed against the Monolith, the black stone slab shone so brightly that it almost scorched his eyes. In fact, its radiance had caused Subaru to hold his breath and immediately cover his face with his arm.

Then, after the light faded away, what remained in front of Subaru's eyes was...

Subaru: "Huh? Where did the Monolith go?"

Shaula: "Hehehe, behind youuu Master."

Subaru: "Behind me…..?"

After that flash of light, Subaru affirmed that the Monolith that should have been in front of him had disappeared. Surprised by what had happened, he turned to look behind him at Shaula who had nonsensically shouted out in triumph.

When he turned around, at the front of the stairs?? In other words, at the place where the original Monolith had stood, the first Monolith stood alone. All the rest of them had disappeared from the room.

Subaru: "So, in other words…… this means?"

Julius: "That everything went back to its original state. To put it shortly, it looks like we've been deemed to have messed up by the "Trial". Of course….."

Stepping away from the dejected Subaru's side, Julius carelessly approached the original Monolith. And then, immediately after he stretched out his hand and touched its surface, that voice echoed out through his mind??.

???: "??*Touch the brightest of the hero destroyed by Shaula*."

Once again, at the same time which the challenge was posed to them, Monolith after Monolith were

replicated from the original and scattered all around the room with the same force as before. The “Trial” was distributed around therefrom.

In other words, they could call this a “Retry”.

Subaru: “I see. It must mean we can think as much as we want until we find an answer.”

Julius: “That’s our guess right now. There happens to be this Monolith, but I can say that even when we went around touching Monoliths at random…. We couldn’t find an answer.”

Subaru: “Ah, so you’ve already tried bruteforcing it?”

Subaru broke down Julius’ mild manner of speaking to the bread and bones of it. Emilia and Meili, who’d heard that explanation, were patting their heads with what seemed to be a look of embarrassment about them.
Just try touching and checking every single one of them, certainly it looked like they’d tried to carry out that tactic. Nevertheless, it didn’t seem to have done the trick.

Subaru: “It’s a “Trial” after all. It means we have to solve the problem and answer it.”

Julius: “It looks like our examiner doesn’t appreciate answers that are just given out at random.”

Subaru: “Yeah, seems so. So like a Sensei who doesn’t give you credit unless you write down all of your working out, and doesn’t allow you to just put answers in the test’s answer column. The anti-cheating measures sure do appear quickly though.”

Reaching an answer without showing how you derived it could only come as a result of cheating or a hunch. Often times, till Primary School, he’d come across problems which he’d find answers to using his hunches, but the main point to Mathematics was to learn how to derive the problem, not to regurgitate the problem willy-nilly on the spot.

One time during Primary School, when he’d been marked down for the lack of clarity in his working out, he remembered how resentful he’d been about it, but??

Subaru: “After all this time, it looks like my Sensei was right….”

Anastasia: “I’m sorry ta butt in when yer still absorbed in yer thoughts, Natsuki-kun, but rather yer turn ain’t from here. Come on, snap back to reality, snap back.”

Subaru: “Huh, ah, oh, my bad. But, what do you mean by my turn?”

Anastasia called Subaru, whose eyes had glazed over, back to reality, and then clapped her hand on his back. As Subaru tilted his head at her appeal, everyone looked around at each other, and broke into mutters.

What they were saying was the same thing, so combining it and paraphrasing it into other words??, “*It’s*

down to Subaru to find out who the hero destroyed by Shaula is".

Emilia: "We challenged the "Trial" many times over until Subaru woke up. However, that girl wouldn't even tell us whether or not she was Shaula when we did."

Beatrice: "As far as we were concerned, Shaula was the "Sage", in fact. We thought they were the person on the drawing engraved on the Silver Coin, so we didn't connect this woman with Shaula, I suppose."

Those were Emilia and Beatrice's replies, both of whom hadn't been able to hear Shaula's story till then.

Ever since Subaru had woken up, he'd seen Shaula communicate with him with an air of over-familiarity that was way off the marks of typical friendliness, and because of that it was hard to believe for him that she'd refused to say anything to them. However, her not telling them anything more couldn't be helped since she'd kept her mouth shut towards those in the tower.

Having said that though, Subaru was still worried.

Even if Shaula had had her tongue unsealed, and became able to talk about that...

Subaru: "I guess it doesn't hurt to ask. Hey, Shaula. If you know anything, please tell me everything about the hero you destroyed."

Shaula: "Leave this to me. Remembering stuff like each of the names of the guys I've killed is second class work….. For a first class individual like meeee, I don't remember past the 100 mark."

Subaru: "Of course you'd say that!"

Shaula gave him a thumbs and then winked. Receiving that vigorous response, Subaru slapped his knee.

Just as he'd expected and feared, her reply was an air-headed Shaula-like one.

He had suspected that was likely going to happen with how she'd acted and talked till now. There was the chance that she, who would seemingly know the answer to "*The hero that Shaula destroyed*" didn't remember it anywhere in her head.

Julius: "However, we won't make any progress if we end it with that. Miss Shaula, do you really not remember anything? It doesn't matter even if it's a tiny little detail."

Shaula: "That's easier said than done. I juuuust Hell's Snipe everyone who comes near to the tower, and their corpses end up being cleaned up by the Witchbeasts outside."

Anastasia: "Okay, but isn' that strange? Could it be a "Trial" ta see whether we can reveal the tower's knowledge in the first place? It'd be a strange sequence of events for it ta require us ta show somethin' that happened after Shaula-san's tenure in protectin' the tower started."

Shaula had pouted, saying she didn't have any clue, but Anastasia pointed out the out of place feeling in

what she'd said. Everyone other than Shaula had agreed with her opinion with an "*I see*". For sure, it was difficult to imagine that the problem posed inside the tower came about after her tenure in the tower had started. Then naturally that meant the period of time which "Shaula had destroyed the hero" came before the tower's construction.

Beatrice: "In other words, that means it's from before you started firing at people at random, in fact. Come on, remember, I suppose. It's like all of your nourishment ended up just in your buttocks and breasts, so your memory's become poor, in fact."

Shaula: "This appearance was chosen by my Mother~. Butbut, it wouldn't be honest of me if I said "*I remember!*". Before the tower was built, right?"

Emilia: "Yeah, that's right. Before the tower was built. During that time, do you happen to know of anyone that you kille…..I mean destroyed?"

Gathered near the stairway with Shaula in the middle of them, they desperately tried to awaken her memories. However, Shaula, who was basked in everyone's expectations, gave no signs that they'd been successful, and she groaned out with an "*Ahiiin*"

Subaru: "Is it true or not that you've been around since 400 years ago? If I name a bunch of the noteworthy people around that time, you wouldn't happen to have killed 2 or 3 of them, would you?"

Shaula: "Master, are you thinking that about meeee? I'm a maiden who likes to dabble with flowers ya know."

Subaru: "That's no maiden, more like a caterpillar."

Emilia: "Subaru, I think your way of speaking just now was ever so rude. If she doesn't want to remember, then don't push her and force her to….."

Subaru: "Emilia-tan, your kindness is your super-virtue, your best feature, but this woman is *the more you pamper her, the more useless she becomes* type, don't you think!? I can tell! 'Cause I'm the same!"

Emilia had firmly puffed out her chest and declared that. But, it wasn't that Shaula couldn't remember because she didn't want to in the first place, but rather that her memory was so poor that she just couldn't.

The topic was one which he'd wanted to handle delicately since one of his members had a bunch of difficult problems in regards to memories, but it was a different matter when it came to Shaula.

Subaru: "Practically, it'll be no problem if I fire off some random names, right? I don't know how one of them striking the answer would react with the Monoliths, though."

Anastasia: "It's definitely gotta be as Natsuki-kun says. I wonder though, even if we find out the answa', how can we then touch "The Brightest"?"

Considering that the Monolith he'd touched had disappeared, and the "Trial" seemed to have adjudicated them as having messed up, he could predict that their answer's final form would probably be to "Touch the correct Monolith".

The issue then was how they would find the "Correct Monolith". Even if they chipped at Shaula's memories he didn't get the feeling like it'd become clear, one could say.

Meili: "Bu~t, even if we think forever, we won't make any progress, ri~ght? Since Naked Onee-san is pretty cooperati~ve, I thi~nk we might as well ask her."

Still holding onto Shaula's bare shoulders, Meili butted in between the adults who were stumbling over what to do. She looked at the group of Monoliths with a look of boredom on her face as she fiddled about with Shaula's scorpiontail.

Meili: "There's n~o ickle Witchbeasties around, there's n~o progress, and it's really not fun he~re. Speed things up, I wanna go back to the Mansio~n."

Everyone: "????"

Everyone was at a loss for words at the words which Meili had uttered. Following straight after that, Meili said ""What is i~t?", as Subaru patted her head.

Meili: "What is it I wo~nder?"

Subaru: "Nothing, I just think it's as you say. You're right. This place is sandy as hell, and on top of that, there's a bunch of scary Witchbeasts prowling about outside. We'll quickly take care of things here, settle all our problems….. wake up Rem, retrieve a means to save the people in need, and then we shall skedaddle out of here."

Treading around things with anxiety before attempting them was a waste of valuable time. It felt to him like the "Trial" had been set up by someone rather ill-natured and that he was playing right into their hands.

Shaula: "Master, Master. You do know that there's an easy-to-stroke head right next to that lil' ankle biter."

Subaru: "I said this already. You're the same as me in that you're the type which when pampered falls unendingly into corruption. That's why from here on out we're doing this the Spartan way. Hurry the hell up and remember."

Shaula: "Do I have toooo?"

Puffing her cheeks out in dissatisfaction, Shaula seemed to be in full-pout. However, she'd be easy to handle since after a few dozen seconds she'd start humming with a face like she'd forgotten.

Julius: "Well then, our young lady requests it too. Shall we try and get on with testing out the possibilities

we have in front of us without dithering about?”

Anastasia: “Mhm, that’s probably a good idea. It’s relievin’ that it’s okay even if we fail a buncha’ times. In most cases in human life, things are decided in just a single bout…… So, this is quite a generous problem don’cha think?”

Although Meili had set things off in motion, Julius and Anastasia had also came into agreement with her. Thus, it was time to make her remember “*The Hero destroyed and forgotten by Shaula*” once again.

Subaru: “For now let’s go with a name that you remember…...Yeah. Ah, how about Reid? That dude was the first ever “Sword Saint”; You killed him, didn’t you?”

Shaula: “AIIIIIIIIIIIIEEEEEE!!”

Meili: “GYAAAA!”
Subaru: “Third Base Cleanup"

(TL Note: A baseball reference. Seems to be a reference to this manga which was translated as "3rd Base 4th": https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoban_S%C4%81do -- Many thanks to Wave Master for pointing this out)

Straight after he’d nonchalantly pulled out that name, Shaula let out a high pitched shriek and leapt backwards. Subaru performed a diving catch on Meili, who’d been dropped having been unable to withstand that injection of momentum.

After he safely brought Meili back to the ground, Shaula, who’d jumped up and fled far away into the room, had gotten smaller in view.

Subaru: “Hey! I’m sorry! I don’t really know why you’re acting like that, but get back here!”

Shaula: “P-please don’t say such scary stuff. Master’s a real mean guy. The absolute worst. A maiden’s distress. A liability issue.”

Even though she spoke frivolously, Shaula’s voice as she skulked back was shaking feebly. She sure did act tough, but she wasn’t all that. Unmistakably, fear and dread had caused her to react like that. Naturally, the reason behind her fear could only be but one.

Subaru: “Huh, is the First “Sword Saint” such a scary person?”

Julius: “How foolish. Reinhard, Wilhelm-sama and such are esteemed individuals worthy of the forefather of the Astrea family. He definitely wasn’t just skilled with the sword, but a man of character as well. Certainly, there are some parts sprinkled into the anecdotes that were left behind as rumours that indicate that he was rather strong-willed which don’t overlap with Reinhard and the rest, but….. If it’s not like that, then wouldn’t that’d mean the history of the Astrea Family has been twisted till this current generation?”

Subaru: “Not really, but when you unravel history, and the viewpoint of prominent statesmen also changes, you'll find that Japanese History is sufficiently cruel too. If we compare it to that, then I mean we can’t really start speaking about definites here…..”

Julius: “Dear goodness, let’s not delve into this sort of talk. It’s alright. We can get a clarification to the story if we get her to talk as she’s a living witness here. Come now, let’s listen to her.”

Julius started to ramble on with tremendous vigour at Subaru, who had hazarded a guess at Reid’s temperament from Shaula’s reaction. And to make matters worse, he’d handled things by dismissing Subaru, who’d tried to defend his point, with a laugh.

After so long, Subaru could once again see a glimpse of the figure of that gaudy knight which he’d first seen at the Royal Selection. He now knew that his attitude back then had been down to him playing the villain. Though, whenever he saw him like this, he sure did get the impression that he still was like when they’d first met.

In any case,

Julius: “Your impressions regarding The First “Sword Saint”, Reid Astrea. Miss Shaula, I’d like you to tell us your candid impression of him.”

Shaula: “He was human garbage.”

Julius: “I’d like you to tell us your candid impression of him.”

Subaru: “Don’t pretend like she didn’t say anything!!”

Subaru shoved Julius’ shoulder, who’d tried to ignore that inconvenient tidbit, and made him face the facts. Pointing his finger at Shaula, who had a troubled look on her face, Subaru continued.

Subaru: “Hey, listen up. The truth about the history you wanted to know about is right here. She’s a living witness to it. Go on, tell me as many anecdotes about Reid Astrea as you like, of that magnanimous man of character skilled in the sword.”

Julius: “……Those who hold exceptional talent end up having confidence in themselves, more or less. That shouldn’t be chastised, rather, it should be something you take pride in. If you end up becoming the greatest swordsman recorded in history, even acting like such is, yeah, when you take into account how things were back then, it would be suitable??”

Subaru: “It’s the first time I’ve seen you so desperate.”

Julius too became flustered as if he was considering just how unconvincing he sounded.

Setting Julius aside, who’d been betrayed by the history which he ever so loved, Shaula’s “Truth of Reid Astrea” was pouring out of her without an end in sight.

Shaula: “Well, anyways, he was a nasty guy. His personality was like that of an unruly brat’s in adult-form, and he loved to bully the weak. Or I guess if we look at it from that garbage’s point of view, almost all of his opponents were weak, so he’d be bullying the weak no matter who he fought against. He did that a lot to meeee too.”

Emilia: “But, he was able to keep doing that to you even though you’re so strong? Ah, since it happened over 400 years ago, you must’ve still been small then too?”

Shaula: “I’veeee been like this ever since I was born. So, between now and back then, I’veeeee not changed, however….. *That thing* was just out of the ordinary. A total piece of shit.”

Garbage, piece of shit, the hero of yore had been harshly evaluated as such.

The darkness wasn’t vanishing from Shaula’s attitude, as if many hateful memories had come flooding back to her. It was the same as when a person who’d been bullied recalled what the bully had done to them.

Shaula: “You should always keep that piece of shit in mind. Even if the bully forgets, the one bullied absolutely never will, and that’s a fact…..”

Subaru: “I’m not really surprised since there’s a precedent in Reinhard, but it’d take quite a monster to knock you down a few pegs, and Reid Astrea’s one too.”

Shaula: “He really was the worst. But, I was able to get him to use both hands once every ten times we fought.”

Subaru: “.....I see.”
He could only answer with that. Had she set her goals high or low in making him use both of his hands once every ten times, and not to gain victory once every ten times?

Subaru felt like he wouldn’t be able to make Reinhard use both his hands even once every hundred times, so he could admit that her putting up a fight like that had been plenty enough.

Subaru: “Well, we can put off asking about Reid. It’s pretty pointless for us to ask if you didn’t destroy him.”

Julius: “??. ????. I agree. There’s other things we ought to prioritise right now.”

Subaru: “Didn’t you waste time doing that just now?”

Subaru couldn’t tell whether he had a scholarly interest in it, or it was a curiousity spurred from a simple hobby, but he judged that for now, perhaps Julius wouldn’t be of any use.

Although he felt sorry for Julius, who’d had his illusions shattered, unfortunately for him, Subaru had no reason to care about Reinhard’s ancestor right now. To begin with, Reinhard himself was already more than plenty enough amazing no matter how amazing his bloodline was. At least considering his

“Father’s” nature, he was sure that Reinhard had been abounding in it.

Subaru: “Then, let’s leave all speculation about who the hero is to the guy who knows best.”

Julius: “Gotcha. I shall humbly accept.”

Subaru: “I still wasn’t talking about you, but sure. Go for it. Beako, help him out with it.”

Beatrice: “Gotcha, in fact.”

He left the task to Julius since he was willing to do it. And getting Beatrice to assist him as a helper, who boasted 400 years of knowledge, was ideal.

Emilia: “Then what shall we do?”

Subaru: “We’ll take a closer look at the surroundings.”

He’d leave the hero-related stuff to Julius and Beatrice, who’d remain by Shaula, and meanwhile he wanted to take a look at the *arrangement issue*.

Namely, how the replicated Monoliths were arranged?? *If* there was some significance to their uneven arrangement, then taking the time to search for the pattern behind it probably wouldn’t be a waste.

Subaru: “First of all, the first one…. is in front of the stairs.”

Emilia: “It’s the Monolith that hands out the question, right?”

The Monoliths weren’t lined up in a narrow enough space to the extent that they had to be careful not to bump into them, nevertheless, Subaru took Anastasia and Emilia and looked around the Monoliths inside the room.

There was a surprising difference in size between the scattered Monoliths when he double checked. However, there wasn’t a single one of them that was as large as the series of original Monoliths, the figures of countless Monoliths which were one or two times smaller were scattered about after them.

Subaru: “When you take a look at it….. I guess there’s about 7 or 8 Monoliths that are about the same size as the first Monolith?”

Emilia: “I guess so? Yeah, I think so too. I think the ones that are reaaaally far away are all quite small. We’ll end up restarting things if we touch those too, though.”

Subaru: “From the way you’re talking about it, it looks like you’ve done that before…. Ah, Sorry. Nevermind about that.”

Seeing sadness build up in Emilia’s eyes, Subaru caught himself before he said too much. Returning back in front of the first Monolith, Subaru turned to face the two girls and plunged into thought.

Subaru: "*Touch the brightest of the hero destroyed by Shaula*…...I feel like it's trying to say something *'cool'*."

Anastasia: "I guess it must be sayin' somethin' abstract. Unfortunately, we can't go overlookin' the question when we take into account what comes out of relyin' on Shaula-san's memory."

Subaru: "Well, I suppose so."

In essence, relying on others, or on the being that had been left behind in the tower as its warden, to get that answer was really unfair with it being labelled as a "Trial".

Subaru and the others hadn't expected friendly contact when they'd made it to the tower?? However, they ended up making it into the tower without coming to blows with Shaula; if it hadn't ended up like that, they would have fallen into a quagmire of massacre. Even if they'd successfully made it into the tower in that case, they likely wouldn't have been able to defeat Shaula.

Emilia: "If we do that, passing the "Trial" is going to be forever impossible, right?"

Subaru: "That's correct if you're saying they have no intention of letting us solve the "Trial". They could put a strong Guardian as a defence mechanism, and worse, were we to kill said Guardian, they could put a terrible barrier that wouldn't let us pass..…."

Emilia: "But, you don't think that….. You think it's different to that?"

Subaru: "Mhmhm."

Emilia turned her eyes in anticipation towards Subaru, who'd touched on this issue of security. Receiving her gaze, Subaru confirmed her thoughts with a chuckle.

Those eyes were Subaru's weakness. Subaru grew weak whenever Emilia and Beatrice gave him those looks. Rem, Garfiel and Otto would occasionally look at him like that too. Coupled with Petra, that made far too many. The only ones who didn't look at him like that were Patrasche and Ram.

Subaru: "Ahh, it somehow feels like I could see a trend."

Emilia: "???"

Subaru: "It's nothing, just talking to myself."

Subaru's bluff wouldn't have worked against those who could see through him. Of course, he was bailed out thanks to Emilia not being one of those who'd question him about it.

Anyways, putting that aside and going back to the problem of the format of the "Trial"??,

Subaru: "Exceptions aside, fundamentally the problem was constructed with the assumption that it can be solved. If you really wanted to hide things properly, it'd be smarter not to leave them somewhere where

there’s a chance of finding them.”

Anastasia: “But, Natsuki-kun, yer’ve eyeballed this place as not bein’ like that?”

Subaru: “What was it that the keeper of this place, Shaula said? She said this is a Great Library where you can get all the knowledge you desire. I don’t think Shaula herself could come up with such a fancy-looking phrase, so I think she’s splurging out words that were told to her by someone else. Meaning that “Flugel”, who built this library and entrusted it to Shaula, intended for it to be used.”

The more he unravelled the possibilities, the more unnatural the current situation became to him.

The creator of this Great Library Pleiades must have taken steps to set it up so that the purpose of the building worked. He’d left behind the “Trial” and Shaula here as a means to screen people for that.

Subaru: “Does this mean that no one but those who get along well with Shaula can use it to begin with?”

Emilia: “But Shaula said that she attacked everyone who approached the tower, right?”

Yeah, that was right.

The command that had been given to Shaula was to “*Eliminate anyone who approached the tower without any exceptions*”, and Subaru and the others coming into friendly contact with Shaula had just been a stroke of luck. If he recklessly concluded that people wouldn’t get the qualifications to challenge the tower unless they abounded in fortuity, then...

Anastasia: “So what ya need is strength, luck, ‘n charm so that yer able to make friends with Shaula-san? I think our lineup is pretty unfit for that challenge.”

Subaru: “..... It sure is.”

If they’d been defeated by Shaula, killed by her, or been unable to get her to cooperate with them, then they’d have lost the qualifications to challenge the Great Library Pleiades...

Although it was irrational to think so, if he listed all the conditions up till now, he could only come to that conclusion.

However, Subaru couldn’t help but have a bad feeling in just accepting that.

And,

Emilia: “Hey. Heey.”

Subaru: “Emilia?”

Emilia: “I’m feeling quiiiiite a bit uneasy. I’ve got a real bad feeling in and around my chest.”

Emilia placed her hand to the pit of her stomach and anxiously spilled that out. As he was about to draw his eyes to that, Suabru restrained himself before he ogled her pale skin.

Clearing his throat with an *Ahem,* he frowned at Emilia and said, “A bad feeling?”

Subaru: “Huh, is something on your mind?”

Emilia: “To tell you the truth, there is. But, this may have nothing to do with everything, and even if I say it out loud, I think only you would understand me…..”

Subaru: “I think I’d like you to say whatever’s on your mind right now, so you can say it to me. My thoughts aren’t necessarily correct, and it’s honestly a good thing to think about things from multiple different angles.”

Emilia: “Really?”

Having been immersed in her thoughts about what she was holding back, Emilia’s face brightened a little as she heard his words. Then she continued speaking saying “In that case,”

Emilia: “When you touched the Monolith, you guys could hear a voice inside of your head, right?”

Anastasia: “Yeah. It’s an uncanny contraption, but I wonder what the heck it is.”

Emilia: “It’s that voice but…. Isn’t it similar to the one back at the “Ordeal” of the Sanctuary?”

Subaru & Anastasia: “????”

(TL Note: For terminology disambiguation, check my TL note from last chapter on why I am using Ordeal here instead of Trial.)

Subaru and Anastasia both kept their silence when they heard Emilia’s suggestion. However, even if both of them had ended up staying silent, the reason why they’d done so had been different.

Anastasia had plunged into silence because she had no clue what those words meant, but Subaru’s silence had been because he’d been taken by surprise and understood her words.

The “Ordeals”?? Those had taken place at the Witch Echidna’s graveyard, who’d lived in the “Sanctuary”.

Those mystifying phenomena that made you confront the past/differing presents, Subaru didn’t know the full details of them as he’d retired halfway through, but according to Echidna back at the graveyard, there’d been a third “Ordeal” too, which Emilia had overcome.

No, in this case the details and hardships of that “Ordeal” weren’t what was important here.

What was important was that *refrain* that had informed them about the details of the Ordeal using “Their

own voice" was pretty much the same as when they'd challenged that "Ordeal".

Subaru: "Now that you mention it, you're right. Why did that slip out of my mind…. I guess 'cause they're bad memories?"

Emilia: "Subaru, that's because you reaaaally dislike Echidna, no?"

Anastasia: "??*hk*"

Subaru: "Going through an experience where a saviour turns out to actually be an éminence grise is gonna end up making you look like me!"

Since the "Sanctuary", Emilia and Subaru had spoken about the "Witches" only once or twice. Even after they'd touched on the subject of the Ordeal, Emilia liked to skirt around it, so he hadn't pursued the topic too much.

The point that they both shared in common was that they thought "Echidna was an ill-natured fiend." Emilia sugarcoated it more when speaking, but Subaru spoke about her as it was.

Anastasia: "Why, ya freaked me out 'cause ya mentioned Echidna's name."

Emilia: "Ah, I see. Anastasia's Artificial is called Echidna too….. She does speak in a reaaally similar manner, right? 'Tis strange."

Subaru: "Yeah, it's strange, but let's settle this another time, alright? So, it's similar to the Ordeal..."

When he'd heard the word "Trial" mentioned, he'd thought that it sounded similar to "Ordeal".

When it came to the parts that resembled the "Ordeal" till the start, this was probably one part of a system, or perhaps it was a great part of it that resembled the one at the graveyard.

Subaru: "Come to think of it, the "Ordeal" too was practically unlimited in how much you could challenge it."

Emilia: "And what's more, about the "Trials", there's the Third Floor, the Second Floor and the First, totalling three here too, right?"

Subaru: "????"

Subaru and Emilia looked at each other as if they were saying *Yeah, it's definitely like that.*

The "Sage's" name, and the 400 years time period. When he looked back on it, it felt inevitable that history overlapped with the period of time of those "Witches".

Emilia: "Yeah, though I'm sorry. Even if we know that much, it still doesn't bring us any closer to the answer, huh."

Having thought all the way up to there, Emilia cut her story short with a flustered look on her face.

Just as Emilia had concluded, even if there was a chance that this place had some relation to the graveyard, it still had nothing to do with the “Trial” of “Taygeta”.

The name of the “Hero who was destroyed by Shaula” was still something that they had to rely on Shaula for??.

Subaru: “....Actually, isn’t it not like that?”

Emilia: “Subaru?”

Subaru: “If we presume this place is something that’s supposed to be solvable, then isn’t saying that it can’t be captured unless Shaula manages to a mistake in the first place?”

This was the tower of the “Sage”, and that had been the graveyard of the “Witch”.

Both of these examiners shared in the same wicked disposition, but if that wasn’t only what they had in common, they had a conceivable chance to overcome them.

The “Witch” had tested people out in her “Ordeals” but she didn’t give them any hardships that couldn’t produce results.

Then if the “Sage” tested people in his “Trials”, then he shouldn’t give them any hardships that couldn’t produce results.

Subaru: “A chance for us to be able to capture the tower without needing Shaula…..”

Anastasia: “Natsuki-kun, what did’ya think of.....”

Emilia: “*Shhh*”

Plunging into his thoughts, Subaru placed his hand on his chin, closed one of his eyes and sunk into speculation. As he did so, Emilia waved her hand and silenced Anastasia, who’d seen a ray of hope glimmering in what was occuring and spoken up.

Emilia put her finger to her lips and made a shushing gesture at her telling her to stay quiet, and after that, she turned her head back to look at Subaru. Her amethyst eyes sparkled with anticipation.

Not taking any notice of Emilia’s anticipation, Subaru’s head spun in thought.

In this “Trial”, “Shaula’s” presence wasn’t important. Perhaps there was even a chance that those challenging the tower could destroy Shaula were she to attack them. *If he presumed that they still didn’t even know Shaula’s name...*

Subaru: “Even if we didn’t know that Shaula is Shaula, if we assume a Shaula was involved...”

Emilia & Anastasia: “????”

Subaru: “We mistakenly believed that Flugel’s achievement had been Shaula’s. The “Sage’s” achievement was that he sealed the Witch with the help of the First “Sword Saint” and the “Divine Dragon”. However, “The Witch of Envy” ain’t something that we’d ever call something like a “Hero”, nor was she ever destroyed.”

He cut out that possibility as being an incorrect hypothesis right here.

Maybe there’d been another heroic tale which the “Sage” Flugel had forced on Shaula that he just didn’t know about. However, it didn’t make any sense that Beatrice and Julius hadn’t recalled something like that?? An inevitable possibility floated up in his mind.

Subaru: “Even if we didn’t know that Shaula is Shaula, if we assume a Shaula was involved... that’s it.”

He once again repeated what he’d said.

That didn’t mean his thoughts were going around in circles. It was the opposite. He’d cut out one of the possibilities, and another one had surfaced. And, what that meant was??

Subaru: “Beako! Come here for a sec!”

Following the possibility that had struck him, Subaru lifted his face up and called Beatrice over.

Julius was trying everything he could to try and pry open the lid on Shaula’s memories. Next to him, Beatrice sprung up when she heard Subaru’s voice that indicated he’d managed to find something. She rushed over to him, and said,

Beatrice: “That face is Betty’s favourite Subaru face, I suppose.”

Subaru: “Shouldn’t all of them be your favourite?”

Beatrice: “This one especially, in fact.”

Beatrice said that without any traces of embarrassment to her, and Subaru stretched out his hand over to her as she stood in front of him. Beatrice took his hand and looked at him with her round blue eyes.

Her eyes were asking, “What do you want me to do?” Thus, Subaru nodded, and said,

Subaru: “It’s quite simple. ??I’d like to jump a bit higher with Murak.”

Beatrice: “.....Don’t tell me you’re going to say “*I’ve given up, so let’s break the ceiling and go up that way”*, I suppose.”

Subaru: “Don’t be so shocked. Of course not. I just want to look down on the Monoliths from above.”

Emilia: “Look down on the Monoliths…..”

Behind him, Emilia turned around to look at the Monoliths and muttered that out.

Even if she didn’t know what he expected to get from it, Beatrice didn’t show any intent of wanting to ask anymore about it. She let out a small sigh and gripped his hand more tightly,

Beatrice: “Murak, in fact.”

Pale, light purple waves faintly wrapped themselves around Subaru’s body following her incantation.

Murak was magic which kept the effects of gravity at bay and made you far more agile. Just by jumping lightly he’d be able to float up by about one metre, and if he kicked off from the floor with all his strength, then...

Subaru: “Up we go!”

Still holding Beatrice’s hand, Subaru leapt up towards the top of the tall room. Although he’d made it up by 6 or 7 metres, his body didn’t crash into the ceiling as he’d expected.

The layer had expanded as if there’d been no ceiling at all inside of this endless white expanse. Thus, Subaru was able to look down on the entire room from above.

Subaru: “??It’s as I thought.”

Beatrice: “Were you able to find what you were looking for, I suppose?”

Subaru: “Of course. This place is the absolute worst.”

Subaru frowned and nodded seeing Beatrice’s gaze who’d heard his mutter wrapped inside of his arms.

The two of them turned towards the ground and dropped down; their lightness of body that had helped them leap up also helped grace their landing. They landed without any issue, and he lowered Beatrice, who he’d been princess-carrying, down to the floor,

Subaru: “I know the name of the Hero.”

Emilia: “Really!?”

Subaru said that with conviction to Emilia, who’d seen him muse about it and then leap up. Emilia reacted in surprise to his words, and Anastasia rounded her eyes as well.

Hearing them speak, Julius and the others with him who’d been captivated by their talk gathered over to where Subaru and the others were.

Meili: “Onii-san figured it ou~t?”

Subaru: “I solved it. Along with the line of thinking of this errant examiner, for now.”

Shaula: “That’s Master for you! You’re makin’ me feel all tingly! Oh how I yearned for this!”

With Meili on her back, Shaula gave him a thumbs up and replied, then she shook her head vigorously. Looking at that from the corner of his eye, Julius looked over to the group of Monoliths, and said,

Julius: “I don’t mean to doubt you right now. But please tell me how you managed to get the answer.”

Subaru: “It’s nothing spectacular. Y’all needn’t feel bad for not solving this. Because in the first place, the people who have a chance at solving this are few.”

This problem was the most contemptible in that sense.

The challengers had to overcome the obstacle that was Shaula, understand the details of the problem and yet from the start, they’d been narrowed down by the “Likelihood of knowing the answer to the problem.”

Subaru: “The hero destroyed by Shaula, his name is Orion.”

Everyone: “Orion……?”

Everyone looked at Shaula in confusion after they heard the word that Subaru had spoken out. However, Shaula vigorously shook her head as everyone’s gazes converged on her and said “I don’t know them!”

Shaula: “Nopenopenope, I’ve no idea who that is. And even if for a sec we assume I did kill them, what sort of person who can’t even make it all the way here gets called a hero, it’s totally ridiculous. Soooo, I don’t think I’m the one to blame here. How you may ask, well by this argument from theory! I’m suuuuper smart!”

Subaru: “As you can see, this woman’s not smart at all. At first, I’d suspected that she may have actually forgotten, but that’s not the case. Reason being that the “Shaula” from this problem isn’t this woman in the first place.”

Shaula: “I’mmm the only Shaula! I got this name from Master!”

Subaru: “Even the name that your Master gave you came from someone else.”

He prodded out his finger to the tip of the protesting Shaula’s nose and pushed her away before she could get closer. Following that, Subaru walked over to the original Monolith and stood in front of it.

Emilia: “Maybe once again... only Subaru knows the origins of Shaula’s name?”

Subaru: “It isn’t just me who knows, though I suppose not everyone would know. ??The name of a star in my hometown is called “Shaula”. The meaning of its name is the “Stinger”, but if I had to specify which kind of stinger, then it’d be the “Scorpion's” stinger.”

Shaula had insisted on calling her hairstyle a *scorpiontail*, had that been a hint of some sorts, or was that some natural airheadness of Shaula's? Whichever one it was, there'd been a few things that had made him recall that "Shaula" = "Scorpion" = "Stinger".

Subaru: "According to legend, the Hero Orion was stung by a scorpion which had been sent out to besiege him due to his boastfulness, and he ended up dying. After his death, he became a star. So, the scorpion that killed Orion also became a star due to its deed, and it's said that even now in the sky Orion lives in fear of the scorpion ..."

Beatrice: "Now that you've explained things, this legend has a pretty depressing vibe to it too, in fact."

Subaru: "Anyways, think of it as having constellations where stars are illustrated by the figures of animals and people and such. You can even think of them as an asterism. ??So, that's how it looks when you look down on the Monoliths from above."

Becoming practically weightless as a result of Beatrice's magic, he'd jumped up and looked down at the group of Monoliths.

The scattered black Monoliths in this world of white?? Although their colours were inverted, a series of black stars floated about in this white world, forming a pattern which he was familiar with.

There were eight Monoliths in total which had the same size as the original one.

The number of major stars as well as how they were laid out both matched with how the constellation of Orion was shaped.

And when he linked it to the last part, "*Touch the brightest*"...

Subaru: "The original Monolith is right in the middle. Well, I just gotta keep my eye on Alnilam and if I keep following the shape of the constellation…. If I keep following Orion, then..."

Emilia: "Then?"

Subaru: "The phrasing *'The brightest'* is a bit of a roguish expression. In actual fact, stars shine in various different ways, sometimes they're always bright, other times they shine brighter only every so often. Considering that, there are two stars that fit the bill for the brightest in Orion….."

When viewed from above, the two stars that fit the bill were the right shoulder of Orion located in the upper left part, "Betelgeuse", and Orion's left knee located in the lower right part, "Rigel".

"Rigel" was always invariably bright, whereas "Betelgeuse" was a variable star that sometimes shone brighter than Rigel.

Solving the problem by picking both of them wasn't a pretty one, but…

(TL Note: Have a helpful image if you need help visualising this, though not all the stars are

shown: https://i.pinimg.com/originals/f6/59/bd/f659bd011bbb9b0724d185d6cff29db2.jpg Keep in mind that Rigel is shown as the foot here, from some quick Wikipediaing, "In the constellation of Orion as the mythological Greek huntsman, Rigel represents his knee or (as its name suggests) foot; with the nearby star Beta Eridani marking Orion's footstool." Tappei went with knee in the Japanese which is why you might find a discrepancy between this image and the translation.)

Subaru: "I guess I'll go for "Rigel"."

He had bad memories of a name that was similar to "Betelgeuse".

Subaru: "????"

Setting his answer in stone, Subaru touched the Monolith on Orion's left knee, "Rigel".

This wasn't necessarily the only answer. But, most likely it should be the right one.

And at the same time he realised that, he readied himself for the precipitousness and difficulty of the obstacles that awaited them on the Second and First Floor, when considering the maliciousness of the person who'd cooked up these "Trials".

Subaru: "????"

The white room was filled with a dazzling light.

Both sound and landscape were left behind, everything was blown away, before finally??.

Subaru: "……Whoa."

When the light died down, Subaru and the others were left standing in a room made out of stone ??in the middle of a room that was encompassed by countless bookshelves.

Arc 6 – Chapter 35, “Thin Ice Relations” (Part 3/3)

by admin - Wednesday, August 22, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/08/22/arc-6-chapter-35-thin-ice-relations-part-3-3/

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Translated by :

- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism

Proofread by:

- Furuta /u/GracedHarperd
- Beidh, /u/Beidh
- Shifty, /u/Shiftyfish87

Fan Art Created by :

- HaruSabin

Disclaimers:

- **Note to anyone reading this, it’s in the process of retranslation, this was one of my first ever TLs and it’s very poor quality, so I am trying to fix a lot of it.**

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

[Emilia: This morning… we couldn’t find you in the dragon carriage. As you were also nowhere to be found in any of the rooms on fourth floor… we were pretty worried.]

Subaru’s curiosity was piqued by the word dragon carriage, but he did not open his mouth in fear of interrupting Emilia’s story. Perhaps, the lizard which stood in the Green Room was related to Earth Dragons in some way? It seems as if the carriage was drawn in the same fashion as horse-drawn carriages used to be. His curiosity in wanting to see the thing in action had to be postponed.

[Beatrice: Betty was not at her wit's end as much as Emilia was, in fact. Simply, I was worried that I wasn't able to understand the whereabouts of my contractor within this strange tower, I suppose. So, we went searching around the tower for you...]

[Subaru: … searching for me?]

[Emilia: We found you collapsed on the third floor, in the white library, and then brought you to the Green Room.]

Subaru breathed out an "Uhh" after hearing Emilia and Beatrice's joint explanation.

[Julius: The third floor is one of the floors within this tower. We are currently on the fourth floor, trying to reach the topmost floor – that is, the first floor in our efforts to capture the tower... it was thanks to your knowledge that we have already reached the third floor.]

[Subaru: Thanks for explaining… huuh, thanks to my knowledge!?]

Julius fills in Subaru with the missing details, explaining how the tower was structured. Although, to Subaru, the contents seemed to be quite lacking in credibility. However, Emilia continues her speech:

[Emilia: That's how it happened. All we heard was gibberish, but Subaru was able to solve it all by himself… you were reaaaalllly amazing.]

[Subaru: Hahaha, thank you… gibberish, I don't hear that term used often nowadays.] [1]

[Emilia: ……]

[Subaru: Did I say something strange?]

Though Subaru had intended to praise Emilia, she remained silent as if concealing embarrassment in hearing these words. For a second, he had seen the traces of some strong emotion flicker across her eyes, like a ripple in a pond, but he didn't know what it was.

[Subaru: By the way, so you brought me here, to that room full of grass…]

[Beatrice: That room is protected by a special spirit. That spirit has the power to heal people's wounds… that is why Rem's also sleeping there, in fact.]

[Subaru: Okay, okay, I see. So, that's why I was also brought in… By the way, what are the chances that my memory disappeared due to that room?]

[Emilia: That's…]

Subaru closes one of his eyes as Emilia is about to reply and plunges into thought. After all, if the spirit took the form of some kind of plant, Subaru doubts that the spirit could necessarily be benevolent – after all it could possess an intrinsic nature of cruelty.

Flowers can be pretty, and filled with sweet nectar to attract insects to carry their pollen. However, sometimes, carnivorous plants can be camouflaged as such, so that they can drain the life force from their prey.

Instead of healing his body, it could have absorbed his memory. Such a possibility existed.

[Echidna: It’s quite a wild idea, but it’s very doubtful. I've been in that room longer than you have, and nothing untoward has happened to me.]

[Subaru: …is my condition linked to how the original owner of your body isn't able to come out, somehow?]

[Echidna: Regarding Ana, that happened before we came to the tower. Her condition has no relevance to the Green Room. That’s right… did the Earth Dragon who was in the room forget you?]

[Subaru: Huh?]

[Echidna: That Earth Dragon has a deep bond with you. Suppose, for argument’s sake, her memory was taken away from her by the room’s spirit… don’t you think she would probably ignore you?]

Echidna reminds Subaru of the Earth Dragon that had been near him when he woke up. Certainly that Earth Dragon was extremely friendly towards Subaru. It was convinced that it was Subaru’s Earth Dragon. It was quite surprising.

[Subaru: That Earth Dragon, she's a female…?]

[Echidna: Let's get back on topic. The chances of that room causing such wickedness are not high at all. I think that the problem occurred on the third floor, in the room you collapsed in – The Third Floor's Taygeta’s library.]

[Emilia: Yeah, yes. In that room, Subaru was collapsed on the white floor…]

Emilia grips her wrist tightly, as she reflected back at that moment.

[Emilia: I was in a panic… I carried you from that room, and then went to call everyone, but…]

[Beatrice: Subaru woke up during that time, and then he found himself in this condition, in fact. Therefore, it would be difficult to imagine that the Green Room would have time to do such a deed, I suppose. After all, going to that library…]

If there had been a cause to his memory loss, it would likely be that the origin was the library. It seemed like a common point of view had been reached, but Subaru didn’t really understand it.

That’s because his power of imagination probably does not reach to what kind of room ‘the library’ in reality actually could be other than a simple library.

[Subaru: Taygeta? What kind of room is this Taygeta library? Somehow, that sounds familiar…]

[Julius: That library is the place where?The Books of the Dead?exist.]

[Subaru:?The Books of the Dead?… is this still junior high..., hey!]

Showing interest, Subaru attempts to get to grips with the existence of these?Books of the Dead.? But just as he reacted, Julius continues to speak, saying: “Although there is no concrete confirmation.”

[Julius: There are a number of books bearing the names of people who are now deceased from around the world, in this library. To read the books, you likely have to be qualified to do so by knowing the person who had died.]

[Subaru: What bad taste… what is written in those books?]

[Julius: The past life of the dead is written there. Intense memories are scorched into your mind; it is not an experience you would like to try over and over again.]

There was such a weight to Julius’ words in his explanation, which could only have been expressed by one who had personally experienced this sensation. It seemed to Subaru that the memories of the dead were not something he wanted to have scorched into his mind. To say it frankly, experiencing this sort of shock was not something he was keen to do. And…, if he had collapsed in a library where such experiences are possible…

[Subaru: Was I reading one of those books and collapsed? No way, is that what destroyed my memory?]

[Echidna: I can’t say that the possibility isn’t there. About that, ?Sage?, what do you think?]

[Shaula: … maybe, are you talking to meee?]

While nodding at Subaru’s guess, Echidna turned to face Shaula. Subaru found that *Sage* was a really disproportionate way of calling her. He wondered why she was named as such – to him Shaula looked like the furthest thing from a?Sage?in this room.

[Shaula: Even if I have to repeat it many times, my answer will not chaaange! I don’t know much about the tower, except its ruuuuulesu! Now that you mention it, I am strict with rule breaking. Whatever Master did in the tower, it has no relatiooooon!]

[Subaru: To begin with, I don’t know why Shaula is calling me master, but...]

[Ram: Don’t worry. Barusu’s answer is all too similar as before he lost his memory. You're just using this as an excuse because it's convenient… disgusting!]

[Subaru: How did you allow yourself to come to that conclusion!]

Subaru looked on in bewilderment at Shaula’s declaration – her gaze seemed to emanate deep, deep

affection. Even if he could appreciate the environment he was in, which had this glamorous, beautiful woman present in it, not understanding the source of her affection only yields way to confusion and bewilderment for Subaru. Besides, this woman's deep affection gives him a strange feeling of unease; it felt completely different from the sincere feelings which Beatrice and Emilia had shown him. He doesn't understand whether this is a harmful effect of his memory being gone or not.

[Subaru: In any case, that library feels suspicious. If it's perhaps our only clue that can lead us to returning my memories back, then it's worthwhile going there and checking it out.]

[Julius: Yes, we should do that. Even under normal circumstances, difficult problems happen one after the other. There are seldom times where problems and misfortune never crop up. Besides, in these circumstances, you must honestly realise that…]

[Subaru: What must I realise?]

[Julius: … you, oh, just how many things are you making up for?] [2]

In hearing Julius' words, Subaru closes one of his eyes and snorts. It was not from embarrassment that he had reacted like this; he smiles bitterly. On Natsuki Subaru they must depend on, even at the end. Bad things come in threes – misfortunes never occur alone. Once again, Subaru had been unaware of the burden he felt that was on him.[3]

[Subaru: Anyways, after I finish eating, I'd like to go to the library and if the memories that I lost are scattered around there, I'd like to go pick them up and refill my mind with them.]

[Emilia: That's a weird way of saying it… you really are Subaru!]

[Subaru: You really are Subaru… saying that, huh, wait, it's probably not a compliment!?]

Emilia smiled gently at the flustered Subaru. The tension that had been filling the air seemed to have relaxed a bit. A plan had been decided; Subaru started to begin to feel a little bit more positive towards their course of action.

[Echidna: I am sorry to interrupt you, Natsuki-kun, there's just one thing I want to ask you.]

[Subaru: Well, since you're already speaking, go ahead. What is it?]

[Echidna: No, this isn't related to your memory, or capturing the tower, it's something I wish to ask out of curiosity…]

Echidna starts to stroke her wavy hair, and with an adorable look on her face, compounded by a look of deep intelligence in her light blue eyes, she asks:

[Echidna: What does that word you speak quite often of, "Parallel World", mean?]

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- [1] Probably references the fact that Emilia talks in an old-fashioned way.
- [2] The use of ??? in this sentence is confusing. This exchange between Julius and Subaru was tricky to decipher. Think Julius is referring back to the night before (Eridna’s confessions) and how Subaru was at fault and should be making up for it.
- [3] Not such a strong translation here, the gist should roughly be okay though. Also, I translated the proverb to the common English one which states threes but does not necessarily mean three specifically in this context.

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Arc 6 – Chapter 36, “A Place of Relief”

by admin - Wednesday, August 22, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/08/22/arc-6-chapter-36-a-place-of-relief/

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Translated by :

- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism
- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd

Proofread by:

- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd
- Jaerek, /u/Jaerek
- Review, /u/ReviewR524

Fan Art Created by :

- Wawaka1212

Disclaimers:

- **Note to anyone reading this, it’s in the process of retranslation, this was one of my first ever TLs and it’s very poor quality, so I am trying to fix a lot of it.View Here**

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… What do you mean when you say ‘Parallel World’.

[Subaru: ……]

Subaru felt as if his breath had been knocked out of him in hearing Echidna’s question – he sunk into silence. Everyone’s gaze turned towards Subaru. Although the emotions varied across everyone’s faces, many of them showed tangible signs of doubt and disbelief. After he had mentioned ‘Parallel World’,

everyone had reacted in confusion to it. The Natsuki Subaru before losing his memories had not explained it to them. [1]

[Emilia: Parallel World… ah, I remember, that sounds familiar! Subaru said that at times.]

[Ram: There's a certain familiarity in hearing it. Judging by his usual behaviour back then, I thought it was just nonsense that he liked to spout out.]

[Subaru: Regardless of Emilia-chan… Ram's indifferent manner towards me is simply wonderful……]

Ram's manner seemed to be the opposite of Emilia's who was immersed deep in thought whilst gently brushing her finger against her lips – an action Subaru found quite cute. Instead, Ram had snorted at Subaru's remark and replied in quite a cold-hearted tone. Due to them having some familiarity with the word, thanks to this cushion, their initial surprise had been softened.

To Emilia and Ram, and all those he had supposedly adventured together with, the previous Subaru had not told any of them what he had meant by talking about "Parallel World". What does it all mean; he doesn't know for sure, but…

[Subaru: Do I have any restrictions in what I can say? When I was thrown into to this world have I been sworn by a God or Goddess into not telling anyone where I am from… what kind of mission is there for me to do here?]

Subaru racks his brain – the burden of potentially having to carry out a mission crosses his mind.

Presumably, Subaru was summoned into this parallel world by someone working behind the scenes that had some expectation of him. By Subaru's reckoning, the likelihood of this someone being a "God" was very high. Subaru had been given a role to play in this world by them, despite not remembering who this "God" was. Thinking about this other world… had it not been down to fate that he was here? So, if losing his memories was something that this "God" found inconvenient, he could hopefully expect some follow-up to improve his situation. Subaru wants to believe this "God" is not the cruel sort who would just throw him into this fantasy world without giving him some benefits. Maybe…

[Subaru: … in fact, would it be better to see if it's prohibited for me to mention this topic?]

[Beatrice: Subaru?]

Subaru licks his parched lips and searches for a response for this situation. He winks at Beatrice, who had been starting to feel uneasy after overhearing his muttering. He had made up his mind – he decides that he will address the question that Echidna had asked him about the Parallel World.

Even if speaking about it was forbidden by this "God", Subaru muses that it would be unlikely that there would be some sort of drastic consequence that he could not recover from were he to touch this taboo. Surely, as soon as he speaks of the taboo, there wouldn't be anything drastic that would happen, such as being assailed by unbearable pain. With a little bit of anxiety, Subaru beings to speak…

And…

[Subaru: This “Parallel World” I spoke of, I don’t mean it in the sense of the literal definition of “Parallel” and “World”. Moreover, what I mean is that where we are now is a different world.][2]

[Emilia: There’s a difference between “Parallel World” and a “Different World”…]

[Subaru: Uh-huh. That’s why it’s a different world.]

Following Subaru’s explanation, Emilia mulls over the subtlety that Subaru had pointed out, rolling the different words out on her tongue. She was not the only one who had reacted like this – others in the room were also pondering this distinction.

Subaru assumes from the lack of understanding at him when he had used the term “Parallel World” that apparently the concept was not a common one in this world. Subaru, still with a trace of anxiety in him, slapped his body to check for any changes.

[Subaru: … nothing seems to have happened to me.]

In other words, Subaru was ensuring that nothing untoward had occurred to him after revealing this. As far as he could tell, there are no signs of abnormalities in his body. There is neither pain nor numbness. Nor is there a strange voice sadly addressing him with "You've violated your instructions" or "You mustn't have said that"; nor is there a flock of cranes ominously congregating in his surroundings. The people around however do not show any significant changes in their expression.

[?: That in itself is unexpected…]

Certainly, he could not think of any particular reason now for not talking about the other world.

Subaru cocked his head to the side noticing that Julius had raised his hand in an attempt to get Subaru’s attention.

[Julius: Though I understand what you mean by a different world, and the terminology you have coined for it, I think there is a little bit of an implication left. Why are you mentioning that different world again and again?]

[Subaru: Oh? Oh, oh, that’s right! Just explaining the meaning of the terminology is not enough…]

[Julius: In other words?]

Following Julius’ questioning, Subaru acknowledges he had cut his explanation short. And, clearing his throat he goes on to say,

[Subaru: I was not born and raised in this world – that other world I was speaking about… I am from it. I was brought here by pure chance; it is as if I am an alien being. So for me this would be the parallel world which I spoke of earlier.]

Indeed now he had clearly explained his position and circumstances.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

I am a person who came to this world from a different world. Nice to meet you.

Roughly speaking, this is what Subaru had told them. It was easy to imagine Emilia and the others to have been shaken by that bold confession. At any rate, having dropped this bombshell on everyone who did not know about the existence of the parallel world must have made them feel like the world had been turned upside down.

After finishing this confession Subaru curses his carelessness as he thinks that he has probably worried everyone – maybe they would even be scared of him. If he had made Emilia and Beatrice feel as if they'd been engulfed by a maelstrom of confusion – if he had made them grieve, then he was responsible for having upset them. How would he comfort such beautiful girls if they were to break down into tears? He had no experience in this whatsoever.

Only a split second had passed since Subaru had confessed where he was from – already he was racked by anxiety at imagining their reactions. He turns to face them…

Subaru had imagined that he would find them looking pale, blood drained from their visage, with confusion and fear etched on their faces. However…,

[Emilia: … Uh, so you are from beyond the Great Waterfall?]

[Subaru: Eh? The Great Waterfall?]

Subaru's eyes widen at Emilia who had timidly asked this question. Subaru had found the word "Great Waterfall" unfamiliar. Sure, he knew what a waterfall was, but, a waterfall so large to be named as being "Great"? Could he imagine such a thing? No, even more important, what was the connection between this great waterfall and the world he had been brought into?

[Subaru: No, it was something completely different – unrelated to an actual waterfall. It's not the waterfall that was behind it; it's a tale from the other world beyond common sense.]

[Ram: So, you are from beyond the Great Waterfall. From Barusu's way of speaking, that is where he was born... If these countries are beyond the Great Waterfall then it certainly could be a "Parallel World". Even if he was hysteric recounting it, I am satisfied.]

[Echidna: That's right. That must be the reason why I could not investigate Natsuki-kun's origins – because he is from beyond the Great Waterfall.]

[Subaru: Well, hey, hey, you're all convinced!?]

It wasn't just Emilia who had agreed with this conclusion – Ram and Echidna, who both appeared to be extremely intelligent had also agreed with it. For Subaru, it was difficult to understand how credible this

mysterious waterfall was in being related to his old world. Beyond the Great Waterfall… what sort of idea is it that there existed something akin to a tunnel to this strange land beyond this waterfall.

[Beatrice: You may not have any clue about it due to your missing memories. But, the Great Waterfall at the edge of the world… I have heard quite a few stories about people coming from beyond it. I suppose.]

[Subaru: I do quite like the sound of that… at the edge of the world.]

[Beatrice: The Great Waterfall is said to be impossible to cross and go beyond it, with the exception of the dragon. It's the border between this way and that way. We do not know what is on the other side of it....That's why it's rare to know of someone who has crossed worlds, and as such, the basis on whether they are lies or not is difficult to draw, I suppose.]

Beatrice explains the basis behind this theory, it seemed like the general consensus from the people around him was that they were ready to accept it. The theory's contents were lacking, there were some things that were difficult to imagine for Subaru with him not being an expert in this world's circumstances. Thinking about the term "Great Waterfall" and its present explanation now–

[Subaru: Why do I get this feeling that this place is like a floating continent, and it's not possible to reach the next continent across without being ferried across by a dragon?]

[Ram: Haa]

[Emilia: Don't go making such a dreadful sigh there, he's wounded.]

Ram was looking at Subaru, who did not know how to support his explanation, with a sense of staggering disappointment. However, what had seemed like a good theory to Subaru, seemed to not be shared by any of the others here. In the end, his floating continent theory was likely incorrect.

[Subaru: If I was off the mark, I understand… If my current theory had been correct, I was hoping to have a good experience riding on the back of that dragon.]

[Beatrice: If you start talking about it like that, your cute earth dragon's older brother will start to sulk, I suppose.]

[Subaru: Oh, that jet black earth dragon is mine – let me ride on it later!]

[Shaula: Ahhhhh~ Do not be afraaaaid! Master, I think that you should take care of meeee, love and love~ Now that you have lost your memories, let our relationship restaaaart! From zerooooo!]

[Subaru: Noisy and clingy! Also, don't poke into other people's affairs especially when they have no memory of it!]

Shaula noisily joins in the conversation, with Meili sitting in between her knees. She had stepped into the conversation and been brash in speaking her mind, something that he found quite overwhelming.

[“—“]

From there, Subaru shifts his attention towards his surroundings. In his original world, though depending on the situation, Subaru had a reputation for not being able to read the mood from the people in his surroundings. However, no matter how unsuitable one is at reading people’s emotions, if the emotions are incredibly strong, then they can be easily read by anyone.

Not just Emilia and Beatrice, but also Ram, Julius, Anastasia (i.e. Echidna) – their expressions are all showing worry towards Subaru. For better or for worse, before losing his memories, Subaru would have been doing pretty well with the ladies. Now he felt jealous. What exactly had he done, what sort of magic had he used? Subaru has no idea when he had been taught such arcane skills, but he doesn’t believe he could put it into practise now.

[Subaru: Anyways… so, in short, at the edge of this world there’s a big waterfall and occasionally people come from beyond it… and I am one of them?]

[Emilia: When I listen to Subaru’s story, I can only imagine that is the case, but… maybe it’s a bit different?]

[Subaru: Uh huh.]

Subaru exchanged looks with Emilia, her arms were crossed by her side. To be precise, it was not Subaru’s intended course of action to run counter to the general understanding which everyone had of the world. Nonetheless, even if Subaru thinks that the ‘Parallel World’ and the ‘Great Waterfall” are unrelated, he knows that he won’t make any progress in this situation if he continues to talk about it.

[Subaru: To make a long story short…]

Within this world there was no concept of “Parallel Worlds”. It’s unknown whether Emilia and the others’ truly believe that the “Great Waterfall” actually has Subaru’s or other worlds existing beyond it. Subaru is reminded of the explorer Christopher Columbus, whose records had indicated that he believed in a great waterfall at the edge of the world. Yet, he had found a continent on the other side of the ocean despite having been branded as a “weirdo” – though there certainly had been no waterfall. If that is the case, then the way they perceive the “Parallel World” is not correct.

[Subaru: By the way, did I ever mention anything about the other world I am from, back when I had my memories?]

[Emilia: Thinking back to then, once in a while you’d make some mention to a “Parallel world”… but this is the first time we have really talked about it.]

[Beatrice: Betty agrees with Emilia.]

As Emilia and Beatrice speak, the others are nodding, agreeing with what they are saying. It seems that before he had lost his memories Subaru had not really discussed anything about it. Had it been because he had thought they would not understand him, just as they had shown now?

Or…,

[Subaru: … because I had been stopping myself from talking about it?]

[Julius: Subaru?]

[Subaru: Huh. Uh, no, nothing. Hey, are you acquainted with any other people from other worlds except me? A person from the other side of the waterfall, or drifting out at sea from it – whichever.]

Perhaps there were a lot of people drifting in from different worlds; maybe there was a community or town of sorts where such people gathered. However, Subaru's hopes were denied by a shake of the head from Julius.

[Julius: Sorry, the existence of a person drifting in, as you call it, is very rare. Most people who claim they are from beyond the Great Waterfall are lying. What they say are generally pipe dreams or fabrications, some of them set their sights on trying to extort people out of money whereas others are simply trying to influence people of their fanciful beliefs.]

[Subaru: Oh, well, yeah I can see that happening…]

As much as you would like to believe such stories, the majority are the works of fiction or embellished rumours. Even if people, like Subaru, who were genuinely from another world existed, their existence would be buried under countless falsehoods.

[Echidna: Honestly, my interest in the Great Waterfall is not exhausted, but it seems it really has no relevance to our current situation. It would be a good idea to simply end this with establishing that Natsuki-kun's home-town is unknown.]

Echidna had broken what had been an awkward silence that had been forming. Originally she had been the one asking Subaru about it. Although there were still parts unfamiliar to her and she was most likely unsatisfied, Subaru welcomed her ending the conversation there.

The more he talked about his original world, the more he remembered what he had left behind.

Thinking about it had begun to make his heart ache.

By concentrating on the situation in front of him, he could try and distract himself from these feelings.

[Subaru: I understand that you all care and were worried about me. It feels now like what we settled earlier may be worth checking out.]

Subaru does not know if this would turn out to be the cause for his memory loss, but, the place where the Subaru with his memories intact had supposedly last ventured – he wanted to check what had happened there.

[Beatrice: You will want to check the?Taygeta?library, I suppose.]

Subaru nodded at Beatrice who had beaten him to voicing out his thoughts out loud.

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The group now had headed out towards the?Taygeta?library.

Subaru was feeling quite nervous about what would be awaiting him there; on the way there he had felt it may very well be the continuation of his troubles.

That is because,

[Subaru: Well, Emilia-chan, why are you holding my hand so tightly?]

[Emilia: Eh? Well, I'm worried about leaving Subaru in a place where I can't reach him… I couldn't bear not holding hands with you since we set out.]

[Subaru: I mean, I like the hastiness of it, but this is pretty embarrassing!]

Subaru was aware that he was blushing; he lifts up the hand that was held by Emilia. Her slender, cute fingers were gently holding his hand and he worries whether his palms are sweating. In reply to Subaru's words, Emilia raised her eyebrows and said "Jeez,"

[Emilia: Well, Beatrice is also holding your hand, so it's not just us two together!]

[Subaru: There's a difference between holding the hands of a child, compared to one of a beautiful woman! There's a big difference, it's like night and day!]

[Emilia: I'm sorry, I have no idea what you're saying.]

Subaru feels flustered by his feeble excuse – Emilia was not going easy on him even if he had lost his memories. All his grudges, all his memories… he'd lost them all.

[Beatrice: Now, that statement is unpardonable. But, it's as Emilia says. Subaru is following along obediently and is well protected by Betty and Emilia, I suppose.]

[Subaru: Oh yeah? This is where we put Beatrice in the middle, and I and Emilia hold hands with you from both sides, young couple style! Is that not cool?]

[Ram: Subaru is most certainly not cool.]

[Subaru: What kind of assessment is that!?]

Beatrice had been holding Subaru's other hand as that blow was delivered to him. Julius, who was leading the way ahead, looks back towards Subaru. Echidna who had been following right behind him stops as Julius is about to round the corner. It had been Ram who had delivered that sarcastic remark; however, Subaru was the only one who knew that despite her outward appearance she was probably

suffering inside. He wonders if he should talk to someone about her, but he doesn't know who he could possibly talk to regarding what she was experiencing. In a way, it's only Shaula and Meili who seem to be untroubled amongst them – they are chatting together at the back of the group.

[Subaru: Well, they're not useful at all for anything…]

[Meili: … somehow I don't think you are being polite right now, Onii-san.]

[Shaula: It's always such a feeling coming from inside Master's head. Never mind it, it's no looossss. At some point, if you are frank and peek underneath his skull, it's all pink anywaaays~ Pink braaain~ Shaaaameless knowledge~] [3]

[Subaru: I don't think we'd find either shame or knowledge in you…]

[Shaula: Master's doooing – my entire knowledge – Master's doooing~]

Subaru starts to experience a slight pang in his heart due to the conversation. Whilst they had been exchanging these bouts of conversation, the party had gone up the stairs and arrived at the ?Taygeta? library on the third floor. It was quite expansive, almost as if it transcended time and space.

[Subaru: Right here is?Taygeta?… there are quite a lot of books in here.]

Subaru breathes in awe as he looks around the?Taygeta? library, marvelling at the sheer number of books there. Indeed this was a sight that was beyond anyone's imagination. Subaru was quite the avid reader (reading Light Novels, Manga, Strategy Guides), but he had never been surrounded by so many books. Of course, it even surpassed the National Diet Library in terms of sheer quantity. However it could be said that that the National Diet Library was far superior in providing a spacious environment to peruse its reading material. Though, as the most common reason for visiting it is its picturesque architecture it meant that it wasn't stocked well…,

[Subaru: If?The Books of the Dead?are here… then wouldn't that mean that there are as many books here as people who have died? If it has been recording nonstop since the time of the Homo Sapiens, then it must be literally overwhelmed by the amount of records here.]

Subaru does not know the scale of this world, but if the records of the dead are books, then the quantity of books would be immeasurable. Even if he tried to find a book, such as one with the name of a deceased person he knew, he would not be able to physically find it.

[Subaru: In a modern day library, a lookup function is indispensable… but here?]

[Beatrice: I don't know what you mean by lookup function, I suppose. However, there is no one else more similar to a librarian here than Betty. I have no choice but to check, I suppose.]

[Subaru: This is like looking for a 100 Yen coin in the middle of a desert…]

Warily, Subaru places his hand on the spine of a book. It is an ordinary book, and when he pulls it out of

the bookcase nothing extraordinary happens. There is no design to it on the cover, other than its title. In all, it could be mundanely described as being a very plain book.

[Subaru: Damn it! I can't read the title.]

The title was written in squiggly characters that he could not read. In the story he had heard from Emilia and the others the title of the book was meant to be the name of someone who had died. If it was a person who you had personally known before they passed away then you could read the book. However, Subaru could not even comprehend what the letters meant in the first place. It was doubtful now that his memory could be in danger if he could not even read it…

[Subaru: Well… this may be difficult…]

[Emilia: SUBARU!]

Subaru who had been lost in thought, looked around in surprise at hearing Emilia shout. In an instant, the book he had picked up was wrenched from his grasp by Emilia.

[Subaru: Huh…, Emilia-chan?]

[Emilia: Don't do such a stupid thing! Subaru, do you understand? Subaru has probably lost his memories here – it's dangerous.]

[Subaru: No, wow, that's overblowing it…]

Emilia had said this in a strong expression which was different to her usual demeanour; Subaru scratches his cheek and responds with strained laughter. It seemed that only Subaru was taking the situation lightly.

[Beatrice: Subaru, listen to Emilia – refrain yourself from acting so impulsively, I suppose.]

[Julius: I agree. You should be careful and refrain yourself from performing such a rash action.]

[Subaru: Mh…]

Both Beatrice and Julius had beseeched caution from Subaru. His throat had seized up, unable to reply to either of them. A feeling of revulsion had welled up in him, a great sense of shame overpowered Subaru. Certainly it had been a little stupid of him to have acted so carelessly.

[Shaula: Pfffft! Master is getting aaangry! That's why I'm feeling down!]

[Subaru: Shut up! Don't poke fun at people who are immersed in thought!]

[Echidna: Hey, hey. You don't have to interject in like that, you know. In fact, Natsuki-kun's behaviour was somewhat inevitable… anyways, I have thought of something.]

With her hand covering her mouth Shaula was laughing away at Subaru's mistake. Echidna had forced

herself between Subaru and Shaula who had been snapping away at each other. And whilst gently stroking her scarf she said:

[Echidna: Natsuki-kun, you were unable to read the title of the book, is that right?]

[Subaru: …? Oh, yeah, that's right.]

[Echidna: What you can see here is that losing your memory as he has will interfere with your cognitive abilities such as your literacy skills. That is why he was speaking of parallel worlds…]

[Beatrice: Sorry, but Subaru began to study the alphabet when he arrived at Roswaal's mansion.]

[Echidna: ……]

Echidna, who had spoken confidently of her theory, was dumbfounded by Beatrice's retort. Not paying any regard to Echidna's lack of response, Beatrice crosses her arms.

[Beatrice: Subaru could not read or write until he came to the mansion, I suppose. As far as I know, the one who instructed him was Ram.]

[Ram: Yes, it is exactly as Beatrice-sama says. From the start, Ram dedicated herself to educating Barusu so he would learn to read and write… it seems my efforts were wasted, seeing him in this current state.]

[Subaru: Sorry! I wasn't aware there was such an episode!]

Subaru raises his voice in apology in reply to Ram's resentful complaint. Taking a sidelong glance at the occurring exchange, Echidna cleared her throat.

[Echidna: Ahem, it seems I was way off the mark. I'd like it if you could forget what I said.]

[Julius: No, it's not as off the mark as you may think. At least we have discovered that Subaru's memories were lost when he came to Lugnica.]

[Ram: In other words, Barusu is just useless baggage that doesn't serve any purpose in this library.]

Ram scathingly adds to Julius' confirmation – Subaru remains silent as he doesn't want to stir up any more trouble upon himself. However it is Julius who speaks, saying "Miss Ram's words are correct,"

[Julius: In any case, as Subaru cannot reproduce what occurred last night in this place, we should be the ones to look for clues in here.]

[Echidna: Yes, that would be safer.]

[Ram: I don't have any objections. Are Emilia-sama and Beatrice-sama okay with it?]

Beatrice nods back towards Ram, saying: "I understand, I suppose." Emilia turns towards Subaru,

looking at him with quite a serious expression in her eyes.

[Emilia: Subaru, please wait here without doing anything rash... The memories you lost, me and the others… we will find them.]

[Subaru: Oh, okay, okay, understood. It feels annoying not being able to do anything, but I believe in Emilia-chan and everyone else! I will wait here.]

[Emilia: Can you really wait here quietly? You won't wander off as you please?]

[Subaru: I don't need reminding! I'll be fine! I am not a 5 year old kid, I can wait here – I can promise it if you want.]

[Subaru: Well… even so, I am not going to be quiet…]

[Emilia: What do you mean!?]

Granted he had brought out that promise to make her feel peace of mind, however it had ended up in only sowing more mistrust. Looking around his surroundings he saw that Beatrice and Ram were merely shrugging their shoulders in reply. In any case…,

[Emilia: Subaru is going to quietly wait here at the front, okay?]

In response to Emilia's sincere appeal, Subaru decides that he will reluctantly wait for them at the front of the Library. He sits down cross-legged watching over the party who had begun to split into two separate groups to search the Library. In one group were Emilia, Beatrice and Ram. In the other there was Julius and Echidna. Looking on with an air of confusion, it seemed that Emilia and Echidna respectively were leading these uneven teams.

[Meili: I am looking for a guarantee that I won't end up like Onii-san. After all, Onii-san's strong point is that he attracts trouble.]

[Subaru: I have no memories... the problem is that I have no memories, so obviously I cannot even answer that… No, I don't want an assassin of all people, to tell me this.]

[Meili: Because I am totally concerned about trifling matters like that…]

[Subaru: I don't think you can call that a trifling matter!? In the first place…] [5]

She had clicked her tongue at Subaru, interrupting his train of thought. He turned to face her. The voice had come from far away from the bookshelves, next to the wall which Subaru had been standing at. Meili was standing there with a coquettish expression on her face not at all appropriate for her age. Her braided hair was arranged so that it dangled down to her shoulders. "What?" she asks him, cocking her head to one side.

[Subaru: I thought you had joined the search… are you not going to?]

[Meili: Yeah, I won't join it, because I am not really a proper companion of Onii-san and Onee-san's friends.]

[Subaru: Not really a proper companion…]

[Meili: I told you so, didn't I? I'm an assassin… well, as I failed my mission it's more like former assassin. Originally, I was sent here just to help out, now I don't know anymore.]

[Subaru: In other words, I get the feeling like this was your bail condition… You were once an assassin and then through the sense of adventure became my friend. That is my daring judgement.]

[Meili: – Yeah, that's exactly right! I suppose you really are crazy.]

Meili giggled and placed her hand on her mouth as she said this. Subaru snorted at her attitude and–

[Subaru: I understand why Meili wouldn't go with them; what about you?]

[Shaula: Huh, meee~? I cannot read and write anything, so I am of no use whatsoeveeerrr. For me and Master, the books' content is all gi-bbe-rish to uuuussss.]

Shaula was leaning against the wall, on the opposite side from Meili, laughing as she responded. She proceeds to move over and pulls Subaru by his left arm towards her voluptuous body. Such a soft, warm feeling… instinctively, he untangles himself from her.

[Subaru: Whaaaa!]

[Shaula: Ahhh, Master is such a meeeeany~]

[Subaru: I'm not a meany, stop that! It's improper for a girl to have done that… such things should be reserved only for the guy you like… refrain yourself from giving off this sort of impression. You're doing yourself absolutely no good by behaving like this.]

[Shaula: Pfffft. A speech about a girl's sense of dignity? Master seriously never changessss.]

Shaula pouts at Subaru as she protests against his attitude. However, hearing her words had made Subaru look down in embarrassment.

[Shaula: Master?]

[Subaru: You don't think I have changed too?]

Subaru blurts this out to Shaula almost instinctively. He had heard this phrase several times over the course of the few hours he had been awake. It had seemed like a salvation to him to hear this… but also at the same time, a curse.

[Shaula: Hmm, I don't understand what you mean.]

Nevertheless, despite such turmoil brewing inside Subaru, Shaula had flatly dismissed him. He was more or less astonished at her reply. Perhaps it had been a mistake to have let her hear some of his more delicate worries.

[Subaru: You… No, it was me who asked you. I was an idiot.]

[Shaula: Mh-. Master is not an idiot! With such a way of speaking, Master must be getting angryyyy! My Master is a wonderful person. I want you to be confident in yourself!]

[Subaru: Your position, I really don't understand it.]

If you were to think about pointing and laughing at the overwhelmed Subaru, you would find that he was immersed in the most loathing feeling of self-deprecation. Hearing Subaru's question, Shaula pushes her ample-sized chest forward and smiles with her hands on her hips.

[Shaula: Whether you're changed or not, Master remains Master! Whether Master likes it or not, I will always follow him.]

[Subaru: … as for right now, is everything supposed to be strange like this?]

[Shaula: Well! Even if we get into a strange situation, we can overcome it together! Master may have forgotten, but that is the relationship between Master and meeee!]

[Subaru: …]

Shaula's honest words had begun to pile up deep inside him; back and forth her speech ricocheted within him, and with each passing moment he began to feel more emotional. Subaru takes a weak gulp of breath – he had been completely overwhelmed by her.

[Meili: Onii-san?]

[Subaru: …]

Seeing Meili looking at him, he turned his back away from her.

[Shaula: Master, what's wrong?]

[Subaru: …gh]

Subaru cannot escape to the left of him, or to the right. He can only kneel down, and look down at the floor holding his head in his arms so nobody can see his face. Subaru gets the sensation that Meili and Shaula are looking at each other with him curled up in between them. They don't understand… no, he doesn't want them to understand.

And just like that, his prior worries drain away from him, he feels like he had just been saved by those words. He feels like he doesn't need to worry anymore, her heartfelt manner spoke far louder than

anything else could.

[Meili: Onii-san, you're strange.]

[Shaula: Master was strange from the very beginning, but I love you like that!]

He could not say anything to the girls who had been carrying on their exchange as they walked past him. Nevertheless, the feeling of anxiety in his heart had eased thanks to them.

A few minutes had since passed. Subaru had somehow managed to ward off his prior impulses and collected himself up from the floor. Emilia and the others had just come back with the results of their search.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

- [1] This sentence works better in Japanese because instead of Parallel World its 'isekai' and they are confused and puzzled by the term's meaning. Footnote 2 will explain this in more detail – I heavily recommend you read that footnote when you get to it in the dialogue as it will help give more sense to these dialogues.
- [2] It's hard to convey the meaning of this. I will try to explain it: in this sentence essentially Subaru takes the word "isekai" and splits it up into "???" (to differ, pronounced kotonaru) and "??" (world, pronounced sekai). In Japanese the cast don't know what the word isekai actually means. The closest thing I could think of doing is making them confused what a Parallel World was, that also keeps consistent with Chicken's translation of the word. Realising this makes the exchange make a bit more sense compared to the English.
- [3] This was rough to translate; she uses a lot of weird metaphors. If anyone has a better suggestion let me know.
- [5] This exchange was tricky to translate; it's probably a bit off the mark somewhere. The gist is that Meili does not want to end up like Subaru (i.e. an amnesiac), and Subaru is like "WTF you're a killer stop asking me this."

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Arc 6 – Chapter 37, “A Papier-Mâché's Dream”

by admin - Wednesday, August 22, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/08/22/arc-6-chapter-37-a-superficial-dream/

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE.

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Translated by :

- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism

Proofread by:

- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd
- Review, /u/ReviewR524

Fan Art Created by :

- HaruSabin

Disclaimers:

- **Note to anyone reading this, it’s in the process of retranslation, this was one of my first ever TLs and it’s very poor quality, so I am trying to fix a lot of it.View Here**

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

The search of the third floor library, ?Taygeta?had ended with absolutely no results.

[Emilia: I am so sorry… I tried reaaally hard to look for clues…]

Emilia bowed her head in apology towards Subaru after bringing him such fruitless news. Subaru accepts the apology; however, he cannot help but feel big disappointment at how the search had turned out. Of course, it certainly would have been for the best if he could have regained his memories here. But, in spite of his lack of awareness in how he had lost his memories in the first place, Subaru did not feel overly emotional that the search party had yielded unsuccessful results.

[Shaula: …? Master, what's up~?]

[Subaru: Huh, Oh… it's nothing.]

Subaru glances towards Shaula who was looking at him with a happy-go-lucky expression on her face. Her long, jet-black braided hair was swung across her shoulder.

There was no ill-will, malice, or even any profound meaning in anything she spoke. In the end, that cheerful attitude Shaula possesses was a salvation to Subaru in his current state. At least it was better than seeing the others constantly worry over him, watching over every single step of his.

[Julius: Apparently, it seems like the books do not stay in the same place. It would have been too much to ask to have found them lined up and ordered by their titles or in chronological order. Books which we would have found yesterday on one bookshelf cannot be found today on the same one.]

[Subaru: This happens to be such a troublesome and unfriendly library…]

Subaru wrinkled his nose towards Julius' remarks. Not only does the library boast an overwhelming collection of books, but the books happen to move around scrambling themselves on their own accord. Subaru had completely given up hope at ever being this library's customer. Even if there happened to be something within these books, they would never find it.

[Subaru: Why can't we just pull out each book one by one and stack them onto the floor? There has to be an end to this bunch of bookshelves going around the room. If you pick one shelf as a starting point and follow the bookshelves around the library, surely you will find something?]

[Echidna: In my opinion, it'd be wiser to stop. Perhaps what we are doing may be prohibited by the tower's rules. We cannot risk showing any disrespect to this library.]

Echidna, cocking her head to the side, had dismissed Subaru's suggestion. Beatrice crosses her arms and agrees with Echidna with a curt "I suppose".

[Beatrice: Betty being an experienced librarian could never overlook leaving a book on the floor. You cannot show such disrespect to books like that, I suppose.]

[Ram: Beatrice-sama, I feel that there was a large amount of books left on the floor back at your library.]

[Beatrice: Those were the books that instructed me how to correctly arrange the library – it was only right to keep them on the floor!] [1]

Ram narrows her eyes at Beatrice's awkward excuse, though she does not deign to reply back to her. Beatrice sighs, looking positively shocked that Ram had made that accusation. Alongside this librarian-talk, Subaru butts in and says: "Prohibited by the Tower's rules?" with a puzzled expression on his face.

[Subaru: I am sorry – it looks like this is something I've not heard of again… what is prohibited?]

[Emilia: Oh, I am sorry; it looks like I didn't explain it properly.]

Emilia raises her hand to answer Subaru's question.

[Emilia: There are certain things we can't do in this tower… Um, such as: don't leave this tower until we finish its?Trial?, don't do anything bad to the library, don't damage the tower, those kinds of rules.]

[Subaru: Well, who would have guessed that putting books on the floor in this library was a bad thing… By the way, who judges whether we've broken any rules?]

[Shaula: Yeah, yeaaah! I'm the Stars-Keeper! If a rule violation happens, I will become a cold-blooded killing machine who you will all be scaaared of~!]

[Subaru: You…? A cold-blooded killing machine…?]

Subaru could only laugh dubiously at Shaula who was waving her hands about whilst she made this proclamation. No matter how much you believe of Shaula's frivolous speech, he thought it unlikely that she could ever transform into a cold-blooded killing machine. In the first place, how much damage could she really do with the slender arms of a woman? Even that should not be acceptable in this magical fantasy world.

In fact, Subaru had heard that Shaula was not his or Emilia's ally, but rather was the Stars-Keeper of this Pleiades watchtower. She held a different position compared to how Meili had found herself here. Supposedly, she was here to aid in advancing the?Trial?inside this tower. Yet he had no such impression of her actually doing this.

[Subaru: If you seriously hold such an important position, will our friendship let me off the hook?]

[Shaula: Oh, you are such a baaaad guy! Master is quite dirty! The way that you are a little evil is quite nice~! I love hearing such a request from Master, but that is irrelevant to my will! Give up on that hope and show good sportsmanship – act fair and square and give it your all!]

[Subaru: You're no use!]

[Shaula: Hn-]

His strategy of trying to bring her to his side ended with unexpected failure as her authority did not grant him such allowances. At the same time, she had been poking her forehead over and over again during the middle of the conversation, whilst giving Subaru a charming smile. Subaru could only sigh in response at seeing such a comical scene.

[Emilia: – it seems that Subaru and Shaula are both really good friends...]

Emilia whispered this just after Subaru had finished talking with Shaula. Hearing Emilia whisper it to him, Subaru immediately turned to face her and awkwardly stammered a "No, no, no, that isn't so!" to her.

[Emilia: ……]

His attempt to lighten the mood of the situation was not working; Subaru immediately stops when he sees Emilia's expression. Emilia was not smiling. Looking up at her amethyst eyes, Subaru felt that within them was an unmistakable sign of great loneliness. Subaru's face sunk at seeing her expression – immediately noticing his reaction, Emilia frantically waved her hands back and forth at him in denial.

[Emilia: Oh, no, it's really good that you're both friends! Such a gloomy face does not suit Subaru… yeah, it's okay.]

Feigning a smile, Emilia somehow blurted those words out.

[Subaru: Ah, Emilia-chan, you know, I…]

Subaru holds his head as he struggles to find anything he could say to comfort Emilia. He feels like he would be in the wrong no matter what he'd say. Likely the only way he could find a correct answer would be amidst his vanished memories. He was in a nightmarish situation where all the options that were presented are probably false answers. Under these circumstances, saying anything to the sad girl sitting in front of him would be –

[?: Hey, so what are you going to do now?]

A soft voice had broken the awkward silence. It had been Meili who had asked this from where she sat on Taygeta's floor, resting her chin in her hands. She looked up at the adults in the room and spoke,

[Meili: We can't find any leads to recovering Onii-san's memories here. It's a shame, but I wonder what we should do next… are we still trying to find clues on how he lost his memory? Or…?]

Meili doesn't finish her question; instead she turns her face upwards and points at the ceiling. She was smiling quite provocatively.

[Meili: Let's go upstairs? Let's postpone finding Onii-san's memory for a short while.]

[Echidna: …Yes, that seems like a good idea.]

Having heard Meili's suggestion, it was Echidna who had considered her advice and agreed to it.

Emilia's eyes widened at hearing her agreement.

[Emilia: Wait… I feel the same sense of wanting to hasten… but I can't leave Subaru like he is.]

[Echidna: I understand your view. It would be certainly preferable for me, Julius and everyone to return Natsuki-kun's memory… However, we can't ignore the current situation either. Natsuki-kun's memories ceasing to exist may be linked to the tower's?Trial?.]

[Emilia: Subaru's memories are linked to the?Trial??]

It wasn't just Emilia who had reacted like this; the others had all turned their heads in surprise towards Echidna as she said this. Realising she had the attention of everyone, Echidna closed one of her eyes and said: "Look!"

[Echidna: There is no doubt that common sense barely applies when it comes to this tower, however, it would be foolish to think what happened to Natsuki-kun is unrelated to the tower. That's why we all went to Taygeta – we thought that this part of the tower had stolen his memories.]

[Subaru: I think that sounds sorta cool, that memories can be stolen by the tower. If it wasn't me who was experiencing this I would be excited to hear more of the story… but, to begin with, Taygeta's?Trial?is complete – isn't it strange to try and pull out my memories from here?]

[Echidna: Yeah. Therefore I think that your memories weren't stolen because of the?Trial?, but rather because you must have broken one of the rules. It's just like taking out a book and disrespecting the library. Even though Taygeta's trial is over, there still remain more within the tower.]

Echidna had explained her reasoning and Subaru was left to puzzle it over in his mind. In conclusion,

Echidna's reasoning alluded to this:

[Subaru: I guess yesterday I must have broken one of the rules of this place and bam, it destroyed my memories. To be honest, trying to search for loopholes sounds like something I would do. I am not able to make any objection to her reasoning.]

[Emilia: But, won't that have made Shaula angry?]

Echidna had nodded at Subaru acknowledging his conclusion; however Emilia had butted in and pointed towards Shaula, clearly remembering their previous interaction.

[Emilia: If he had violated any rules, won't that have made Shaula angry? It should be a completely different story to what we are experiencing here.]

[Ram: That's right. I understand the possibility that Barusu foolishly broke the rules, but Shaula has not bared her fangs yet at Ram or any of you. What do you make of that?]

Ram glares at Shaula with her pale, red eyes. Beholding her gaze, Shaula leapt up with an "Eeep", and hid behind Subaru.

[Ram: No way, did you abandon your role because of Barusu?]

[Julius: That is very optimistic of you to say. However, as Miss Shaula said some time ago, I am not aware of her being the one who is the executor of all the punishments for breaking the rules of this tower.]

Shrugging his shoulders, Julius stands next to Echidna and supports her opinion.

[Julius: If we are presented with four things which are prohibited, and you break one, the given penalty

may not be equal for us. Miss Shaula could turn into our enemy and in some cases attack us, for example desecrating the Library in some way could result in having your memories stolen…]

Julius had turned his yellow eyes towards Subaru and spoken these words in quite a severe tone.

[Subaru: ……]

There were some really complex emotions swimming inside Julius' eyes which Subaru could not distinguish. Julius continued his speech with: "Although,"

[Julius: We do not have any time or actual proof to test whether this guess is correct.]

[Ram: There is a way to do it, we can just sacrifice the 4 or 5 hours of memory that Barusu has had since he's been awake. That ensures that the damage will be minimal.]

[Subaru: Stop using people's memories as guinea pigs! Memories still shape that person! Even if it's only 4 or 5 hours, I am still myself! I'm not an evil version of Natsuki Subaru!]

[Ram: I was joking.]

Subaru's entire body shivered at Ram's blunt remark which she had said behind his back. Whether it had been a joke or not, Subaru had no clue. It was likely it was, dare he say that her lofty attitude was probably just a façade. It is in her nature that she does not want to show any weakness to people, after all could it be related to what had happened a short while ago. In the end, it wouldn't surprise him if she just wished to erase her embarrassment from the time when Subaru had seen her frail side.

Anyways, other than whether Echidna and Julius' reasoning are correct or not, one possibility is worth considering. Regarding his memory loss, that…

[Subaru: To put things plainly… both of your opinions, whether it's a joke or has a nugget of truth within it, maybe we're all grasping at straws here. Maybe we should give up for now, before things get worse. Right now we're just floundering blindly in trying to find the memories that I lost.]

[Emilia: Does what you're thinking have any basis at all?]

[Subaru: My reasoning is quite sensible. Besides, if this is really part of the tower's?Trial?then maybe if we clear it I'll get my memories back, right?]

[Emilia: ……]

Subaru shook his finger at Emilia, who glanced down away from him. However, she hadn't reacted negatively to his thoughts. Rather, there was a trace of hope beginning to appear on her face. Suddenly, placing her palm on her chest, Emilia began to rapidly nod.

[Emilia: Yes, that's right! If Subaru's memory has been sucked up by the tower, then it may return after completing its?Trial?]

[Subaru: The expression you used, “being sucked up” is quite cute, heh, but that’s the spirit!] [2]

[Emilia: Yes, that’s the spirit!]

Subaru smiles at Emilia as she had jumped up and made a cute triumphant pose. Beatrice, who had been looking on, shook her head,

[Beatrice: Really, I don’t understand which one of you is more encouraged.]

To Beatrice, she seemed to have an opposite take on what Subaru had said. He had thought what he had said was fine – after all, he had found some hope in this situation, and some of the light had returned to Emilia’s eyes. For that, Subaru had felt quite a great sense of relief. Such a gloomy face did not suit a young lady like her. Besides, she had been worrying about Subaru from the depths of her heart. Does she not feel sorry when seeing that Subaru had caused Emilia to look in such a dispirited way?

[Subaru: I made a move on a woman who was way out of my league…]

[Beatrice: I have no idea what he is saying – for now we will adjourn finding Subaru’s memory, I suppose. So if we can complete the tower’s ?Trial?, we should do as Meili suggested and go upstairs.]

[Subaru: Upstairs. So you said we are on the third floor now, so the next floor up is the second.]

Subaru looks around the library seeing only bookshelves wherever he looks. He can’t find anything that resembles a set of stairs that lead up.

[Subaru: Where is the staircase that leads to the second floor?]

[Julius: It’s located on the fourth floor – there’s a staircase there that leads up to the second floor.]

Emilia stared at Julius with a concerned look on her face. Seeing her, Julius knitted his eyebrows as if to ask her if she was worried about him.

[Julius: I will not act rashly without consulting any of you like yesterday. It is as I promised at breakfast. However, even if I hadn’t…]

[Ram: Reid, the first?Sword Saint?, is a very tough opponent. Now then, what do you suppose we should do?]

Julius and Ram exchanged bitter looks. It wasn’t just those two that seemed to share this feeling, but everyone around him had a similar look on their faces. That is, other than Shaula, who had shrieked in terror and was grimacing–

[Shaula: Ah, sorry. What do you mean, Reid?]

As usual, it was Natsuki Subaru that had been left behind in this situation.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

The first?Sword Saint?, Reid Astrea.

That is the name of the man who guarded the second floor of the Pleiades watchtower. In the first place, the title of?Sword Saint?was something Subaru had heard for his first time. However, when he had heard that he was of the first generation of this lineage, he gets the premonition that this man could be likened to a powerful fictional character from his knowledge of these subcultures. His prediction is quite accurate, in fact the people who hold the title?Sword Saint?are all extremely powerful.

It seemed that yesterday, the party that had challenged Reid had experienced the difference in strength between them, rather like the difference between an adult and a child. Amongst them, it was only Emilia who had achieved some sort of victory through both skill and luck…

[Subaru: The problem is that I've lost my memory and I can't even do anything useful…]

At the breakfast table where everyone had been trying to distract themselves from their uneasiness, he had tried to think of a novel idea to clear the tower with a bang. As far as he knew the?Trial?on the second floor seemed to require pure strength. In this situation, there was no place at all for his guile or knowledge of the modern world.

[Subaru: I'd probably get some flour and attack him with a dust explosion or something like that…]

His strongest signature ability: "Dust Explosion" – he would need to fine-tune quite a large amount of flour to activate it. In the first place, Subaru imagines there wouldn't be an abundant amount of flour lying around in this place where food was scarce. In fact, it was unknown to him whether there was any flour at all in this place.

[Subaru: Hm, then I hope I can activate the secret cheat ability that I must have gotten from being summoned into this world.]

Subaru punches the wall next to him with his palm, yelling out a "HA!" in an attempt to see if he could activate it. There was no shockwave emitted from his palm, nor had the stone wall he had punched shattered into little pieces. As he feels the pain from hitting the stone wall with his palm, Subaru's heart begins to sink.

Unfortunately, the secret cheat ability that had been given to Subaru seemed to not be related to great physical strength. In a last attempt, Subaru places his hands on the wall and kicks it with all his might. All that resulted was that he left a footprint on the place he had kicked the wall – as well as a stubbed toe.

[Subaru: Well it must be magic! Beatrice, tell me how to use some magic.]

[Beatrice: Magic… Subaru can never use that ever again.]

[Subaru: Ever again!? Why!? Did something happen with a spell!?]

[Beatrice: You used too much beginner's magic despite being told not to use it and it broke your gate, I suppose. Therefore, Subaru will never be able to use magic again.]

[Subaru: It broke from using beginner's magic!?]

Subaru had the urge to cry out to the heavens, having heard that he indeed had possessed magical powers, but could not use them anymore to live life as a mage – and worst of all it had been him casting beginner's magic that had destroyed his magical gate. Regardless of his loss of memories, Natsuki Subaru's life in a different world had started from the very bottom.

[Subaru: Is it at least a blessing that these people are helping me?]

Clenching his hand into a fist, Subaru sighs and accepts his lack of superpowers. Even if he couldn't remember them, it was relieving that there were people here who knew him. Without them, he would have been alone in this unknown world without any special abilities. To be honest, he does not think he was skilful enough to survive without any support. So, finding himself here was a salvation… even if it was depressing.

[Subaru: ……]

Holding his breath, Subaru starts to realise what his status quo is here. He had checked for the presence of increased physical strength, magical powers and special abilities.

During the time in which Emilia and the others were preparing themselves to challenge Reid on the second floor, Subaru now had no doubts as to whether he had any special powers.

After punching and kicking the wall, after being indignant about being told that his magical ability had ran dry, after running around the tower's insides, after thinking on how to test for special powers from various directions, Subaru had realised one thing, that is –

[Subaru: That maybe, I haven't received anything…]

After sprinting through the hallway, whilst slightly out of breath, Subaru had accepted this fact. He felt like he possessed more physical strength than he did before. Even when he kicked the wall he felt as if he was far more agile than he remembered. However, it is not to be confused for special powers – rather it would be more accurate to say that it's the same consequence of the scars on his body, and his grotesque looking arm. That is to say, it was probably due to what had happened during the year which Subaru could not remember.

The only ability he possessed was the one where he was just an ordinary person who could not even respond to his parent's expectations. That ability had been the only one to surface after his exertions. There were no special powers granted to him by a so called "God" here.

[Subaru: At first, I'd tried to do some transformation poses…]

He had tried Super Senshi poses, then Kamen Rider poses, Pretty Cure poses, and even Sailor Senshi

poses – but they had all been ineffective. [3]

[Subaru: After all of that… my only hope is that my powers awaken when I am in trouble… fuck.]

Scratching his head, Subaru bit down the seed of anxiety that was starting to grow in his heart. In front of Emilia and the others, he would steel himself and pretend that everything was okay. Thus, if anyone looked at him they would not notice the dreadful anxiety that was welling inside him.

His memory was gone. There was no longer any doubt about it. There was too much evidence pointing towards it. And to be honest, he really wanted to believe it. He couldn't not believe it and continue to stay in this place. He wanted to stay here. Here in this world, but not as it was now. So, he wanted some powers to do that.

[Subaru: After all, all I have to do is depend on the bonds I have made with the people I don't remember.]

Natsuki Subaru does not have any changes in him, even in this parallel world. Subaru curses himself feeling as if his current body is a borrowed one, he anxiously ponders whether to go along with Emilia and the others.

[Subaru: Why can't I do what I used to be able to do, on the second floor?]

In his heart, he had refused to be left behind.

After they had explained to him about the guardian of the second floor, Reid Astrea, they had argued whether to bring Subaru along to the?Trial?. It had been Emilia who was the most concerned about bringing him along. Others were a bit reluctant but had not protested as strongly as Emilia. Subaru on the other hand wished to accompany them. It seemed that they had thought that he would be unlikely to be of much help to them in conquering the second floor. They also mentioned that Reid Astrea's temperament would be harmful towards him. Therefore, although Subaru was going to be left behind, he had –

[Subaru: – Still, I had insisted on going with them.]

They had tried to leave Subaru behind. Being treated so gently with concern always on their mind felt poisonous to him. If he had been the Natsuki Subaru with his memories intact, he was sure that he would have accompanied them and that there would never have been such a discussion on whether he was coming or not.

It would be unlikely that his amnesia would influence his abilities. In other words, except for the lack of knowledge, Subaru had thought he would be able to fight just like before he had lost his memories. Hence, he had tried one way or another to prove it to them, but in the end they decided that he could not go up to the second floor.

[Subaru: Although I asked Beatrice to leave me alone, she was deeply concerned about me.]

In seeing that Subaru was about to be left behind, he recalls Beatrice's sullen face who had opted to stay behind with him. However, he had still asked her to leave him be after he had tried to ascertain whether

his secret cheat ability was something physical, magical or skill based. After she had left, Subaru had tried out the transformation poses. After all, it would have been extremely embarrassing to test these poses in front of another person. Beatrice of course had been quite unyielding and Subaru recalls how he had argued back and forth with her…

[Beatrice: I will not leave Subaru alone, there's nothing wrong with losing your memories! Betty will not move from here even with a lever, I suppose!]

[Subaru: I am glad you feel that way, I'm totally grateful, but I am unable to reciprocate it!]

[Beatrice: Between Betty and Subaru, we don't need such distance!]

[Subaru: No, I will be getting naked to put on my makeup by the moonlight!]

He had tried to break through to her with a brute-force approach, zealously appealing her to leave the room. Eventually, seeing how nothing was working, he had given her a very strict order to leave – only then had she left.

[Subaru: Although the meaning doesn't ring a bell, I was told I was her contractor. It seemed like Beatrice was doing well in resisting until I used that against her. It wasn't like me to act like that… was it really okay to do that?]

Grimacing a little, Subaru pulls out the whip that had been holstered at his waist. He tries to hit the tip of it against the wall, but instead only succeeds at hitting his own shin.

[Subaru: Oww…! I guess my body doesn't remember how to use it… or, maybe I didn't master how to use it before I lost my memory…?]

Having hit his own shin, Subaru's eyes began to tear up in pain as he sits down. In the first place, why had he chosen a whip as his weapon of choice? It's not a sword, or a gun… was he trying to be cool and unique picking a whip as his weapon?

[Subaru: If I was familiar with it, have I lost the ability to use it because my memories are gone?]

While rubbing his shin, Subaru thinks about this, his face twisting into a scowl. If his current reasoning was correct, what did he have left here? He had lost his memories, everybody just showed concern towards him, and he had lost all of the skills that he had learnt in this world. All he had left were the scars on his body and the Q&A he had prepared.

He looked completely superficial – like papier-mâché.

[Subaru: Ha.]

With a sigh, Subaru gets up. Those three words that were floating in his brain were so silly that he wants to guffaw at them.

What are you going to do now, you superficial man… Back then, the old Natsuki Subaru had not at all been superficial like papier-mâché.

[Subaru: Ah, I give up, I give up. I'm an idiot. Maybe I'm just unmotivating myself...]

Subaru hits his forehead in frustration and sighs again, bending over to pick up the fallen whip. He did not understand how to put it back in its holster – struggling a bit he finally manages to put it back on his waist. At that time, it had felt like he had been wielding edamame beans…[5] It was far different from what he could achieve with a Kendo sword; he had just seen the result of a year's experience gone to waste. It felt rough. It felt bitter.

[Subaru: I wish I'd kept a diary for this occasion. I'm so useless.]

Subaru starts to walk away from the scene, fuming at his past self in irrational anger. He couldn't confirm the presence of any secret cheat abilities, but in a sense he could not say whether the fruits of his labour were completely full proof. With this in mind, he concludes that he shouldn't rely on something that does not exist. In a way it was a little bit positive and a little bit negative.

[Subaru: Well, this is not the right way…]

Subaru had gone the wrong way and found himself on another floor. In front of him was the large spiral staircase that leads to the lower floors of the tower. He had heard that the tower was made up of six floors. To go up from the sixth floor to the fourth floor, one would have to climb up the stairs which went up for probably over 100s of metres high. It could be comparable to climbing a mountain, except it was probably worse due to the oppressive and gloomy atmosphere which permeates inside the tower. For sure, it was far more effort than it looked.

[Subaru: Thinking about it, the way this tower is structured is peculiar… it's like being in a fantasy world story now.]

It is a world where a room full of ivy and plants can treat your injuries. Besides, in his original world, there had been some buildings which had seemed to exceed human knowledge. Pyramids were one example of such a phenomenon. If you think about it, then maybe there was not much of a difference between this tower and the pyramids of yore.

[Subaru: I'm looking for things in common between this world and my original world, did the past 'me' do this too?]

Subaru starts to feel ridiculous at having referred to himself as the "past me". He feels as if he has slowly been going crazy since having been told he had lost his memories. Originally, in his thoughts, there hadn't been a Subaru 'before' or a Subaru 'after' losing his memories. Yesterday and today too, his memories had continued the same. So, here too, Natsuki Subaru is –

[Subaru: – Oh?]

Subaru shook his head as if he was trying to shake off the thoughts that had clouded his mind – he let out

a small sigh. It was truly a nonchalant sigh.

He had let it out completely unintentionally, as if by chance, in spite of having experienced something much more unexpected. It was no more, and no less than that.

However, at the same time he had let out that sigh, he had felt a slight push on his back.

[Subaru: ……]

The world has started to spin around him.

[Subaru: Ah?]

His feet were off the ground – no, not just his feet… his whole body was. His whole body was overwhelmed by a feeling of weightlessness, he was falling down mid-air, losing sight of what was up or down.

Engulfed by the sensation of weightlessness, Natsuki Subaru continues to fall.

[Subaru: Wha-?]

The sound of the wind whistles through his eardrums. He doesn't know. He doesn't understand. Right now, Subaru was falling. He was falling. Spinning round and round in mid-air as he falls down head-first.

Falling, falling, falling – as he falls his thoughts catch up to him – still falling.

[Subaru: Waaait, wait, wait, wait–]

The world was spinning around his eyes. His limbs were flailing in mid-air. He does not know how many seconds had elapsed, but finally Subaru understood what had happened.

Falling, he is falling. He is going to crash. He will hit the ground after falling down from above. He was swallowed by darkness as he fell past the edge of the spiral staircase. As he looks around desperately to all of his sides, Subaru can only see the tower's stone walls flowing past him. No, the walls were not flowing past him. It was Subaru's field of vision that was inverted as he falls down head-first – so it was in fact him who was sweeping past them. The sensation of tumbling down causes him to retch, chunks of vomit fly out from him.

[Subaru: …gh]

Subaru can't breathe, his throat is clogged with vomit. His nose is runny, tears of pain are streaming out of him and his organs feel like they are all in the wrong place. His whole body felt like a chaotic mess. Subaru starts to imagine everyone's reactions to seeing his face and clothes covered in vomit when he hits the floor…

Emilia would be shocked. Beatrice would get angry at him. Ram would just coldly stare at him. Julius

would give him a tired sigh. Echidna would shrug her shoulders. Meili would laugh. Shaula would poke him.

With such a feeling of frustration, Subaru had completely lost track of his own reality. Even if I search everywhere, I cannot find it. It's not up in the sky. It's not within me. Where did it go? Where is it? As well as his memory, Subaru had also lost himself.

[Subaru: Mommy.]

Natsuki Subaru starts to faint just as he finishes imagining everyone's reactions to him covered in vomit. His consciousness starts to fade, his thoughts were becoming fuzzy, and then–

And then ——

And then ————

And then ——————

And then ————————————

Hard ground.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ??

[? … Subaru! Hey, Subaru, are you okay?]

As he woke up, the first thing he heard was her chiming voice. He could feel her breath near his face and her fingers on his chest. Sensing this, Subaru roused himself into consciousness, and slowly opened his eyes. In front of him was a frighteningly good-looking fairy.

[Subaru: Is this Emilia-chan…?]

[Emilia: Oh, Subaru, thank goodness. You woke up. I was really worried about you.]

Hearing Subaru speak, Emilia continued to stroke his chest with a relieved look on her face. Subaru looked around the room in shock. He was in a room that was completely covered in ivy, even the bed he was lying in was woven from ivy. The beautiful girl next to him, Emilia, was gently stroking him. And right next to her stood a drill loli.

[Beatrice: Emilia, if you continue to be so gentle to him, Subaru will not reflect on his actions, I suppose. If you don't act tougher on him, he won't understand just how much he worried everyone.]

[Emilia: That's right, though Beatrice why do you say it like that? Subaru was missing, so I hurried to find you… when I did, you were collapsed, I was about to cry…]

[Beatrice: Do you not have something you have to say to me, I suppose!]

Beatrice turns away from them, her face turning red in anger. Subaru who was watching this exchange looked on in confusion.

[Subaru: Eh? What? Was it a dream?]

[“……”]

At hearing Subaru say that, both Emilia and Beatrice turned towards him.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

- [1] Tricky to translate, Ram is teasing Beatrice as far as I know about the state of her forbidden library despite her saying it’s important to put books back on the shelves correctly.
- [2] Unsure if I introduced the sexual innuendo with my translation or the author had intended it in the Japanese.
- [3] All references to Japanese media – hopefully got them accurate.
- [5] ?????? – I think “mame” referred to beans, specifically edamame beans. And the whole phrase meant something like to hold in the palm of one’s hand beans – i.e. he felt like wielding the whip was as effective as wielding a pile of beans.

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Arc 6 – Chapter 38, “Who Are You”

by admin - Wednesday, August 22, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/08/22/arc-6-chapter-38-who-are-you/

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE.

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Translated by :

- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism
- Jaerek, /u/Jaerek

Proofread by:

- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd
- Shifty, /u/ShiftyFish87

Fan Art Created by :

- HaruSabin

Disclaimers:

- **Note to anyone reading this, it’s in the process of retranslation, this was one of my first ever TLs and it’s very poor quality, so I am trying to fix a lot of it.**

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Subaru gazes around the room, not knowing what had happened to him. He could not comprehend the situation.

[Subaru: ……]

It was the room that he had gotten so used to seeing now. The walls and the floors are covered in ivy, even the bed he had woken up in was woven with ivy.

In front of him stood two girls – a beautiful lady and a beautiful little girl – both are craning their necks to look at him. A huge lizard was kneeling down beside his bed. On the other bed within the room, a girl with blue hair and closed eyes is lying there. There was absolutely nothing out of the ordinary; this was the green room of the Pleiades watchtower.

[Subaru: This again… why am I here?]

Subaru doesn't know if he had even woken up.

With his hands on his head, Subaru recalls what had happened just before. They had talked about challenging the second floor trial whilst he had tried to confirm whether he possessed any special abilities. After all of that, Subaru had walked through the tower to join with Emilia and the others after he had confirmed that he didn't possess any abilities –

[Subaru: Errr? What happened after that?]

His memory of what had happened afterwards was unclear. He had woken up on this bed all of a sudden, that impression had been strong. And, whilst he fumbled to straighten his mind, a voice broke his train of thought,

[Emilia: Hey, Subaru, are you feeling okay?]

[Subaru: Uhh-aaah! Emilia-chan, you're so close!]

Emilia's beautiful face had suddenly popped up right next to his; she was so close to him that he could feel her breath against his face. In seeing her amethyst coloured eyes, bordered by long eyelashes, approaching out of nowhere, Subaru scoots back to the opposite side of his bed.

Emilia's eyes widened in surprise at his overreaction.

[Emilia: You don't have to look so scared... Besides, it was me who had been scared earlier...]

[Subaru: Scared…?]

[Beatrice: Certainly. We thought that you had disappeared. We searched for you and found you collapsed, I suppose. It would be improper to not be worried.]

[Subaru: Seriously? I collapsed again?]

Beatrice crossed her arms and snorted in exasperation. Subaru was caught by surprise by her words – he stood up and patted his body to make sure it was okay. He couldn't feel any abnormalities.

Though it was dubious whether he would notice any differences considering his amnesia, there were no

obvious signs of trauma.

[Subaru: Still, it's pretty dangerous to collapse twice in such a short time… although it has only been a couple of hours, should I feel lucky that my memories weren't blown away again?]

[Beatrice: What are you grumbling about… Subaru should have something to say to Betty and Emilia, I suppose.]

[Subaru: Something to say…?]

Beatrice threw these words at him as he was staring at his outstretched arms. Subaru turned around to see both Emilia and Beatrice staring at him. He was a little bit worried about what would he have to tell these two individuals.

[Subaru: Well, I'm sorry. I apologise for worrying you all. You both saved me again.]

[Beatrice: You're doing fine so far.]

[Emilia: Heh, you are most welcome. But, I am quite glad that nothing happened to you. I'm so relieved.]

[Subaru: Ah, yes. I'm sorry to Emilia-chan, it's inexcusable for me to cause you so much trouble all the time.]

Raising his hand in apology, Subaru expresses his gratitude towards Emilia. However, when Emilia heard Subaru's words, she furrowed her eyebrows. Her amethyst eyes looked positively bewildered.

[Emilia: Well, would, wait… Subaru, what happened just then?]

[Subaru: What happened… that's a vague question. What's the issue?]

[Emilia: Well, just now you called me Emilia-chan. Somehow, being called that makes me feel a little bit uneasy.]

While saying this, Emilia starts to fiddle with her long silver hair as she looks at Subaru. Her gaze seemed to be filled with loneliness, Subaru involuntarily let out a yelp. Open and friendly, her appearance had struck Subaru's taste. However, in regards to her current attitude, Subaru felt like there was a deep gap opening between them.

[Beatrice: Subaru's pranks are starting up now, I suppose. More importantly…]

Beatrice's mood was starting to get worse after hearing the exchange of those two. Shaking, the drill-loli snapped her fingers at Subaru. And, with her face turning a deep shade of red, she said:

[Beatrice: I want you to tell Betty and Emilia now. Why did you go to the?Taygeta?library last night, I suppose? Why did you collapse there?]

[Subaru: Wait, wait, wait, wait! Wait, what, I collapsed again in Taygeta?]

[Beatrice: Again?]

[Subaru: Seriously, Taygeta is such a dreadful place… I don't know what I was doing there again. After all, it's a place with such a shady history, it was reckless of me, I guess.]

Subaru had been told of an incident which his own memory did not recall; he is bewildered by this fact and starts to feel a little bit unsettled. For sure, he could not recall anything before and after he had slipped out of consciousness. Still, there should be no reason for him to have visited Taygeta again. Rather, it's more likely that someone must have found him collapsed elsewhere in the tower and brought him to Taygeta. Though, he doesn't see what the point of that would be.

[Beatrice: Wait, I suppose. Subaru.]

Subaru had induced confusion within Beatrice who was waiting for his explanation.

[Subaru: Yeah?]

[Beatrice: Somehow, I think your story is incorrect. Subaru, tell us the story accurately, I suppose.]

[Subaru: Accurately…? What do you mean?]

[Beatrice: Now, Betty will tell you the situation she and the others are in.]

Patiently, Beatrice slowly spelled this out to Subaru. He nods his head as he senses the intimidation in her tone as she speaks those heavy words. And, whilst Emilia looked at him with a worried expression on her face, Subaru strained his memory in thought.

[Subaru: Well, I think I told you… when I woke up I had no memories. Though it doesn't mean that they are completely empty. My memories since being summoned to this parallel world are…]

[Beatrice: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait!? Memories? What do you mean by memories, I suppose!?]

[Subaru: Huh?]

Beatrice's usually dignified manner was abruptly shattered as Subaru had begun his explanation. He was surprised by her unexpected reaction. Emilia had placed her hand on the panicked Beatrice's shoulder to steady her. But Emilia is also not calm. She was also looking at Subaru in astonishment.

[Emilia: Subaru, I am sorry, I don't know what to say…]

[Subaru: No, I'd feel bothered if stop here, I have you two here…]

– He was supposed to know what to say next, he tried to continue, but his words trailed off.

[“……”]

Both Emilia and Beatrice looked at Subaru with sheer bewilderment in their eyes. It was plain to him that they were not acting. And because he thinks they are not acting, that makes it all the more terrifying to him.

Why were they forgetting about when he had told them about his amnesia? Surely, the tower hadn’t sucked up the memories of those other than Subaru. The thought of everyone’s memories being partially absorbed by this terrible tower was not very appealing to the imagination –

Then, Subaru notices it.

[Subaru: When I woke up, those two were talking to each other…]

Besides, he may have remembered something. No, not may have. He had definitely remembered something. The first time he had met Emilia and Beatrice, when he was told he had lost his memories… the conversation had sounded exactly like the one now.

To put it more plainly, waking up in the Green Room, laying on the ivy bed, was that not a carbon copy of the situation earlier when he was told he had lost his memories?

[Subaru: ……]

Thinking about this, Subaru gulps loudly. If you look at Emilia and Beatrice, both of their behaviours had not changed. However it is not from distrust that they are glancing at Subaru in sheer bewilderment, rather it’s from concern in their heart towards “Subaru”. The fact that there was no deception in their gazes made Subaru feel much more calm at heart.

In all honesty, Subaru’s heart had been undulating under great turmoil. But, having made this guess at the current situation –

[Subaru: I am seeing the same events again. I must be experiencing precognitive dreams.]

Given his situation when he woke up, is it not reasonable to think this? If so, when he had lost consciousness, should he rather say that he had woke up? In that moment just before he woke up his memories had been incredibly hazy. Maybe even if he had tried to hold in these dreams, they would spill into him from in between his fingers. Or maybe these precognitive dreams are a special ability Subaru was given when summoned into this world –

[Subaru: It’s difficult to make use of – it’s a pretty selective ability…]

However, there’s no doubt that if he could master it, then it would be quite a potent ability. In the end, a precognitive dream would let him foresee the future. The longer it would show him the truth for, the greater chance of finding a clue to overcome the situation. Unfortunately, he does not think that he got much useful information out of the precognitive dream –

[Subaru: – you two, I need you to calm down just a little and hear what I have to say.]

Sitting up straight, Subaru now had an understanding of the ability he possessed. He turned towards them and poises himself to speak. Emilia and Beatrice both look at Subaru and nod, with serious expressions on their faces. Looking towards them, Subaru said with a slight hint of hesitation:

[Subaru: I don't know if you can believe this, but I seem to have lost my memories.]

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

– Subaru had awakened at the Taygeta Library and lost his memories.

It took as much time as it had in the precognitive dream for Emilia and Beatrice to digest what he had confessed.

[Emilia: Aieee!]

With a spirited cry, the girl slammed her palms onto her own cheeks with all her strength. Clapping down with both hands at once with a crisp sound ringing out, the girl's cheeks turned bright red.

It was a brave, almost manly way of accepting it – something he had also seen in his precognitive dream.

[Emilia: I'm fine. Being like that is no-good, is it? How could we keep making that troubled face when Subaru must be feeling even more troubled than we are… look, Beatrice too!]

Having justified her sudden reaction with a speech, Emilia shook Beatrice's shoulder. In front of Emilia's presence, Beatrice shrivelled back a bit,

[Emilia: I'm shocked too, and I also understand the sadness… but right now, we have to think about the one who's taking this the hardest. We have to do something for him, don't we?]

[Beatrice: Be- Betty is…]

[Beatrice: ……] [1]

Subaru fights back a pang in his chest as he watches Beatrice struggle to get her words out. Subaru knows exactly what Beatrice will say, and what sort of face she will make. But he was quite wrong in thinking that it would bring him some peace of mind.

Having to betray someone's feeling of hopes is tough, rather it's terrifying. No matter how many times he has to do it, regardless whether it's the same problem for the second time, it's all the same. And now, Subaru knows Beatrice much better than the first time he met her. That is why Subaru was tougher than he had been the first time.

[Beatrice: aaaauuggghhh, just, really! Subaru is just the most hopeless Contractor in the world!]

With that said, Beatrice broke through her embarrassment – the pattern of the butterfly wings that adorned her irises started to flutter in her eyes. While he relived that, Subaru felt a strong sense of self-hatred.

…Was this right. Was he satisfied with this? Yeah, Natsuki Subaru… What is trust in this tower in the desert?

[“……”]

To be kind to Emilia and Beatrice, but also to see their heartache and their gritted determination; to that Subaru grinds his teeth together.

Subaru had not confided to them that he was able to experience precognitive dreams. After waking up and interacting with them and using their names, it meant that not all of his memories had fallen out of him. In fact, besides his memory loss of course, Subaru’s report had also been about the allocation of his missing memories. He couldn’t afford to doubt the two people with him, and furthermore, Subaru himself didn’t want to engage in any unproductive conversation.

Above all else, he wanted to figure out how far his precognitive dreams would show the truth for. For this reason, he does not want to create a situation which would deviate from what his precognitive dream had shown him. Although some changes had occurred at the start, they were not anything too big.

However, this was not the only reason that he did not mention his precognitive dreams.

[Subaru: ……]

Neither Emilia, Beatrice, Ram, Julius, Echidna nor even anyone had explained to Subaru that he had this?Precognitive Dreams?ability. Shaula and Meili also hadn’t. It’s difficult to imagine that they intentionally hid it from Subaru. Even under the prior circumstances it’s difficult to believe that they all had the same intention; it made no sense.

Then it was inevitable that there was only one reason why they wouldn’t know of his?Precognitive Dreams?– that is, Natsuki Subaru had never revealed to them his ability.

[Subaru: … what were you thinking, Natsuki Subaru.]

Subaru calls his name out no longer as if he was referring to a different person… No, saying *no longer as if he was referring to a different person* is wrong. It is a different person.

To Subaru, “Natsuki Subaru” is an unknown person who doesn’t exist. He can’t guess what he is thinking and he can’t interact with him. There would be no chance of getting to understand him.

Why did “Subaru” not tell Emilia about his power?

Was it because he didn’t want to change the development of these precognitive dreams as much as possible? Even if it was due to that, surely once the situation had been overcome there would have been time to confide this? Was there a reason why he couldn’t say it?

A distrust of the old “Subaru” was steadily growing within him.

[Subaru: You are…]

… what were you thinking, “Natsuki Subaru”.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

– After that, the events took place as expected, roughly following what he had seen in his precognitive dreams.

[Emilia: So, I guess everyone is pretty shocked…… Subaru is in quite a situation right now. But, even in a situation like this…… no, precisely because the situation is like this, we should give him our support.]

Emilia explains to the others how Subaru has lost his memories. Although it wasn’t the greatest of explanations, it was now impossible to make a follow-up in case he drastically changed the events.

And then –

[Ram: Is this some kind of prank, Barusu?]

Ram had suspected that Subaru’s situation might have been a prank –

[Shaula: Say, Master… you’re still not tired of playing around like thissss? Just how many times do you have to forget me before you cut that outtt?]

Shaula had accepted that he had lost his memories as if she thought it was something that he constantly experienced –

[Meili: Really, Onii-san is such a headache-san.]

Looking quite disinterested, Meili smiles at what she thinks is a prank, enjoying the atmosphere of confusion –

[Echidna: Just, give him a little time. That’s fine, right?]

He carefully watched Julius as he became extremely upset at hearing that Subaru had lost his memories, and soon after Echidna suggested for them to take a brief interval to collect their thoughts. He accepted Ram’s invitation and left the room to fetch some water. Then when they were alone with just the two of them, Ram grabs Subaru by his collar and pushes him against the wall.

[Ram: ……Please, spit it… out]

He had parted with some of his noble attitude when replying to her. However, that’s not to say that he wasn’t shook to the core. After being asked about whether he had been lying by Ram, Subaru returned back to where everyone was with this conviction…

...The precognitive dreams are accurate. They are terribly accurate and foreshadow the events completely.

Subaru hadn't recognized all of the words and phrases used by the people here, but the impression that they had given was pretty much unchanged. If there was a problem –

[Echidna: Natsuki-kun is quite calm despite the situation.]

Echidna had said this where she confessed that Anastasia's consciousness had been taken over by her. [2]

[Subaru: ……]

Subaru feels his mouth dry up after he hears Echidna's words. To be honest, Echidna's observation was understandable. Subaru himself couldn't really do much about it.

Everyone was shocked and in a state of panic. Still, whilst seeing her trying to smooth over the absurd situation, he couldn't help but not feel much empathy from within his heart for them. It's like when you watch a movie for a second time – the emotions you experience are not as strong as the first time you watch it.

She and the others were behaving in a manner that showed an assortment of sympathy, guilt, aversion to this "Subaru", and various other negative emotions. It was no wonder that Subaru bore a dark expression on his face coupled with a taciturn attitude – even though they had thought that was him remaining calm. In any case –

[Subaru: I am happy that things have settled down. "There is no real calmness or composure" has always been typed into the kid's report card.]

[Echidna: Reeport caaard, I don't really understand that that means… is it related to the term 'parallel world'?]

[Subaru: Ah.]

Narrowing his eyes, Subaru nods his head at Echidna's question. The way he answered the question about the meaning of "Parallel World" did not change again. He explained how he was summoned to this different world and found himself in this place. And the same understanding came from Emilia, Echidna and the others who concluded that he originated from beyond?The Great Waterfall.?

Perhaps, even if he could not fully reproduce the events of his precognitive dreams, events that hold some sense of importance will still be realized with some slight changes to them. It's something typically found in Subaru's future prediction genre of games and manga.

Though the response to a sudden situation may change, what you decide to do doesn't disappear so easily. A person who has decided to ask someone out on a date goes and asks the person out in a completely different way than before, where there now are some notable obstacles in the way – that is the feeling he is getting from this. In other words, Echidna would have heard about his explanation of being from a different world, regardless of whether he had lost his memories.

[Subaru: Even though now I didn't explain it as much, was I still careless in mentioning the word 'Parallel World' … I don't know what to think anymore.]

Due to the nature of his precognitive dreams, it would be difficult to reveal that he possessed this ability compared to talking about the parallel world. And just like that, he had given up on it. There was no point in confiding his ability… almost as if he was scared of confessing it.

[Echidna: After all, it's odd that you sound the least confused amongst used. We are all growing uneasy here, we must do something about it.]

[Subaru: Even with confusion all around, you all tried to remain calm or at least something like that. I was pretty worried I would have to do something. I'm relieved.]

[Emilia: I feel like I can't remain calm at all…]

Both Echidna and Subaru shrug their shoulders at each other. Emilia's looked quite dispirited as she spoke those words, her mood was hitting rock bottom. After all, Subaru's attitude was growing. He had tried to mimic his precognitive dream as much as possible; however, how attempts at mimicking his attitude had been quite poor. It was very difficult to imitate the confused self he had seen in his dream. So, before he spouts out additional nonsense –

[Subaru: Anyways, I understand the situation we are in. I know that there's a lot of confusion, but let's overcome it together. Let's do something about it.]

Clapping his hands together, Subaru tries to progress the conversation ahead. Beatrice nods in response, and as if obeying the precognitive dream, she says:

[Beatrice: You will want to check the?Taygeta?library, I suppose.]

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

[Shaula: Ueeeh~]

With a loose-lipped smile, the glamorous, beautiful woman let out a shriek. If she would just straighten herself out and start to look more dignified her beauty would surely captivate the hearts of many men. Her face relaxes as she tries to snuggle into Subaru.

[Shaula: Master, Master. I'm haaappyyy~ I'm sure you will be haaappyyy!]

[Subaru: Hey, don't say that. Don't hug me. You're frighteningly soft!]

[Shaula: Ah! I just wanna hug you so hard that I smush you.]

Subaru continues to push her away by her forehead whilst Shaula tries to desperately cling onto his arms. In all honesty, for a beautiful woman who dressed so scantily, she was clinging onto Subaru with immense strength, despite him trying to push her off.

Subaru and the others had arrived now at the 3rd floor of the watchtower, where the?Taygeta? library was. As it had been in his dream, they would search the library in an attempt to find out how Subaru had lost his memories.

However Subaru knows that their search will be ineffective, and that they will bring back no results. It was going to be an irritating time for him now, since he was not allowed to participate in the search. To him, it looked like Shaula was acting way too over-familiar than his dream had shown –

[Shaula: After all, Master, you chose us over that chibi-ko, didn't youuuu?]

[Subaru: It's not like you chose it yourself! Due to what's happening, I couldn't help but be stuck with you!]

Shaula speaks this with a ditzy expression as they are about to approach?Taygeta.?Although the distance to the library was not long, Subaru had arranged it so that he wouldn't have to hold hands with Emilia and Beatrice.

His intention had been to avoid upsetting Beatrice and Emilia. Subaru was interacting with them in a manner which avoided causing any unnecessary strains thanks to his predictive dream. In a manner of speaking it's as if he now had a bird's eye view on the doings of everyone. Within his conscience, he felt sorry for having kept so much distance between the two girls who worried so much for him.

Therefore, he was now sitting next to the air-headed Shaula whilst waiting for the party to finish searching?Taygeta.?

[Shaula: Finally, Master recognized how charming and attractive I am! I had to wait 400 years for this! I'm so happy, I'm so happy! I will give you such a passionate kiiiisss!]

[Subaru: No thank you! That's scary! Really, stop it!]

Shaula was pressing her body down onto his; Subaru tried desperately to push her off, but she had unusual strength, and thus he found himself pinned against a wall. She slammed her hand on the wall next to him, the rigid wall! It was a moment of great tension. And, just before the virginity of Subaru's lips, which had never experienced the love of a woman, was forcefully taken away –

[Meili: Hey, hey, onii-san seems to dislike this. There's not much reciprocation from him.]

[Shaula: Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow!]

It had been Meili who had dragged Shaula off him by pulling her back by her ponytail. After Meili had let her hair go, Shaula twisted her neck, carefully cradling her long, black hair against her chest and fixed her ponytail.

[Shaula: What did you do to my hair!? What did you do to my precious hair, you horrible little giiirl!]

[Meili: I don't want my silver haired onee-san or Beatrice-chan to be angry. I was keeping watch to make

sure that my half-naked onee-san didn't do anything bad to my onii-san.]

[Shaula: Grrrrr! So annoying! Master, please do somethiiiing!]

[Subaru: Shaula, don't you dare come within two metres of me.]

[Shaula: Master's such an idiooooooot.]

Shaula turns her back from Subaru, and starts to break down into tears. Subaru scratches his cheeks in confusion as he looked on at her exposed back, then he turns around to face Meili who was holding her hands behind her back.

[Subaru: Ah, I was saved… now that's a strange thing to say to a killer.]

[Meili: Don't worry. This killer has gone out of business, now I do what onii-san, onee-san and her friends tell me. Onii-san and the others can make good use of me, like when I helped them from the demon beasts.]

[Subaru: ……]

She spoke with no malice or ulterior motive, that's why Subaru didn't react to her words. Meili did not seem to be especially affected by any particular pangs of conscience as she spoke. She had spoken of such a matter as if it had been nothing out of the ordinary.

[Meili: ……]

She said nothing in response to Subaru's silence. She just looked at him silently with an unfathomable expression on her face. Meili now turns to gaze indifferently at the direction which Emilia was searching the library. The girl was quite short, had a youthful face, her arms and legs were still tiny, and there was still quite a way to go before she reached womanhood. In the end, she was still a child. It was unbearable to him that she held such broken values about herself.

[Subaru: Maybe, you still have a lot which you can rely on, you can count on me!]

[Meili: …? Eh, are you saying that you want me to make good use of you?]

[Subaru: No, not use me. Rely on me. We're not tools that can be just used, think of it like a… friendship?]

[Meili: … Hmmph.]

For a second Meili had regarded Subaru's words in shock. Though it had only been for a fleeting moment, she had quickly averted her eyes afterwards. Subaru was relieved that she had not reacted in discomfort; rather it had seemed like a faint glimmer of comfort had flitted across her face. Even if within her heart she held broken values about herself, it didn't mean that Subaru couldn't sense the emotion that had passed through her.

The fact that they both had been drawn into these strange circumstances made Subaru feel a little bit better.

[Meili: … Onii-san really doesn't remember anything, right?]

[Subaru: Yup? Unfortunately. Was something on your mind?]

He had unexpectedly shaken something from Meili's memories. Subaru tried to ask her what she had meant by it. Hearing his question, Meili just put her fingers to her lips and gave a very strange smile: "Oh yeaah."

[Meili: Petra-chan would cry if she heard it.]

[Subaru: Ugh… I don't even know who that is.]

[Meili: Petra-chan is a girl that love's Onii-san. She was worried about you going all the way out here; I thought you should hear about her, that's all.]

[Subaru: *You*, what a careless thing you did telling me about the past version of me like that!]

Subaru looks on bitterly, thinking in distress about this young girl, Petra that he had not yet seen. How much would he end up learning about the footprints that the "Subaru" unknown to him had left?

[Meili: Really, I honestly think that my opinion of Onii-san of the past is that he was quite careless.]

Meili was stretching as she said this, ignoring the turmoil she had left in Subaru's heart. In his mind it had sounded like what she had said had been accompanied by a very strange emotion.

In any case, Emilia and the others would come back before he could quickly confirm it. If they had found no clues, it would only reinforce how accurate his predictive dream had been.

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Since the search of?Taygeta?ended with no success, they would now prepare to go up to the second floor.

Ultimately, from now on the scope of the precognitive dreams would stop around about here – Subaru had until now not doubted the accuracy in his future prediction ability at all.

The events had transitioned just as Subaru had experienced them before. If any issues were to occur at this point, he would not be able to respond by using his knowledge of the future that his precognitive dreams had shown.

[Subaru: I am able to predict the future, isn't it insane that I managed to confirm it?]

However, it was also strange. In the first place, Subaru didn't know how what conditions were needed to activate his precognitive dreams. If he fell asleep, would it activate, or did it need some sort of trigger – or

was it just completely random? It would be unlikely that there would be time to find a place to sleep due to the urgency of the current situation. However, he wants to depend on the power of his foresight – certainly, he would need to find out more details about this. He would need to investigate thoroughly what he could do with his foresight.

[Subaru: For now, Beatrice had been just as unreasonable as she had been in the dream when I asked her to leave me alone…]

Subaru had asked Beatrice to leave him alone as he tried out via trial and error the transformation poses. It had seemed that Beatrice had been trying to remain more attached to him than he had seen in his dreams. That was probably as a consequence of being around her less than he had been in his dreams, such as on the way to?Taygeta.?In any case he had a reason for being alone.

[Subaru: I have to find out why I woke up and what happened to me just before I woke up.]

It may be that he just happened to wake up normally. However, it could also be that there was something within his dream that had caused him to wake up. He thinks that the latter thought was probably the most likely.

[Subaru: I'm a little nervous now… what if I start to have precognitive dreams-ception; it's spooky, it's like as if I was dreaming of being a butterfly.][3]

Dreaming of being a butterfly is the situation where you dream of physically being a butterfly, but when you awake you aren't really sure whether you are a butterfly dreaming of being a person, or a person having dreamt of being a butterfly. It felt like it would become a vicious, never-ending loop, like a self-fulfilling prophecy that would drive him to a corner of madness.

[Subaru: … in order to avoid this, I need to go past where my dream ended. If I can do that, then I should be able to tell Emilia and the others about my precognitive dreams.]

The "Subaru" before losing his memories had unfortunately avoided confiding his ability to Emilia and the others. However, Subaru now was anxious to change this situation and confide to everyone what he could do. He doesn't know why he had done such a careless thing, he doesn't want to imitate his past self and delay it now.

[Subaru … I have decided.]

Looking back to what his past self had done, Subaru had finally decided that he would tell them about his precognitive dreams. Nonetheless, what was coming up ahead was an unknown to him. After the point at which Beatrice had left, his memories including those of having performed the transformation poses were quite fuzzy. Therefore, showing proof that he could experience precognitive dreams would be quite difficult to do. In addition he didn't know how to activate them. He would need them to cooperate with him when he tries to explain his ability.

If he could master his dreams, it would become an extremely powerful weapon at his disposal. Or perhaps it was a necessary weapon that would allow them to conquer the Pleiades Watchtower. With these

thoughts in mind –

[?: – As for Natsuki-kun, is it not dangerous for him to accompany us in the crazed state he's in right now?]

[*In the distance*: ……]

Having arrived in front of the hall, in an attempt to join everyone, Subaru held his breath at hearing those words.

The voice he had heard was Echidna's. For some reason in in his mind, Subaru had hesitated to announce his presence, and had decided to hide behind the wall. The conversation in the hall continued.

[Emilia: Echidna, what do you mean by crazed state?]

[Echidna: There's nothing else to say right? Considering the state he's in right now, it's certain he has lost his memories. However what he said afterwards was truly crazed. The way he explained the term "Parallel World" is proof.]

[Emilia: Parallel… world…]

[Julius: You don't truly believe he came from beyond the Great Waterfall?]

Julius and Emilia seemed shocked at hearing Echidna's words. Subaru's heart lurched, what did Echidna's remarks mean now? He wanted to jump out from his hiding spot and ask her, but for now he would suppress that emotion. Even if Subaru doesn't ask, surely someone else would –

[Ram: It was certainly an absurd explanation.]

[Emilia: Ram…, do you doubt what Subaru said?]

Emilia reacts in surprise at Ram's cold, indifferent tone. In response to her question, Ram says: "Emilia-sama"

[Ram: Ram does not doubt that Barusu's argument came from within his head. Indeed, Barusu's knowledge, behaviour and strange customs are things which are unknown to us. It is clear that he may indeed come from a place which none of us here know about.]

[Emilia: Well, in that case–]

[Ram: But, where he came from, it's limited to this world. I am sure being from beyond the Great Waterfall could be tailored to mean Barusu's term: "Parallel World", but I can't believe the existence of such a place… there is no reason to believe him at all.][4]

[Emilia: Ram…]

Emilia’s voice faintly trailed away as she heard Ram’s bitter explanation. She had tried to reply but her voice had choked.

[Emilia: I believe in Subaru, Beatrice too, so, please, please, try to believe what Subaru said.]

[Julius: … Emilia-sama, Echidna is not suggesting that Subaru is trying to deceive us on purpose. She is just saying that he’s in a terrible state of confusion.]

[Beatrice: In that statement, you still agree with that spirit, I suppose!?]

Julius tries to rationally explain their thoughts to Emilia. However, Beatrice was having none of it, as she was intent on remaining on Subaru’s side in this matter. Her temper had flared considerably. At that moment, an unnerving silence had fallen within the room; Subaru’s forehead had started to sweat.

[Shaula: Heeeey, it’s best if you all quit fighting and settle dooown.]

[Meili: I don't think it's quite a discussion on that scale yet... but, what she said…]

Hearing the voices of Shaula and Meili it seemed now that they had moved from their roles as bystanders. Laughing rather superciliously for a short while, Meili continued her speech with: “Going crazy,”

[Meili: Why don’t you ask Onii-san directly? *Onii-san, are you going crazy?*]

[Subaru: ……tch]

Subaru gritted his teeth to those venomous words. He had remained surprisingly calm when he had stood against the wall; he carefully left the room without making any footsteps.

[“.....”]

After putting some distance between them, his prudent footsteps quickened in pace, which then turned into a run. Then, arriving at a passageway where no one was present, he pressed his forehead against the wall.

[Subaru Damn it…]

Not knowing what he should say to whom, Subaru struck the wall, letting out the feelings that were smouldering inside him. The discussion that had taken place in Subaru's absence was an unexpected shock to him. He wasn’t conceited enough to think that he had gained their full confidence. Rather, what he’d heard them say didn’t fit into that type of thought at all.

Subaru had thought that trust was such a basic principle. Emilia and Beatrice had been too kind and thoughtful towards Subaru. Whilst insisting to himself that it had felt far too uncomfortable, he had tricked himself into believing that it was true. There was no doubt that being from a different place would have helped them conquer from the tower.

With the handicap of losing his memories and his calm and collected thoughts, he had lost all his usefulness. Looking at it objectively, he realized just how shameless he was. What was trust in this tower in the desert? He himself couldn't understand it much. He wondered if he could ever handle what "Natsuki Subaru" had gained.

[Subaru: In this state, it's no use telling them about my precognitive dreams.]

The fact that they believed in his memory loss was proof of these people's virtue. At the same time however, they were sensible people who did not believe in a "Different World". Therefore, he didn't even have to think about what response an explanation of his precognitive dreams would provoke.

[Subaru: From the start, I mistook them…]

Messed up, he had messed up.

In the meanwhile, Subaru would show why he was dependable. He would overturn their evaluations of him. What was sought now, what was needed now was "*Natsuki Subaru*". Not Natsuki Subaru.

Was it alright if he feigned ignorance and went back down to them? Also, in a state which he didn't know what kind of exchange had taken place, would it be okay if he shamelessly joined the capture of the second floor? Or would he, Emilia and Beatrice be pushed aside and left behind? At the very least, he wished that the conversation had not troubled Shaula or Meili.

[Subaru: ...Fuck, I'm such an idiot.]

Whilst saying those words out loud, Subaru abruptly came out of the passageway he was walking through. He had come across the great spiral staircase which connected the fourth floor to the floors below – a gaping hole stretched out from the middle of the watchtower to its lower half. It was truly colossal.

[Subaru: Spiral, staircase…]

Suddenly, laying his eyes on that scene, Subaru started to ponder. Including his dreams, this is his second time he had come here. Whether it was a dream or reality, Emilia and everyone else had guided the amnesiac Subaru around the tower. So, recognizing this place was not a mistake, but?

[Subaru: No, apart than that, I sense something strange…]

Goosebumps coursed down his body, he felt the hairs on his back stand on end. The blood in his whole body felt cold, and the ringing in his ears was awfully loud. His heartbeat had accelerated, his breathing became rough and his knees began trembling for whatever reason. His teeth had begun making an uncontrollable chattering noise. Subaru became aware of these abnormalities.

However, they were not caused due to any changes in temperature or any external causes. This abnormality, this unusual phenomenon, had been caused by Subaru's own body. To say more about it, the influence on his body was as if it was Subaru's spirit or something from a deeper place –

[Subaru: – ah.]

With a faint tap, Subaru felt a slight impact just as he was stepping forward.

?No, it couldn’t be said that he stepped forward.

To step forward is a term which presumes there is some solid ground which can be stepped on.

Stepping ahead, his leg had come out.

And his foot had scratched the air.

And so he,

[Subaru: A

A

A

A

A

A

A

A

A

A

-!?]

Falling, falling— he was plummeting.

His whole body was overwhelmed by a feeling of weightlessness; he was falling down mid-air, losing sight of what was up or down. A tremendous gust of wind was hitting his eardrums. Subaru understood what was happening. He was falling.

No, there had been a light impact back then. But, he hadn’t realized he had fallen.

[Subaru:“AAAA

Screaming his lungs out, Subaru desperately stretched out his hands— searching for somewhere, anywhere to hold on to. There was nothing. There was nowhere he could hold on to. The world around him was spinning around into the unknown.

A desperate feeling of wanting to vomit overpowers him as all the contents of his body are pulled from bottom to top. Chunks of yellow vomit overflows from his mouth, spilling out right into the air around him.

This sensation… he remembered it. In the midst of his pain and vomiting, the memories that had once been ambiguous had suddenly sharpened.

Yes, yes, that was it. Before he had woken up, the end of his precognitive dream, Subaru was experiencing the same thing.

He had fallen, lamented his futile situation, and then he had lost consciousness. And after that, he had woken up from his precognitive dream and found himself in the Green Room –

Suddenly, Subaru experiences a great impact on the right side of his body, shattering his bones into pieces.

[*CRACK*]

The sound of something breaking filled the air, his right side felt like it had been hit by lightning – Subaru's cries were silenced. And, right after, a severe pain coursed through his body.

[Subaru: GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!]

His right arm was sticking out at an odd angle, completely broken from the elbow with the bone protruding out from his skin. He was covered in blood, his jacket was torn, and he could see his own pinkish muscles and white bone from underneath his torn skin.

He crashed. Subaru's body crashed against the spiral staircase whilst he fell down towards the bottom. As it is now, his uncontrolled spiralling descent would end up destroying Subaru's body, and still he didn't stop.

No, instead he –

[*BANG*, *BOOM*, *ACK*]

His body that had tumbled downwards and had struck one of the lower steps of the spiral staircase, spraying blood everywhere. It was bad luck that his head hit the next step. His forehead cracked. He felt as if things were spilling out from the insides of his skull.

Instantly, he lost consciousness – where it seemed like it had all ended, his body collides with another step, and the pain from his broken right arm wakes him up as his body continues to lose its shape.

[Subaru: AHHHHHHHHHH!!! GYAAAAAA!!]

It hurts, it hurts, it hurts, it hurts, it hurts, it hurts, it hurts, it hurts, it hurts, it hurts, it hurts.

Pain, anguish, vomiting, burning, Natuski Subaru was being shattered into small pieces.

Arms, feet, face, every part of him was thrown and scraped against the stone staircase, broken, crushed, he no longer resembled a person. It was no longer a person, it was no longer Natuski Subaru.

– Memories are what shape people.

[*THUD*]

Whilst a losing a vast amount of blood, Subaru suddenly heard this voice in his head.

Who had said such a silly thing? But, it was a good thing to say. Memories are what shape people.

It's a good saying.

If so, what the hell does that make someone who's lost his memories, and is no longer who he once was?

[Subaru: ……]

Blood was spewing out of his mouth; quite literally, a scream that spews blood, his throat was completely crushed. Natsuki Subaru was falling apart, crumbling away until he reached the distant, distant ground.

There is no waking up from this dream. Natsuki Subaru had failed.

There would be no more second chances to try again. The end draws near.

Slowly, darkness, darkness… the world around him is being dyed black.

– *Who are you.*

And finally, after all of his anguish and hot blood, Natuski Subaru's crumbled out of existence.

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- [1] If this sounds familiar it's because it's deja-vu from Chapter 34, I used Chicken's translations here because they are more or less repeating the conversation/reaction since Subaru had already experienced it before.
- [2] I think the Japanese here means that she did confess to the others whilst Subaru had gone off.
- [3] Seems to be referencing this Chinese famous saying: https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Zhuangzi
- [4] Translator note: Though Subaru never was present here in this conversation in the prior loop, I think because he explained "isekai" briefly that Echidna now doesn't believe him, but, in the prior loop I believe everyone continued to believe he was isekai'd even when he was out of

earshot. That is just my assumption though. Remember that “Parallel World” here in the Japanese is “isekai” which they don’t know what it meant.

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Arc 6 – Chapter 39, “Ruins”

by admin - Wednesday, August 22, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/08/22/arc-6-chapter-39-ruins/

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Translated by :

- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism
- Jaerek, /u/Jaerek

Proofread by:

- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd
- Ringo, /u/Ringo_17

Fan Art Created by :

- HaruSabin

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Repeatedly, over and over, a scorching heat fills his very being.

His skull, his limbs, his torso, his organs, his flesh and blood. Every single thing in his body is crushed, smashed, twisted and broken. His mind is set alight by the anguish, it’s as if every single one of his nerve-endings were being plucked right now, his soul is on fire, burning away. The screams he let out were

racked with fever and delirium.

Pain, pain, pain, pain, pain, pain pain pain pain pain pain pain painpainpainpainpainpainpainpain. He is in pain.

There was only pain. There's just pain. The world around him was filled with pain. Even just thinking this causes more pain to cloud over him.

His thoughts, his very existence are painted with pain. Anxiety, confusion, nervousness, sorrow, anger, despair, all of these emotions are meaningless in front of pain.

They are meaningless, yes, they are meaningless.

Thoughts, actions, pondering, opinions, hopes, memories – they are all equally meaningless. Those very things are worthless, broken, crushed and lost in the end.

Only the endless pain inscribed within his soul makes him aware of his existence. Then suddenly, the never ending pain… starts to fade…

[Subaru: AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!]

He wakes up screaming. It wasn't too long ago that his screams had been drowned by the blood in his crushed throat.

[Subaru: AAAAAAAAAAAH!! AHHHHHHHHH!!]

Whilst shouting, he tries to protect his body from being crushed using his arms and legs. His arms should be broken, completely unusable – he moves his legs. Although his legs move, he loses his balance as his body is still overwhelmed by the sensation of weightlessness and he falls and hits the floor.

[Subaru: ……gh]

He tries to speak, yet nothing resembling speech came out. He rolls onto the floor. The feeling of the floor was strange; he felt a sensation which was like that one of a rope against his body. He opens his throat, which was screaming for oxygen, and immediately feels a pungent pain strike it, resulting in a coughing fit. Unable to bear it, he vomits. His stomach had been mostly empty. Foul smelling watery chunks of vomit are spewed out of his acrid mouth onto the floor.

[Subaru: Blurgh, Bgh! Gh, ghrgh! Gbruuuugh!]

Coughing violently, and spitting out a bit of bile, tears and snot cake his crumpled face. Cowering and covering his face, he places his forehead against the floor and started to rock backwards and forwards. Repeating this motion, he finally notices it.

… That overwhelming pain which he had suffered as his body had been crushed had vanished.

[Subaru: … ah?]

He had been surprised by how suddenly his pain had vanished, that he hadn't until now realised that someone was gently patting his back.

[???: Is everything better now?]

Reflected in his tear-encrusted eyes he could see the person who had been patting his back. Even with his blurry vision, the image of the girl was quite vivid; she had beautiful silver hair and amethyst eyes – on her face was an expression of worry whilst she patted his back. She started to talk:

[???: Suba…]

[Subaru: AHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!]

He twisted his body and shook off the white hand that had been touching his back. As he did so, a trace of surprise flitted across the girl's eyes who had until then been patting him. But the one here whose soul had been more seriously damaged was him.

His back. She had been touching his back.

Even now, even before, someone had touched his back, and after that... agony…

[Subaru: Ah-]

He jumped back, in an attempt to escape her – he felt the hair on his back standing on end. However, his legs crumpled beneath him and he fell flat on his backside. As he fell, his blow was softened by a rough, black presence underneath him.

[Subaru: ……]

Looking down, he sees the eyes of the reptilian creature staring back at him and he reacts in fright. Looking at its sharp, long fangs that lined up its mouth, he suddenly realizes that they could easily be used as a weapon to crush him.

[Subaru: AHHHHHHHHH!!]

Again, he screams. He tries to escape forward this time. In front of his eyes now, he could see someone's leg; he doesn't dare to look up and instead rolls away sideways from her small shadow.

[???: Beatrice!]

With a high-pitched shrill, her chiming voice frantically cries out something, but the meaning does not reach him as he covers his ears up. Immediately, he headed towards the gap which lay in between the foliage of the room. With his legs shaking, he leapt out of the room. Stepping into the stone passageway and without stopping his body crashes into the stone wall. Despite this, he continues to run. His sight was

dyed red, in his mind he heard an echo of his bones breaking.

[Subaru: Aaaah–]

His bumped right arm moves as normal. He pounds at the wall to check whether it really does move as normal. He feels pain again. He screams again. Steadying himself against the wall, he broke out into a tottering run.

[Subaru: Ha… hff… *puff*… *pant*]

He was out of breath, drooling from his mouth, with sweat dripping from his forehead – he continued running down the passageway as fast as he could. Behind, he felt as if someone was following him, and many times he resisted the urge to look behind him. If he had looked back, and decided that someone was following him, it would have been too much to bear the thought that his heart was about to burst.

He feels as if his heart is about to rupture, as if the blood within his body was rotting, and as if his body was about to shatter from its feet, like a glass sculpture. Whether it's a premonition or the truth, there is one thing that is clear – the absolute, unwavering fact that if this went on, he would die.

People are born to be ruined. Every second you grow older, every second you head towards eventual death, every second you fall towards the end. Though, he isn't applying this metaphorical meaning of "Death" to himself right now. "Death" was approaching him with a steady gait. Indiscriminately, he would be cornered against a wall and laughed at as he struggled to escape from here.

He ran, he ran away. He ran away anyway. "Death" was following him. He would be killed. He would be killed. In this way, he would be killed. Although he had already been killed, he was going to be killed again. Or, given such sheer agony, could it be possible to not die from it? Was that a mystery of life? That's rather sickening. The mysterious and beautiful way of saying it was disproportionate. It was a sickening and ugly obsession. [1]

Rather, shouldn't he be dead…?

[*TCH*]

The beating of his heart felt like an explosion that shook his eardrums; his sight was flickering on and off. Even how he breathed resembled how a baby would take its first breaths. It was completely absurd how he looked like when escaping from his fear of death. Yet, as comical as it is, there is no laughter. Everything to him was something that would cause him fear.

[*All around him*: ……]

He was losing track of where he was running through, all of the stone passageways he had been going through looked the same to him. If there was one thing he understood, it was that he should not go back from where he came from. Though, if he continued to escape in this directionless fashion he would gradually lose his way. If he lost his way, someone would catch him. If someone were to catch him, he would lose his life. Why, why his life? Such a question now was useless.

He had no time to wonder whether to go towards the left or towards the right. Whilst escaping from "Death" which may catch up even at this very moment, he places his right hand on the wall as he frantically pants for air, completely out of breath.

It felt like he was drowning. It's as if he was struggling to break above the water's surface even though here on the ground there is no water anywhere.

Drowning, drowning, struggling as he drowns, heading towards the water's surface, kicking and struggling, kicking and struggling, kicking and struggling, floundering, floundering, floundering, sooner or later –

[???: *YOU*, the hell you doin' here so early in the morning, OY!]

[Subaru: ……]

He felt his feet stop as he sensed a monstrously huge presence right in front of his eyes… No, his feet weren't the only thing that had stopped.

His breathing had stopped, his noisy heartbeat had stopped, and his knees which had been trembling with fear and fatigue had stopped. It felt like all of his vital signs had stopped. He felt as if his whole body had been grasped by the scruff of his neck.

— Before his eyes there stood a giant-like being, as if it was an illusion. But after a few seconds, he slowly began to understand, that even though he was tall there was no chance that the person upon the stage had the constitution that would allow him to jump over someone. At the same time, it was also a fact that this living, human being had such a ghastly, fierce expression on his face.

[???: Yer alone? Yer just a lone small fry that's not even worth talking to. Small fry! Yer not even a person, but a critter? A critter that's not even worth considering. Go fetch those people ya were with yesterday, and that sexy girl. Are you listening, hey! You, OY, YOU.] [2]

The figure that was standing still in front of him was rambling on. He showed the signs of being an extremely violent person, and his manner of speaking felt really vulgar, as if each word was being beaten into him.

His breathing which had stopped before, as well as his silenced heartbeat and his trembling knees suddenly started up again.

— He had entered inside of the ferocious beast's cage, the very place where he mustn't tread.

He desperately wanted to run away. He had ran along the stone corridors and tried to keep away from any places he had found familiar. He had followed a stairway which he had found within a strange room which had led him upstairs. Maybe he had been told about the staircase yesterday, or was it something like yesterday, maybe some few hours ago? It was all but lost to oblivion.

He went up the long, long, long, long, incredibly long stairway, short of breath, up he went, and then…

Then, when he reached the end he had found himself being glared at by a most terrible beast.

[???: Are ya even listening to me?]

[Subaru: ……hh–]

Suddenly, his breath was knocked out of him and just before his eyes he noticed he was looking right at the other person's face. He had long, red hair, with a black eye patch covering his left eye. He wore a kimono that exposed one of his shoulders and part of his chest. White linen cloths were wrapped around his exposed chest. Just underneath his nose, this man was jabbing at him a thin, wooden stick. Though the tip of it wasn't at all sharp, he still thinks what is thrusted before him was "Death" too. [3]

[Subaru: ……hk]

[???: Hey, don't ya fucking ignore me.]

[Subaru: Wha, ah, eh?]

Without hesitating, he had obeyed his instincts and had tried to escape him. But the moment he had tried to run back out of the room, he had crashed straight into the man's chest. The man had then pushed him down using his wooden stick. The back of his head bumped against the floor, bright flashes flew around his vision. Tears of pain started to flow out of his eyes. The pain of bumping against the floor, the pain of his head banging against the floor… it reminded him of the crushing pain he had felt when he had crashed down the stairs.

[Subaru: aa, aaa, aaaaaaaaah...]

[???: OYOY, c'mon are ya crying? Why'd ya start crying? Did you fight with yer boyfriend downstairs? Are ya crying because I defeated you?]

[Subaru: Gh...hh...uuuuu!]

[???: Good grief, I can't stand this bastard, OY!]

Whilst lying flat on his back, tears had started to pour out of his eyes as he slowly relived the horror he had experienced. Looking at this spectacle, the long haired man roughly scratched his head. He crouched down beside his head, and,

[???: C'mon, tell me what happened. I want you to listen to me, to what I ask you.]

[Subaru: … uh, ah?]

[???: You ran all the way to this place. Ya really fucked yourself over.]

He spoke those words with a sigh. The meaning of them was incomprehensible to him, and he simply reacts by blinking rapidly. Just then, for a moment, he'd thought that this being of unparalleled atrocity

had shown a trace of emotion. In his vision blurred by tears, the face of the man looking down in his direction gradually became clearer?

[???: No matter what ya say, yer a fool!]

[Subaru: Gh- gha- aaaaAAAAAA!?]

— With a cruel appearance, reminiscent of a bloodthirsty shark, the man had shoved the wooden stick right into his chest. He had slid in between his ribs the pointed end of the stick. He poked around and tickled the delicate internal organs behind his bones as if he was making sport of it. Sheer agony pierced his entire body, making him feel like wanting to vomit up blood.

[???: What!? Ya were running away! Even worse, what were ya tryna do, fucking running away from me. Do you want to fucking die?]

[Subaru: Gh… Gah… Aaagh… Gghhhgya]

[???: Isn't this the sort of relationship where we get along by talking to each other? If it ends up culminating into this, I absolutely won't discriminate against people who treat me like that in this place. I honestly feel like killing you. I'm not messing about here. So…,] [4]

With evident irritation and hostility, the degree of his anger increases with every word he says. The hands of the man that was fiddling with his organs had a certain delicateness to them, and boasted exceptional precision. He had been taught the importance and value of his organs with sharp, unbearable pain.

Even if the man had been someone who was on edge and had the tendency to let his emotions get the best of him, or if his arms had been something other than precise and gentle, his guts would've exploded a long time ago.

It was a terrible skill that he had. He had been blessed with the violence and the power to oppress this overwhelming talent. With that skill combined, he had performed this act of barbarity.

[???: Beat it small fry.]

[Subaru: GH–]

The poking sensation in his guts faded away, and was quickly followed by the man's foot violently kicking his side. Rather than having kicked him with the side of his foot, he had punted him like as if he was a football. His body spins and tumbles around mid-air, and emerges out of the large room he had been in. However, what was welcoming him as he was flying out of the room was…

[Subaru: NO WAAAAAaaaay……]

He was tumbling down the stairs. Having immediately realized what was happening, he instinctively dug his nails into the floor. With a terrible screeching noise, the nails of his right hand, belonging to his middle and ring fingers were torn off their root. The nerves behind them became exposed and red blood

wet the floor, but somehow he managed to stop himself from falling down.

[Subaru: GH, GHHHHH…..!]

Immediately following the brief moment of relief, as he somehow escaped the fall, he was assaulted by a sensation of scorching heat at the base of his nails. If he looked at the hand with the sharp pain, he'd see his fingernails torn off like the open lid of a box; the nail on his little finger was also coming loose as well. Seeing this pain spurs his brain into overdrive.

[Subaru: It hurts… it hurts, it hurts, it hurts…]

Grasping his left hand with his right one, whose nails had been torn off, he applied pressure to ease the pain, even if a little. Coming in drops, the blood flowing from his wounds flow down his wrists, and leave behind a trail of blood on the stairs. He picks himself up from the floor.

There is no courage in him to look back behind him anymore. There was no sign that anyone else was aware that this ferocious beast, existed in this place. If he were to take a glance, now for sure there was no mistaking that he hadn't fell down the stairs this time. He had stopped himself from experiencing the worst situation, but had now settled into the second worst case. So, what was he going do to do now?

[Subaru: Wh…y?]

He wonders how he had found himself in this place. He thinks back to how he had walked here, how he had forgotten to escape, how the sound of his heartbeat was swallowed by fear and paralysis. It was a complete mystery how he had survived.

Though he should have been smashed up, he was here. Though he should have been engulfed by scorching heat and vanished, he was still here.

It would have been nice if everything had been a dream or an illusion or the likes of that.

[Subaru: Precognitive… dreams…]

He had assumed that was what he had been experiencing. The spectacle he had seen, the people that he had talked to, the conversations that had proceeded exactly as he remembered them, the events that should have occurred… because they had seen them with his very own eyes. He is trying to think of a theory to why this had happened. He had originally thought up the precognitive dreams theory up without as much of a second thought.

He hadn't known that the way he would be rewarded for such impudence and shallow thinking would have been experiencing such intense pain.

[Subaru: ……]

Noticing that he had crouched down on the spot, he can see drops of blood dripping down from him and soaking the stone staircase beneath him with a hue of red.

A feeling of wasted effort, a feeling of loss, a feeling of dismay… generally speaking, a lot of negative thoughts were spinning around his head. Even if he investigated the conclusions which were spinning around in his head, he would find that they would all result in the same thought – He doesn't know why he had experienced such things.

[Subaru: ……]

Just a few hours ago, he was comfortably living his boring daily life. There was no danger there, at the worst, he was worrying about his future. There was no one around threatening him, there were no real swords used to fight each other.

— He had just been in a place where he at most he only needed to face his mother and father's gaze.

He wonders what had gone wrong. He had continued to be an inconvenience to his mother and father. He had continued to disappoint them. He hadn't been a good son. And thus, he had tasted the pain of death. Nevertheless he had been driven to a situation now in which he hadn't died. The nails which had been peeled off were hurting him, he had been tortured by a strange man, he had been left all alone on this stairway… was he crying?

In retrospect, if he had thought about it…

[Subaru: … I should have at least said "See you later."]

It had been a life full of regret. Everything had gone wrong, resulting in only failure. If he thought back on it, the things he wanted to redo had once seemed impossible to have been done with his own hands and feet. For the first time it had occurred to him that…

—When I left home, I heard mom's voice saying "Take care" and I didn't reply to it. Why?

—I didn't wash the cups left in the kitchen sink.

[Subaru: Gh, ff…]

I didn't wash the cups. I didn't care to wash the brown stains that were stuck to them after drinking that hot cocoa. If I'd responded to mom's voice, if I'd started a conversation with her, I might've been told to wash those cups.

I ignored my mom's words because I didn't want to wash the cups. I didn't say anything. I left the house without saying anything and went to the convenience store and spent money that I did not earn. Then I noticed that I had ended up here.

I didn't say anything to mom or dad, I didn't wash the cups, and then I ended up here.

Without washing the cups, without even saying a word to my kind-hearted mother, I may die in this place. I will die, having always caused trouble, without giving anything back, without even washing some cups.

Die, I'll die. I will die. I will most definitely die. If I fall from that height, there'll be no saving me. I will definitely die.

[Subaru: ...I'll, die.]

I'll die. Everything that lives eventually dies, and I am going to die here. Alone in this place. Without my mother or father, surrounded by complete strangers, I'll end up becoming a filthy, bloody lump and die.

[Subaru: I'll die. I'll die. I'll… die. Die, die, die…]

He muttered this. As he muttered so, with wonder, he saw something appearing in the distance. It was just a temporary peace of mind. He was distracted. When you say something, nothing will dramatically change.

"Death" will not change. His fate had caught up with him here, he would stand firm and face it. Just now, it appeared to be taking the shape of a person. A dark shadow rose up, laughing at him as if it were mocking him. That face, which was stuck to the dark shadow was a face which seemed familiar. Whose face was it that he recognised in this place? Thinking this, he notices...

"Death" was right up against his face, laughing as it pointed and shook its finger at him.

[Subaru: Don't laugh.]

He glared at the shadow, and said this with a dark hatred. The shadow continued to smile. It hadn't stopped pointing its finger at him.

[Subaru: Don't laugh. Don't laugh at me! Don't laugh at me, hey…!]

Standing up and grinding his teeth he approaches the shadow that was standing against the wall. The shadow still continued to smile. It still hadn't stopped pointing its finger at him.

[Subaru: Quit laughing. I will die. But not to you. You will not kill me.]

The facial expression of the embodiment of "Death" changed for the first time. He had done his own thing and hadn't acted compliantly to it and now it seemed to have gotten angry. It seemed like this was the shadow's weak point, it is here that he will launch an incessant onslaught against it.

[Subaru: I will not be killed by you. I will die. It's certain that I will die! I will die! I'm dead! I'm already dead! I died and came back here, but I–] [5]

—won't be killed by you.

In that moment he had tried to clearly speak those words out loud.

[Subaru: ……]

His lips had stopped moving to his will. The next thing he noticed was that his eyes which had been glaring at the shadow seemed frozen, and the sensation of being completely separated from his body. *Why,* even his ability to question it had been sealed, he had simply just succumbed to this sudden transformation in his body.

He can't move. His body… No, it isn't his body that had stopped moving. It was the world around him. The black shadow that had stood in front of him had also stopped moving, its distorted expression of anger remained frozen on its face.

In this world where he couldn't move, there was only one thing that moved. And that was –

[???: – I love you.]

– It perhaps looked like a woman shrouded by black darkness.

Darkness, it was a woman with slender limbs whose whole body was entirely dyed in black. He doesn't know whether this woman's figure was made of darkness itself or whether it was a woman that was dressed in black. He wasn't certain which one it was – it didn't seem to make any sense to choose one. In any case, it was a woman shrouded in black darkness. It was as if she was wearing a black wedding dress, with a black veil that made it impossible to see both into it and out from it. This black veil completely concealed her face.

[???: – I love you.]

However, the words which emerged from the lips of the woman who was shrouded in darkness contained an unimaginably strong emotion. If you were to concentrate every single one of your emotions into one single phrase, you would have inevitably spoken words of such effect exactly as she had done.

In those words there was quality, there was quantity, there was the sensation of time passed, there was weight, there was worth, and that was just the general concept. He doesn't know approximately how many people have uttered "I love you" in the world – but if you were to take all of those "I love you's" and put them together then it would surely be akin to this woman's "I love you".

And slowly, the woman who had been gently whispering her words of love moved her black arm towards his chest. Slender fingers pass through his chest, his skin, his flesh, right through his bones and caress his beating heart.

[Subaru: ……]

Several minutes, dozens of minutes, he doesn't know how much time had passed. His heart had been made aware of her presence ever since she had awakened it – but, in that moment he hadn't ever thought that he found her presence annoying. Because –

[???: – I love you.]

She had caressed his heart with the same passion that was found in her whispers. But suddenly, a great

shock passed through him, his body, fearing pain, was completely succumbed by it. His body being crushed by his fall, his soul burning and being scorched out of existence, even the pain of his guilty heart when he had thought back to his mother – all of those pains seemed insignificant compared to this pain.

He wants her to let him scream. If he could shout himself hoarse, he could alleviate the pain a little. Rather than be faced only with pain, he was able to escape some of the pain by thinking of things other than the pain he was in. Now he can't do that. He can only face his pain.

[???: – I love you.]

Her love will not let go of his heart. It's like as if she had an everlasting desire to not allow him to turn his attention to things other than herself.

— It was as if she was envious of everything around him. [Subaru: – Hhhhk]

He had been suddenly set free.

[Subaru: ……]

Gasping, he collapses on the spot. With tears overflowing from his eyes, he couldn't keep hold of his continence. He feels a warm, wet feeling around his crotch, and urine starts to drip down the stairway. The dark shadow that had stopped, continued to point at the shameful sight in front of it, and was laughing loudly.

As he watched the figure that was laughing he realizes that he had been deceived. Since he had displayed behaviour which had indicated weakness, he had been deceived into stepping on the tiger's tail that shouldn't be stepped on.

[Subaru: I…]

He couldn't continue his words. He was holding his head, completely at his wits end. Blood was still flowing from his wounds where his fingernails had been ripped off. Even his tears and the urine that was dripping from him seemed like punishment for his weakness and stupidity.

— Just kill me.

He voices this out inside his head. As for when he had been killed, was he really "killed"?

He hears the sounds of footsteps going up the stairs, and the sounds of anxious voices running up to where he was. He continues to cry like a foolish child, smeared in his own filth and disappointment.

The ruins of Natsuki Subaru kept on crying. [6]

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

- [1] Very tough to translate, in his delirium he probably thinks Emilia is "Death" incarnate

following him and he's terrified if she catches up she will kill him. Then he starts to spout "philosophy" about dying, I probably botched parts of this up

- [2] This is the first time I see a Reid dialogue translated, he is quite vulgar (or at least he thinks himself above everyone, constantly referring to people via the vulgar *)* He frequently says this at the end of his sentences, which for now I haven't adapted verbatim because it sounded a little weird in English. In my head he almost sounds a bit like a Yakuza villain or even like Kenny Ackermann with the way he keeps saying OY. If anyone has a better stylistic suggestion let me know.
- [3] Tappei doesn't use the kanji for chopsticks like he did in Ch. 29, hence why I am using the literal translation. I don't think Subaru realised he was holding a chopstick.
- [4] Probably have a fair amount of mistakes in the Reid dialogues, if anyone wants to help improve them, let me know. Had to unfortunately skip a tiny bit which I had no clue on.
- [5] Wow! So, the author makes it very unclear who this shadow who Subaru views as "Death" is, I think intentionally. It could be Satella, but it could also be Emilia who he referred to as "Death" earlier. It could even be a hallucination or something else altogether. Just a note that he activated his taboo to a similar extent that he did in Anime Episode 24 where he said: "I can return by death to –" Though, don't take my thoughts or the translation as the gospel!
- [6] Editor opinion: About the shadow, my personal thoughts are either it was Satella (I don't know, I actually doubt it, but it could be and then she froze time), it was Emilia (then she ran off to get the others without Subaru even paying attention cause in his mind she's just a shadow) or it was just a hallucination… or thanks to /u/Jaerek his theory-craft was that it could be that "Natsuki Subaru". I like that theory a lot, but that doesn't mean it's true of course!

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Arc 6 – Chapter 40, “Abandoned by the Stars”

by admin - Saturday, August 25, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/08/25/arc-6-chapter-40-abandoned-by-the-stars/

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Translated by :

- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism

Proofread by:

- Tournament, /u/Tournament1122

Fan Art Created by :

- Source

PDF Link + Disclaimers:

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?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Everything is messed up. Literally, so messed up.

He was found, brought back and questioned about what had happened. Bit by bit, he finds that the situation would get worse every time he would say something.

[???: All right, so Subaru really doesn’t remember anything?]

He looks down, clutching his knees as the girl with the silver hair gazes down at him with a gloomy expression. Next to her stood a young, sweet little girl who couldn’t come to grips with what he had said and reacted with shock.

[???: We were at a complete loss when we heard that we couldn't find you… by no means, did I think the situation would end up like this. It looks like we're faced with a very difficult problem.]

The girl, who had a white fox scarf wrapped around her neck, grumbled this in a stiff tone. The knight with the handsome face nods and mutters the occasional "Yeah, that's right" as she speaks. [1]

[???: For how long are you going to be satisfied in exposing that unsightly appearance, Barusu.]

Scowling at him as she said it, was the girl who had cleaned up the mess that had been caked on him. But, there was no great animosity in her words, moreover, there seemed to be a forlorn expression hanging over her.

[???: Master, Master. Something in the air seems to have become remarkably more gloomy eh~? You need to smile mooore… Huh, what is that? You stink of piss!]

The black haired woman was laughing in good spirits without seemingly understanding the situation here. At the side of the black-haired woman, there stood a young girl who was stroking her braided hair. She gives him a sidelong glance which seemed to show a small glimpse of interest at the situation he was in.

[Subaru: ……]

All of these reactions, if he were to broadly speak about them, every single one of them he had let go by. Once, twice… thrice. He had disappointed them three times. However, this time, he had soiled himself after he had tried to escape from this place. He had been found alone, huddled up and crying. There was no room for doubt that it had been the worst situation so far.

— Even though he is the only one aware of the real facts behind this truly dreadful situation.

[Subaru: Heh.]

It makes him laugh. The fact that he had repeated this same situation – No, not just repeated once, but three times.

He had seen the same scene a second time. Then on the third time he had revisited this scene, he had finally grasped what sort of situation he was in.

— He had died twice.

Both times, most likely, from falling from the same place – the first time he had lost consciousness on the way down and because of that, he hadn't tasted the moment of death. However, it had not been like this the second time. As he fell down, he hadn't died quickly and had tumbled and crashed against the staircase having his whole body destroyed.

He then finally died, but came back. At the moment of death, he would return back to the Green Room and once again he would wake up and redo the day.

Die and return –?Return by Death.?That was the blessing which the God had given to Natsuki Subaru in this parallel world.

[Subaru: Heh.]

For the second time, laughter had leaked out of him. Whether objectively one could call it laughter is left to discussion, suffice to say that for Subaru it was laughter.

There's nothing else he can do except laugh. He feels as if his tears have honestly dried up. Crying also wastes his physical strength. He had died and then returned, it seemed like the physical strength he exerts before dying is given back to him when he returns. This time he had wasted the strength he got from awakening on soiling himself.

[???: Anyways, let Subaru rest until things settle down. Over time, we may see some change.]

At hearing the girl with the silver hair's proposal, he knew that his treatment had already been decided like so. Was she thinking that he would lash out violently? Subaru's persona had been exaggerated. He had been brought back to the Green Room under everyone's supervision.

[???: I'm afraid we can't leave Rem here with this current Barusu. I fiercely oppose it.]

[???: …But, apart from finding out what caused this, our best bet at helping Subaru recover would be to rely on the spirit of this room.]

[???: If that's the case… if that's the case, we will move Rem to another room. Ram will stay with her and look after that child. Ram seems to be the only one now who is worried about her.] [2]

He wished he was in a place where there were no quarrels or clash of opinions. Whatever it is, he has no options. Taking the initiative and having the willpower to do things such as resolutely overcoming this situation doesn't have anything more to do with the current Subaru.

[???: …Rem, I am sorry.]

She uttered this so Subaru could hear her, just before she carried the sleeping girl out of the room. It was remarkable how much they resembled each other, like two peas in a pod.

[Beatrice: Subaru, it's quiet here. Betty will surely find a way to return your memories, I suppose.]

[Subaru: ……]

[Beatrice: You're not alone, I won't let you go.]

Just before she leaves the room, the young girl speaks those gentle words. Her voice is tinged with grief, yet there is also a hint of noble determination within it. The voice is strong and doesn't doubt what she says. In that way, her voice shows that she is concerned for him–

[Subaru: …Ahh!]

Subaru shrunk back in an attempt to avoid her outstretched arms. Seeing his reaction to this, the eyes of the little girl swayed with hurt.

[Beatrice: ……..]

He was a stranger. No matter where they are, he was a stranger. But, to Subaru, they weren't strangers. But for them, this Subaru was a stranger.

Their familiarity, their worry, and their deep affection was directed at the original "Natsuki Subaru" and not at his current ruins. And, at the same time–

[Subaru: I don't even know why I was killed, I…]

He had been left behind in the Green Room, alone. Subaru grinds his teeth as he mutters this. It's still not yet a good thing to turn towards those good feelings of comfort, or to blow off the bonds that he had supposedly accumulated over time, and the trust and deep affection he has no memory of. However, why does he have to bear the consequences of the murderous intent that "Natuski Subaru" had accumulated towards him?

All the good things and the bad things, everything that was jumbled together was not his own. Despite this, why must he struggle and drown in this place?

…

[Subaru: I'm sorry…]

After a few hours of being alone, Subaru pushes his back up against the wall, and steadily gets up. Having bitten down on his lips too much, he spat out the mixture of blood and saliva that had piled up within his mouth. Then slowly he starts to walk towards the Green Room's exit.

[???: ……*Tsssssssss*]

Behind Subaru, the only presence that he could hear was the black lizard's cries. The cry sounded somewhat feeble, as if it was crying out in loneliness. Subaru shakes his head at that thought. *It's just a big reptile feeling loneliness*, even for him, there was a limit to his stupidity.

[Subaru: Somebody will bring you food. Shush now.]

The lizard continues to give out its feeble cry despite what Subaru had said. Without listening to it, Subaru shakes off the thought that it was crying out in reluctance at seeing him go, and steps out of the Green Room. He checks to his left and right, making sure the coast is clear and starts to stealthily walk away.

[Subaru: Water, and where they keep the food…]

He knows where those things are. As he had accompanied her to draw water, he knew where he could find it. He also knew where he could find food. The only other question he had was how much of it should he bring?

[Subaru: ……..]

To be honest, there was something Subaru didn't know. What on earth had pushed Subaru down those stairs and robbed him of his life.

However, there was something that Subaru clearly remembers. Back then, at that place, someone had pushed Subaru's back. It wasn't due to some ridiculous reason such as banging his shoulder against something or being blown off by a strong gust of wind. He was certainly pushed. He had been on the receiving end of definite, murderous intent. Natsuki Subaru had been killed.

The suspects were seven: Emilia, Beatrice, Ram, Anastasia, Julius, Meili and Shaula – Subaru doesn't know how many of them are his friends, and how many of them are his foe. After all, everyone amongst the group was not truly alone. Even though they were acquainted with Subaru, there was no point for the current Subaru to pass judgement on who was friend or foe.

— In reality, aren't they all assassins gathered here at this tower to kill Subaru?

[Subaru: If that's true…]

Even if he brings out only a bit of food, he can't feel guilty about this. However, at the same time, the first and second time he had met them… Emilia had called out to him in the same manner, and Beatrice had told him that they would look for a way to return his memories, and Ram had cried out refusing to believe that he had lost his memories. He doubts that they were acting.

[Subaru: ……]

It was impossible. He had seen those scary eyes, and he had been killed not just once, but twice. Subaru doubts the girl and the others from the bottom of his heart. Now, all he can do is run away for his own safety.

[Subaru: Shit, shit, son of a bitch…!]

He swears at his own disgraceful behaviour as he starts to secretly pack away food. So to speak he was collecting emergency rations, he was putting no consideration into what it would taste like. Of course, what was important now was that the food would fill him up, other particulars like taste were secondary, no, tertiary. He had roughly taken enough food to last him three days. He had in a similar fashion drawn enough water and placed it in leather drinking pouches to carry along with him.

[Subaru: There's a desert outside, but…]

In the same place he had found the food, he had also found a bunch of cloaks. In terms of size and design, Subaru immediately noticed which one was his. The cloak is designed so when you clasp the front

together it can be pulled up to cover his mouth. It seemed like a perfect countermeasure against breathing in the sand of the desert. And after collecting food, water and tools to help him navigate the desert, his preparations were complete.

[Subaru: Is it past the time where I've twice died...?]

If he thinks about it, the time he had spent huddled up in the Green Room should mean that he had perhaps already approached the time in which he had been pushed off last time. The effectiveness of?Return by Death?had immediately demonstrated its power. Like this, one by one, he could overcome his own death flags and continue walking the tightrope of life and death.

[Subaru: ……..]

He doesn't want to do that. It would be better for him to not be in this place, even with what he can see with his powers. Subaru jumps out of the room and starts to jog, he heads towards where the spiral staircase is located using the mental map he had drawn in his head of the area. Twice he had been pushed down from this place. Naturally, his brain was screaming at him to get out of there. However–,

[Subaru: ……..…tch]

Immediately after arriving at the spiral staircase and being momentarily enraptured by the scene in front of him, Subaru looked back behind him and carefully examined whether the assassin was hiding somewhere behind him. Luckily, because the time was different to last time, or because the assassin did not know where Subaru was, he couldn't find any trace of an arm stretched out preparing to push his back.

About now, everyone was probably at the library where the memories of the dead sleep, or they had headed upstairs and are waiting to face that arrogant examiner – the memory of having his internal organs messed with by this man resurfaced, and a feeling of wanting to vomit wells up within him.

[Subaru: Challenging that guy…]

He wasn't human. Both in skill and personality. By no means at all does it seem likely to win against such an opponent, were you to challenge him. If that's the case, what's it to him to overlook the fact that they had gone to face a fight they know they couldn't win.

[Subaru: Hell if I know!!!]

Since a little while ago, this enigma had kept popping up in his mind and had been trying to stop his feet. So what. He doesn't care.

Although she may have been gentle and kind, it may have all been a lie. She may have acted worried, but behind her back she may have been sharpening the blade of murderous intent. At least she could have warned him of the possibility that a dangerous individual was lurking somewhere in the tower. [3]

[Subaru: What if she's an enemy?]

Enemy, if you were to look up the definition of the word enemy you would get “laughing stock”. In his everyday life in his world which was relatively unaffected by conflict, the opportunity to utter a word like “Enemy” only existed within games. As a matter of speaking, one could say this is a more interesting world. No, that is wrong. He doesn’t want to be in this place. He doesn’t want to stay here.[4]

[Subaru: ……..tch]

Subaru runs, biting down the unbearable irritation that was boiling within his chest. He runs down the spiral staircase, heading down towards the fifth floor that was out of sight. There are many steps spiralling endlessly down the wall, and he cannot see the end of them as he goes downstairs. He frantically ran down as fast as he could, puffing and panting, to the point that it almost seemed comical.

Still, he didn’t want to die.

[Subaru: I made it…whew…]

He had made it down to the fifth floor. Unlike the fourth floor, the fifth floor wasn’t divided into various rooms. Rather, it was like a single hall that occupied the entire space of the floor. The only thing that was noticeable within the fifth floor was a set of stairs that led downwards to the sixth floor and –

[Subaru: A huge door…]

Looking up at the huge door, he sensed a terrible feeling of oppression emanating from where it stood.

[Subaru: ……]

Standing in front of the door, it felt like a strange overpowering sensation was clogging Subaru’s throat. He feels a slight sandy breeze blow through. Perhaps the wind outside was blowing some sand into the tower through gaps within the door. In the end he was certain that this door connected to the outside.

[Subaru: If what Emilia and the others said was true…]

Using this door, he should be able to go to the desert outside. Desert – he had forgotten its official name, but nevertheless he will follow the sandy road and head towards civilization. That way at least, there should be no worries of having his life threatened by this cruel assassin.

The basics to crossing a desert are to travel at night, avoid sandstorms, and try to move towards one set direction – this was the only knowledge he possessed on the matter.

[Subaru: I would bet that it is far more likely that I will survive there, than in this place where it’s certain that I am going to be killed.]

It could be said that this wasn’t quite a normal decision to make. However, whether or not this was an abnormal decision to come to, he doesn’t think making it is a mistake. Under these circumstances, if he can’t believe even in “Himself”, then only darkness would await him.

He would never do such a thing like sitting in the dark, waiting for death. Since his death, he had decided to fight back.

[Subaru: ……..]

He placed his hand on the huge door which was in front of him, and slowly pushed it with all his strength. The door was more than ten times larger than Subaru himself. By all rights, even if Subaru were to push with all his might, it should be that due to its weight, the door should not budge at all.

However, when he had pressed the palm of his hand against the door, it had easily pushed open as if was mechanized.

[Subaru: Eh.]

Subaru let out a flat sigh and stops pushing the door open. Even if now they hadn't noticed Subaru trying to sneak away, if he left the door completely open, then he can expect the girl and the others to notice.

Even if Subaru slips out and manages to get away, he wants to make sure to put in enough distance between them so they couldn't catch up to him.

[Subaru: …….]

Quietly, Subaru looked out from the gap in the door to the outside. As soon as his eyesight adjusted, he saw a vast sea of sand which was swallowed by the darkness of nightfall.

[Subaru: …It really is a desert, eh.]

He tries to squint his eyes so he can see what is beyond the horizon, but he can't see anything beyond it. In this environment where there are no signs of any shelter, what is at the end of the horizon cannot be seen. There is no way for Subaru to know how far it stretched. However, no matter how far this desert went on for, it certainly couldn't go on forever.

If he were to take a step forward, it would be one step closer to the outside world. If he were to get closer to the outside world – wouldn't that be a step closer to his original world?

[Subaru: …….]

For a moment, Subaru's legs remained glued in the tower. He will probably, surely, leave this place. It made him feel a bit guilty to do this, as he would be leaving behind those without any ill intentions towards him. Subaru shakes off these feelings. With a lingering attachment towards his original world, he will step towards the outside.

He doesn't want to be here. Natsuki Subaru will return back home because that is where his mother and father await him.

[Subaru: So…]

With a firm step forward, Subaru passes through the gap he had opened in the door. Stepping on the sand, he notices that his feet sunk into the sand more than he had thought they would. He had taken his initial steps with quite a lot of force. Natsuki Subaru had firmly stepped outside into the outside world. And –

[Subaru: …huh?]

A violent explosion from underneath his shoes suddenly launches Subaru high up into the air.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

He had been thrown by his back from the ground. He had been in a complete state of panic – Subaru now no longer knew whether being in a state of panic was more normal than being in a state of normalcy. He had blacked out.

[Subaru: What the…]

Spitting out sand from his mouth, Subaru wakes up. He no longer had it within himself to continue. This was due to the imposing figure that was now standing right before his eyes.

[Subaru: ….……]

Right in front of Subaru's eyes, a huge shadow is looking at him against the background which was dyed by the night. The shadow had a huge, limbless body, with slimy skin. It looked ferocious, with cruel fangs lining its mouth – it seemed to look like an earthworm to Subaru. A terrible, gigantic earthworm. In length, it stood not less than ten metres tall – it was an earthworm-monster.

[Subaru: *Takes a step back*]

Was this a world full of monsters? Every single scene he had seen had been disconnected from reality, and had not given Subaru's heart a chance to calm down. And now, the latest crisis was drawing near to him, not giving him any chance to crouch down and lament his fate.

[Subaru: This, fucking… hk–]

Picking himself up, covered in sand, Subaru shakes his head. Most likely it had been this earthworm who had struck him earlier and blown him away, because he was standing on its territory. That, or he had simply been standing in the place where it had emerged to take a breath. Either way, the earthworm was rolling over the sand towards Subaru, moreover–

[Subaru: I am not going to let this happen, NO…!]

Understanding that in this situation he was at an overwhelming disadvantage, Subaru looked around his surroundings. He had barely taken four steps since leaving the tower. Although it was cowardly, there were plenty of options to pick from, such as jumping back into the building and living.

However, as he looked around, Subaru cursed his luck. He had been blown away by the earthworm's

blow and had rolled across the sand, away from the tower. The huge earthworm stood in between Subaru and the tower, so if he were to try and get back to the tower, he would have to go past the earthworm's huge frame.

[Subaru: But…]

Even if he were to run into the desert, he expects that the earthworm will eventually catch up with him. Firstly, this may not be the only earthworm; there's a decent chance that this earthworm is the lord of the desert with how big it is, although even one that's half of its size would be quite a threat too. Not to mention, if he were to be attacked by a herd of them...

[Subaru: In fact, is the option of escaping even realistic?]

He hates the kindness which this world quickly teaches. And, it seemed like the earthworm had decided what to do about Subaru, who had been busy trying to puzzle how to get out of this situation.

Slowly, the earthworm turns its eyeless head towards him and opens its gaping maw. There was a curved horn on its head – it was quite a surreal sensation.

[Subaru: One shot, I just need to get in one shot on it. Just one one shot, one shot, one shot…]

Pulling up his anti-sand cloak to his neck, Subaru keeps an eye out at what the earthworm was doing. He pulls his arm to the front, and calculates the timing of when he should deliver his blow. He suddenly notices that the wound where his nails had been ripped off on his right hand had clotted, and that the nails had started to regenerate. Had it been healing magic, or the effects of the Green Room? He had no idea –

[???……. KRUAAAAAAAAAAGH!!]

The gigantic beast had let out a terrible, shrill cry which he could have never imagined coming from such a thing. The earthworm had then leapt, almost as if it was flopping, towards Subaru. When Subaru had heard its roar against the howling of the wind, for a split second he had felt a strange sensation, like as if his body was acting on its own accord.

[Subaru: …….]

The earthworm had leapt at him, however he had rolled towards his right side and dodged its attack. He hadn't been thinking of anything else. It's as if he could see an illusion of himself of what to do next. He had simply traced what the illusion had done and moved his body like it did. And just like that, he had moved out of the earthworm's attack.[5]

[Subaru: …Shiiiii–!!]

He sees a large amount of sand mushroom up into the air, followed by a shockwave right beside him. Whilst experiencing the aftermath of its attack, Subaru rolls over the sand, still tracing the illusion of his own consciousness.

[Subaru: …hhhfffff!]

His body was far more agile than he remembered it to be. In a split second, it had crossed his mind that he had forgotten about “Natuski Subaru’s” one year period. There is a trace left of the experience “Natsuki Subaru” had accrued surviving in this harsh environment. He hadn’t thought until now that he could make any use of it.

[Subaru: This way…!!]

Rolling forwards, with the nimbleness and vigour his precursor had left him, Subaru rights himself up and runs as fast as possible towards the tower’s front door. In this moment, it is all about clinging onto what is in front of his eyes.

If he makes it back to the tower, he knows that he will return to an environment of shadows and suspicion, as well as that he will be tormented by the fear of death. But still, he would rather chose that than ending up becoming this huge earthworm’s poop.

[Subaru: ……..]

He cannot afford to look back behind him, but it should be that the earthworm should not have enough dexterity to be able to catch up with him immediately. He was only a few metres away from where he was running to–

[Subaru: Rh–]

Just now, instead of the earthworm’s head, the earthworm’s tail had broken through and appeared from underneath the sand at Subaru’s feet. The sand underneath him violently exploded and the momentum from the tail striking his feet hoists Subaru’s body up into the air again.

[Subaru: Oh, ah.]

Whilst revolving around in mid-air, and flailing his limbs about, Subaru sees what is underneath him. Beneath his eyes, he sees that the earthworm was opening its large mouth, preparing itself to greedily devour his body.

– He looked like a sweet, tasty morsel to it.

It had survived in this harsh environment, eventually reaching its current stature and all of a sudden now it had been presented with such a sweet morsel, just like as if it had been living in a greenhouse similar to his world. Reckless, he had been reckless. He will pay the price of his own impudence with his life.

[Subaru: NO!]

Whilst falling, he shouts this out, like a trapped insect struggling to escape a spider’s web.[6] Die, would he died again? If he dies, he doesn’t know if he will remain dead. If he is to die and it end here, what would happen? Could he bear it? If he were to be thrown forever into the never-ending darkness like this.

Could he bear it?

[Subaru: NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!]

He screams and stretches his hand out to the night sky for help. There is nothing to reach out to. Even at the ends of the sky, which was blurred behind some wispy clouds, he couldn't see the stars that were supposed to be there – Subaru was falling alone. The star with his own name had been abandoned, about to be swallowed into the monster's belly; it will blink out and disappear. Such despair –

– Suddenly, a surge of white light appears.

[Subaru: ……]

A surge of white light rushes forward and blows away the face of the earthworm that had opened its large mouth. Literally, the impact had pierced the earthworm's face, with its large head being warped in such a fashion that it almost looked like it had been turned into Amezaiku.[7] And then, in a split-second, it blows up. Chunks of dirty flesh and blood spray out of the earthworm's head as it flies off.

The head that should have been swallowing Subaru is gone, and the earthworm's huge body shakes violently. However, before its body toppled over, Subaru's own body crashed off the top of the headless worm.

With a heavy shaking movement, it had felt like as if he had fell onto a hamburger patty just before it was going to be cooked. Its gaping wound, its internal organs, and its flesh and blood were the things that had cushioned Subaru's body. He had been given his life in exchange for the discomfort stuck in his hair. He coughs and splutters violently, he realizes that inside his mouth there is some foul liquid within it which is making him want to vomit. Meanwhile, the earthworm's remains were slowly starting to topple over – wait, no!

One after the other, the light flashes across his field of view, end every time it does, the earthworm's remains are shot through. Its shot through, burst open, segments of it are sliced off, bits of it fly about: the earthworm is cut into ribbons. It was only by coincidence that none of these flashes of light hit Subaru, which you could say was a stroke of luck in such a bad situation. However, eventually –

[Subaru: – Ah]

Subaru notices that its body which had been shook by these impacts had now been strewn across the sand. Subaru was now lying with his back on the sand, his whole body stretched out.

[Subaru: ……..]

Up above him, he sees the same starless sky just like when he had been flung up by the earthworm. Was it karma? Even now that he had managed to cling onto his life, the sky hadn't changed, "Subaru" had still been abandoned.[8]

Being amazed, being wanted, being abandoned, being hated, being befriended, being kept away. Does he

want to live? Does he want to die? Is he still here in his body? Or is he not?

[Subaru: What should I do…! If you know, tell me…!]

There is no one around. Covering his face, he shouts this out at the empty sky. He received no reply. Who was it that Subaru wanted to hear the answers from the most? It was probably –

[Subaru: …Answer me, *Natuski Subaru*.]

Saying this in a miserable voice, Subaru sighs and turns his body to the side. There had been no particular reason why he had happened to turn his body.

– But that tiny movement had barely saved Subaru's life from the white light which had grazed his ear and struck the ground next to him.

[*DZZZZZZ*]

Something had grazed past his right ear with tremendous force. He clasps his hand to the ear which was throbbing in pain, and rolls to the side. As the blood was dripping out from his ear, he saw what had caused the pain.

A glowing stinger was stuck in the ground.

[Subaru: This… Eh?]

As soon as he had reached out to touch it, the white stinger had turned into dust. And, right after that, Subaru's field of view had started to shake.

[Subaru: ……..]

It shook greatly – from top to bottom. Whether it was because of an earthworm wriggling, or whether it was because the last stinger had stabbed into it, the ground underneath Subaru's buttocks was collapsing. He was sinking down along with the surrounding earth.

[Subaru: UAAAAAAAAAaaaaa!!]

His fingers slip through the sand as he falls, trying to find anything to hold onto. Rather like an insect falling into an anthill, Subaru's body sinks to the bottom of the sandy floor, unable to do anything about it.

His arms and legs are buried. He cannot move them. Turning his head up, he desperately gasps for air. His whole body was being swallowed by the sand, he frantically tries to fight against the premonition that he was about to be buried alive.

[Subaru: Someone, someone, help me…]

He couldn't say what he wanted to say next. Subaru's entire body was being swallowed by the sand, sinking, sinking.

And the stars do not even take one single notice at the miserable, struggling "Subaru".[9]

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

[1] Really, I was translating this term: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aizuchi

[2] This line is said by Ram, if it's not clear – I was using "???" because in Subaru's minds they seemed nebulous, as he was referring to them via description than by name (which he knows). Since they start to use names in speech from herein I will add names to the dialogue.

[3] Though no specific gender seems to be used in the JP source, I think these lines are referring to Emilia rather than everyone at once, hence the use of "she". His next line of speech seems to reinforce that.

[4] On the first line of the sentence, I think the author is saying if you were to define the kanji used for "Enemy" it would be ridiculous for use in modern Japan because there's not much situation you'd have a mortal enemy.

[5] I think, from my take on this line, it's a highly metaphoric way of describing things. I think the authors saying that Subaru's thought process blanked out for a sec, and he like subconsciously envisioned what to do (to avoid the worm). And instinctively he had moved out of its path as if he was following a ghostly illusion.

[6] The metaphor used here is different, but I think I understood the gist of it, and replaced it with an English equivalent.

[7] Nom nom: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amezaiku

[8] He is not referring to "Natsuki Subaru" here. His name is written in Kanji, so he is referring to himself by the constellation (?): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hairy_Head - Ironically enough I just realised Subaru's constellation refers to Pleiades… make that as you will.

[9] Again, not to be confused with "Natuski Subaru" – it's referring to the constellation again. He is calling himself by his star-name. It's saying that the stars above (which I presume were hidden by wisps of cloud which is why he couldn't see them earlier) did not even care about the sinking Subaru (i.e. as if he was a sinking star). Very cool metaphorical writing, I bet it has some significance to the tales of the Pleiades as well.

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Arc 6 – Chapter 41, “The Scent of Peace”

by admin - Wednesday, August 29, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/08/29/arc-6-chapter-41-the-scent-of-peace/

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE.

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Translated by :

- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism

Proofread by:

- Shifty, /u/Shiftyfish87
- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd
- Tournament, /u/Tournament1122

Fan Art Created by :

- Source

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— His consciousness returns, the first thing he feels is a difficulty in his breathing.

[Subaru: *Cough, cough, hack*]

Feeling something unpleasant collected in his mouth, he coughs violently – spitting out sand and forcing open his heavy eyelids. He had lost consciousness. The reason why he had lost it wasn’t because he had dozed off or anything like that; it had been because he had been swept away by that wave despite his efforts in trying to stay afloat.

He feels sand trapped within his eyelashes. Rubbing his eyes, Subaru wonders what had happened and tries to recall what had occurred to him just before. If he remembers correctly, there had been a terrible confusion, and after that he had attempted to leave the tower. There was no doubt that he had managed to leave the tower without being disturbed by anyone, but –

[Subaru: The earthworm… the white flash of… light…]

Recalling the terrifying incident that had happened just after that, and recalling how the flashes had continued to rain down – one impact after the other – Subaru seemed quite suspicious at whether he was actually alive. Had it only been down to luck that he had survived all of these abnormal events that he had been dragged into? However, even if he were to die, it was doubtful that he'd truly remain dead. Natsuki Subaru did not want things to stay as they were now.

[Subaru: After the stingers, I fell right into the termite nest…] [1]

He remembers that the ground beneath him had collapsed and he, along with the earthworm's gigantic carcass, had been swallowed by the Earth. He had managed to stretch out his head to secure some oxygen, however even his head had been swallowed up by the sand, and he had faded out of consciousness. It seemed as if he should have died of suffocation, but that hadn't been the case.

[Subaru: Right here… is this underground area beneath the desert?]

Looking around, he couldn't find a source of light in this room; the darkness was so thick that he could barely see anything nearby. Opening his heavy eyelids, he takes a fistful of sand and stretches the palm of his hand forwards in front of him. Only barely can he see that it's there. The world around him was too vague to let him see the existence of this life line.

— It really seems as if he just barely remains in the world of the living.

[Subaru: …whew, don't do that, you fucking idiot.]

Thinking that far, Subaru tries to slowly move his arms and legs in an attempt to release his body, which was trapped in the sand, from the heavy pressure around him. The feeling that he couldn't breathe was due to the bed of sand that had swallowed him from his waist down. He was quite lucky that his upper body hadn't been buried. You could say that this process of extraction could be likened to trying to raise up a flag on a sand dune without causing the flag to fall over. Subaru carefully extracted himself out from the sand, and climbed out making sure not to make any poor movements to avoid burying himself in the sand again.

[Subaru: ……..]

After barely escaping from the sand, he felt a great sense of fatigue overpower him. It was likely because his body temperature had been sapped by the cold sand along with the continuous pressure it had exerted on him. The fact that he couldn't grasp how long he had been out cold was horrible.

[Subaru: Was it lucky that when I was out cold another earthworm didn't come and munch on me…?]

Whilst speaking, Subaru becomes aware that his throat is parched, and he moves his hand to his waist. When he had escaped from the tower, he had fastened some leather pouches containing enough water to cross the desert there. But, his fingers which had been trying to grab that water closed around thin air. Despite fumbling around several times for them, he couldn't find the leather pouches.

[Subaru: I should have expected this, considering I was buried from my waist down…]

It seemed like the water pouches had come off when he had been swallowed by the sand. As well as that, it looked like the bags filled with his emergency rations had also come away. Although it indicated he was in a fatal situation, he remained calm at heart. Already, his heart had been paralyzed by this cruel situation; it was perhaps becoming absurd to react every single time like this.

[Subaru: At least, it's gotta be nearby... eh?]

Getting on his knees, he fumbles around the bank of the sand mound that he had just gotten out of. It is quite a large amount of sand. He didn't expect to find it, but as if it was just mere consolation, he feels something soft exactly where his body had slipped out of. Confirming it with his fingers, he was surprised to find that it was the leather pouch that he had been looking for. But,

[Subaru: It's empty, am I even surprised by this…?]

Feeling the pouch with his hands and gauging its weight, he realizes the contents are empty. Just in case, he places the opening of the leather pouch to his lips, but only a few drops trickle onto the tip of his tongue. Even if it was just a little bit of water, now every drop of it was precious. He was thirsty for more. Subaru places the leather pouch to his waist and decides that he will feel around his surroundings again.

[Subaru: …….?]

If he had found his drinking pouch, there could also be a chance that he'd find his food. But such an expectation had been betrayed, just like when he had found his water.

— His food had fallen out and was now scattered all around the mound of sand he had been buried in.

[Subaru: ……]

Due to it being dark, he can't see around the sand-bed properly. However, he can recognize that the food that he had brought now lies scattered around it. The crumbling pieces left on top of his palm have not maintained their original shape – if he were to speak truthfully, he recognizes that the food is now inedible and leaves it scattered there.

Gulping, Subaru's throat ached in thirst and hunger. Subaru's food was scattered around his surroundings. This fact clawed at Subaru's mind, as if it was scratching him with nails, as he desperately tried to remain calm. Subaru starts to sweat profusely, wasting precious water, as fear fills his hearts as he thinks of being embraced and preyed on by earthworms.

Originally, this huge earthworm had crawled out of here, so to speak this was the monster's habitat. The

earthworm who must have been the chief among them had died; but it would be no surprise to him if there were other monsters inhabiting this passageway which it had cohabited with.

[Subaru: Over here…]

Subaru decides that he has to leave. However, he knows that he can't see his surroundings well. Placing himself far from the wall, he starts to crawl using his hands and knees, relying on feeling his way using the ground beneath him. Since there's ground here, and there's a wall… there has to be a way. On his hands and knees he crawls away, confirming that he really does exist.

[Subaru: Ow, it hurts… shit, ouchhhh…]

His right ear had been grazed by the white stinger, the fingernails on his right hand were still halfway through regenerating, and the organs in his body were still aching him. While suffering from all this pain, Subaru was crawling out, trying to escape this place. Even if beforehand he didn't know exactly what the heck he was running away from, now, he must do anything to get away from this strange being.

Anyway, in order to get away from this unfamiliar being which inspired such fear in him now, he had no choice but to continue his escape.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

[Subaru: ……..]

Smelling a pleasant aroma, Subaru moves his hands and feet forward as if he was being guided by it. The smell gradually became stronger, eventually becoming strong enough to be regarded as a reliable sense. It guides Subaru deeper within.

— It had been a little over an hour since Subaru had begun to crawl out of this place.

Whilst escaping, Subaru had accidentally slid down the sand-bed quite a few times and had also been obstructed by walls in his way on this trackless path. Sometimes, sand had rained down from above which had caused him to react in fright and repeatedly roll over to avoid it.

Whilst doing that, Subaru realises that he's within a cave underneath the desert. Although it hadn't really been any great salvation that he had noticed this, it did bode an omen to its real meaning.

— A strange, yet alluring scent suddenly drifted into his nostrils.

By no means could he call such a fragrant scent strange. In a typical situation, smells are generally considered to be of lower priority and have less value when trying to figure out a situation. However, considering that his sight was sealed by darkness, and he couldn't tell what was happening in the world around him, this sudden stench felt extremely fresh to him.

Therefore, Subaru started to crawl using the wall to feel his way towards the source of the scent, it looked just like when a young child first starts to learn how to walk. Sniffing with his nose, he looked exactly

like a dog who was following a trail towards the depths of the cave – No, to the depths, or maybe the entrance of the cave, he cannot be sure where this scent is leading him to.

[Subaru: *Sniff* *Pant* Pant*…]

Without even noticing, Subaru had stuck his tongue out and had started to pant heavily, exactly like a dog would.

He had heard that dogs would stick their tongues out and pant in an attempt to cool their body down, but Subaru didn't really equate this comparison to his current gesture. The reason why Subaru had lolled his tongue out, imitating something that a dog would do, was because he wanted to increase the amount of knowledge he could obtain from his surroundings by sensing the flow of the air on his tongue.

[Subaru: ……]

In just a few hours Subaru had applied the methods that creatures use to move about in the dark. Naturally, his half-baked attempt was completely different to how it occurs in reality. The darkness was unchanging and didn't provide Subaru with any hints of what was around him. In this lonely area, all he can hear is his own breathing and the faint scratching noises of himself paddling across the sand – But, this felt comfortable to Subaru now.

— It had been terrifying, it had been horrible, but one way or another he must manage it.

It was the first time he had naturally embraced this feeling. Right now, Subaru loved this silence and this darkness and this "Lonely" space where no one was around.

Right here, no one would hurt him. Right here, he can escape merely by just crawling on the ground. Right here, he doesn't have to think about doing anything at all.

A feeling of complacency, similar to the feeling you would get if you let a muddy river sweep you along, embraces Subaru's heart. He starts to slowly feel at peace, as if he was no different to a clay figurine. Without ever changing, once it melts and disappears, would he even mind? [2]

— In this manner, he had submerged himself in thought about it whilst escaping from his fatigue and bad habits.

[Subaru: Damn it, what is this…]

Subaru had steadily crawled through the dark cave. On his way, he had come across a fork in the road with a path going left and the other one right. He anxiously deliberated on which path to choose, in the end he decided on the right path. From then on, there was a long, long journey whereby he followed the scent. Would there be a place where he could find relief at the end? Would he reach somewhere which had light? Even though such a prospect was not necessarily true, Subaru pushed forward without any concern for this. However –

[Subaru: There's a dead-end right here…]

The path that he had followed had steadily narrowed. After going up a slope, Subaru had found a narrow path awaiting him which could only be traversed by literally crawling; at the end of it was a wall of sand – ultimately, it was also where the source of the scent was.

[Subaru: What am I doing all the way here… No, wait a sec.]

Subaru grinded to a halt and started to get angry at the blockage in his way, beating his fists against it. He started to feel anxious at the current contradiction in front of him, having followed the scent all the way here.

Subaru had unmistakably arrived here by following the scent which was lingering in the air. The scent had been wafted in by a draft and had certainly arrived all the way to Subaru who had been quite far below. In other words, if the drafts had flowed from here, it meant that this wall of sand could not be a dead end. The draft had surely flowed into the cave from the outside.

[Subaru: If that's so…!]

Frantically palming his surroundings, Subaru shuffles back a bit. He fumbles around the dead-end path for anything. He hadn't missed anything on the left, right, front or bottom. Then, where had he not looked?

— He had been abandoned by the stars, had he been afraid to look up?

[Subaru: —There it is.]

After more than an hour of backtracking, his hand that had been touching the ceiling brushes against the air and Subaru's eyes sparkled. Standing up, he puts his arms up, and even when he puts his shoulders up they don't hit the ceiling. There is a hole. The hole is more than twice as large as Subaru's waist, and his body would fit through it easily. In other words, if he were to push up using his back and legs, he should be able to climb out.

[Subaru: …….]

A gentle breeze was flowing into the hole. Until now, Subaru had clung on only to the target that he had been pursuing: that is, the scent. It was flowing in from the wind above to the underground area below that he was in. There was no choice now but to climb up as Subaru had sniffed to make sure of it.

[Subaru: Ghh… Nhhh.. Fffff.]

Placing his body by the hole, he pushes his back against the wall. Of course, because the wall was made up of sand, if he makes even a slight mistake in the angle in which he applies his body weight, he risks the wall collapsing and his plan failing. Being careful not to do just that, he places his feet against the wall too. Subaru thrusts his feet and buttocks up, and slowly starts to climb out of the hole.

[Subaru: ……]

Fortunately for him, the wall has some grooves embedded within it in some places, which to an extent help Subaru support himself as he makes his solitary climb. Perhaps, if you happened to be a person possessing superhuman physical ability, you could simply put your feet on one of the grooves and get out of the hole just by jumping.

[Subaru: *Puff*]

But, Subaru does not possess such physical abilities, thus he has no choice but to continue steadily climbing up. Still, it seemed like his body had been trained in the time which was unknown to him and was suited to withstand activities like this. He gradually adapts to his body having a new engine, just like as if he was getting used to driving a new car. He had gotten the hang of it by the time he had managed to pull half of himself out of the hole, and had established that he was a pretty good climber.

However, before being able to show the full extent of his strength–

[Subaru: — I'm out.]

He doesn't know roughly how many metres he had climbed up the wall, but if he were to take a look, he had climbed up to such a height that if he were to fall down he would die from the resulting fall. Finally, Subaru had succeeded in climbing up the wall.

[Subaru: ……..]

He didn't feel any great emotion about it as he thought he would have. It's not because he thought what he had done was dull or effortless. He had however thought that climbing up the wall was such a trivial thing if he had done it once before.

Pulling himself out of the hole, treading onto the fresh sand, Subaru stands up. And, taken aback, he mutters a brief word about the majestic structure that was standing in front of him.

[Subaru: — A door.]

— Right there in front of him, there was only a strange door standing there without relying on anything else for support.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

—Subaru was at loss at what to do about the door that was standing right in front of him.

[Subaru: I can see it.]

It seemed that the hole Subaru had gone through did not lead towards the surface. He was most likely still inside the cave – if there were different tiers to the cave, then the place he had probably dropped down to was B2F, and now he was at B1F. Rather than it being a large-scale area, the room was hidden by the means of something that you could call a stopgap. The room had nothing that resembled walls or floors, it only had a single door which was standing there stock still. What was the meaning of it? Was there

something he could understand by glancing at it?

[Subaru: –It’s meant for me.]

Whilst looking at the door, Subaru announces this with extreme arrogance. Placing his hand on his chest, and widening his eyes, he was clearly aware of what the door he had suddenly encountered was – it was his door.

He had a strange confidence about it. He was confident that this door was his own.

The draft that had flowed to the underground area he had been in, the scent that had been carried in by the breeze, he had followed it all the way here. Everything was bringing Natsuki Subaru to this place.

And now, the door that stood in front of his eyes was quite plain. Even in the darkness it was asserting its right to exist; it was longing for the moment when Natsuki Subaru’s hand would open it.

[Subaru: …….]

Subaru walks up to the door with a spring in his step, as if he was about to go and caress something beloved, like a sweetheart. It looked like a set of wooden double-doors that were about twice as high as Subaru. Straining his eyes, he can see that at the centre of the double-doors there was a doorknob that allowed it to be opened. He can also see a strange pattern in that particular area.

— He can see seven jewels there.

[Subaru: —Whoa.]

Whilst looking at the jewels, Subaru had touched the door. And just as he did, the jewels on the door started to shine – four of them.

Four of the seven jewels were shining brightly, welcoming Natsuki Subaru’s visit –

— The lord of the door did not admit the visit of one who doesn't possess the key.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

…

— Immediately after he had blinked, Subaru did not know where he was. He blinked again.

[Subaru: Whoa.]

Breathing a sigh like as if he was stunned, Subaru looks down at his hands. The place was well illuminated. There was light here, there was colour. He can see where he is standing. He is standing on a stone floor – there's stone, on the floor.

[Subaru: —Tch]

Subaru's body stiffens as he looks around his surroundings in confusion. In his surroundings, there are reddish-brown walls, walls, walls – they were the walls of the circular tower. The huge door behind him leads to the outside. He was inside the tower – he was on the fifth floor of the Pleiades watchtower.

He had come back to the very place that he had tried to leave with determination.

[Subaru: Ba]

He can't continue. His words never come out. It must have happened just after he had blinked. In a split second, Subaru had ended up standing stock still in this place. He cannot break out of his shock, he feels dizzy and his feet start to wobble. He was barefoot, his shoes had come off. Subaru grinded his teeth together.

It isn't the case that he is completely stunned by this place. He could run away right now – No.

[Subaru: Why should I run away?]

Subaru looked up above him with extreme fury, murky feelings were boiling up inside him. A burning hate like molten magma was zealously whirling inside Subaru without him even being aware of it.

His time alone had ended, the peaceful darkness had ended, clinging to that scent had ended – everything that had happened in this place gave reason for him to pick up this hatred.

[Subaru: ……..]

Why does Subaru have to run away? Someone plans to kill him and had once, no twice taken his life. Why does he want to go to a place where they are all shamelessly behaving like good people, hiding their intentions behind a mask of tranquillity?

— There are only suspects inside this tower.

Does he want the culprit to be inside? Did he escape because he couldn't do it? He had been an idiot, he had been an idiot, he had been an idiot; he didn't know anything.

— If any of the suspects tries to touch him, he would hit back until he delivers them a crushing defeat.

[Subaru: …….]

Luckily, all of those bastards were careless around Subaru. He would find out whether it was only the culprit that would show caution around Subaru – though, the culprit has no way of knowing that he is

suspected by Subaru. That is the advantage Subaru has here, having once died.

Once he had realized that he had died, he knew that someone was trying to kill him. The only thing he has to do is kill them before they commit that act of murder again.

[Subaru: Hah–]

A smile appears on his face, and Subaru covers his mouth with his hand, stifling his laughter. The idea for his gratification had just suddenly leapt out from inside his head. Subaru had received a blessing from the heavens to pick up and rescue himself.

[Subaru: …….]

It seems like it's a good idea to quickly set things straight. Subaru will act quickly in executing his plan. Subaru rushes down the spiral staircase – he was going down towards the sixth floor below him.

The sixth floor was fuzzy in his memory, but he recalls that it is the lowermost floor of this tower. When Subaru and the others – No, when the original "Natsuki Subaru" and the others had come to the tower, they had borrowed on the strength of lizards to cross the desert, using things that looked rather like horse-drawn carriages. Of course, if there are such things lying about, they may come in useful for an "emergency."

[Subaru: ……..]

Subaru, had arrived at the lowermost floor and found the carriage he was looking for, however his feet had stopped there. The reason that he had reacted like that was because just beside the carriage – collapsed there was a huge lizard, already dead.[4]

Its head was missing. Its body from the neck down was lying on the floor. Had the blow that had decapitated it been that powerful? The head that had been blown off was nowhere to be seen nearby. Instead, blood had flowed out of its huge body, staining the ground below. He found that a considerable amount of time had passed since this tragedy had occurred.

[Subaru: — the stingers.]

What Subaru had thought about in this moment was that it looked a lot like how the mysterious white stingers had blown up the head of the earthworm which had battled against him immediately after he had left the tower. This impression was consistent with the remains of the lizard that had collapsed here. Then that attack was from someone inside the tower – it was highly likely that it was one of the suspect's attacks. Thus, the lizards themselves had been treated just like cattle, in their pitiful lack of burial too–

[Subaru: —Does this mean they are not trying to hide their true colours anymore?]

It seemed like his opponent had been quick tempered, and rather than giving Subaru a chance to escape, they had instead delivered a decisive blow. Whilst trembling at this fact, Subaru went inside an intact carriage – it showed signs that it had been used as a place to sleep. Tearing through the inside, Subaru

finds a big knife inside one of the baggage.

Dare he say it had some purpose; was it something similar to a survival knife? Rather than it being an all-out weapon, the large knife was probably good for cutting through obstacles – but, in this situation, it would still be a splendid weapon that would fulfil Subaru's aims.

[Subaru: I don't know who the enemy is, but…]

—He will show them.

With his body burning with dark feelings, Natsuki Subaru heads upstairs, knife in hand. A twisted smile curves across his cheeks, boosted by his hatred. If he wants to be saved, if he wants to escape, he must believe that anything he murders is justified; with that, he will go forward.

—Below his smiling cheeks, he doesn't notice the tears of fear that are streaming down his face.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

[1] More precisely, antlion pit (???) but I went for something more familiar in English.

[2] This is what the title of this chapter "The Scent of Peace" refers to, peace in particular refers to him being at peace of mind/complacent, rather than the general meaning of peace.

[3] My take on: "??????????????????????" seems to say the chief/main part of the door does not admit the ones who do not possess the key. Let me know if I am wrong since this sentence was tricky to me.

[4] Very likely this is the Gyrus earth dragon that helped them cross the desert – his name is Gyan.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Arc 6 – Chapter 42, “The Tower of the Dead”

by admin - Wednesday, August 22, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/08/22/arc-6-chapter-42-the-tower-of-the-dead/

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE.

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Translated by :

- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism

Proofread by:

- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd
- Wintry, /u/WintryOne

Fan Art Created by :

- Kinokopepe

PDF Link + Disclaimers:

- **Note to anyone reading this, it’s in the process of retranslation, this was one of my first ever TLs and it’s very poor quality, so I am trying to fix a lot of it.**

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Natsuki Subaru slowly continued up the stairway, stepping firmly as he continued up. With madness filling his eyes, fury raging in his chest, and a knife in one hand, he continued to walk up.

[Subaru: Kill, kill, kill, I’ll kill you. Definitely, I will kill you…]

That whisper, rather like a rasp, were the words of an endless curse. If power dwelled in the might of words, then the sheer amount of curses Subaru was spewing out would indeed bolster his deed.

"Kill", each time he said it aloud, he felt as if the power lodged in his knife increased.

[Subaru: Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill…]

While muttering this, his sight would occasionally blur over. Subaru wonders how many hours he had spent crawling under the desert; he was exhausted. His head had begun to feel incredibly heavy; Subaru shook his head a few times.

In order to protect himself, Subaru must kill them. Otherwise, they will kill Subaru.

[Subaru: Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill…]

Subaru does not want to kill… he *has* to kill. If we were to delve into the true meaning of Subaru manically repeating "kill", we may suppose what he is saying is incorrect. If you truly reflect on Subaru's feelings, maybe "kill" is not the most appropriate word.

… it is more accurate to say that Subaru does not want to die.

Thus, if the one responsible for this appeared, Subaru would kill him. Natsuki Subaru had finally reached the 4th floor of the tower. And, then he saw it…

[Subaru: Huh?]

Subaru breathed sharply. With a clatter, Subaru's knife fell on the floor, his body was trembling. Shaking his head, Subaru took a step backwards.

The smell of blood lingered in the air. Traces of a fight were present in the room. Subaru was stood near a broken wall; the floor near him had been crushed through. Only something or someone who possessed great strength could have caused such destruction.

Whilst frozen completely still, Subaru saw her. Shaula's head had been crushed, she was sprawled on the floor, and her body had been left in a grotesque state.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Shaula's corpse was in such a terrible state, Subaru wanted to cover his eyes.

Her long, black hair was sprawled untidily across the floor. Both of her arms had been sliced off at the elbows, and Subaru could not find a glimpse of them anywhere. A vast number of deep cuts had been carved onto her skin, and a large amount of blood was pooling out of them. The trail of blood had started from the back of the aisle, showing that it had been a long fought battle which had taken place across the room.

Likely, it was the blow to the head which had finally killed her.

Subaru muses that the one who had inflicted such a blow must have did so with something such as a large hammer. Her head had been crushed, scattering fragments of bone, brain and tissue about. It was extremely barbaric.

Shaula's head had been completely obliterated from existence. Subaru recalls that it was not so long ago that she had been smiling warmly at him…

[Subaru: … gh]

Now Subaru was in shock, astonished, aghast…, his legs had given way and he was kneeling on the floor, staring at her corpse. The urge to vomit was unbearable, unable to stop himself, Subaru puked up the contents of his stomach. He expelled the contents onto the floor, some of which unfortunately ended up on Shaula… adding to her humiliating appearance.

[Subaru: Uu… oh… eh, blergh.]

Despite this, Subaru continues to vomit, not paying any mind to how he was desecrating Shaula's corpse. He continues to vomit profusely, urging himself to expel the entire contents of his stomach to stop the pain that was burning inside his belly.

Finally, having finished puking his guts out, Subaru fell to the floor. He lay spread-eagled, staring at the ceiling, hands over his face it had been the first time he'd seen someone die.

["---"]

It was the first time he'd seen a corpse.

For most people, the first time they'd encounter someone's death would be when an elderly relative would pass away. However, Subaru's relatives had all been relatively healthy, thus he had never experienced anything remotely like it. He had been lucky to have never even been to a funeral.

So, seeing something like this for the first time extremely shocked Subaru. On top of that, the manner of her death had been gruesome. People can have their lives taken away from them as cruelly as this.

[Subaru: Me, too…]

Subaru muttered this to himself, and slowly pulled himself up from the floor, using the wall to steady himself upright. His ears were ringing really strongly.

Subaru had been struck in the back and plummeted to his death after being pushed out of the tower by someone. His death must have been equally as gruesome, likely, on impact, his body would have resembled something like a hunk of meat. All of that in the blink of an eye. Subaru feels relieved that it was not possible for him to have seen the aftermath of his own death.

If there was such a thing as seeing one's death with their own eyes, it would be impossible to retain your sanity. Even though Subaru knew he had died, he was suddenly struck by shock at his realization that he had died.

[Subaru: Anyways…]

Subaru stops his train of thought and falls down next to Shaula, yet he tries to not look at her corpse.

He knew she was dead.

There was still a terrible presence lurking around within this tower. Subaru realises now that he was not the only one who had set out to murder people in this tower; someone else was doing the same thing.

[“---“]

It was bad news for the now deceased Shaula, however this bode good news for Subaru. Subaru doesn’t know who had killed him, thus he would not rest until he found out who had been responsible for his death. But, as Shaula had died, she could be struck off the suspect list. Now his list was down to seven potential names. Subaru was also convinced that the person who had killed him was hostile not just only towards him – or even it could be someone he hadn’t met who was trying to kill everyone in the tower.

In other words, it could be possible that someone else could kill the one who had murdered Subaru.

Therefore, he must kill all the survivors. Only then Subaru can be at peace of mind.

[Subaru: I see… Ram, Echidna, Julius as well. They must die.]

Since Beatrice and Meili are children, Subaru barely places any emphasis on them as he concludes he will be able to kill them pretty easily. Emilia, as well. Shaula… she had already died. As they are not cautious around Subaru, they would be very easy to kill. However, Ram and Echidna would pose to be more problematic. He had received the impression that those two were probably two of the hardest people to kill, even if he caught them by surprise.

Subaru didn’t know how to evaluate Julius, however he muses that he was worthy of looking out for as he is the only other man in the tower, if he didn’t count himself. That and it was also a problem that he carried a sword at his waist. But, if Subaru could take that sword, then he was certain he would have an advantage. After all, he was quite apt at kendo.

Also…

[Subaru: Above there… that fucking bastard.]

Subaru shook his head at thought of the red haired man who was sitting on the upper floor of the tower. It would be impossible to eliminate him. It would be futile to interfere with such a superhuman being. Natsuki Subaru’s common sense concludes that it would be impossible to win that fight.

There are things that just can’t be killed. If there was one thing to comfort Subaru in this instance, it was that he doubted such a man would kill Subaru in such a trivial way.

[“---“]

Subaru picked up the knife he had dropped earlier, walking away from Shaula’s corpse. For a moment,

Subaru was at loss at whether to investigate her body for any clues, but he doubted that he would find anything that would be useful hidden inside her clothing as she was very scantily dressed. [1] He also did not want to humiliate her death further.

She was dead. Those who are dead are no longer Subaru's enemies. She just had no luck. Subaru will not bother doing anything as admirable as clasping his hands together in prayer for her.

He leaves her corpse behind, as he walked further into the tower, following the trail of destruction.

The tower is silent, not one sound can be heard. To Subaru, this silence was quite overwhelming.

His ears are ringing; he can feel his blood pumping around his body. But, strangely enough, his heartbeat had calmed down as if his prior agitation at seeing Shaula's body had not occurred. [2]

Whilst going up to the 4th floor of the tower, dark hatred had boiled inside him, the feeling remained and was still stuck to his chest like dirt. Even now, for the sake of his own survival, his willingness to murder everyone was unshaken. Stab them, gouge them, and take away their lives. Subaru is prepared to do it. And yet … Subaru had just turned the corner. Lying in front of him was Echidna's severed body, and now Subaru realised that his preparation to murder everyone had been all for naught as he looked upon this hellish scene.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Echidna's body was severed from the right shoulder, to the left side, suffering a wound which Subaru thinks is caused by a large blade.

["---"]

Subaru suddenly imagines that this could have been caused by a sword, rather, his suspicions fall onto Julius who carries a sword. It was a cheap-looking, likely mass-produced sword, but certainly it would have been able to have slashed through Echidna's delicate body. The question was, what reason would Julius have to kill Echidna?

When he had been introduced to them, Subaru had heard that Echidna and Julius had a relationship quite like one of a master and a dedicated servant. There were some complicated circumstances involved, but, it should have been quite a close relationship. Of course, if Julius was crazed and wanted to kill everyone in the tower, then that would bear no impact.

[Subaru: Ua… ah… hgh.]

Subaru leaned against the wall and vomited again. The corpse was not as mutilated as Shaula's. Still, even though it took Subaru great courage to look at it, her manner of death had been different to Shaula's.

While it had seemed that after Shaula's death her corpse had been abandoned, on Echidna's body there was a white cloth that had been placed over her. Her eyelids had been closed by someone as well.

[“---“]

Given that they had been slaughtered in different ways, Subaru notes there had been differences in how the dead had been treated afterwards. In this situation, even thinking which aftermath is the most normal seems to be crazy.

[Subaru: Echidna is also gone…]

Subaru’s breathing trembles, his voice feels hoarse, and he can barely stand up as his legs are shaking. He mentally makes a note of what he had learnt, and slowly walks deeper into the tower, looking for survivors to kill. Or, rather, Subaru doesn’t know whether what he wants is dead or alive now.

At the back of the hallway, Subaru finds Ram, part of her back was blown off.

Her body had a large hole between her chest and waist; her corpse was in a really pitiful state with her flesh adorned by multiple cuts. The manner of killing appeared similar to how the earthworm that had attacked and nearly killed Subaru had died. Ram had likely been struck in the back as she was running away. Subaru bit his lips, and left her corpse behind with a feeling of regret, and cursed.

Subaru vomited again.

In the dining hall, where they had explained to Subaru about his past, there lay the corpses of Meili and Julius.

Julius’ death was strikingly terrible. Deep wounds and lacerations were present across his body; they were so deep that Subaru believes something extremely sharp must have caused them. His left arm had been severed away at the elbow – the stub had been crudely wrapped and bandaged. Subaru could not find a direct cause to his death. Perhaps he had simply died of blood loss. Had he been protecting the girl behind him, was that the reason he had fought until the end?

Subaru vomited yet again.

Meili, who had been slumped against the wall, with her hands around her belly, was the only one who had died with what seemed like a peaceful expression frozen on her face. Her hands were concealing a wound in her stomach; a copious amount of blood had seeped out of the wound. The cause of her death would also have to be attributed to blood loss.

Her remains had such tranquility to it, Subaru refused to understand it.

Once again, Subaru vomited.

[“---“]

It’s a corpse, it’s a corpse, it’s a corpse, it’s a corpse, it’s a corpse. There were only corpses here. They were all scattered around the tower. What was going on here, Subaru could not understand what was happening.

It had been an ideal situation, if everyone but Subaru had died. However, it is impossible to understand why everyone was dead now; they should have no knowledge of Subaru even existing.

Shaula's head had been crushed, and her body had been sliced up.

Echidna had been collapsed by a terrible blow from the shoulder to her side.

Ram had a huge hole in her back.

Julius had fought bravely and fiercely, but eventually had lost his life.

Meili had died from her wounds, accepting her death.

Is there anything he could do? Who was the culprit behind these killings? Could Subaru even accept this situation?

[Subaru: Emilia, and Beatrice…]

Subaru had found 5 dead bodies, 2 of the suspects had yet to be found. Did one of them, or both, conspire to cause these acts of senseless killing? First of all, those two had been the most concerned about Subaru losing his memories. Could malintent be present from that attitude?

He had found five dead bodies, white sheets covering four of them. Four of the corpses had been laid to rest on the floor, covered by a white sheet, with their eyelids closed. There had been some respect given to the dead there. Except for Shaula's body.

When had all of this occurred?

[Subaru: Blood…]

The blood seemed to have dried up. Subaru thinks about how each person must have died, as he looks around for Emilia and Beatrice. The stench of blood and death overwhelms Subaru. It pierces the depths of his mind and his stomach heaves in pain. He dry heaves, having already expelled the contents of his stomach earlier. Subaru's body was devoid of fluid. He can't figure out why everyone was dead, he had intended to kill them after all, yet he had not been around to do it.

Subaru thinks that it has been several hours that have passed since their deaths, or even a dozen. He doesn't know how long he had spent wandering around the underground cave in the desert.

There is just confusion and chaos. One way or another, Subaru will attempt to manage the current situation. To find a reprieve, for that reason, Subaru has to reduce the amount of suspects. If one or both of the criminals who created this situation dies, he will be free.

["---"]

Subaru enters the Green Room. Subaru spots a lizard-like creature sitting in the corner. It was the first

living creature he had found ever since returning to the tower.

[Subaru: What is this lizard doing here?]

On seeing her survival Subaru gave her a smile. He had happened to meet a survivor, a surviving lizard, in fact. Clicking his tongue, he began to leave the room. There was nothing else in the room except the lizard. However…

[Subaru: Don't follow me.]

["---"]

The lizard had followed Subaru out of the room; it was surprisingly large, as big as a horse. It moves along, following Subaru across the hallway. Subaru started to wildly shake his arms, threatening her, spittle flying from his mouth.

[Subaru: I do not have time to play with you right now! In this tower, I have to kill the remaining guys! If you disturb me…]

Whilst gripping the knife in his hand, Subaru stares at the lizard. The lizard looks at the knife which Subaru is swinging around, but quickly looks back into Subaru's eyes instead.

[Subaru: Wow.]

Ignoring the knife, and gazing steadily at Subaru, Subaru's voice begins to shake. It's as if it does not care about Subaru's murderous intentions. It is terribly unpleasant, it is extremely uncomfortable, because she is inspiring the hostility that had been smouldering within Subaru.

[Subaru: Hey, you son of a bitch, don't fool about with me.]

As he gave this outburst, Subaru plunged his knife into the lizard. The tip of the knife plunges into its jet black scales. Though at first, the knife encounters a bit of resistance, it is able to pierce deep into Patrasche's body. He had stabbed the lizard through the left side of her body, yet she remained unmoving. The blade was buried into her to its hilt, blood started to spill out of her wound.

[Subaru: With this…]

Subaru breathed a ragged sigh. For the first time, he had taken action to killing a living being. Subaru's heart was beating wildly, a certain sense of agitation was overwhelming him. He couldn't finish his speech.

["---"]

[Subaru: Ah… uh…]

The lizard had been stabbed with the knife. Nevertheless, she still looked at Subaru. She reacted in neither

pain nor surprise; she simply just looked down at the work of Natsuki Subaru. In her eyes, he could not read her emotions, yet they look as if they are blaming Natsuki Subaru.

[Subaru: Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck! What is that, WHAT IS THAT, WHAT IS THIS?]

Scratching his head, Subaru breaks into this outburst. Whilst shouting, Subaru had forgotten to retrieve the knife he had stuck inside the lizard's body. He begins to move over to her, to retrieve it.

No, Subaru does not have the courage to even touch the knife. The expression in the lizard's eye is frightening to him.

[Subaru: You… except you, the corpses! Someone who lives! I don't know whether they are alive or dead! What on earth, what do you want!? What is it!?]

While he understands it's useless he shouts this out in front of the wounded lizard. While thinking about how he wandered within the tower, how he wandered in the deep darkness of the caverns where nothing can be seen, where left and right cannot be distinguished, how he was suffering from being thrown into this world, Subaru feels depressed and overwhelmed in emotion.

[Subaru: The one who always tries to kills me keeps succeeding! The people relying on me always let him escape! Don't push your luck! Acting like you know me… it's not a joke!]

["---"]

[Subaru: I don't know any of you! What are you guys even thinking! Everyone, everyone, I am compulsed to by my situation! It's because of you all that I am at my limit! I am at my limit!][3]

Shouting and screaming, Subaru begins to shed tears, kneeling down where he had fallen. In front of him, the lizard did not cry out or make a sound; she continued to gaze at Subaru, breathing raggedly. Subaru had pressed his head to the floor and was not able to see her.

[Subaru: Please… leave me alone… abandon me.]

Subaru's sobs echo across the hallway. How long had passed? Several seconds? Dozens of seconds? Several minutes? Subaru who cannot find it in himself to move, is crouched on the floor, when he suddenly notices – faint tremors, coming closer… he could sense them against his face as he had it pressed to the floor.

[Subaru: Ah.]

["---"]

Subaru lifted his face; he looked at the lizard that had now opened her mouth. Her mouth was lined with sharp fangs, it inches closer towards Subaru. He wonders whether she will bite his head and kill him. If she does he would hardly care.

[Subaru: Huh?]

The lizard had picked up Subaru by his left shoulder, and without pausing she started to run. His body had been forcibly pulled up from the ground. The sharp fangs of the lizard had bitten into his shoulder, a shriek of pain escaped Subaru's mouth.

[Subaru: Gh-, aah, aaaah.]

It tried to kill him. It had tried to kill him possibly, that idea was stuck in Subaru's mind. However, in actuality, the fangs biting his shoulder had made him stand up, yet he still feared the pain despite him being mentally prepared for his death. [4] He imagines his shoulders are going to be eaten, his whole body, eaten, and left to die. To die being eaten by a living creature was one of the worst deaths Subaru could possibly imagine. [5] Subaru started to tremble in fear.

["---"]

The hallway which Subaru stood in was on the verge of being engulfed by a vast amount of black fog. He hears a heavy impact which causes dust and debris to scatter around, the fog was overrunning the hallway, engulfing the ceiling, the walls, the floor… it was heading towards Subaru. The fog was made up of many, many black shadows, each tendril resembled an arm.

[Subaru: Shadows with arms…]

In his mind, there was the shape of a woman who intended to hurt him, by the stairs, amongst the haze. A woman who was drenched in shadows, her face was hidden by a black veil, his heart suddenly wrenched in fear. The shadows that had been engulfing the room were akin to the ones that covered this woman. It will engulf the tower's passageway, and Subaru, as it pleases.

[Subaru: You…!]

The lizard did not answer, but whilst dragging Subaru with him by its mouth, it ran away through the hallway at full gallop. Subaru, who had been looking at the opposite direction to the pathway which the lizard was running strenuously to, could not see where she could escape to. Instead he was looking at the shadows which had followed them. The blood inside his body froze.

To be devoured by that shadow, or to meet a terrible death. [6]

Making his mind up, Subaru pushes at the lizard's fangs which are gripping his shoulder. He cried in pain, if he could shake her off it would be the end for him, something that he would gladly welcome. At this point, his hatred for the lizard, it is an obsession that would serve him no use.

["---"]

In front of them, there was a loud boom and the aisle in front of them blew up. The shadow was attempting to block their way.

Reacting to this, the lizard turns back around, she dives straight into the shadows, and just an instant before they are engulfed she turns into a side-corridor. She runs past the tendrils which are jutting out of the shadows. And like that, she continued to run, having temporarily escaped.

[Subaru:… a spiral staircase…?]

A huge spiral staircase was in front of them which connected the fourth and fifth floors of the tower. Subaru was lost for words; he could see the fifth floor which was below him from the height he was at on the fourth floor. A fleeting moment of fear passes Subaru in which he recalls how he had fallen down the tower.

Below him, the staircase was being engulfed by the shadows, from the passageway that would have led down to the fifth floor. In other words, the tower's lower half was starting to be literally devoured by the shadows.

[Subaru: I cannot escape down there… nor behind me.]

The bottom layers of the tower were already engulfed by the shadows' arms, from behind him a stream of dark tendrils was closing in on him. There was nothing really he could do, he had been caught up with, he was near his end. Would they be devoured by the shadows, or be killed in some other manner? These options to Subaru seemed absurd.

["---"]

For a second, the idea of suicide flitted across Subaru's mind.

If he was destined to die by being swallowed by the shadows, would it not be better to choose how he died? That was a possibility which Subaru could take.

[Subaru: Ah, -urgh]

As soon as he thought about taking his own life, Subaru's body started to tremble. In the unlikely case Subaru chose to suicide, what would he do if it ended there. He vaguely believes he could return like the previous times he had died, but there was no guarantee at all. He had first thought that it had all been a precognitive dream. Until the last time he had returned, it had all been a painful precognitive dream. If this time was going to be the last one, then that would be it for Subaru.

Why must he die? He had not done anything wrong. Why must he pay with his life? Why himself?

[Subaru: NO! I do not want to die!]

Subaru screamed this without shame. There was no one in the tower who could hear it. There were only dead people and missing people here. It was only the lizard, who was not a human being that could hear what he had said.

Whilst holding Subaru by its fangs, the lizard gave an almighty roar. Immediately, the lizard broke into a

sprint and dashed away from the tendrils that were approaching from the passageway they had come through. Without stopping, she jumps onto the remaining part of the spiral staircase which had not been consumed by the shadows.

[“---“]

No matter how agile they are in jumping up the crumbling stairway, Subaru thinks that they will likely lose momentum, miss a jump and plummet down to the shadows underneath them. However, the lizard had come up with an ingenious idea to overcome this desperate situation.

[“---“]

The lizard digs its feet into the side of the tower wall. Now, it would be impossible to fall as the lizard is firmly gripping the wall with its sharp claws. … That is, if the wall was vertical.

The lizard emits a roar and starts to run across the wall. The tower had begun to tilt due to the amassment of shadows that had been engulfing it. The lizard was scaling up the wall which was tilting obliquely to one side.

[Subaru: Well… that’s…]

What was going on? Everything was swaying, Subaru could not make sense of what the complete picture here was. However, it was clear that this black lizard was spending its remaining strength in trying to survive. Subaru notices that she was heavily struggling.

[Subaru: You…]

Suddenly, a tendril reached out to where the lizard was. It had realized its prey had escaped from the staircase, and had scaled onto the wall of the tower. The lizard barely managed to avoid its attack. A violent shockwave had accompanied its attack, which had left a large hole in the side of the tower.

[“---“]

Without hesitating, the lizard slips into the hole that had been created by that devastating attack. Subaru is jolted left and right by this sudden motion, resulting in his sense of balance being completely lost as well as his view of the scene spiralling out. However, it is due to the lizard’s evasive manoeuvres, ensuring that Subaru is not hit by the shadow’s attack that he had to endure such a dizzying experience.

They came out of a large hole from within the bottom of the tower. Immediately, he is greeted by a sandy breeze, and his field of view starts to blacken as he closes his eyes.

Subaru notes that he is outside. Had it jumped out of the tower? The lizard had been desperately scaling down the tower, trying to escape the shadows…

[Subaru: … huh?]

The lizard's thin neck was bent towards him; a strong breeze was buffeting them. The lizard let go of Subaru, pulling its fangs out of his shoulders. Subaru's eyes flashed in pain as he felt the sensation of the fangs being removed from his flesh. However, he ignored his pain, as well as the strong wind which was blowing against him. His body had been struck by something hard. After being bumped around, rolled about and thrown out to the floor, Subaru opens his eyes.

In front of him, Subaru glimpses the dark night sky. Yet there something strange about it… the sky was flickering.

[Subaru: Eh?]

Subaru started to panic, the view he was seeing was far beyond what his imagination could comprehend. Subaru notices that he was on an area which was jutting out of the tower, resembling something like a balcony.

She had gone through the hole, rushed up the wall, and thrown him here.

[Subaru: Lizard…!]

Fearfully, Subaru rushes over to where the lizard was rolling away, closer and closer to the looming shadows. And there he saw its end… the lizard had thrown itself into the shadows, in place of Subaru.

… The falling lizard is swallowed by the black shadows, disappearing into the abyss.

He had stabbed her with his knife due to his crazed anger, yet she had not even cared about her own pain and fear, she had brought Subaru to this balcony and then had been swallowed by the shadows. A terrible end was waiting for Subaru, to be swallowed by those shadows.

[Subaru: What is that, what is that, what is that.]

What is that, what is that, what is that, what is that. Subaru does not know.

["—"]

Subaru was watching the bottom of the tower gradually being engulfed by the shadows from the balcony, when suddenly, a white bird flew up and landed on the edge of the balcony. Subaru gazed emotionlessly at it, breathing out a "ha" as he looked at the plump bird. He started to think about what had happened.

The suspects who had died, the suspects who had disappeared, the lizard that had helped him at the cost of his life, and now, a white bird had suddenly appeared in this crazy place. Little by little, the tower was being swallowed by the darkness and disappearing in front of Subaru's eyes.

["—"]

While sensing that the end was approaching, Subaru feels a great weakness in his body, and sits down on the balcony floor. He now understood that the lizard had been trying to save him. But even though he

now comprehends this, he feels as if its efforts had been futile. It had bought only a little more time before he would succumb to death too.

[“---“]

Subaru suddenly lifted his head up. There was someone behind him. It wasn’t a bird, or a lizard, or a shadow.

The sign of a living being, someone was there. Subaru stood up.

[Subaru: You… what do you want?]

Subaru asks this in a very faint tone of voice, having no strength left within him to even look back behind. The person who stood behind him laughed, and spoke with a voice he had never heard before.

[?: … next, try guessing, hero.]

For a second, Subaru heard a whooshing noise. Then his field of vision started to spin rapidly in front of him. The desert, the sky, the tower, the world… all of them were spinning in front of him. His body felt awfully light. He was flying up into the sky like a bird. And then he realised what had happened.

The someone from behind had decapitated him.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

[Emilia: … Subaru! Hey, Subaru, are you okay?]

His decapitation and subsequent loss of consciousness had happened in an instant. He could feel that he was lying in a soft bed of ivy. Subaru woke up, for a second, he could not recognise to whom this chiming voice belonged to.

[Subaru: Emi… lia…]

[Emilia: Oh, Subaru, thank goodness. You woke up. I was really worried about you.]

Subaru slightly opened his eyes. In front of him, there was Emilia, a relieved expression resting on her face. She had been stroking Subaru’s chest, just as he had woken up. A smile appeared on her lips.

[“---“]

When he saw Emilia, he immediately looked at her slender, beautiful neck with smouldering rage in his eyes. Subaru stretched out his hands, grasping Emilia’s neck with a sense of fury. Her slender neck fit easily between Subaru’s hands.

[Emilia: Subaru, what’s wrong?]

Emilia was staring in puzzlement at Subaru, her eyes widened in surprise. Subaru was surprised by his reaction, but he did not reject his feelings of anger. If Subaru put his entire strength behind choking her, he was sure he could break her neck easily. Even though her life was held within Subaru's grasp, Emilia's reaction was awfully slow, moreover-

[Beatrice: Emilia, apparently it seems that Subaru is still half-asleep, I suppose. Betty was worried about you, though.]

["---"]

Subaru let go of Emilia's neck immediately. Looking at her, he sees Beatrice place her arm on the side of his bed, her nostrils flaring in disgust at Subaru. Emilia gave a wry smile, and said "Well."

[Emilia: Well, it's better for you to be half-asleep than it being anything else more serious. When I found you collapsed on the ground, Beatrice was nearly in tears.]

[Beatrice: Do you not have anything that you want to say to me, I suppose.]

Beatrice turns away, her face red, slightly angry at Emilia having told Subaru about that. The two who were talking to each other had not even realised that Subaru had intended to strangle them. When he had been stirred awake, he had not been aware that he wasn't in a perilous situation anymore. Subaru had reappeared…

[Subaru: … that is, here.]

Immediately after that "Natsuki Subaru" that was unknown to him had lost his memories, that is, as soon as he had been summoned into this world, he realises that he has returned to that very same place which it had all started. And, at the same time…

["---"]

[Subaru: … you…]

Subaru hastily turns around, looking towards the corner of the room. Subaru sees her. The lizard that had given her all to save Subaru, the one who had sacrificed herself to the shadows in a bid to buy Subaru time. She was looking rather unperturbed, standing in the corner of the room.

[Subaru: … somehow, I doubt it was Emilia and Betty that found me.]

Subaru muses this for a second, before rushing over towards where the lizard stood.

[Subaru: Heh, Patrasche, don't make that face, don't pout, me and you, we are close friends.]

Behind him, Subaru could hear Beatrice and Emilia talking to one another. Subaru did not care to join in; he was too busy tightly embracing the large body of the lizard in front of him, immensely thankful that she was here.

He was eternally grateful that back then she had been the only one who had not tried to hurt Subaru.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

- [1] Hopefully got the gist of this right, I think he wanted to see if he could find anything from her, but then he reckons there would be nothing really hidden cause of the way she dresses. Props for Subaru not being a necrophiliac.

- [2] Poor translation, I think Subaru means that his pulse is more normal now that he feels he'd forgotten about his earlier reaction at seeing Shaula's body.
- [3] These Subaru feverish exclamations were hard to edit, possibly slightly misworded some parts but the emotion is preserved.
- [4] Tricky to edit. I think that's the gist of what is meant, he is scared of the pain even though he had accepted death.
- [5] Poor Subaru, jk, fuck him for hurting Patrasche. It's cool though that I think in Arc 4 he regarded being eaten by the Great Rabbit as one of the worst deaths and now he echoes this despite not knowing about it.
- [6] In his feverish thoughts Subaru thinks Patrasche will still gobble him up after.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Arc 6 – Chapter 43, “The Tower of the Living”

by admin - Wednesday, August 22, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/08/22/arc-6-chapter-43-the-tower-of-the-living/

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Translated by :

- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism

Proofread by:

- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd
- Wintry, /u/WintryOne
- Azeem, /u/Azeem_45

Fan Art Created by :

- Owari

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??Think

Think, think, think, think, think, think, he must think.

…

Natsuki Subaru kept thinking as he wrapped his arms around her whole body, which was lined by hard, rough scales. The things that had happened in his own body, the ridiculous events inside the tower, the people who were attempting to kill him, the people who were attempting to kill ones other than himself, distinguishing between friends and foe, and??.

[Beatrice: Subaru, is that enough, in fact? Have you calmed down, I suppose?]

[Subaru: ????]

Subaru turned his head slowly towards the voice he had heard from behind him, which had interrupted his thoughts. Beatrice, the one who had called out to him, was sitting upon the ivy bed. The girl, who seemed to be making a pouty face was dangling her feet. Her hand was connected with Emilia's who sat beside her. She was glaring at Subaru. ??Seeing that look, Subaru's face stiffened a little.

[Emilia: Heeey, Beatrice. Don't speak like that. I guess Subaru felt surprised when he woke up. I think it's inevitable that he'd go hug Patrasche.]

However, Emilia smiled as she denied Subaru's misguided thoughts. Hearing her point this out, Beatrice proceeded to suddenly turn away from Subaru and Emilia.

[Beatrice: It doesn't mean I am angry, in fact. It's not just to do with your sudden awakening, I suppose. Betty and Emilia were also worried for Subaru; the Earth Dragon isn’t the only one that worries about you, in fact.]

[Emilia: Hehe, yeah, I was really worried about you.]

Stroking Beatrice’s head with her still facing away from them, Emilia looked at Subaru and raised her eyebrows. Subaru held his breath as he looked into Emilia’s amethyst eyes. His chest gave a sharp pang to the deep, deep affection in her look.

He was reminded. They were hoping in "Natsuki Subaru", the one that was here. He would feel uneasy were he not able to shoulder that burden. But, However…,

[Subaru: ??Errr, I am sorry to worry you all. I’m sorry, I heavily apologise. It is not like me to hug a girl that is half-asleep and this even, is a thing to hide my embarrassment.]

Relaxing his stiffened face, Subaru replied, whilst easing his face into a smile. To that answer, Beatrice and Emilia exchanged looks, and,

[Emilia: But… Patrasche is a girl as well you know?]

[Subaru: Eeeh!? Hey, wait, Patrasche is quite the special entry, or rather, the sort of target which we are bonded by different sorts of bonds, or rather, the top seed in an unconditional second round entry.]

[Beatrice: Hmph, that is unpardonable, I suppose. I don't get why you’re only giving special treatment to that earth dragon. I would like an explanation, I suppose.]

[Subaru: Hey, don’t try to stand in the same ring as her! That Earth Dragon…]

Subaru returned his answer whilst looking carefully at Beatrice and Emilia's reaction, as Beatrice's face was growing ever more in displeasure. Receiving his answer, it seemed that the two of them did not feel

like anything was out of place. Feeling relieved about that, Subaru turned his head to look towards the lizard?? No, Patrasche, he had been stroking.

[Subaru: Truly, only you are a special one, Patrasche.]

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

[Emilia: So, Subaru, are you really feeling okay?]

[Subaru: Ah, yes, yes, I am okay, I am okay, no problemo at all. I'm sorry for worrying you all. I think perhaps the exhaustion got to me, and as things are rather the case with that, I must have accidentally fallen asleep.]

[Emilia: Yeah… but you'll tell us if you are tired, right? Because, you can take it easy.]

Emilia brought this reminder to Subaru who had answered in tune whilst rotating his arms. Subaru answered back to those words with a lackadaisical "OKAY, Captain!" whilst immersing himself in full thought.

Subaru led Beatrice and Emilia now, and kept walking through the fourth floor of the tower. They were going to the fourth floor hall, their purpose was to dine?? In brief, the three of them were walking with their bodies not holding any urgent issues.

This time Subaru was determined to take a different approach from last time. That is… he would not confide to Emilia and the others about his amnesia.

[????]

In other words, the situation would require Subaru to act as if he were impersonating another. Wetting his parched lips with his tongue as his strain exacerbated, Subaru had kept observing how things were around Emilia and the others.

Subaru had still not figured out what kind of character the “Natsuki Subaru” for the others was. It should be impossible to do something like tracing a stranger in such circumstances, but by all rights it should be a different story to "Impersonate Himself" in conditions that would otherwise not be established.

No matter where he went, “Natsuki Subaru” is simply just Natsuki Subaru.

Even if he had spent a year in this parallel world, Subaru knew that the fundamentals of human nature would remain unchanged in himself. Then, if he just paid heed to the relationship afterwards, then he should be able to trace the same sort of character to a good enough extent. And then, whilst tracing "Natsuki Subaru", he would see what would happen now.

What happened in this tower? Who would kill him? And who was killed by who.

For now, Subaru would verify the likelihood of the trigger that drove him to his own "death" by hiding

his amnesia. In other words, would his opponent kill him because of his amnesia, or did it have nothing to do with that? Be that as it may, in all honesty, he didn't have much expectations. Subaru's lost memories?? it's hard to imagine the situation with our without some troubles cropping up. However, of course there are exceptions.

[Subaru: The case in which the criminal would be a guy who would be troubled if my memories were to come back.]

Subaru remembered seeing it in a movie before. Eyewitnesses who had witnessed the murder scene lost their memory due to some sort of shock. The criminal who could observe the scene would be in trouble if their memories were to return. That's why in the movie the criminal tried to kill the witnesses as well. It can definitely be thought that a similar situation was occurring to Subaru currently. Foremost, the circumstances in which Subaru had lost his memories were unclear??,

[Subaru: Emilia, did you find me collapsed in the third floor the library?]

[Emilia: Yeah, that's right. You were on the floor of the library… Beatrice and I carried you to the Green Room in a great hurry.]

[Beatrice: Well, since it was Emilia that carried you, Betty was just there to help out behind her, in fact.]

Subaru gazed at Emilia's slender arms as he received Beatrice's supplementary explanation, laced with a sigh. If he were to settle down and think properly about it, it was a mystery to Subaru how these two people had carried him all the way back from the library to the Green Room. Beatrice didn't give a single fragment of indication that she was suited to do any heavy lifting, and from what he had been told at face value, he was also wondering how this Emilia that believed in a fake had carried Subaru so easily.

[Emilia: What's wrong?]

[Subaru: Eerrrr, nothing. Well, in any case, you were a great help. I've said it many times, but sorry to have troubled you.]

[Emilia: Not sorry, A thank you would be nicer.]

Bowing his head in apology, Emilia placed her palm on Subaru's forehead as he tried to lower it.
Subaru's eyes widened at the touch of Emilia's smooth fingers, hastily muttering out an: "I guess you're right".

As Subaru had thought so far, the feeling of distance between him and Emilia was a little too strong; therefore, he did not hesitate and let her touch him. Come to think of it, when Subaru had woken up, he had also placed his hands around her neck. Nevertheless, she was looking at Subaru with a peaceful expression.

[Subaru: No matter what kind of livelihood, I will always feel a great sense of distance with this girl…]

Or perhaps, Emilia, contrary to her awfully well-prepared appearance, was just all too used to strangeness? Surely, she is gentle to everyone as well, and probably she didn't feel any barriers between anyone as a result of brought up and loved.

She was likely a girl who had been sheltered as a child, unaffected by any significant hardship— If someone isn't burdened with even one regret, then they can believe in only the virtue of others, and keep your eyes all the time prim and beautiful. ??Or… was even that all just an act?

[????]

Whilst looking at Emilia and Beatrice side by side, Subaru was deeply immersed within his thoughts. Simply, when he deconstructed it down to the bare-bones, when it came to Subaru's last moments and tragedy in the tower within the last loop, the suspects most worth keeping an eye on were Emilia and Beatrice.

Subaru had seen the corpses of Shaula, Echidna, Ram, Julius and Meili. He had been saved by Patrasche and brought out of the lurching tower; however he had had his head lopped off by someone standing behind him, and lost his life. ??He had yet to see Beatrice or Emilia die.

Of course, even if the two of them had conspired together, then he didn't know if the possibility of the killing of the five people still remained. Subaru's diagnosis was that it was difficult. But, if for argument's sake, another person existed?? if the number had increased to three, then the story probably changed.

[???: Next. Try and guess, hero.]

Subaru had no memory of the unknown voice which had spoken those words at the end. In the midst of the chaos, in the midst of the swirl of confusion, in the midst of despairing of wanting the end to come already, he had heard this voice. That, a third person cooperating with Emilia and Beatrice?? could that be the identity of an unseen third person that carried Subaru from the library to the Green Room? That's why these two were spouting out such codswallop??,

[Emilia: Uh, Subaru, you are going too far.]

[Subaru: Huh?]

Apparently, Subaru had walked past the room whilst he was immersed in his own thoughts. Emilia had stopped in front of the room and had placed her arm on Subaru’s shoulder to prevent him from walking too far. In an instant, Subaru felt a peculiarly uncomfortable, and he looked at Emilia's arm which had grabbed his shoulder. And then, he took her hand and shook it.

[Beatrice: Subaru? What on earth are you doing, I suppose?]

[Subaru: Ah, just a little experiment... Emilia, won't you do a contest of strength with me?]

[Emilia: Eeh, but I think we'd better have it stop from being dangerous...]

There had been no sense of resistance when he had shook her hand itself, and Emilia had shown a sense of denial to the contest of strength. Seeing this behaviour, Subaru became more convinced and strongly said: "I ask this of you." If Emilia's arm indeed did not have the strength to carry Subaru, then his deduction from before would give him a fairly strong guarantee. So now, Emilia should not think that she is suspected. He would need to make best use of this advantage, a chance like this only existed right now.

[Subaru: I ask this of you, because it’s of utmost necessity.]

[Emilia: … Since Subaru sounds quite serious, it must be quite the important thing, right?]

Receiving Subaru's supplication, the worried Emilia pursed her lips, and gave a nod with a determined look. Seeing that, Subaru clenched his fist with all his heart, saying: "Ready". If after, he proved her weakness, then Subaru's deduction would progress far further.

[Beatrice: Well, do something different like an arm-pull match instead so that it doesn't become dangerous, in fact. is that okay, I suppose?]

[Subaru: Ah, that’s OK!]

[Emilia: Okay, got it!]

In accordance to Beatrice's instructions, Subaru and Emilia shook hands, and made some space between them. They took each other's right arm, and then the two of them stared into each other's eyes.

And then??,

[Beatrice: Ready, go, in fact!] *(TL: Note, interesting note maybe? Beatrice says this using Engrish. Probably something she picked from Subaru.)*

On Beatrice’s signal, Subaru pulled Emilia’s arm with all his might.

[Subaru : Oooooh!!]

His grip strength could crush apples, his grip strength could keep swinging a Kendo sword even with no target, his grip strength could keep on doing push-ups. The strength of a man against that of a woman’s— he poured all of this into this battle.

??Yet, Emilia’s arm did not move an inch.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Subaru’s deduction in which he doubted Beatrice and Emilia was set back to square one.

However, Subaru had only confirmed that Emilia and the others had carried him without the help of a

third party. It didn't mean that the suspicions of the two girls had been cleared away. Subaru had still yet to have seen the two girls' corpses. The tower's mass killings?? that situation's criminal being different was something that was still not decided.

[Subaru: After all, is it purely the guy who came out in the end the one who is the criminal?]

They had certainly killed Subaru. But was that guy a criminal insofar to have carried out everyone's mass-murders by those hands? As well as the shadows which had engulfed the tower? All the ones killed were each killed in different ways. What becomes of that explanation. The ways they had died in was easy to understand merely from glimpsing. Echidna had suffered damage from a single stroke from something sharp. Julius had had several wounds piled up on him. And hadn't Meili died from blood-loss?

There was no doubt that everyone had died in different manners, fighting someone. That should be it, but.

[???: So what the hell was that prank about?]

A voice called out as if amazed to Subaru who was deep in thought. That voice was Ram's, who was finishing preparing breakfast. As she set up the table with water and preserved food, she demanded an explanation on the contest of strength with Emilia?? Subaru's experiment which he had carried out.

The contest of strength which had been for determining proof of Subaru's deduction had its curtain closed by the shape of his defeat to Emilia. It was Ram joining up with them in front of the hall which had given an impetus for its end. When she saw Subaru's struggles, red in face, she had put an end to things with a curt: "Are you stupid?"

[Emilia: I was asked by Subaru, I don’t quite understand why but I am sure it had some reaaaallly important meaning to it. Isn't that right, Subaru?]

[Ram: Is that so? The reason given to Ram, all I could see was wanting to hold Emilia-sama's hand.]

[Subaru: You're overthinking it! If you want, next time do you want to do a contest of strength with me!?]

[Ram: Disgusting]

[Subaru: Why!?]

Ram spoke her awfully cruel impression of him to Emilia who had tried to stick up for him. If he tried to dispel it, in an instant his position would get considerably worse. An undoubtedly vicious cycle.

[Ram: Hah!]

Giving a scornful laugh, Ram diverted her attention back to setting the table. Seeing her retreating figure, Subaru was secretly relieved that it seemed as if his current behaviour was did not give off anything that would feel out of place. It seemed as if he hadn't yet taken an attitude which separated him from the "Natsuki Subaru" known by the girls.This made him feel relieved, and also amazed. Doing this, he mustn't tip his awareness towards a different bearing, not even by a little??

[Subaru: Urp-!]

In an instant Subaru bore the vomiting sensation that suddenly welled up in him. Subaru put his hand to his mouth. Its cause was Ram who was diligently working with her back turned towards them. ??The girl's retreating figure caused him to keep blinking with the manner of death scorching his eyelids.

Ram had received a blow from behind, in which part of her stomach had been blown apart, killing her. The shadow of her death were coated with regret and anger, distorting and cursing her pitiful facial expression. A lamentation was etched into her soul which would attempt to tear any who witnessed it from limb to limb. The owner of that corpse moved right before his eyes, and certainly was alive.

In all honesty, from the moment he first came across her at the hall, he had been desperate to accept a contradiction between reality and that uncomfortable feeling. He felt more or less relieved that he could use the lapse of dizziness he had experienced as an excuse thanks to his exertions in the contest of strength with Emilia just before.

But, he had overlooked Ram's facial expression.

[????]

Grinding his teeth together, Subaru directs his awareness into getting back strong self-control. From then on, all of the people related to the tower one by one filed into the hall. He mustn't overlook each of their expressions. ??Because that in itself would be the key to breaking the situation.

[???: Wooooah, what a nice smeeell~! A meal fit for a king in this refreshing morning! IIIII sure know I'mm living for this~!]

The first one of them showed up in the hall whilst saying out this stuff noisily. A beautiful woman whose long black braided hair was swinging about, who was unabashedly exposing most of her huge breasts?? Shaula showed up in the hall still with her head definitely attacked to her body.

She was looking at the meal which had been prepared by Ram, but, then she noticed Subaru within the room, and she spoke:

[Shaula: Master! Good morning! Did you sleep well yesterday~?]

All of a sudden, her facial expression lit up, and she rushed over towards where he was with the vigour of say, a puppy. And then, grabbing Subaru's arm, she tightly embraced his chest.

[Subaru: Uh.....]

[Shaula: By the way, IIII slept incredibly well! After such a long time, I had dreams and such from the former days~. Meeee and Master, and mother, and then and theen]

[Subaru: Aah, I getcha… wait. I will give a good listen to the story about your dream sometime… But, did you happen to see me this morning?]

[Shaula: Eeeeh, again with the awfully weightless questions? How typical of Master!]

Disentangling himself somehow from her arms which had embraced him, Subaru inquired this as he escaped from Shaula. In response to that, Shaula gave a cheerful laugh.

[Shaula: SHOUJIKI (TL Note: Seems to be a reference to this), what Master sees is no big deal! Just like the olden days, to me you're always the sexiest guy! It's a marriage proposal awaited for 400 years!]

[Subaru: Talk about patience. .....Generally speaking for that joke it'd be good if it is nothing.]

[Shaula: ??? Is that so? If so, I dooon't mind as well~]

Without a desired response, Subaru withdrew his doubts regarding Shaula whilst sensing some relief mingled with some traces of discouragement. And, as he did, the next suspect, Meili showed up in the room.

[Meili: *Yaawn*.... Good morning. I'm feeling sleepy this morning to~o]

The girl who came through the entrance gave a sweet yawn, covering her mouth with her hand. Even so, she had taken great care to upkeep her personal appearance, and he certainly admired the little girl's sense of beauty. Greatly different to Subaru who was just content in ruffling his hair up, and washing his face. In any case??

[Subaru: Good morning, Meili! You overslept this morning, huh?]

[Meili: When slowing down and thinking about it, I feel like I have no reason to get up at the same time as Onee-san and the others. This tower doesn't really have anything to do with me.]

[Beatrice: A girl whose proposing such ill-natured things, in fact. In general, unless Betty and the others complete the trials so to leave the tower, then you can't leave this tower either, I suppose.]

[Meili: Well, that is true… but…]

Having a bone to pick with her yawning excuses, Meili pursed her lips at Beatrice's opinion. As she said that, she shifted her attention to Shaula and Subaru who were near the wall. She gave a wave, accompanied by a smile. Seeing that, Subaru raised his eyebrow, and then he returned the wave.

[Subaru: Am I overthinking it as usual in having doubting even as far as a dead child…?]

[Shaula: Master, when troubled, you return back to the basis. Staring with from how you jab.]

[Subaru: ....What is that teaching?]

[Shaula: It’s Master's teachings.]

[Subaru: It's no wonder I thought it was useless.]

Listening to this monologue, Subaru dodged Shaula's frivolities as he shuddered in his heart. In any case, he couldn't get a response he desired even from Meili. Then, the only things which remained were just two more people who could test to see whether this plan was at all fruitful??

[??? : ??Good morning.]

With that, the last two people missing entered the room together. Echidna and Julius. Echidna, who was wrapped in a white fox scarf walked into the hall with Julius beside her. They each in turn greet Emilia, Ram and the others, and exchange words of good morning. Meanwhile.

[??]

Julius who had been walking behind Echidna saw Subaru standing near the back of the room, and his face stiffened. He suddenly averted his eyes and drove Subaru out of his awareness.

[Subaru: ??You?]

Julius’ reaction was quite close to one Subaru was seeking. And, as no one other person had shown such a reaction, it was very likely that he had no choice but to say that it was him who had displayed the most blunt reaction.

[Subaru: Shaula…, I have a small favour to ask you.]

Subaru faintly muttered this. The remains of hatred as if boiled with the flames of anger that would not extinguish were there.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??The breakfast at the hall started and ended with the meeting regarding the explanation that Echidna = Anastasia.

As he made his face into something like as if hearing it for the first time to the surprised reactions of Emilia and the others, Subaru was impressed with the way the world had went ahead like so when he hadn't talked about his amnesia. So far, mistaking what is reality and not had been piling up, and Subaru almost can't comprehend his own special characteristics which make him "Return by Death." However, just the same as time leaps that are often in fiction, the problems which do not involve Subaru will proceed the same as usual. He understood that changes in the affected problems were born.

In other words, up until the last time he had been involved in the core of their discussions due to his "amnesia". The reality in which the individual called Echidna lodging in the body of the young girl called Anastasia had by no means been delved deeply into during their talks.

Even this time around, there would be no such thing like finding the problem's solution or something that would reveal new facts. The changes are considered to occur only in Subaru's actions. If he wanted to dramatically advance the situation, Subaru would need to proactively do stuff.

Therefore??

[Subaru: ??Julius, I'd like to have a couple of words with you]

Breakfast ended, and as they all tried to file out of the hall, Subaru called out to Julius so that he'd stop.Julius stopped in his tracks at that call, turning his head to look at Subaru. Subaru craned his neck up to look at him when they were facing each other, as Julius was quite tall. However, if he were to lose to that intimidating presence, Subaru would stick his chest out all the more as he and Julius glared at each other. Perceiving his disposition, Julius spilled a weary sigh from his thin lips, and said,

[Julius: What is it? Shouldn't you rest until noon, as Emilia-sama suggested?]

Julius' words were something he had gotten from Emilia's proposal back at breakfast. Apparently, it seemed that Emilia had been worried about unseen fatigue wearing everyone down, and had taken up the opinion that Subaru had been exhausted and had slept in the library because of it.

In fact, although this wasn't in Subaru's memories, this party had just managed to cross the desert a few days ago. Though Subaru had failed to cross the desert in just a few steps, it would have probably relatively difficult to fulfill that. This too could be said to be a change caused from Subaru's speech. Even trivial words sometimes can derail that day's schedule. He must take care in what he says and does.

With that in his chest, Subaru would confront Julius head-on. And, tucking his chin in response to his words, he said.

[Subaru: I want to talk about last night.]

The effect of these words was immediate.

[????]

Receiving Subaru's words, great emotions floated in his yellow eyes. Seeing the immediate effect his response had brought, Subaru deepened his belief in his own deduction.

[Subaru: Come. Let’s change location.]

[Julius: ??All right.]

Julius followed along with a look of resignation at Subaru's invitation, which he gave whilst jerking his chin. Just like that, Subaru led Julius and brought him to a suitable place for conversation in a room on the fourth floor. Naturally, it was a secret talk in which others couldn't be allowed to but in.

[Subaru: Well, I wonder where shall I start from...]

Inside this cramped room, Subaru turned his head around, and confronted Julius. There was a slight feeling of tension, but he didn't want to make a mistake such as revealing that. The thought that he should to some extent stand emotionally superior allowed him to show his boldness. On the other hand, the way Julius looked was complex, reading what lay in heart was difficult. But, it seemed to be something that mustn't be a feeling of composure, that had persisted from the place of breakfast before.

[Subaru: First of all, about last night]

To start things off, Subaru abruptly cut to the main point in an introductory manner. Currently, he has the emotional upper hand, but his opponent has an overwhelming advantage with what he knows. In the first place, Subaru didn't really know all too much about what had transpired the night before. Nevertheless, perhaps last night, Subaru and Julius must have done something in the library. As a result of that "Something", Subaru thought that perhaps he had lost his memories because of that.

[Julius: About last... night]

Repeating Subaru's words, Julius closed his eyes, which were bordered by long eyelashes. Subaru consciously kept breathing out deep, long breaths as he stood in front of the handsome man. He mustn't be overwhelmed. At least, it's that his feeling was to not lose.

[Julius: When it comes to that talk, we said it was a thing that ended at that place. At least, that's what I was thinking, but is it different for you?]

[Subaru: ??. Aaah, not quite. I mustn't have grasped it.]

Seeing Julius join in the talk, Subaru replied in turn. Julius' voice was devoid of any intonation, and so to speak he was careful so that he didn't reveal more emotions than necessary. Of course, when it came to Subaru receiving that, he chose the option of snapping at it.

[Julius: Grasped it…? I see, well, that sounds just like you. In short, you're saying you want me to postpone the feelings I hold, and solve the issues of your own self, is that? Isn't that... a little too selfish?]

[Subaru: That's a little off, and that's not what we're talking about. I'm certainly not happy with it, but are you trying to look happy about it? We're both walking around with anger in our hearts, and you're saying I have to look like nothing's wrong? You think I could do that?]

[Julius: ...Well then, exactly what other option is there?]

Julius had been quietly keeping a check on his emotions. But, little by little, emotion started to flow out from his voice. Subaru could feel Julius staring at him, with a furious gaze, Subaru of course was still unaware of the details behind Julius' outburst.

What choice did Subaru want to hear? What kind of choice had Julius taken regarding Subaru with him holding such fury? And when it came to Subaru, how did he let Julius choose that choice.

[Julius: My feelings are as I said last night, and I am not going to keep mentioning it, since I hadn't even

noticed you and Anastasia-sama… and your connivery with Echidna.]

[Subaru: Me and my connivery with Echidna…?]

An unexpected fact had leapt out, and this time it was Subaru who had been caught unawares. By the information he had at the present, Subaru was supposed to be part of a group with Emilia at the top. Julius and Echidna?? in their situation, he had been in a master and servant sort of role with Anastasia who was the original owner of Echidna's body. He also heard that they were in an opposing sort of relationship with the girls, if he looked at the big picture. But, he had said Subaru had been conniving with Echidna.

[Julius: I know you did not have bad intentions doing that. Even if it's Echidna, I can't say it's enough, but we spoke. She can be trusted... No, there is no other way but to trust her.]

[Subaru: …]

[Julius: I have nothing except for pursuing that possibility in order to save Anastasia-sama. .....Even if we get her back, and even if that lady doesn't remember me.]

Julius uttered these words, an awfully lonely tone of voice tinging his expression.

Subaru had heard about his circumstances as well. Just like Ram's sleeping younger sister, and many people from many different towns, Julius too was afflicted by this. He had been told that they had faced an awful experience similar to a curse in which they are forgotten by others. Even if Echidna returned control to the rightful owner of the body, it would be highly unlikely that Anastasia would remember her knight, Julius.

Even so??

[Julius: ??I haven’t changed what I’ve set out to do, I don’t know what on earth you want to drag out from me, but let me tell you just this beforehand.]

[Subaru: What is it?]

[Julius: For goodness sake, please do not make me miserable in front of you again.]

As soon as Subaru heard Julius's feeble voice, no words escaped him.

[????]

However, in the back of his chest, there was just a feeling of discomposure. Subaru kept silent. Julius took a look at Subaru, loosening his lips so that he could let out a faint sigh,

[Julius: It seems apparent this will be a barren exchange from here.]

Saying that, Julius turned to face away from Subaru and was about to leave the room. Then, just before leaving the room, Julius stopped just once. And whilst still not turning his head, he said:

[Julius: Last night's talk that was said left me quite shocked. ??What ought I do, if you were to speak an apology?]

[Subaru: If I were to apologise...?]

[Julius: Back then, I wonder how I would've replied back to you. Though even that is something I don't know anymore.]

Julius left the room, leaving behind the echo of self-derision in that mutter. After making sure that he wasn't in sight, Subaru let out a long sigh. He suddenly felt exhausted, as if a great stone had been placed on his back. He was sweating copiously. He felt like he had become a vehemently detestable person.

[Shaula: ??Master, was that okay with you?]

Shaula showed up and peered into the room. Subaru let out a "Hah" seeing her quite indifferent manner. And then, placing his hand to his forehead, he nodded his head with a: "It was okay."

[Subaru: In that state he is in, perhaps Julius didn't have anything to do with the library. ...But the distrust in myself sure grew still a little bit stronger.]

[Shaula: I don’t really get it, but was I useful for you Master?]

[Subaru: ??. Aah, indeed. Thanks to you, I was able to face Julius, and get some peace of mind.]

[Shaula: Hehehehe, That's good~ Then, then, then, Master, Master...]

Shaula was delighted, she was making her body squirm, and her cheeks were blushed in red. She was making her way towards Subaru. And then, she nervously stretched her hands out,

[Shaula: I want a really tight hug as a reward!]

[Subaru: No way!]

[Shaula: Eeeeeeh!? How mean! Master, didn't you say you'd listen to what I'd say if I didn't deviate from the reward level!?]

[Subaru: That wish goes far beyond my pure, and innocent heart...]

Subaru bluntly rejected Shaula's excessive hopes and dreams for close skin-to-skin contact. Nonetheless, it was true that Shaula had been lying in wait, giving him enough composure in his heart to confront Julius.

When he had called out to Julius, Subaru had kept Shaula in wait in the adjoining room as backup. The reason he had chosen her was because between all of the other girls, she seemed to have the best athleticism, as well as that she seemed to listen to favours due to her likeability of Subaru. It was as a result of calculation that she seemed willing to help him without asking too many questions.

Other than that, from amongst the suspects, the girl, whose dead body he had found first, was the least likely to pose a danger from all of them.

In any case??,

[Subaru: My thoughts that it was Julius who was the opponent who stole my memories at the library was way off the mark...]

This morning, he had thought it was almost a certainty from his reaction when he'd seen Subaru. But, those line of thinking had been off. Despite what happened at the library, the Julius of some time ago didn't really touch much on the incident in which his memories of him had gone. Having said that, his emotions were all too natural for an act.

It was quite uncertain what thing of speculation the connivery with Echidna was due to "Natsuki Subaru". But, at least, it was a good enough reason for Subaru now to harbour distrust to the him of last night. Before his memories had been lost, it seemed like there'd been quite the exchange of tempestuous words between him, Echidna and Julius,

[Subaru: You... what on earth were you doing, and who on earth targeted you, "Natsuki Subaru"....]

[Shaula: Maaaster, how about you jump to my chest? Come hug my busty body, Master.]

[Subaru: That wish is beyond naïve!]

[Shaula: Master is mean~!]

Speaking of things he had no clue about, Subaru also had no clue why Shaula showed him such a strange affection. Why did she dearly love Subaru to this extent? It appeared that Emilia, and everyone else around her, also had no clue why she did. It was said it was something to make convenient use of ??But, was it really like that?

His connivery with Echidna, the blurriness of last night's deeds, and in the first place, his relationship with the girls?? And now, the being Subaru least knew of as far as he was concerned was "Natsuki Subaru". What kind of speculation did he face against the girls and guys?

??Was "Natsuki Subaru" even truly associated with them? *(TL Note: more accurately "the girls" probably to refer to Emilia-side)*

[Subaru: Crap, my thoughts have come to a dead end… Let's go where Patrasche is for a bit?]

For the time being, he wanted to go to place where could settle down and think. When thinking that, the first thing that came to the current Subaru's mind as his greatest ally, was most certainly that jet-black earth dragon. There was no choice but to put his faith in the one who had staked their life protecting him,

regardless of whether he had his memories or not.

[Shaula: Eeeh, that earth dragon~? That earth dragon... isn't really my cup of tea since it keeps glaring at me.]

[Subaru: You... insults against Patrasche are unforgivable! Even if this world became a world in which anyone's insults were permissible, I won't forgive any insults at Patrasche.]

[Shaula: Master, how whipped does that dragon have you!?]

Shaula raised her voice into something like a shriek, but Subaru took absolutely no notice of it. In any case, it was because he now wanted to be lost in his thoughts in peace, by Patrasche's side. At any rate, their original aim, the tower's capture, would begin straight after lunch. Since he had concealed his amnesia, there would be no way of stopping it.

[Subaru: That's why we're parting here as well. See you in a bit.]

[Shaula: Uwaaah, you were colluding even for the reward. But even so, I caaaaan't bear it. I'm a woman for Master's convenience, that's the meaning of my life.]

[Subaru: ??]

As he tried to leave the room, Shaula spoke this out, and gave him a cold goodbye. Receiving her words, Subaru held his breath. Whilst still keeping his back turned away from her, Subaru hung his head down, and closed his eyes.

[Subaru: Where in Natsuki Subaru is the worth in going that far?]

[Shaula: ??Master?]

[Subaru: ??hk! Ah, damn it!]

Unable to bear the irritation welling up in him, Subaru roughly scratched his head, and turned around so he was facing Shaula who was inclining her head. And then, walking towards the immobile girl, he stretched out both of his hands and with all of his might, he embraced her slender body.

[Shaula: ??hk]

[Subaru: You shouldn't think of yourself as just a woman for convenience, or things like that. It was my bad.]

Subaru was going to end up becoming the same as "Natsuki Subaru" were he to just make a one-sided use of her. Shaula's breath hitched and her body stiffened at the Subaru's comportment who had refused to become like that.

Shaula was tall, approximately the same height as Subaru. But even so, her body which he had embraced

was slender, supple and soft. There was quite the difference between her body, and that of his own body.

[Shaula: Ma... ster…]

[Subaru: You helped me out by being there. ....That is all.]

[Shaula: ??]

Around 30 seconds had passed hugging Shaula. Subaru slowly let go of her body. In all honesty, he felt awkward, but his sense of achievement was stronger. If he were to become a guy who just handed out gifts like that. If he were to become the same as "Natsuki Subaru"??

[Shaula: Maaster…]

Looking at the pensive Subaru, Shaula dizzily walked towards him, her cheeks fiercely blushing. Her eyes were wet with tears, her breathing was somewhat feverish, and she was gazing at Subaru's lips,

[Shaula: Master, finally you've shown me some love...]

[Subaru: Beyond naïve!]

[Shaula: Gueh!]

Pushing her face away with his palm, Subaru snapped Shaula back to reality.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

[Subaru: Whether or not I reward you, you get carried away... What a difficult character...]

Subaru had somehow managed to calm down the aroused Shaula, and extracted himself out of the situation. He sighed. Eventually, Shaula had left, still in a dreamy state of mind, with the words: "It's the mark of a good woman to see when it's time to leave as well." In all honesty, even though he had no clue what the meaning of this was, meddling into it would be all too bothersome.

[Subaru: Since sometimes, there are things that you *need not know* in the world.]

In any case, contrary to such a careless act, Subaru's situation was not looking great. At least, he expected what happened in the library to come to light if he pecked at Julius. But, as now it had missed its mark, he had once again returned back to square one. Or, as he had first posited, were the others not at all involved in Subaru's missing memories? Though, it was just Ram's facial expression that he hadn't been able to check ??

[Subaru: She looked like she was in tears… but, I don't know anymore if they were just crocodile tears…]

It had been Ram who had tried her hardest to not believe the story that Subaru had really lost his memories. Of course there was still the possibility that she had been acting; it's not a possibility that she

hadn't been able to recognise some sort of participation happening, but there are no limits to these sorts of suggestions. If he doesn't place his trust in something, then it's certainly a fact that he can't even start to doubt something. As far as Subaru is concerned, that basis was??

[Subaru: ??That means Patrasche now]

After asserting that, he was shocked at himself for being the conclusion of a person who fell into a pitfall of bearing complete mistrust for everyone around him. But in fact, it was true that that side of him was quite prominent. His "complete mistrust for everyone" was indescribable tantamount to it being deeply ingrained. And it wasn't just to others, but now, he also couldn't believe in himself.

[Subaru: Still, it might be more a blessing if I got to spend some time in a paradise in which just Patrasche and Earth Dragons are....]

[???: ??Ahh, I heard th~at!]

[Subaru: Wooah!?]

At the very moment in which he had been voicing these thoughts out loud, a young girl nimbly rushed out from the corner of the aisleway. The little girl was Meili, her blue braids swinging about as she stifled a giggle. Subaru wearily dropped his shoulders at the figure of the young girl when she had heard his dull thoughts voiced out.

[Subaru: It’s just something like a joke or nonsense. Surely you didn't get that?]

[Meili: I'm su~re. But, I don't particularly intend to laugh at them even if they're Onii-san's true feelings y~know. Because if there's a place where you can just live with some bad animal-chans, then I think it's something that one wouldn't mind living there.]

[Subaru: .....Huh]

Whilst hearing Subaru fumbling excuses, Meili held her skirt by the hem in a gesture which Subaru cannot tell whether it’s meant to be elegant or wild. Even if he'd gotten an answer from that, he didn't really know what sort of reply to give. However, it didn't seem like she was pleased by that reply.

[Meili: Ah, si~nce I gave a vague answer. Since a person took the trouble to diligently give a speech, I thi~nk that not listening to it properly is the mark of a naughty child.]

[Subaru: That's not much of an apology. … You're alone? You aren't with Beatrice?]

[Meili: No chance! Why would I be with Beatrice-chan? Bu~t, I think that is a question I'd rather ask of you, Onii-san.]

He had thought that the girls who were of a similar age would be hanging out together, yet it seemed that it was not so. Certainly, the times in which Beatrice had acted together with Emilia were many.??That's why he treated his misgivings for the two of them as a set; he wasn't able to think of them separately.

[Subaru: Well, still, that’s fine. Though, just so you know, I don’t have time to play with you. I'm sorry, but look elsewhere if you want to speak to someone. Shaula's back there for example.]

[Meili: I could talk to my half-naked Onee-san, bu~t right now I have stuff to do with Onii-san.]

[Subaru: With me?]

Though Subaru didn't want to be disturbed during the time he had set to plunge into his unavoidable brooding, in his secret "date" with Patrasche, he couldn't help widen his eyes at Meili's unexpected introduction. Thinking about it, the little girl was quite similar to Shaula, in that she was easy to talk to compared to Emilia and the others. Even in her last moments in the last loop, her corpse hadn't been left in a mutilated state as far as it being too painful to even look at. Since she had looked as if she had died in her sleep, the shocking images don't overlap with each other even when he's directly opposite her. His heartbeat had calmed as well.

[Subaru: What is it? Is it quick?]

[Meili: Yeah, it wo~n't take particularly long.]

Subaru felt an overwhelming sense of security; he lent out an ear to listen to Meili's story. And then, seeing Subaru adjust his posture to indicate he was willing to listen, Meili placed a finger to her lips and licked the fingertip with her tongue. This somewhat alluring gesture did not fit her childish appearance. Subaru frowned at it.

[Meili: ??I wo~nder, just how seriously should I take what we talked about last night?]

This is what the little girl said to Subaru, whilst still smiling sweetly.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

.

[Subaru: ??Wh...a?]

Suddenly, Subaru was set free from the strange stoppage in his consciousness, and grasped his own neck. There was something in his throat like a feeling of acridity and breathlessness. He launched into a coughing fit.

[Subaru: Ack, Ack...]

Whilst touching his throat, Subaru coughed over and over again as he relished a sensation which felt similar to parched pain. And then, he suddenly took notice.

[Subaru: That... I was…...]

??What was it that he was doing?

Just before, he had for sure talked to Julius, then there had been that farce with Shaula, and after that he had tried to go to where Patrasche was. And, finally, he had met Meili halfway there??

[Subaru: OW…]

Subaru had been rubbing his arm as he was immersed in thought, he clucked his tongue in sharp pain. Looking down at his hand?? both of his hands. A bunch of scratchmarks were carved on the wrists of both his left and right hand. He realised that blood was oozing out of them.

[Subaru: TCH, What the hell is this...]

The wounds were relatively deep, but, the wounds themselves were irregular. Them being scratchmarks was not a bad guess, they could not be from a sharp blade. They were wounds which had been caused by someone digging their nails deeply into his flesh with all of their might. Where on earth had he got these wounds from??

[Subaru: ??Ah?]

Subaru looked around his surroundings to see if there was anything he could use as a bandage whilst grimacing in pain. And, he noticed that he was in a similar stone room like many of them on the fourth floor. And then, he finally noticed it.

[????]

White feet were strewn on the floor. The feet were unmoving, the strength in them had fizzled out. He slowly shifted his gaze up from their feet; there was a skirt, and the upper part of their body... and then.

And then??

[Subaru: ??Wha?]

And then, right there, the figure of a little girl who didn't even twitch had collapsed in front of him.

??Meili had collapsed in front of Subaru's eyes, and she wasn't breathing.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Arc 6 – Chapter 44, “Medal of Blood”

by admin - Wednesday, August 22, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/08/22/arc-6-chapter-44-medal-of-blood/

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Translated by :

- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism

Proofread by:

- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd
- Ringo, /u/Ringo_17

Fan Art Created by :

- Owari_Su

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Within the stone room, Subaru was gazing down at his hands in shock at seeing the small girl who lay limp just beneath his eyes.

[Subaru: ……]

He could not understand what had just happened. His wrists were wounded, his throat felt acrid, and his

heart was racing. However those things did not seem to be linked with what had happened, in fact his memory was a complete blank, it was like a glitch had been born within his mind.

Apart from the physical evidence that remained, any traces of anyone had vanished. Only one thing was certain, only one thing –

– The light within the little girl's eyes that lay in front of him had been extinguished.

[Subaru: … tch, it's still too early to give up.]

One step at a time, each step he takes feels extremely heavy, as if his feet were glued to the floor.

He somehow manages to move his feet towards the little girl… Meili. He crouches down next to her.

[Subaru: ……]

Meili lay there motionless, in spread-eagled fashion with her mouth half-open. She had an expression that seemed like one of shock frozen on her face and her eyes seemed to be out of focus.

When he had first seen her, it had seemed like the girl had been taken by surprise. Seeing her figure now up close only strengthened this impression –

[Subaru: Mei, Meili… oy, Meili!]

He called that out. But there was no reaction.

Since his desperate appeal had not roused her, Subaru shakes her shoulders and tries to lightly slap her face in the hopes of seeing a response. But yet again, there was no response from her. Her eyelids which had remained open did not even blink.

[Subaru: Me…]

Stopping himself, Subaru took a deep breath and decides that he will try to resuscitate her using what he recalls. Putting his hands on her chest, he remembered learning about how to administer emergency chest compressions. He remembered that the heart's position was about two fingers length away from the top of the stomach and that he would need to press down on her heart using all of his body weight. With this in mind, he started to push his palms down on her chest.

[Subaru: Haa… haaaaa…! Meili! Hey, Meili!]

["....."]

[Subaru: Fuck.]

There was no reply. With a pale face, he feebly shook her body. Cursing the situation he was in, Subaru brought her head up and secured her airway in preparation for giving her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

The process of CPR included administering both chest compressions and performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

[Subaru: What next. There's something else. What is it, what is it, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, FUCK!]

Desperately clawing at his memory, Subaru searches for anything else that he could do. However, he had obtained this smattering of knowledge from watching TV; in the end it was only half-complete. The more desperately he tried to resuscitate her, the more Subaru's arms succumbed to fatigue and the more it started to feel like a fruitless attempt.

Simply, in the end, he was repeating over and over again the actions of chest compressions, followed by mouth-to-mouth. He could not feel any trace of a heartbeat against his palms whilst he pressed down on her chest. He could not get any response from the girl's body even when he was breathing air into her lungs. Continuing to administer CPR to the limit of his strength would –

[Subaru: Damn. It.]

Subaru fell back towards the ground, breathing in exhaustion and sweating profusely from his forehead.

[Subaru: Aaah… aah… fuck, fuuuck…!]

Clutching his fringe in frustration, Subaru could only swear. Meili had not shown any signs of breathing. His first impression had been correct. The light within this little girl's eyes would never shine again.

… Meili had died.

Ruthlessly, fate had snatched away this young girl's life so cruelly. Such an expression was mere consolation and was not suitable in this place. It hadn't been fate that had killed her. She had been murdered by someone.

Meili's neck was blemished by a series of bluish-black bruises.

[Subaru: ……]

Holding his breath and filled with regret, Subaru looks towards his hands. Until now both of those hands had been used in an attempt to save Meili's life – on his wrists, both his left wrist and his right wrist there were numerous amounts of scratches grooved into them as if done by fingernails. Quite entirely as if someone had scratched and clawed at them with all their might as if it was a life and death situation. He wasn't so ignorant to not understand what it meant.

[Subaru: ……]

Subaru gets up and goes to fix Meili's dishevelled appearance. He adjusts her clothing, crosses her arms across her chest, and closes her eyelids. And, whilst he was paying his respects to her corpse, he gently placed his hand against her thin neck.

Sensing a bad feeling about this, he traces his fingers against the bluish-black hues left on Meili's neck.

[Subaru: … a perfect match.]

His faint muttering came without any strength or surprise, and it only reaffirmed this fact. The bruises left on Meili's neck looked like they had been caused by fingers – and the shapes of those fingers matched exactly with Subaru's fingers.

No longer would he doubt the facts here.

Meili had been strangled to death –

And the culprit was no other than –

[Subaru: ……u, gha]

As soon as he had accepted this fact, the feeling of wanting to vomit ran up his throat. He turned his face quickly and rolled to the side so he could avoid befouling Meili's body. It had only been a short while in which Subaru's breakfast had been in his stomach. Emptying his stomach's contents onto the luxurious floor, he vomits until his stomach is completely empty.

[Subaru: I'm. really. done. puking.]

Wiping his mouth with his sleeve, he mocks himself. In fact he couldn't remember how many times he had vomited now. This may have been the first time today, but yesterday it had been a terrible amount of times. He felt that as of now he wouldn't be able to stomach any food anymore. Subaru felt like apologizing with all his heart to all the farmers around the country.

His mind would likely crack and break into little pieces if he wasn't conscious of thinking such thoughts.

[Subaru: ……]

There was a bunch of circumstantial evidence present. There had been two people in the room, and the bruises on Meili's neck matched Subaru's fingers. Subaru isn't optimistic enough to believe that he could escape the blame in this situation.

He didn't think someone had framed him.

You don't need to add another person's hands in this situation. If someone had framed him here, then this place transcended all known dimensions. If hands are needed to create this nightmare, then it is only two you need. Since Natuski Subaru possesses two hands, then surely that is enough?

[Subaru: … I don't understand the meaning of this.]

Subaru lacked understanding in him to accept the facts in front of him. Inexplicable, baffling, incomplete, regardless of the term used to describe this scene, it would be impossible to reproduce it – he can only

conclude that the crime was done by Natuski Subaru. However, Subaru did not hold such a memory within himself.

[Subaru: What happened, what happened? Remember. Remember, remember, remember…]

Walking around the room, Subaru tries to wrench open his memories. He had died, then woke up and seen Emilia, Beatrice and Patrasche. He had hid that he had lost his memories from them and then eaten breakfast. He had tried to interrogate Julius whilst Shaula secretly kept an eye on them. Then Meili came across saying she had something to say to Subaru.

[Subaru: Last night, she mentioned last night...]

Subaru frowns as he vaguely recalls Meili's words. However, shortly after she had tried to talk about it, Subaru had slipped out of consciousness. The words she had said had shattered into a thousand pieces just like the thoughts that you can get whilst you are on the verge of falling asleep.

[Subaru: Last night, I was asked about last night. On that I am sure. Before I woke up or before I went to bed? Either way, she asked me… and then?]

From there, he doesn't know anymore.

The only thing he can fathom about the contents of what Meili had asked Subaru was that it was related to his "Evening Excursion."[1]

Emilia had told him that this morning Subaru had been found collapsed outside the Taygeta library. Subaru's behaviour in the night before he had collapsed was completely unknown to him. At least now there was no doubt that the incident was related to his memory loss. And surely, Meili remembered what Subaru had forgotten; there happened to be some connection, on that there was no mistake –

[Subaru: She's dead. And I strangled her…? Why did I do such a thing…?]

If he looked down at both of his hands, although not present in his memories, he felt that it revived a raw sensation in his palms. Both arms had squeezed her neck until her breath had stopped. There was evidence on his wrists that showed that Meili had desperately tried to resist. If he looked carefully, on Meili's fingernails there was blood left in them, and the evidence of a fight. Very deep fingernail marks had been left there on his arms; he couldn't help but feel like this had been the echo of deep-seated resentment that the little girl had left behind.

[Subaru: … ah?]

Subaru's thinking had given reins to delusion – suddenly he let out a hoarse gasp. He had gasped as if he'd been taken aback by something. The cause was due to his arm. It was not the wounds at the vicinity of his wrist which he was staring at. He was looking at his right hand's fingernails.

Just like Meili, his fingernails were jam-packed with blood and skin as if he had scratched someone.

[Subaru: ……]

With these baffling bloodstains in mind, Subaru turned to face Meili's corpse again. Showing respect to her death, he had fixed up her dishevelled appearance. It wasn't a great consolation, but except for her bluish-black bruises on her neck, the little girl's corpse still looked cute just as she did when she was alive. At least there were no traces of any fingernail scars visible on her body. Subaru's fingernails were unkempt and hideous, and there were no traces of such pitiful gouge-marks on her body.

Then the remains of skin and blood left stuffed inside his nails – wasn't it from his intent to kill, what was it?

[Subaru: … no way.]

He looked down at the arm that had been hurting him; Subaru's lips quiver as he gets a bad feeling about it. It is good to remember that from the elbow of his right arm, there was a grotesque black coloration to it. But it had been his left arm that was throbbing in pain.

Subaru starts to slowly roll up his sleeve, unrolling all the way up to the inside of his elbow, where the source of the pain was coming from. He feels the fabric trying to stick to his arm as dried blood peels off as he continues to unroll his sleeve. Taking a sharp breath, Subaru finishes unrolling his sleeves all the way to his shoulder. There he saw his own left arm bleeding quite a bit. Subaru took a very deep breath.

[Subaru: ……]

He scrapes away the dark-red blood that was dirtying his arm with his fingers, and gazed at the wound that had been bringing him this pain.

As he had imagined, there were scratches in his skin, as if it had been carved by his own right hand. From the inside of his elbow all the way to his upper arm, there was a wound which had been painfully carved into it. However, it was not merely just an ordinary wound.

There are characters.

Carved there on his flesh by fingernails are some crudely etched characters.

Engraved there, it said:

– "Natsuki Subaru was here." [2]

[Subaru: … ahh]

He felt trouble breathing from the moment he saw it. It was as if his breath had been knocked out of him. Subaru wiped the scar left on his left arm with his fingers to see if he had been mistaken. Over and over again. Once the flow of blood had stopped he rubbed the wound once more and confirmed it.

There was no other way of reading it. No matter how he looked at it, it was written as "Natuski Subaru

was here.”

The handwriting was messy, written in Japanese, and said: *Natsuki Subaru was here.*

It was easy to understand. It was a very easy to understand self-assertion. It seems that the criminal left evidence at the scene of the crime as proof of his own crime. Leaving behind the name had clearly conveyed who had committed this crime. How kind of him, what ambition, oh how must he have craved being in the limelight –

[Subaru: You… you, what do you want!?]

In the face of such unacceptable facts, Subaru’s voice shook as he shouted out in grief. Shaking his left arm, and keeping it far away from him whilst turning his face away from it, his feet ended up getting tangled. He fell flat on his backside. Subaru’s left arm hit the floor and his teeth clattered together. Many, many times he banged his arm on the floor over and over again. He bit his lip as the pain in his bone resounded, blood starts to pool out of his mouth.

But even so, the reality of the situation will not change. The wounds on his arms will not disappear.

[Subaru: This wasn’t there! There was no such wound here!]

Shaking his head in refusal, Subaru cries out this appeal in the room where there only the motionless Meili lay. Subaru’s wound on his left arm must have occurred just after he slipped out of consciousness. The wound on his left arm had been newly created – he had never noticed it before. Someone had strangled Meili, and had scratched him as well – no, it wasn’t that.

No, no! That was absolutely wrong. It’s all wrong. Admit it. Understand it. He ought to know. It wasn’t someone else. It wasn’t performed by another being – this crime had been committed by Natsuki Subaru.

It wasn’t Subaru, it was “Natuski Subaru” who killed Meili and carved this medal in his arm to show off his achievement.

[Subaru: Cr…azy.]

Insane. Crazy. It seems he is going insane… is “Natsuki Subaru” the name of a monster that he just couldn’t comprehend.

[Subaru: ……]

This was not the first time Subaru had held great distrust of “Natsuki Subaru”.

“Natsuki Subaru” obviously repeats actions that make no sense, starting with his unusual behaviour of the night before which still hadn’t been answered.

When he had ended up questioning Julius, he had heard from him of Echidna’s misdeeds with him and how those actions had driven Julius into some sort of mental anguish… The Subaru that came back from

the convenience store and the “Natsuki Subaru” here no longer resembled the same person. As if it was a counterfeit version of him. [3]

Subaru was seriously convinced that his body possessed a completely different being inside it.

[Subaru: But, that’s not right…]

Although it annoys him to, if he pays close attention to the scar engraved on his left arm, he can’t deny his suspicion. His name was engraved on his arm. Of course, it was quite different from how he’d write it using a pen or a brush. However, there was a certain peculiarity within how the letters were written. Specifically, there was a certain habit that Subaru had when writing his calligraphy. Unless you were to deliberately copy them, it would be practically impossible for someone else to have coincidentally written it like this.

In other words, it was unmistakable that Subaru’s handwriting and “Natuski Subaru’s” handwriting had the same origin.

As soon as he had noticed that, the facts had become clear.

That is –

[Subaru: – when I lost my consciousness, “Natsuki Subaru” returned?]

And then that “Natuski Subaru” had had some form of argument with Meili and ended up killing her. He had then left that fact behind in his arm and all of this had been hidden in the confines of his consciousness. He doesn’t understand the real meaning behind doing such a thing.

[Subaru: Why are you using my body… why… my… no, what on earth am I? What are you planning to do!? Who are you, are you…]

Clutching his face, Subaru’s voice trembles as he mutters this. In this different world in which he has no allies. In this different world in which he doesn’t know who the enemy is. In this different world where he can’t tell between friend and foe. In the end, Subaru had removed even himself from the frame of innocence.

[Subaru: ……]

He was staggering around, barely able to keep upright as the feeling of anxiety overwhelms his heart. Subaru tries to take long, deep breaths to ward off this overpowering feeling.

He can’t remain calm. His mind was in complete disarray. But, as it was currently, he didn’t want to be brandished about by whatever intentions “Natuski Subaru” had without knowing about them.

So –

[Subaru: – who are you?]

Whilst muttering words of hatred at the impossibility which was reflected in his arm, Subaru placed his left index fingernail against his right arm. He placed it right against the grotesque looking skin and started to scratch that into his arm.

Red blood droplets were oozing from his black skin. He thought that it was ironic that the blood that flowed from his black skin was red.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

- [1] More like “Behaviour of the Evening” but “Evening Excursion” sounds snappier.
- [2] Fun fact, this was carved into the Flugel tree in the anime, and also the words he wrote on the paper when he was studying at the mansion. Refer to this image:
- [3] The gist seems to be okay, but I feel like this part’s translation could be improved here.

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Arc 6 – Chapter 46, “Meili Portroute”

by admin - Friday, August 31, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/08/31/arc-6-chapter-46-meili-portroute/

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Translated by :

- Paperlightning
- Ringo, /u/Ringo_17
- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism
- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd

Proofread by:

- Shifty, /u/Shiftyfish87
- Review, /u/ReviewR524
- Tournament, /u/Tournament1122

Fan Art Created by :

- Art Source

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

?Meili Portroute

Staring at the binding of the book, as Emilia said that, Subaru became shocked. His eyes shot open, He glared at the binding of the book. The letters written there, Subaru couldn’t read them at all. However, here now, there is no reason for Subaru to put on a pretext and think that Emilia was shaking without

meaning.

Then why was there a?Book of the Dead?with Meili's name in the title? There was no room to doubt this fact.

Subaru:??????

He still couldn't talk, Subaru with stiff cheeks had his back break out in a cold sweat. Inside his skull, his brain was desperately screaming one thing and one thing only:?Why.?

Why is there a book with Meili's name here? Why did this library that kept records of the dead have the girls book ready that quickly? Why is it that in a library this vast that they found Meili's book so easily? Why was it that the moment Subaru felt like he could trust Emilia out of everyone in the tower this had to happen? Why was it that fate just couldn't forgive Natsuki Subaru? Why Why Why Why Why Why Why Why Why Why Why Whywhywhywhywhywy hywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhy whywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhyhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhyw

Beatrice had anticipated this and had already referred to the memory about Meili's death?

Beatrice:??I haven't checked yet, I suppose.?

Subaru:??hk, oh, is that so??

Beatrice:?It's natural that I didn't, in fact. I have no choice but to handle it carefully, I suppose. In fact, to begin with, we don't even know whether this Meili's book is about the one we know. If it really is that girl's book...?

Emilia:?Meili's inside this tower... oh no! We have look for her right away!?

Her complexion changing, Emilia tries to breaks off into a run at hearing Beatrice's words. However, Beatrice cuts in front of Emilia and shakes her head.

Beatrice:?Wait, I suppose! If it really is that girl's book, then searching for her all in a hurry is meaningless, in fact. You know what happens when a book is added here, I suppose.?

Emilia:?...so because of that, Ram went searching for us and Julius' group.?

Beatrice:?If in the middle of this, Meili waltzes in looking all innocent, then you can take this as being Betty's childish misunderstanding.?

Emilia's strength steadily drains out of her as she listens to Beatrice calmly pointing these facts out. Still, with a fretful look across her pale face, Emilia clasps her hands against her chest, as if she was praying. She hopes that the book that had come from the bookshelf was not Meili's one; she clings onto the hope that it belongs to someone who had happened to have the same name as her.

?But, Natsuki Subaru knows that hope will never come true.

??????

Subaru was frantically turning his head back and forth between Emilia and Beatrice as they spoke. His thoughts were spinning around in circles; for the most part he was thinking on how to get out of this situation and whether to keep the truth only to himself.

As he had simulated before, he can't let Emilia and the others see Meili's memories. It was a stroke of good luck that Beatrice hadn't seen them, even so, it was only a matter of time until one of them would. It's a fact that Meili is dead, she will never appear in this library again looking all innocent. So of course, they will eventually get a chance to check the?Book of the Dead.?Before long they would do it.

If they look at the book, everyone will accuse Subaru. Then, should he do something like disposing of Meili's book? ?No, he wants to avoid that. It's true that this situation was exceedingly difficult, however, Subaru's feelings had become more problematic ? Subaru also has a great interest in the contents of the book.

Subaru currently believes with certainty that it was?Natsuki Subaru?who had killed Meili. If he were to look through Meili's records, he may be able to see?Natsuki Subaru?there. He could conceivably look at the literal form of the potential?Enemy? that was lying inside him. If that was possible, Subaru's situation would change drastically. At least, he should be able to come up with a resolution.

Hence, he cannot let Emilia or anyone else read the contents of the book. Subaru must be the only one to experience the book's contents?

Shaula:?Now this is what you call a commoshun, did something happen??

Emilia:?Ah, Shaula, you've come.?

In the meanwhile, Shaula had showed up at the Taygeta library. Craning her neck, her black hair swinging about, Shaula greets Emilia and Beatrice. She then notices Subaru at the back of the library and waves her hand at him. In this moment, he thinks that her appearance overlaps with how Meili had entered the breakfast room this morning. Subaru turns his face away and resists the urge to vomit.

Shaula:?Oyo, what a cold response from Master! After spending such a passionate time together with meee.?

Beatrice:?I am quite interested in what happened between you and Subaru, but, for now I will postpone it, I suppose. Speak up if you've seen Meili anywhere. You were good friends with her, I suppose.?

Shaula:?The chibiko... umm, Number Two?[1] Her? Hmm, now that you mention it I haven't seen her for a while. I don't know what happened to her after this morning's breakfast.?

Shaula answered Beatrice by shaking both of her hands. Then, she placed her waving hands against her cheeks, and cocking her head she said: "What's wrong with Number Two?" At hearing Shaula's question, Emilia cast her gaze down in unease,

Emilia:?To tell you the truth, we found a book with Meili's name in the library. We haven't looked inside it yet, before doing that we wanted to check whether that child was okay... ?

Shaula:?Ah, I see. Number Two ended up dying? That's troublesome to think about, there are many ways you can die; things like that may just happen, noo??

Emilia:??hk?

Beatrice:?...you?

Looking quite indifferent to what was going on around her, Shaula states her opinion on the matters of life and death, paying zero consideration towards the distressed Emilia. Hearing what Shaula had said, Emilia's cheeks stiffened, and Beatrice glared at Shaula with an expression of anger. However, Shaula did not pay any attention to how the two had reacted,

Shaula:?So, where is this important boook? Once you look inside, you may find out how and where

Number Two died, indeeed.?

Subaru:?That’s, that’s enough from you! Always talking like this...?

Subaru was unable to look on without doing anything, he flares up at Shaula’s reckless remarks. Now Shaula’s behaviour showed heartlessness too. Up until now, by no means could Subaru tell Emilia his thoughts, he has just about enough discretion to not open his mouth. As for Shaula, she has no?

Shaula:?Don’t get maaad, Master. I didn’t mean any offence! But, but, practically, what should we do with the boook here??

Subaru:?At... least, since we all got together...?

Shaula:?Even if you don’t do it leisurely, is it not worth a shot to read the boook? I don’t know what you’re getting angry at when I suggested reading it. If Number One’s worries...?

Subaru falters, the strength of his rebuttal weakens as Shaula presses for an answer from him. She cuts off her speech and quietly sends Beatrice a sidelong glance, and then once again she cast her gaze at Subaru. Her face continued to have a unreserved, but not malicious look on it.

Shaula:??Master should read the book.?

Subaru:??????

Shaula:?When you first saw this library, it was Master and that other pretty boy[2] who first experienced what was in it, no? Afterwards, there were no negative effectssu when you came out riiight??

Her ample-sized breasts shaking, Shaula takes a step forward and brings her face right next to his. His breath was taken away by the woman’s suggestion, and Subaru’s brain started to once again think carefully.

Shaula’s suggestion is extremely reasonable for a woman that has such an attitude. Naturally, it’s not known to him what sort of effect the?Books of the Dead?have on people once you read it. At least, there had been two people who had already experienced it. There should be enough value in trying to read it. Of course, that experience may snatch Subaru’s memories. It could be possible that it is a trap that may start to divide him into his current self and?Natsuki Subaru.?If that’s really the case here, it is odd that Julius hadn’t experienced any of these unusual phenomenons. By no means would he conceal his memory loss like Subaru had done; it was a great leap of imagination to come to such a suspicion.

There is no relation between the influence of the?Books of the Dead?and his loss of memories. Making this conclusion was no issue at all in this situation. Thus, with that being the case, her suggestion had come as a lifesaver?,

Subaru:??Certainly, what Shaula said may have a grain of truth in it.?

Beatrice:?...Subaru, are you really going to do it, in fact? Up until this time you shared meals with that

companion, I suppose.?

If he were to take advantage of Shaula's words, for the time being, he could break through the first obstacle. Becoming the first one to read Meili's?Book of the Dead?, and making sure he is the last and only one to read it, then what Subaru had done would remain hidden inside his mind. However, that is where Beatrice's genuine worry for him entered into the fold.

She is concerned about Subaru's soul being damaged. Until now, the dead that?Natsuki Subaru?had seen here had only had a shallow relationship to him. There was a big difference between that and Meili.

They had journeyed together, they had talked to each other, they had shared meals with each other; she was that kind of comrade in arms. Beatrice had been concerned about what sort of mental trauma would befall Subaru if he were to see her?Death?with his own eyes.

Subaru:?...I'll be fine, don't worry. As Shaula said, I am most likely the best person to do it.?

To Beatrice's concerns, Subaru straightens his cheeks so that he looks serious, and nods. Certainly, looking at the memories of a deceased person whose face you know could very likely cause someone to have mental trauma or abnormalities. If you happened to be a good person, then maybe it would be unbearable.

?But that's not the case with him. It isn't so.

For Subaru now, the journey with Meili, the words he had exchanged with her, the meals he had shared together with her, by no means was she that kind of comrade in arms to him. For these few hours, he had behaved as if was acquainted with her. They had shared two or three meals together, and sometimes she had helped him reassure him a bit, but that was the extent of their relations. She was just an unfamiliar little girl to him ? He would not receive any mental trauma by seeing her death.

Emilia:?I am still against this. If we really really have to, then it shouldn't be Subaru, but me...?

Beatrice:?If Emilia wants to look at it, Betty will oppose it, in fact. If someone has to look at it... it's frustrating, but Julius or Subaru are our best bets for it, I suppose. But, if you had seen how Julius looked like this morning, you'd probably want to erase him from the list of candidates here.?

Emilia:?Beatrice...?

Emilia, who looks quite dispirited, trails off into silence at hearing Beatrice's reasoning. At least, Beatrice seems to have chosen to respect Subaru's will. However, due to what had happened just before, Emilia knows that Subaru's condition is quite unstable. Therefore, Subaru nodded at Emilia whose amethyst eyes showed deep concern that did not disappear.

Subaru:??I will look. Perhaps, what if it's only a misunderstanding, and if you read it in high spirits then maybe nothing will happen??

Emilia:?...if anything happens, I will tear the book from you at once. I'll pull your hair as well...?

Subaru:?I would prefer much more if you'd call out to me and shake my shoulders instead.?

With Emilia's superhuman strength, if she were to pull his hair, the back of Subaru's head would become a permanent desolate wasteland. And then, after retorting with such false words, Subaru faces towards the bookshelf. Unchanging, Meili's book was still there, emitting a strange presence. From the beginning, at the times he had happened to catch a glimpse of it, he had seen it as just an ordinary plain book. But now, from this strange aura the book had, it felt as if he could instinctually recognise the name. At any rate, he couldn't rely on just his senses.

Thus, Subaru picked up the book to search into what he can't rely on in himself.

Subaru:??????

Behind him, Emilia and Beatrice are holding their breaths. Shaula puts her hands behind her head, watching over Subaru's decision with a carefree expression. Whilst taking a look at these three individuals, Subaru takes a deep breath, and he places his hand on the thick book's (which looked rather like a dictionary) front cover.

Subaru:??Let's go?

As if he was trying to persuade himself to do it, Subaru mutters this and opens the book ? his senses blackout.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

?Ever since the woman had been aware of what was around her, there had been nothing.

There had been no one around. There were no men, women, adults, children, elders, babies, no one at all. She was alone in the dark, dark, black, black forest. The woman was all alone.

Being able to stand up and walk. Being able to speak. Being able to cry out in order to live. The woman was not able to do any of these things; all of these things were far away, unknown to the woman, vanished beyond oblivion.

??????

If she doesn't how to speak, she cannot know how to mourn. If she doesn't know how to use her legs, she cannot know how to walk. If she doesn't know how to live, then there is no reason for her to know about dying.

Therefore, the woman had no choices, the meaning of both life and death were not brought to this woman ? she had been snatched away by the fangs of a beast. The beast had a horn on its forehead, and this hideous beast of slaughter was continuously engaged in ferocious slaughter?

The woman did not know why this beast hadn't crushed her throat with its fangs and had instead dragged her by the nape of her clothing back to its lair.

However, choices, which were not supposed to exist, were born, and the woman’s fate was decided under the beasts.

She did not know any words, so she didn't know how to mourn. She did not know how to use her legs, so she didn't know how to walk. However, as she knew the way of living, she didn't think she would die.

Taking notice of what had happened, the woman had followed the murderous beasts and had become their queen, and had dominated the entire area.

Treating the prey however she wanted, eating whenever she felt hungry, killing it if she was bothered by it, sleeping whenever she wanted to sleep, living the way she wanted to, killing the way she wanted to, and she was raised to be like the mother of these slaughterers.

In the past, she lost the memory for the reason for her existence. Things that were nothing, things for which she had no need for like symbols, she could not ever value such things. With the same pace, and with the mind of a beast, whether it was for good or bad, she wanted to die alone, that's what she wanted.

???:??This welcome is much bigger than what I thought. However, I do not mean to hurt you.?

It was a girl in black. Covered with magic and blood, it was a girl in black. The woman who led the group of beasts with a mere action of her hand was deprived of everything she had, by that girl in black.

Blood overflowed, fierce flames scorched the sky, and the girl in black smiled amidst the bloody surroundings.

Without knowing how to do anything, the woman, once again, was in a position where she had nothing.

Girl in black:?I will take you back with me. That's why, I shall accompany you.?

The girl in black forcefully took the woman who had nothing. Leaving the place where she had lived for a long time, where she had spent a long time with the beasts, where she was together with them for such a long time.

Even after all that, the woman still could not do anything.
She did not know any words, so she didn't know to mourn.
She did not know how to use her legs, so she didn't know how to walk.
She lost the way of survival, so this time she may have no choice but to die.

???:?The way to mourn, the way to walk, the way to live, you lost all of those? No way, no way, there cannot be any excuses made for such a lineup.?

That was her regret of not knowing the way to mourn.

???:?Mourn, for my sake. Resist, for my sake. Live, for the sake of loving me.?[3]

That was her regret of not knowing the way to resist.

???:?No matter what you lose or what you forget, you can never go against me ? That is, because it's your duty towards your?Mother.??

?That was her regret of forgetting the way of living, and her inability to think about her way of dying.

More hellish than hell, more nightmarish than nightmares, more evil than evil?

That was?Mother's?idea of discipline, not for other women, but just for her.
?Mother?did not lie.
?Mother?was innocent.
?Mother?used every possible means to be loved.
?Mother?however, just used distorted version of those means.

She remembered words. The way of mourning got peeled away. She remembered the way to walk. The way of resistance was painted away. She remembered the way of living. She no longer wished to die, and this got engraved into her.

Girl in black:?Please stop being under the complete control of that person. Because, except for me, surely, the number of lives left would be short.?

Suddenly, when she had remembered the way of words, and the way of walking, she had recalled the girl in black. The girl in black had often shown to have the face of a woman. Before she even noticed, she was acting in accompaniment of the girl in black much more than before.

Before meeting?Mother?for the first time, she remembered when she was embraced by warm water. Covered with blood, mud, and dirt, the merciless girl in black had sloppily rinsed her of the irremovable dirt. Or perhaps, maybe it was the feeling of freedom that the woman had felt at the end.

?Mother's?intention made it clear that she wanted the woman to be aligned with the girl in black.

The girl in black was abnormally strong. Her way of killing was amazing. She knew more about the way of killing rather than the way of living. Everything else except for that was scarce in her.

Girl in black?Regarding ????. If you entrust her to someone like me, she will do well.?

A single event would shape everything else that had happened, or that's how it felt like. She was undisciplined. She wasn't strict. She was her companion in hand. She couldn't take her eyes off her companion. She was not faithful to?Mother.?She not only knew the way of killing, but also the way of living with freedom.

She had seen hell. She had seen nightmares. She had seen evil. For her whole life, the woman thought she would never forget the?Horror.?While she was together with the girl in black, while she went along and helped this undisciplined girl, it felt like what was engraved in her would fade away. But?

The Woman:??Elsa... Died...?

Died. She died. She turned to ashes and died.
The girl in black who never dies even when she is killed? No, towards the end that girl was Elsa.

Died. She died. She turned to ashes and died.
She had a spear stuck into her belly, she lost both of her arms from her shoulders, and she also saw her with a broken neck. Still Elsa did not die. She thought she would never die.

Died. She died. She turned to ashes and died.
She had also endured?Mother's?training. She had also endured the hell, and the nightmares and the?Horror.?But, Elsa had died. She was going to go back being alone. She had lost her herd, she had lost Elsa. She was all alone.

Died. She died. She turned to ashes and died.
Killed. She was killed. She was turned to ashes and killed. Those who had turned Elsa to ashes had captured the woman and imprisoned her.

?Alone, inside a dark room, the woman questions the void around her.
Hate, Hateful, Hatred? The feeling of Hatred, what does it feel like?
Sad, Sadness, Sorrow? The feeling of Sorrow, what does it feel like?

She doesn't know how to mourn.
She doesn't know how to resist.
Even for herself, she doesn't know the value of life.

It was like this from the beginning. Before Elsa had died, before she could recognise that the girl in black was Elsa, before meeting?Mother?, before beginning her training, before her herd of beasts had been destroyed by the girl in black, before she had begun to lead the herd of beasts, before her life was saved by the whim of a beast, ever since the time she had been torn away from those who were supposed to be her real mother and father, the woman had been a defective product.

The woman was set adrift, living. When she had been a beast, she had imitated the way of living of a beast. After being trained by?Mother?, she had done exactly what she told her to do. And even after she started to spend time together with Elsa, she had imitated the way she spoke, she had imitated her, imitated.

From the beginning, this woman was that kind of creature. A person that imitates humanoid creatures. She had behaved as others desired.

The woman was capable of imitating others, she was a mere sham of the people she imitated, she had the form of a person but was nothing like a person?

Kill the bastard, she wonders if that is what she is thinking. Pursue him, she wonders if she is thinking of that in that manner.

She wants to to imitate someone that knows?Elsa's?death, she wants to precisely know what to do in regards to?Elsa's?death. She wants to imitate. She wants to see what is the correct norm.

What should she do. She had lost?Elsa?? who should the woman imitate now?

Time had passed and she didn’t understand. Meanwhile, while keeping up her appearances on the outside, the woman is a woman who continues to exist for the desires of those in her surroundings.

She wished for change. If the events change, if her situation changes, she may come to an answer. That, or?Mother?may want her to die ? that also may be okay.

She had let herself be shaped up as requested, as they desired, as if she was adrift. Then, if?Mother?desires it, she can also take her life which she can’t find any particular value in.

??

????

????????

??????????????

????????????????? She hated it.

She hated ending it right there, ending here, she hated it. A feeling of impatience burned her heart. Her desiring soul, demanded her own desires.

At the very least she wanted to know the answer. The answer to what murdered?Elsa?would have been able to do.

???:?? Oh so you came here too, ???????

At night. In the library inside the Tower of Sand, in the place where the?Books of the Dead?were. A voice came from behind her. Around there stood a familiar black haired boy who she knew well. Her heart jumped in that instant. She noticed it herself, deep down that she was afraid. If he were to ask why she was there, she couldn’t answer questions like whose book she herself was looking for that she secretly came here?

The Boy:?I just kinda had a book I wanted to look for. I really should’ve asked the others for help though, I couldn’t stand the feelings of restlessness and...?

The boy is saying something. With a smile and a head tilt, she hides her exalted heartbeat. Pretending as always.

The Boy:?? Don’t stay up too late, ??????

As she was told that, she left the library. Slowly walking away, then quickening her pace, and in the end, running. He saw what she was doing, he knows what she was doing, he realized what she was doing.

Biting her nails and furrowing her brow, the woman squatted and calmed her breathing. He didn’t see, He didn’t know, He didn’t realize anything.

But she abandoned everything and started again. The woman understood why it was that she came all the way to this place. And it was all the more reason to change everything she knew and start all over again abandoning anything and everything.

The urge controls her head. As her repressed emotions are left to grind on her molars, the woman turns around. Going back through the road she just ran through. Her legs gradually relax and she eventually starts walking slowly. Finally walking so gently so as to eliminate the sound of her footsteps, she returns to the library where the?Books of the Dead?are.

With his back facing her way, the black haired boy was sitting on the ground. With how many books are scattered around the ground had he already found the?Book of The Dead?he was looking for? Already guessing that, she felt jealous. But before he notices her she definitely has to?

The Boy:??You’re so damn shallow.?

Letting herself be controlled by feelings of desperation, she felt like blaming her impulsive actions. As she stops her feet all that is before her eyes is the black hair on the back of the boy’s unturned head.

She was supposed to be coming back without making a sound and holding her breath. It’s true that she doesn’t hold a candle to Elsa, but even then, she could at least erase the sound of her footsteps. Then how did he find out?

??????

All of her thoughts become jumbled. She just came here while eliminating the sound of her footsteps, and he still saw through her with his back to her, what kind of explanation can she give now.

?No, even then, she should have said something. taking her training into account. It would’ve been fine if she had just come here. No matter what, the woman was brought by the boy. She was also supposed to take that into consideration. With a timid smile and a head tilt, she hides her exalted heartbeat. Pretending as al?

The Boy:?Don’t try to suck up to me it’s disgusting. Nobody would want you doing that to them.?

Cutting off her train of thought and shutting her up as she was pondering and going around in her thoughts. What did the black haired boy mean?

The Boy:?Don’t give me that composed face. Submissive little doll. Are you going to ignore that desire in the depths of your own heart??

Desire in the depths of her heart. Why did hearing him point that out weigh on her so awfully heavily?

The Boy:?Devote yourself to listening to your desire. If you do so, you’ll see yourself a little more.

And when you see yourself a little more, you'll know what you want to do.?

To know. what she wants to do. to see herself. What she wants to do, what she desires, that is?

The Boy:??Now that's a nice face. Looks rich.?

When she noticed, the black haired boy had turned around and was standing right before the woman. The Boy's hand grabbed onto one of the woman's hanging braids, and stared at her with horrible eyes that held a perverted pleasure. She couldn't take her eyes off of those dark pupils in front of her...

The Boy:?If you understand your desire and began to see who you really are, then you'll begin to act more like?Yourself.?Your boring worries and anguish. I'll make sure to remember them.?

Selfishly deciding what another person wants, the boy declared so while putting the woman's hair tips to his lips. This filled her chest with a feeling of dread, however, a slight pain burned in her chest.

The Boy:??I'll make sure to remember them.?

If she understood her own desires. If she properly came to see who she really was. Could the woman become more like?Herself?like what ????? was supposed to be?

The Woman:??I wanted to talk about last night. I'm wondering, how seriously should I take what we talked about last night? ?

The sun rose, she finished her breakfast, and before they moved to the next trial in the tower, she contacted the black haired boy. She thought about it so much she couldn't sleep. She thought thought thought, but no matter what she couldn't come to an answer.

The boy greeted the woman in the morning almost like his attitude last night never happened or something. So she had to make a special chance, she called out to him. Unable to control her restless feelings, at the very least she needed to get him to a place where no one else could hear them, then it might be better.

The Boy:?Not here. Let's change places.?

That suggestion came from the boy. They changed places. As they entered the room, she wanted to question him about the meaning of his words from last night. ?Come to think of it, in the library last night, the boy had said something about going to talk with everybody else.

The Boy:?Sorry, ??????

As those words were whispered into her ear her light body was pushed down into the floor. Falling down. she hit her back on the floor yet couldn't scream. Just as her field of vision was flickering like that, she saw the face of the boy getting on top of her. ?The smirk on his face was the most disgustingly fiendish thing she had ever seen.

The Boy:?Asking that directly is against the rules.?

Her neck was gripped with a strong force. Her mouth was opening and closing but the air that was so important for her body wasn't coming. Writhing. Struggling. She grabbed the hand on her neck and dug her nails in. Desperately, she kicked her legs.

She can't move or push him off. But if she was Elsa she could deal with him.

The Boy:?This time it was a loss because of breaking the rules, but I hope you'll act even bolder next time. Do your best as you always have.?

She didn't understand what he meant. What was he talking about? What was he saying? What was he telling her?

The Boy:?My oh my, this is going to be very interesting ? The Natsuki Subaru murder mystery.?

I'm being killed. The reasoning was nothing but flawed. I'm going to be killed. In the end could I do anything at all? Killed. When I was hunting in that forest, what did I. Killed. Meaninglessly unable to do anything. Being killed. It was fun. Killed. It was enjoyable. Be Killed. Like I was part of some childish game. Being killed. Killed. Killed. Killed. Killed. Killed. Killed.

?I'll kill you.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Subaru:?Uh, AAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!??

In an instant, his head jumped back as if he was being flicked away. ?????? fell backwards, dropping what he was holding in his hands. He saw the world go around in circles. He took a pained breath. His lungs were having panicked spasms at his laboured breathing.

Emilia:?Hey, Subaru!??

As he was remembering the painful shock, the silver haired girl rushed over to ?????? who was screaming in pain. She was followed by a girl with light colored hair. Both of them came and propped him up at the same time.

Subaru:?I- I am.... ah. eh? I? w-w-wwwhat just. how. wh-. eh??[4]

Beatrice:?Deep breaths! Take deep breaths, in fact! You don't need to force yourself to talk, I suppose! Emilia, do not touch that book under any circumstances, in fact!?

His eyes were going in circles and foam was sprouting from the corners of ??????'s mouth as the girl? Correction, Beatrice desperately called out to him. Beatrice called out to the silver haired g? Emilia who was reaching for the book. Yes, Emilia once again nodded and retracted her hand away after all.

Emilia:?But Beatrice, Subaru is looking weird! this book is...?

Beatrice?That’s exactly the reason why, It would be troublesome if Emilia were to fall into the same condition, I suppose! It’s probably quite likely that he ended up diving in too deep, in fact. He is confusing how he talks, I suppose.?

At Beatrice’s analysis, Emilia’s cheeks stiffen and she gulps. Following that, she swiftly comes to ??????’s side and holds on to his cheek, meeting his eyes with her own pupils.

Emilia:?Subaru, Remember. You’re ok, you are Natsuki Subaru, my knight. You’re clueless about the world and broke beyond compare, You get along with everybody and...you’re. You’re...?

Emilia starts picking through her memories, hysterically bringing up everything she can. While hearing her say all of that, ?????? begins to. ????ru begins to. Su??ru begins to

?Subaru begins to recall himself.

Subaru:?I- I...ah, Emilia, Beatrice...I am, me, right? I’m not her I am… Without Elsa, err...?[5]

Emilia:?You’re doing fine, stay calm. everything is fine… slowly. Slowly, okay??

Beatrice:?Like a splinter, slowly pull out those lodged memories, in fact. And then, you’ll be able to come back to the normal Subaru, I suppose.?

Subaru:?Ugh, hk...?

Emilia and Beatrice, Talk to Subaru? Yes, Subaru. They talk to Subaru. While those words are reaching his ears, somehow, he sorts through all he saw just now.

Sorting through them. Doing it somehow. Down to the very end. The memories. The moment his life was extinguished.

Julius:?Emilia-sama, sorry I made you wait. I heard about it from Madame Ram on the way??

Echidna:?Is it true that you found that girl’s named book??

Then, Julius who was running up the stairs arrived. Julius, Echidna and Ram arrived and were caught up with the fact that Meili was absent. To those three people, Emilia and Beatrice started explaining the current situation

??????

Shaula was silently staring, she was staring at a book, lying at her feet to which she was indifferent. She narrowed her black eyes. There wasn’t a single hint of emotion in that stare. She was simply, silent.

?Silently staring.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

- [1] She calls her by the term "chibiko" i.e. small child.
- [2] She uses: ????? probably meaning "Ikemen" or another way to say pretty boy/metrosexual.
- [3] Though it may not be clear in the Translation, Mother's speaking style is extremely similar to Capella in the Japanese, making frequent use of ???? (atakushi) to refer to herself.
- [4] He starts off referring to himself similar to how Meili would, using "???" (watashi) and then switches over to "?" (ore) to refer to himself.
- [5] Here he doesn't use "watashi" he uses "ore", i.e. saying that "I am me (ore), right?"

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Arc 6 – Chapter 47, “I Won't Forgive”

by admin - Monday, September 10, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/09/10/arc-6-chapter-47-i-wont-forgive/

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Translated by :

- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism

Contributions by:

- Jaerek, /u/Jaerek
- Furuta, /u/Gracedharperd
- Paperlightning

Proofread by:

- Shifty, /u/Shiftyfish87
- Furuta, /u/Gracedharperd
- Tournament, /u/Tournament1122

Fan Art Created by :

- Art Source

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Important preamble: Not to detract from the reading experience, but there are some important nuances in this chapter you have to be aware of which are hard to do in English. Putting a preamble makes me avoid putting in tons of footnotes. As you have seen last Chapter, reading Meili's book caused Subaru to sort of take in her personality. She has a distinct style of speaking, using this form to refer to herself: ??? (Watashi), whereas Subaru tends to use ? (Ore). The way I have chosen to represent this is by using *italics* to represent when Meili interjects in his thoughts. So any passages in *italics* should correspond to Meili's voice inside Subaru's head. In addition, I preserve the self-referencing word (I/myself/my/etc.) in the Japanese quotation marks. Also, Wordpress doesn't let me, but the Title of the Chapter is said using Meili's pronoun, so should be in italics. With that said I hope you enjoy the chapter!

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ALL RIGHTS BELONG TO **TAPPEI NAGATSUKI**, THE **ORIGINAL AUTHOR** OF RE:ZERO STARTING A LIFE IN A DIFFERENT WORLD FROM ZERO, THIS IS A TRANSLATION OF THE **FREE** JAPANESE WEB NOVEL INTO ENGLISH

JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

A dark, dark, dark, dark, dark, dark, dark place.
In the back of his head, the back, back, back, back, back, back, back.
Myself, I, *I*, who, you, *you*, Natsuki Subaru, Meili Portroute.

Natsuki Kenichi, Elsa Granhiert, Natsuki Naoko, Petra Leyte, Emilia, Shaula, Beatrice, Frederica Baumann, Anastasia Hoshin, Garfiel Tinsel, Julius Juukulius, Otto Suwen, Ram, the blue hair, who is, I am, you are,?*I*?*am*, myself is, the others are, I, you, *you*, *me*?

?Myself,?*I*?… Natsuki Subaru. Myself,?*I*?... Natsuki Subaru.
?Who,?*I*?… Meili Portroute. Who,?*I*?... Meili Portroute.

??????

These thoughts spin round and round and round in his mind, blurring the lines between what is reality and what isn't. They are fused together as one, blending as one, becoming entwined as one, feeling affection as one, hating as one, suffering as one, loving as one, desiring as one, killing as one, wishing as one, destroying as one, threatening as one, understanding as one, crying as one, laughing as one, not understanding as one.

"You can only be yourself. Others can only be themselves." There's no room for compromise, no compromise out of pity, no chance to engender a compromise, no being considerate to each other; there's nothing, nothing at all in the end.

Emilia:?Subaru……?

Subaru: ??????

Shaking his head back and forth, he exerts himself in trying to extract the thorn of the so called?Other Person?from inside himself with utmost effort. Emilia and Beatrice both gently hoist him up by his shoulders, and prop the struggling boy up from his left and right. Whilst feeling traces of the two's worries on their cheeks, the boy ? the individual that should be called Natsuki Subaru is trying to decide the boundary between his own self and others. He is struggling trying to regain himself.

A swirl of thoughts clouds him, the correct answer disappears due to the whirl of emotions which were melting together inside him. His lungs were convulsing; if he were to feel his throat now, he would realise that his breathing had become painful. From within his neck, he was experiencing a severe difficulty in his breathing that had come to life just now. A fear that he would suffocate was slowly attacking him. The sensation of impending?Death?once again revives within him, the feeling of wanting to vomit surfaces inside him and causes tears to stream out of his eyes.

Subaru: ??????

Whilst confronted by this horrible feeling, Subaru slowly and carefully tries to excludes things which would don't define him from within him, struggling to establish his own personal identity. The way he says?*I*?, the way the second person says it, his memory, their memories, his impressions, his feelings… identify which belong to the other person, and distinguish between them.

Just like that, if he sifts through what is not his and removes the stuff that got blended together, he will go back to as he was. Otherwise, this state where they are fused and blended together will never peel off. It was himself, and the little girl who had been killed by his own?Hands?that were mixed together into a hodgepodge of?

Echidna: ??Natsuki-kun, what on earth did you see? Are you able to tell us??

Subaru:?Uh, ah? ?

A voice had called out from in front of Subaru, as he was immersed by his current identity crisis. He looks at her. Right in front of him, at the same level he was crouched at, a person with pale, turquoise eyes is squinting at him: Anastasia ? No, now it's Echidna, right? In any case, it's that girl. Despite Subaru recognising her, Echidna's eyes remain quite serious, and she continues to speak.

Echidna:?I sympathise that you are in a tough spot. But, the current situation we are all in is quite grave. If you are able to, we need information as soon as possible.That way we don't make any mistakes when dealing with this.?

Emilia:?Wait, Echidna... Just now, Subaru experienced something terrible...?

Echidna:?Of course, I know that. I also appreciate that everyone else in this place is experiencing this unreasonable situation, you know… That is why we ought to have a duty in responding quickly to his judgement.?

Subaru can only let out a hoarse breath, as Echidna's assertions pierce through Emilia who had tried to defend him. Whilst talking, Echidna's gaze for a moment turned towards the fallen book on the floor behind him. Taking a look at the thick black binding of the book, Echidna continued her speech with a: ?Because,?

Echidna:?The little girl who accompanied us is missing. Furthermore, we found a book which seemed to match with the little girl's name in this library that records the memories of the dead… This situation is serious. We can not afford to be treading water here.?

Emilia:?That's… Yeah, but...?

Emilia can't find a rebuttal against Echidna's insisting tone of voice. In fact, Echidna's complaint was justified. In this messed-up situation, the only one to possess such vital information is Subaru. Taking everyone's feelings into consideration, it can be said that everyone here has no time to spare to calm down. As she knows that, Echidna is prepared to blame him and launch questions at Subaru to harden his heart.

At hearing her resolve, Subaru grits his teeth again and places his hand against his throat. With all his strength, fighting against the feeling that he can't breathe, he shut his eyes and?

Echidna:?I want you to listen to me again, Natsuki-kun. What did you see inside the bo??

Subaru:??I saw… Meili's… memories...?

Echidna:??????

Subaru responds with perfect honesty to Echidna's questions without attempting to deceive her. Just as he said that, next to her, Emilia held her breath, and in front of him, Echidna closed her eyes. Next to them, Beatrice, Julius and Ram each respectively have expressions of worry and grief floating across their faces.

?The Book of the Dead?had shown Subaru Meili's memories. There isn't a single person here who wouldn't be able to understand what that meant.

Could there have been a mistake and the memories in Meili's book had been laid out there by some error? He wonders for how much longer could he comfort himself by clinging onto such futile hope. However, in this place, he isn't alone in wanting to surrender himself to this deception and escaping towards the more comfortable option. Especially for the girls right next to Subaru whose cheeks had stiffened in distress trying to bear this.

Beatrice:?Calm down, Subaru, in fact. Calm down, and focus on regaining yourself, I suppose.?

Subaru?...So… rry?

Beatrice:?It's okay, in fact. Right now, you can rely on Betty, I suppose… This isn't your fault Subaru, in fact. Don't beat yourself up, I suppose.?

Subaru:??????

Beatrice had stood up and hugged Subaru's head as he breathed unsteadily. The little girl was gently stroking his black hair with her hands. Whilst checking on Subaru's wellbeing, which was scattered into thousands of little pieces, he notes the irony in her words.

Beatrice had so benevolently said that it wasn't Subaru's fault. But, this was no one's fault but?Natsuki Subaru's?who had committed this crime. Not knowing this fact, Beatrice was speaking gently to him and treating him kindly; it was so absurd that it was almost comical.

Julius:??Miss Ram, what do you think??

As Beatrice and Subaru had been giving this exchange, Julius, with a serious look etched on his face had turned towards Ram and tried to get her input on the matter. Compared to the others, the complexion of those two had not paled in shock to the same extent. Following Meili's memories, it's known that these two had been the most wary about her. At least, Meili had felt that both Ram and Julius had never lacked

in vigilance towards her, as she had once been an assassin. Conversely, she had certainly taken note of Emilia and Echidna's carelessness towards her.

Julius:?If you believe the words that Subaru just spoke, Miss Meili has already...?

Ram:?There's no way Barusu would be skillful or cold-hearted enough to conjure up a lie in this situation…I'm certain that the book is Meili's. To make sure, we could have someone else check it??

Holding her slender arms, Ram glares down at the book that was still lying on the floor. Following that speech, Julius frowned in thought and said:

Julius:??If I were to...?

Ram:?Would there even be any leeway for you, since you'd be reading one these books for a second time? So to speak, what if doing it a second time you end up in the same state as Barusu. Of course, we could also presume that it has only resounded to this degree in Barusu due to him being immature and inexperienced...?

Julius:??????

Ram:?But unfortunately, when it comes to your mindset now, whether it can be said to be more stable than Barusu's, Ram hasn't evaluated it as being any better.?

Standing up stiffly, Julius held his breath as he heard Ram's words, who had narrowed her light-pink eyes. However, he quickly shook his head and said:?That's reasonable...?

Julius:?...It's bitter, but, I have no basis to reject the words of Miss Ram. Yesterday, when I acted in this predicament so selfishly and arbitrarily without consulting anyone... I'm definitely not qualified to do this at all.?

Echidna:?I am sorry, but I also agree.?

Echidna raised her hand up and barged her way into the conversation after hearing Julius' self-deprecating words. And, whilst fiddling with her white scarf which was wrapped around the base of her neck, she said:

Echidna:?However, the basis of my argument is not about the state of mind which Julius is in. Purely, I am only stating my opposition to this from looking at the state Natsuki-kun is in and saying that it's too dangerous to try this!?

Ram:?It's pretty much a fact that it's dangerous. It's quite obvious that this situation is pretty messed up.?

Julius:?Indeed. Since the last time, it seems that the influence from reading the book has come out more strongly. The only question is whether this is down to reading the book more than once or whether it's due to the specific book you read.?

Ram:?Maybe it’s both the number of times you read it, and who the book belongs to??

As Ram and Julius wrack their brains, Echidna nods at the two saying:?Aah,?

Echidna:?Simply put, could there be a mechanism where your burden increases the more books you read? ...Or, perhaps, could it be that it warps your mind due to seeing the memories of a person that was close to you? I think the possibilities are divided into two.?

Ram:?A person close to you, huh??

Putting her fingers up to mirror Echidna’s conjectures, Ram turns towards Subaru. Whilst seeing her glaring at him, Subaru desperately tried not to scream from where he was, his face pressed against the middle of Beatrice’s delicate chest.

Most likely, Echidna’s guesses were correct. The reason why Subaru’s heart had suffered so much damage was due to her latter guess ? the cause of this burden was likely because he had looked at the memories of someone he was quite well acquainted with.

People involved in closer relationships ? Those fresh records of?Life?bring a greater impact.

It’s natural that people are more interested in closer companions than people they have more distant relationships with. Subaru also wished this as a fact. As a matter of fact, Subaru… and Meili’s minds had partly merged together and he was coming to grips with that he wanted to know her.

As a result, Subaru had come to face the unfathomable emptiness in the depth of those?*I’s.*?That young girl had been carrying this feeling of emptiness for all of her life?

Emilia:??Anyways, we can’t sit still without doing anything. Let’s go and search for Meili.?

A strong feeling of silence echoed across the room. It had been Emilia who had looked up firmly with both of her hands placed upon her chest and said this. Emilia had gained everyone’s attentions in the library, Subaru widened his eyes at her words.

Subaru:?Search…??

? Search, searching… what the hell. What is the meaning of this?
? Meili, she, *damn but*?*I*?*am already dead*.
? *Even though they never even cared about me before I died.*

Emilia:?Even if we find her, it’s probably too late. If only we had been closer with that girl, then we probably wouldn’t have failed her. But, at the very least, we need to find her body.?

Subaru:??????

Emilia:?So, no one at all knows where that little girl could have wandered off to? First of all, we shall find her… And after that, we will see what we can do. Let’s go search for her.?

Emilia's words weren't concrete, they were far off from being reliable and wise. What was the meaning of this? The insistence of the?*Me*?inside Subaru remained unchanging. Moreover, it should have argued that it was a useful way of using time, if it was being a realist.

However, no one in this place opposed Emilia's suggestion. Not a single person would oppose Emilia directly to her face, even when she turns out to be wrong.

Therefore, what followed Emilia's proposal was a realistic discussion on how to go about searching for Meili. She announced that they would split into groups to search for her.

Emilia:?We have no choice but to change our plan for today. We need to split up and search for her.?

Ram:?Before we do that...Ram will go and check to see if Rem is safe. Before I went out to call for Emilia-sama, Barusu and everyone else, I was with her in the spirit's room… I will go back now, once again.?

Julius:?That's okay Miss Ram. …Subaru, it seems like a cruel thing to ask, but I want to make sure. Did you also happen to see Miss Meili's last moments in her?Book of the Dead???

Subaru hesitated to answer Julius' carefully worded inquiry. The answer to that question on whether he had seen Meili's last moments is a **Yes.** Subaru had experienced the very moment in which Meili's ?Life? had been snuffed out. Her neck had been strangled, her consciousness had slipped away as she was being choked, her thoughts had been filled with hatred and despair, and then it had stopped abruptly ? it must have been in that very moment that her life had ceased.

It was Natsuki Subaru who had experienced this and had been complicit in hiding the girl's corpse. *Natsuki Subaru is helping the man who killed*?*me.*?*The Natsuki Subaru who knows*?*me*?*should be hated as much as*?*Natsuki Subaru*?*, in this world.*

Echidna:??Natsuki-kun, I want you to answer. Did you see her last moments? Where is she now? Did you see what on earth caused her death??

Subaru:??????

Echidna had kept hounding Subaru with questions to as he remained speechless. It felt like the emotions in her words indicated that she was feeling quite on edge. His heartbeat quickens, his back starts to sweat. He can't even recognize that Beatrice is right beside him, this is dreadful.

?In fact, Subaru wonders if everyone knows that he had some involvement in Meili's death.

Subaru wonders if they already know and are feigning ignorance in order to draw out a confession from him by cornering him with devious tricks. These crazy ideas cross his mind. But, each time these ideas had come to his mind, the look in their eyes denied these thoughts as being plausible.

Emilia, Beatrice, Echidna and Julius' eyes had turned towards Subaru. His hands stained with blood, his thoughts scuzzy, Subaru is only struggling to frantically protect himself. He possesses such an ugly,

rotten heart; that's what it seems like. *Then, better yet, listen to*?*my*?*desires*?

Subaru:??I didn't see up until the point where she died. There's no doubt though that she's inside the tower though.?

Subaru bit down firmly the temptations brought by?*her.*?Dangerous feelings are sprouting up deep down inside of him ? she was trying to convince Subaru to confess to his crime. That was the sweet curse left behind by Meili Portroute.

These thoughts are certainly newly born within Subaru. They want Emilia and the others to find Meili's dead body. Find her, mourn her, repent for what had happened, make him feel sorrow; the thoughts inside of him want to relieve the emotions coiled within his heart.

He doesn't even understand himself, he no longer knows what on earth it is that any of Natsuki Subaru,?*Myself*?, and?Natsuki Subaru?want.

Echidna:?... Do you have any strength left to read the book again??

Beatrice:?Echidna!?

Echidna had thrown out a suggestion at him which you could call completely ruthless, as he struggled to decide on what he wanted. For a second, Subaru tried to reply with a?If you say I have to do it?, but before he could, Beatrice had snapped at her. While still hugging Subaru's head, Beatrice's eyes sharpened.

Beatrice:?What name does Betty have to shout out, in fact…! In any case, I won't let that happen, I suppose. It's more than just for personal reasons that I oppose it in fact.?

Echidna:?Given the risks of being joined together as one, I would never have seriously recommended it. I wanted to make sure he was prepared just in case, that's all. Y'know, It wasn't my intention to make him do it even if he insisted.?

Beatrice:?...let's pray that was what you were really thinking, I suppose!?

Beatrice speaks angrily over his shoulder to Echidna who was hastily taking back her words. Immediately after this exchange, it was Emilia and Julius simultaneously who broke the awkward silence that the two had left behind.

Emilia:?Stop this now! I also don't agree with making Subaru do such an unreasonable thing. I also don't want us to be forever discussing this here. ...we need to start moving quickly.?

Julius:?I completely agree with Emilia-sama. ?In these circumstances, we can assume it's very likely that an accident befell Miss Meili. Something may have happened like slipping off the balcony or off the stairs, or she could have gone outside the tower...?

Shaula:??That's not what haappened.?

Out of nowhere, Shaula who hadn't participated in the conversation until then, had interjected to deny the concerns that Julius had blurted out. She had picked up Meili's?Book of the Dead?that had fell down underneath the woman's feet. Whilst picking it up by its spine, she was shaking it from left to right.

Shaula:?Beeecause, if Chibiko Number 2 had gone outside the tower, I would definitely have turned into a killing machine! What I mean by that is that no one went outy-side~?

Emilia:?No matter what, we flatly refuse to touch that book.?

Shaula:?Leaving it out on the floor makes me feel kinda anxious. Like, what if someone thinks that it's disrespectful towards the library...I don't actually want to kill everyone, you know??

Whilst saying this, Shaula was throwing the?Book of the Dead?around her hands as if she was juggling it. Instead of being afraid of disrespecting the library, she had taken an attitude which could be described as being completely unscrupulous. Julius scowled at her attitude.

Julius:?Miss Shaula, I would like for you to stop messing about with the book. You're...?

Shaula:?You guys think that my heart isn't filled with grief or something like thaaat? I'm not sure I said such a thing. For sure Chibiko Number 2 clung to me quite often. I also didn't dislike Number 2, but… ultimately, except for Master, I am not affected by anyone elseee!?

Looking quite indifferent, Shaula smiled and disregarded Julius' words. He couldn't catch a glimpse of any evil intent in what she had said. It was undoubtedly what Shaula really felt, at least, that's how Subaru perceived it.

In brief, she's a person who also finds it hard to comprehend certain emotions within her heart, compared to ordinary people. ?Actually, no. Ever since he came to this place Subaru, has only had a limited amount of contact with them; it's no wonder he isn't able to comprehend their true feelings.

He wonders what complex emotions could be hiding on the other side of the mask of her smiling face. *You could say she's trying to process what happened to*?*my*?*life.*

Emilia:??Let's split up, we'll look for Meili. Subaru, you stay here with Beatrice.?

In between Subaru's self-condemnation and the awkward atmosphere left behind by Shaula, Emilia raised her voice and cuts in with a few words to urge them all into action. Subaru's heart panged with shame at hearing the girl's instructions. *They want to find*?*me*??

Emilia:?Beatrice, I'm leaving Subaru to you, ok? I'm going to go search around where Reid is.?

Beatrice:?Reasonable decision, in fact. ?Emilia and everybody else, Be careful, I suppose.?

Exchanging these words, and placing him under Beatrice's care, Emilia and Beatrice sort out everyone's roles, hoping for some stroke of luck in this situation. Emilia took Ram, Echidna and Julius with her, and went back into the tower to search for Meili. As he sees them disappearing out of the library, Subaru

can’t find any words to see them off?

Beatrice:??Well then, I guess you aren’t thinking about going with them, in fact.?

After seeing off the search party, she had been left behind next to Subaru. Whilst glaring at Shaula, Beatrice had bluntly said this. At receiving Beatrice’s scathing glance, Shaula replied in an exaggerated tone:?Buuuuuuut?

Shaula:?You gotta remember my role here is just as Stars-Keeper, nooo? My body and soul belong to Master… if Master was to wish for it, I would follow his requests with all my streength.?

Beatrice:?If that’s the case, then you must also go and search for Meili, I suppose. Don’t just dawdle here.?

Shaula:?Hm, reaaally, is that so??

Shaula had craned her neck and looked towards Subaru with a look on her face that looked almost coquettish. Looking over Beatrice’s head, she questions Subaru about it directly. There’s something bewitching about her appearance ? rather than the usual nonchalant appearance on her face, for the first time her facial expression showed signs of something else other than the usual youthful demeanour she has.

Subaru:??????

Subaru’s heart once again leapt at seeing the colour and liveliness in her face, it was as if he had been surprise attacked. He reflexively raised his face up and looked back into Shaula’s black irises, in which he couldn’t read anything from. Face-to-face with Subaru, Shaula’s lips relax, and showing no traces of malintention she holds the?Book of the Dead?in front of her ample breasts.

Shaula:?If Master wished me to do so, I would even knock down the moooon. That’s why I want to hear it from Master, not from the half-witch, or from Chibiko Number 1 or from the pretty boy.?

Subaru:?I...?

Shaula:?Master, what should I dooo? Do you want me to look for Chibiko Number Twooo? Or…??

Shaula trailed off her words, choosing not to say anything past that point. However, while looking for Subaru’s decision and while she held the?Book of the Dead?by her breasts, Shaula refrained herself from saying any more. Subaru reflected but couldn’t come up with anything to say to her unwavering attitude.

Where was the right answer deep down in himself?

Subaru:??????

His conflicted emotions towards what Emilia and the others had suggested were proof of Natsuki Subaru’s current contradictory existence.

?Meili Portroute… by no means could it be said that she had lived long.

By having read the contents within her?Book of the Dead?, it had snatched away at him as it liked, as if digesting parts of him; blasphemously chewed, swallowed, and digested with an invisible stomach. The life of?*me*?and the life of?Natsuki Subaru?has a double meaning to it.

As a result, the mixed consciousnesses of Natsuki Subaru and?Natsuki Subaru?were divided into something which half resembled schizophrenia, having also now taken in the little girl.

? Subaru wants to conceal the manner in which Meili had?died.?
? Subaru wishes them to find Meili's dead body that he himself had hid.
? Subaru hates?*Natsuki Subaru*?*who killed*?*me.*?

And thus, contradicting wishes were born inside of Subaru, influencing his behaviour in trying to make their desires come true.

Subaru:??Shaula, go and search for Meili. Please go and help Emilia and everyone else.?

Before he could even notice it, Subaru was issuing out something like an order regarding what to do about Meili. Receiving his instructions, Shaula raised her eyebrows and straightened her body into a salute.

Shaula:?Roger that! If that's what Master wishes, I will do whateeever you desire!?

Winking at him, whilst giving him a loving salute, Shaula held out the book towards Subaru. He received from her the book which felt like a black weight in that moment; Shaula stuck out her tongue at Subaru whose face had scrunched up into a frown. She looked somewhat mischievous, just like a child who'd just gotten in the last word in an argument would; she turned away from Subaru and she jumped down the library stairs with one giant leap. He sees her swaying black hair gradually disappearing from his sights. Feeling as if he had been released from a great tension, Subaru let out a sigh of relief.

Subaru:?Such strange things...?

? The falsely accused Natsuki Subaru, who doesn't want to divulge his participation in the crime, or let them find her dead body.
??*I*?*, the victim, wish for them to find my body and clear the anger and regret from myself.*
??Natsuki Subaru?, the perpetrator, who murders people and piles up acts of wickedness one after the other.

All of these thoughts exist alongside each other in one body; all of them loom over and try to press Natsuki Subaru into selecting one of their choices. If he truly only cared about his own skin, he would have shut his mouth regarding Meili's life and death; he would have worked his brain harder to falsify the contents that he had seen within the?Book of the Dead.?

In fact, he couldn't really have done that, Subaru wouldn't really have the intelligence to do such an act, but more than that, he felt hostility towards?Natsuki Subaru?and emphasised towards?*My*?*own regrets* ?

there was anger towards himself, in letting such a wicked being do as it pleases.

It’s true that last time, and the time before that, and even before that, that someone had been behind Subaru dying. But even that seems like as if it’s a plot set up by?Natsuki Subaru?lurking inside of Subaru. It seems likely that it’s a trap setup to make Subaru act rashly and hate the others.

After all, what he had thought before reading the?Book of the Dead?was not normal. Emilia, Meili and everyone else, not one of them was truly evil… the only one who is evil is Natsuki Subaru.

Beatrice:?Subaru, it’s not good for you to be languishing in thought, in fact. It’d be better if you let go of that book, I suppose.?

Subaru:??????

Just noticing her, Beatrice was kneeling right beside him, looking at him with a look of concern in her eyes. Right in front of him, she was giving him a look of concern ? It resurfaced in his mind that Emilia had looked at him in the exact same way. A sense of discomfort takes hold of Subaru’s heart.

The emotions that Beatrice was letting off ? they weren’t directed towards Natsuki Subaru himself, rather, they were directed at?Natsuki Subaru.?It seems like such a terribly dishonest thing to do in having received this himself after having hidden the fact that he’d lost his memory, and on top of that, having kept his silence about the true nature of?Natsuki Subaru.?

Shouldn’t he tell them? Without even having noticed, it had been the current Natsuki Subaru who had snatched Meili’s?Life?from her. If that’s what was going to happen, then, before that danger is once again turned towards Emilia, Beatrice and the others?

Subaru:?...Why are you so kind to me??

Beatrice:??. Wait, that’s such a sudden question, in fact. What’s the matter, I suppose.?

Subaru:?No, nevermind...?

As a final word on this matter, if he is to crack the meaning behind these relationships that he had borrowed, maybe he needs to hear what had happened before becoming like so ? their real opinion. He needs to know the real meaning of why Emilia, Beatrice and everyone else have such so much faith and are always turning towards?Natsuki Subaru.?

Subaru:??????

The moment he had tried to put some deep thought into it, a feeling of hesitation arises inside of Subaru’s heart.?*I*?*turned towards Elsa. Emilia and the others, who in this world treat Natsuki Subaru as someone close to them, turn towards*?*Natsuki Subaru.*?

Natsuki Subaru can’t truly experience it, he can only look at it, like as if it is a precious gemstone. Why does this trace, this lingering scent, these remains, this warmth exist? Why? Why is it just for Natsuki

Subaru?

Subaru:??????

Why, such a man...
Why, such a cruel human being...
Why, a man with such a cruel smile...
Why, this man involved in the death of Elsa...
Why, this man who laughed as he murdered Meili...
Why, this man who tried to conceal?*My*?*death...*
Why, is such a man, this man, this man — so loved?

Subaru:??????

I want to know. I don't know. I want to know. I don't know. Only me, only Subaru, *only*?*I*?do not know the reason. I don't know. I don't understand. It's all so one-sided.

Subaru:??????

If you can hear?*me*?*, can you understand me? If you can hear me, can I ask something? Can you tell me? Did you think it was genuine? The smile I expressed... the smile I showed was a fake... there was emptiness in my heart. That's because everyone wears masks, even you, Natsuki Subaru. Even despite you not having wanted to show it to your mother and father outside the house.*

If there's a way to know the truth, then where is it. What do they all really think of me, what are their true feelings, why do they all believe in?Natsuki Subaru??

?*I*?*can give that to you* ? *A way to know about this.*

Subaru:??????

A voice resonating in his mind cruelly seduces him. And he realises that the solution to the problem that had dominated his thoughts for so long was close by.

Had there been up until now a way to know the answer to this resting in between his arms?

Beatrice:?Subaru??

Staring at the silent Subaru, Beatrice narrowed her eyes with uneasiness. Without returning her gaze, Subaru simply looked down between his arms.

Subaru:??????

? A black, heavy tome, it seemed like it was offering a gruesome welcome to his curiosity.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Arc 6 – Chapter 48, "Murder Becomes a Habit"

by admin - Wednesday, September 12, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/09/12/murder-becomes-a-habit/

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Translated by :

- Ringo, /u/Ringo_17
- Jaerek, /u/Jaerek
- Furuta, /u/Gracedharperd
- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism

Proofread by:

- Shifty, /u/Shiftyfish87
- Frusty, /u/TheFrustratedMan
- Nana

Fan Art Created by :

- Art Source

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Small Preamble: Refer to the previous chapter for the format I present Subaru thinking as Meili. In addition, you will see that something happens in the chapter that makes it more natural/easier to represent Meili's interjections this time around!

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Subaru: ??????

Subaru was silent whilst he looked down at the black cover of the?Book of the Dead?which he held in between his arms.

Beatrice nestles closer to him, and feeling her worried and strange gaze, Subaru doesn’t dare to move.

Until now, what had dominated Natsuki Subaru's mind were questions he’d ask himself without any particular answer, as if engaging in zen dialogue.[1]

The truth is, what had occupied Subaru's mind were just shallow thoughts that could be discarded as just wasteful thinking.They were the laughable questions of a child.

?Everyone, no matter who, always has an inner face which others would never see.

This was an obvious truth which everyone learned as they come of age. The expression of hatred behind a smile, the sorrow and tears behind their anger. It is human beings that can pretend that these emotions don’t exist, While hiding their true feelings.

It is impossible to fully understand the true wishes, the true desires, the true intentions, of human beings.

Brothers, sisters, parents, children, spouses, family members... you can never fully come to understand any of them. Friends, childhood friends, best friends, lovers... no matter how close your relationship becomes, by no means is it ever possible to uncover what is hidden deep inside them.

What they love. What they desire. What they prefer. Who they let their guard down around. Who they feel comfortable with. These problems of the mind and body were a totally separate issue to what he wanted.

Indeed, he knows that. But, still, he doesn’t want to abandon these thoughts just for the sake of it. He wants to know, he wants to understand it, he wants to hear it, he wants them to reveal everything. That is his arrogant, but desired wish. Even more so, when it involves both his own and the others lives hanging by a thread. Even if there is absolutely no way to do it.

?No, there was supposed to be absolutely no way to do it.

He laughed at the thought of it, sure there was supposed to be absolutely no way to do such a thing. But, in this Taygeta library, Subaru ended up finding out how.

??????

Meili Portoute. By reading her?Book of the Dead?, Subaru saw through Meili's life, understood what she thought and felt, and who she hated at the time of her demise.

Of course, his extremely short experience did not define Meili entirely. The time she had spent alive was too long to even accept all her individual events into his brain. Even if it had been a short life that she had lived, he could by no means have absorbed into him all of her memories.

Eagerly gnawing away at the key points, drinking them in with the intention of understanding Meili. Those were the kinds of painful feelings that the current Natsuki Subaru understood.

However, but, even so. By understanding the core fragments of the girl, Subaru now had a deeper understanding of Meili than ever before.

?*There was a person whom?I?cherished. Her life was stolen away from me, and, now alone, my heart continued to wander. Being with Subaru and the others, who were the ones responsible for that, I struggled to understand what exactly my purpose was. I went to the library to find her?Book of the Dead?, and I felt ashamed and in despair when I was discovered.*

Subaru had found out everything he hadn't known about Meili, without even intending to. He had discovered the girl's innermost feelings and desires without even expecting it.

If this?Book of the Dead?truly did not lie, wasn't it a way of unearthing the true natures of the others?

Subaru:??????

It was just that he wants to know, that's the only thing he desires. The real intentions of Emilia, Beatrice, and the others in the tower is what he wishes to know. He wants to know why they put so much trust in?Natsuki Subaru.?

Why do they believe?Natsuki Subaru?who was responsible for killing?*Me*?? And now, what do they think of Subaru who desperately pretends to be?Natsuki Subaru??

Intimacy is just camouflage, hatred is the reality, and feelings like anger, sadness and joy are temporary. Hostility and malice, aren't those their true feelings?

I don't know. I want to know. I want to trust them. I can't trust them. Are Emilia and the others allies, or are they enemies; are they enemies who killed Subaru, or are they allies that want him to live? Do they love him, do they not love him? Do they hate him, do they not hate him?

?Won't he obtain that answer by reading their?Book of the Dead??

Beatrice: ?...Subaru, you really look terrible, in fact. If you are feeling uneasy here, it'd be better if we went somewhere else for you to rest, I suppose.?

Touching Subaru's shoulder, who was immersed in thought, Beatrice gives her suggestion. Subaru was rendered breathless for a minute, being trapped by the gaze of her characteristic blue butterfly pattern in her eyes. Looking at it, the girl's tiny, tiny palm rested on Subaru's shoulder.

What would happen if he took her hand, grabbed her head and smashed it on the floor with all his strength?

Subaru:?How, small...?

Beatrice:?Wh... what are you suddenly starting to say in fact? This smallness is exactly the reason behind Betty's loveliness, I suppose. Subaru has also said that in fact.?

Subaru reflexively relaxes his cheeks, as Beatrice sullenly blurts this out. Certainly, it could be said that Subaru was not at all in a normal state. Noticing the similarity between himself and?Natsuki Subaru?, he smiles bitterly.

Small. Truly, Beatrice was just, a small child. Her neck was thin and her bones fragile. The hand that rested on Subaru's shoulder was small enough to be fully covered by his palm. If he put even a bit of strength into his arms whilst hugging her, it seems like her fragile body would break. If these thoughts are turned to actions, he should be able to easily kill her.

?If he kills her, if her life blinks out of existence, will her book appear in the library?

???:?Seems like it, doesn’t i~t.?

Subaru:??????

Suddenly, Subaru hears a voice from his subconscious, one which would be impossible to call his own. It is somewhat sweet, glossy enough to sound adult, but it was a strangely?familiar?voice. In that short period of time, the voice became familiar enough that he could call it his own.

The voice inside him was that of the dead little girl who mocks Natsuki Subaru's intentions.

Subaru:??????

However, Subaru discards this event, concentrating on the matter in front of him. That is, whether the?Book of the Dead?could be realistically utilised.

If so, then how would he go about making this come true?,

Beatrice:?Your face looks really pale, I suppose. Indeed, we should go somewhere else in fact. But before that...?

Subaru:??ah?

Beatrice:?I must return that where it originally was, I suppose. It’s no good to mislead Betty in fact.?

Saying that, Beatrice takes the?Book of the Dead?from Subaru's stiff hands. She holds it cautiously to ensure the book doesn't open, and places it where there was an empty gap in the bookshelf; the place where it originally was.

Beatrice:?It’s easy to understand and remember where I positioned it, I suppose. However, it’s possible that the books in this library will just start moving on it's own...?

Subaru:?A safety measure, huh... that's, mhm, yeah, I suppose that's right.?

Beatrice:?You ought to think that bringing it outside is pretty dangerous in fact. This is safer than throwing them out onto the floor because Shaula is worried about that, I suppose.?

Subaru:?I feel like being in this library is a once in a lifetime opportunity for me.?

Subaru dryly spits these words out as he replies to Beatrice.

In reality, even in the world which Subaru knows, it's said that opportunities like coming across a book which has been published a number of years ago only come once. Just like coming across a second-hand bookstore whilst travelling, if he misses out on this opportunity, he may never find the book ever again. This speculation may also apply to this library.

Like usual, had he been overthinking this? No doubt that this thought is bothering him.

Either way, whilst warily looking at Beatrice's back as she struggles to arrange the books, Subaru immerses himself deeper and deeper into his sea of thoughts.

Realistically, though, he needs to find a way to kill the girl. Although, Beatrice isn't the only one he should think about. Every single one of the members who are inside the tower are in a position to becoming a target to Subaru's plan involving the?Books of the Dead.?

Meili:?Is it really better for you to continue doubting its reliability? It feels to me like you want to kill... aah, Onii-san truly is warped. Tut-tut.?

The voice of the little girl interrupts Subaru from his thoughts, clicking her tongue at him.

The first thing thing he wants to say back to her is that he thinks that this is a necessary thought-experiment. By no means is Subaru a psychopath that is dominated by homicidal impulses, he isn't controlled by such abnormal urges whereby he must take pleasure in deeds like that. But, right now, when he was thinking this through, this had been the only choice that had come to his mind. It seemed rational.

Meili:?Enough with the excuses... I wo~nder, can't you just tell me what you're going to do??

?It would be very easy to get rid of Beatrice.

This is because Subaru can see her back… unprotected, defenceless, completely unguarded. It can be clearly stated that Beatrice's life is precariously balanced by a thread which depends entirely on Subaru's flawed reasoning. When that "rationality" surpasses reason, Subaru will very likely take the girl's life quite easily. When it comes to Beatrice, the only options he has are *to do* or *to not do*. It seemed possible to entirely disregard the countless other possibilities that branched off as an alternative from his standpoint.

Meili:?We~ll, what a~bout the half-witch Onee-san??

The likes of Emilia would be even easier… an easy victory. Once, he had even seized her by the neck after he had woken up. In the past, she hadn't shown any signs of resistance. As long as Subaru put all of his strength into his arms, he could easily break that fragile neck of hers. Certainly he can say that she has strength similar to that of a pro wrestler, but it means nothing unless she is prepared to use it. If in an instant, he strangles her neck with all his strength...

Meili:?Hee hee hee, it’s your speciality, e~h??

?Ram, despite her sharp tongue, is in essence also merely a weak girl. It reminded Subaru about the time she cried while pressing her head against him. With her thin arms desperately embracing him, weak, she was just a girl after all. Echidna is also the same way. Come to think of it, they’re all weak girls. He really made the wrong selection of people if the mission was to cross the desert. As much as he would have liked to have more suitable people with him, there really just weren’t enough people to go around.

Therefore, even though Subaru could take advantage of that chance, the last obstacle in his way is a different story.

Subaru:??Julius.?

The only man who is the same as Subaru, until even now this character which carries a sword in hand, is an obstacle that stood in his way. It’d be impossible for him to say that it would be a good idea to strike at him head-on ? you could also it’s a suicidal act to strike at Emilia head-on, but that’s a whole other story.

In any case, if he was to implement the?Book of the Dead?plan, he will be the biggest wall in his way. In other words, Julius is the one he should beat first.

Meili:?With the amount of time it takes to search for the books, however much time you have, it’s not going to be enough r~ight??

According to the words of the girl, Subaru’s purpose isn’t simply “kill and be done with it”. Rather, killing is a necessity, a passing point that must be cleared — as his desires lay in front, on the side of the?Books of the Dead?obtained in exchange for death.

For that purpose, it is necessary to be certain. He had killed, he had failed, so he could not let it end like this. Beyond this, he has a goal.

Beatrice:?Subaru, the book is alright for the moment, in fact. Let’s get far away from here… like the Spirit’s Room or somewhere like that, I suppose. You should calm down there, in fact.?

Subaru:?Spirit’s... room...?

Beatrice, coming back, taking Subaru’s hand helps him to stand up; Subaru is reminded of the room with the spirit, and his restart point came to mind. That place is the green room, and at that place—

Subaru:?Patrasche...?

Beatrice:?…You're saying that earth dragon's name again... Jeez, there's no point worrying about you, I suppose. I was the worrried one...I cant believe this, in fact.?

Subaru:?... So- sorry. I didn’t mean it like that.?

For a moment, the figure of the black earth dragon brushed his mind, and his lips softened. As Beatrice watched, Subaru hurriedly came back to his senses. However, even in this scene, Patrasche remains the only one who Subaru can put his trust in.

Actually, only Patrasche who ran the risk of death to defend Subaru, regardless of its true intentions or feelings, a being who remained by the side of Natsuki Subaru—

Meili:?Really? If she knew that Onii-san isn't ?Natsuki Subaru?, I still wo~nder if he would do the same thing.?

Subaru:??????

Meili:?After all, on Onii-san's side… there isn't anyone, is there??

Resonating in his mind is a smiling voice, mocking Subaru. Haunting him, an existence that differs from Natsuki Subaru tries to break his optimism.

It was a silly point, and he would've been better off laughing it away. However, at this moment, Subaru couldn't afford that. His heart came to half-agree with the girl's words.

If she knew that this subaru was a fake, he feared that she would also come to ignore him.

Beatrice:?Hey, Subaru, give me your hand, I suppose.?

Subaru:?A, aaa...?

His brain being toyed around by the girl's voice, Subaru grits his teeth with emotions that were hard to accept.

Consequently, his vision started to shift out of focus. Holding out her hand, in an attempt to hold his, suddenly she made a face indicating that she had noticed something. Her gaze staring at Subaru's wrist — she noticed it.

Beatrice:?There are scratches, in fact… and, so many...?

Rolling up the sleeve of Subaru's right arm, Beatrice furrowed her eyebrows at the scratches, pathetic and painful to look at. Even if it seemed she did not notice the scratches deeply bored further up in his arm, just the forearm is enough.

Subaru:??????

At the moment, Beatrice does not know of Meili's death. She therefore shouldn't be able to immediately connect these scratches with Meili's death. But, even discounting this, she should be wondering where on earth he got these scratches.

If Meili's corpse is found, she will inevitably be suspicious.

Subaru:??????

His unprepared heart began beating like an alarm bell going off.

Before his eyes, laying her eyes upon his hand, Beatrice did not notice that expression of his. With instant action it would be possible to take care of Beatrice.

Meili:?What are you gonna doo? Shouldn't you get started already??

As if playing with his self-confidence, the voice urges Subaru to a decision. His temple throbbed from the blood circulating through it, along with his pounding heart. Continuing on from her last statement, Beatrice said:

Beatrice:?It seems you scratched your arm again. A bad habit, I suppose.?

Subaru:?……ah??

Beatrice:?This isn't good, in fact. If Emilia had noticed it, you will have made her worried, you should stop doing things like that, I suppose. Even Betty can't overlook this when it's this bad, in fact.?

Tracing Subaru's scars with her fingers, Beatrice heartbrokenly withdrew her eyes. Following those remarks, Subaru was unable to move from the unexpected impact of her words.

It was almost as if Beatrice was familiar with the scratches that covered Subaru's arm.

Even so, supposing the others notice the scratches on Subaru, it is still completely different from the horrible situation, for entirely different reasons — there's no mistaking that this time the arm is scratched in self-mutilation. She had even said that she had concealed this from Emilia, which in itself was shocking.

Beatrice:?If you go to the room with the spirit, these wounds will be healed as well, I suppose. But still, because Betty cannot bear looking at it, Betty will heal it even if a little bit.?

As she says so, Beatrice wraps Subaru's wrist with a pale light. The gentle sensation brings warmth, but the healing of the wound itself will probably be painful. Healing magic is what is being shown before his eyes.

Subaru:??????

At the same moment, any hostility that Subaru had for Beatrice inside was rapidly swept away. Along with this warmth, the humanity of Natsuki Subaru, which had ruptured along with the wounds on his wrist, certainly seemed to be restored as well.

Meili:?Boooring.?

The little girl grumbled In Subaru's head, as if her hopes had been betrayed. Whilst listening to her

directly in his skull, Subaru swallowed down the evil environment that had taken root in his head.

Certainly, it had been a choice. But, it had been nothing more than an option. There is no need for him to lead himself in the direction that longs for their?Book of the Dead. ?There are no preparations set in place, in short.

Subaru:??????

Inflicting harm on Beatrice right now is not a good idea. His preparations are not ready yet. Even if he takes the worst possible means, it must be done after thorough plans are made. As such, now, this place?

Beatrice:?Come now, let’s go, I suppose. Subaru. Betty will eventually talk about it to everyone afterwards, in fact.?

Subaru:??Alright. Sorry to bother you, Beatrice.?

Beatrice:?Promise not to speak about this, I suppose.?

Although he did not know whether the concern of the girl before his eyes is genuine or not, Natsuki Subaru thought that he ought to listen to her.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

? Firstly, though this is unrelated, there exists a phrase.

??Murder becomes a habit.?

That is one of the phrases the famous detective, Hercule Poirot, left the world with.

??Murder becomes a habit.?

The meaning of this phrase doesn't refer to a person who has killed a human being and then suddenly wakes up with a preference for murdering people, who then repeats the crime to satisfy their cravings.

??Murder becomes a habit.?

It refers to someone who solved their problem once by murder, for them, whenever another problem arises, they will think about trying to break through the problem through murder again.

??Murder becomes a habit.?

By the time they start to consider that murder is not one of those options, the utmost important thing would have had already changed.

??Murder becomes a habit.?

The truth is, even if there was a single murderer who didn’t commit a crime by his own will, even if he dislikes the act, even if you see a glimpse of the memory of the one who had been harmed by such an action, that habit does not go.

??Murder becomes a habit.?

That habit… it does not go.

??Murder becomes a habit.?

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

- [1]A rough example of what a zen dialogue is can be found here.

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Arc 6 – Chapter 49, “To You, The Worthless Excuse”

by admin - Thursday, September 20, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/09/20/arc-6-chapter-49-to-you-the-worthless-excuse/

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Translated by :

- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism

With Contributions by:

- PaperLightning
- Jaerek, /u/Jaerek

Proofread by:

- Shifty, /u/Shiftyfish87
- Frusty, /u/TheFrustratedMan
- Nana
- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd

Fan Art Created by :

- Art Source (With English TL by PaperLightning)

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ALL RIGHTS BELONG TO **TAPPEI NAGATSUKI**, THE **ORIGINAL AUTHOR** OF RE:ZERO STARTING A LIFE IN A DIFFERENT WORLD FROM ZERO, THIS IS A TRANSLATION OF THE **FREE** JAPANESE WEB NOVEL INTO ENGLISH

JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Gradually, he becomes aware of a sensation of numbness coming from his arm. Slowly but steadily, the

scratch marks of Meili's dying throes were starting to vanish and heal. Realizing that he was being healed, Subaru turned his eyes away from his sleeve.

Subaru:?...Well, this room was certainly the big deal it was made out to be.?

The spirit that he had been told of, one which dwells in this room full of ivy, healing the wounds of the living, definitely resided here. Although, as far as Subaru is concerned, he hadn't experienced this efficacy when he had visited the room in the past, so up until now he had doubted how effective it was. He was made to regret having been suspicious of that thing in this room, but now he relished in the sensation of his wounds being healed.

Meili:?Despite my precious words spoken from beyond the grave, Onii-san is sti~ll being disobedient. ?

Subaru:??????

Meili:?But, Beatrice-chan's poor judgement has saved you, ri~ght? Thanks to her, the evidence left around your wrists will disappea~r.?

The shade of the little girl who is incessantly speaking inside his head annoys him. Her constant yammering felt quite gross to him. He can't say when it was that the little girls' remarks, that did not reflect on what he truly thought, had started to wrench open his mind.

He doesn't know whether this little girl's shade is running rampant due to being part of Subaru, or whether it had been because of her ghost literally possessing him after reading her?Book of the Dead.?

Whatever the reason may be, he mustn't bend his ear to what the little girl is saying. He mustn't listen to her. The only issue was that she was irritating him.

Thus, Subaru consciously closes his mind to the sound of these incessant hallucinations. However, the more Subaru tries to seclude himself in his own shell, the louder and more talkative her shade becomes, growing more impish in poking fun at Subaru. The most annoying thing about?

Meili:?Right now, you don't have Beatrice beside you anymore, do yo~u? Since there's no one in your way, why don't you just get rid of that sleeping gi~rl??

Subaru:??hk?

Meili:?Hehe… don't start looking like you're about to cry. I know you're trying to ignore me, but you can't, ah, Onii-san's such an adorable guy! ?

The little girl's voice, which had no corporeal presence, was heard by Subaru as if it was a whisper in his ear. If he closes his eyes, it feels like the little girl's gently leaning on his back, her figure spitting out these sweet words to his ears accompanied by sweet sighs; it almost feels like he is able to see her hallucination.

She had been brought to the spirit's room for rest, and once again Subaru was presented with the same

choice as when he had held the?Book of the Dead.?Beatrice was on her way to tell Emilia and the others that Subaru had left the Taygeta library and that she had brought him to this room. Right now, Subaru had procured some time where no-one would be able to see what was going on. And, right in front of him lay the girl who is sleeping on the ivy bed just as if she were an offering to him… all alone?

Subaru:?...Rem?

Even if he tries to say the name of the comatose girl out loud, no emotions rise within Subaru. He has no memories known of her, he only knows her name. All he knows is that she's Ram's twin sister, and that she was one of Emilia's companions. And that they had come to this tower looking for a way to wake her up from her long slumber.

?Beyond that, he wants to know what happened.

Meili:?There's no other way around it. It's either you do it or you don't do i~t.?

The sweet girl's temptation reminds Subaru, whether he is willing or not, about the?Books of the Dead?plan. Even though now she had fallen into a deep sleep, there must certainly have been a relation of some sort with Subaru around the time when she had been in good health. By borrowing the powers of her?Book of the Dead?, he can find out what kind of relationship and feelings she had towards Subaru.

Above all, he would be able to take that life far more easily than Meili's. The likes of this girl who is in a comatose state could even be suffocated by just smothering her face with a damp cloth. He must do it quickly, quickly, quickly, quickly, quickly, quickly...

Subaru:?... Am I being stupid? No, I'm definitely being stupid.?

Restraining the feeling of impatience brimming in his arm, Subaru rethinks his foolish idea. Immediately carrying something out like that wouldn't be good. His eyes had been covetously attracted by the spot right in front of him... it would be pointless to carry this out later.

Killing is the method. Subaru desires to find out what everyone truly thinks of him. As far as it comes to achieving that result, this was also a good moment to screw up how he'd do it, and rush the killings.

Even at the Taygeta Library, hadn't he thought the same way? If he is to carry out his?Book of the Dead?plan, he needs to carefully choose the right order to eliminate them in.

Subaru:?Julius, Emilia, Shaula, Ram, Echidna, Beatrice, Rem...?

Counting them on his fingers, Subaru lists the people who remain inside the tower, excluding Meili ? namely, the order in which he'd prefer to get their?Book of the Dead?if at all possible. This order should enumerate who'd become most likely to become a hindrance to his execution of the?Book of the Dead?plan. If he did the opposite of what he says, unless he followed this hit-list he had come up with, if he were rush into it and act then it wouldn't work out ? he doesn't want to screw up.

Meili:?If you don't, then you'll end up at a disadvantage when killing. That's scary.?

Subaru:??????

He keeps his silence with the talkative shade. She seemed to give off quite a strong hint of displeasure towards him. Nevertheless, even if he tries to speak to her, her behaviour doesn't change. It remains the same.

Subaru doesn't necessarily want to kill Emilia and the others. But still, if he has to kill them, he wants to go through with that once. Only once, only once is perfect. And only if he has a complete plan.

Subaru:??????

And thus, with that in mind, Subaru sighs as piercing yellow eyes gaze at him. Noticing them, the gaze came from the figure sitting right next to the sleeping girl in this spirit room ? the gaze had come from his jet black Earth Dragon, Patrasche.

Patrasche's gaze seems like it's filled with worry and gloom as she looks towards the exhausted Subaru. She may have worked out that before leaving this place for a while, Beatrice had said?Keep an eye on Subaru?to her. As long as Patrasche's eyes are focused on him, no matter how frustrated he gets, he will be unable to commit any violence towards the sleeping girl. In that respect, he would like to thank Patrasche for having made him not make a premature decision in this matter.

But, after reading the?Book of the Dead?, Subaru was becoming unable to direct solid trust towards anyone, even to Patrasche who he was supposed to feel a great deal of affection to.

Subaru:?...I wonder... is this all going to your plan,?Natsuki Subaru???

He wants to believe in them. The more he ponders about their true intentions, the more Natsuki Subaru isolates himself within this different world where he has no one to turn to. Isn't this clearly because of the game presented by the wicked?Natsuki Subaru??

Subaru:??????

Bit by bit, the scratches that had been caused by Meili continue healing. Whilst savouring the feeling of his aches and pains fading away, Subaru rolls up his sleeve to where the painful scars showing?Natsuki Subaru was here?were carved in. He traces his nails above the scabs, and realises they are also being healed.

He doesn't mind that the scratches which served as proof of his horrible criminal acts were fading? No, not his, he hadn't been "himself" then. However, he cannot let the knowledge that it hadn't been himself be erased.

Subaru:?This message as well.?

The wound that had been carved into his left arm, and the one in his right arm too, had both been scratched in a similar manner. On his still unfamiliar black arm which is mottled by black spots, there is a wound that at first had not been there. He had carved this wound there as if he was returning the favour

for the wound that had been carved into his left arm by his other self.

???Who are you??He holds that question engraved into him as a wound.

Subaru:??????

Subaru had not given a single care when wounding his own flesh without abandon.

Subaru:??hgh?

Patrasche gazes pitifully at the wound left behind on Subaru's arm, as a result of his own self harm. Even if the scratches she had given him were to disappear, if they were to look at Meili's own hands, they would find it clear that she had died trying to put up a fight trying to desperately ward off the one who had killed her. The logic of thinking that he had concealed Meili's murder from everyone was based entirely on his terribly sloppy cleanup afterwards.

All it would take is for one gear to collapse to set everything into motion. He feels like a marionette being dangled from the top of this tower, standing on thin ice, turning his face away from the root of his problems, an amusing clown desperately fighting to keep his balance… that is what Subaru has become.

However, this amusing clown's performance will finally earn itself a curtain call without encountering any more obstacles in his way. And that is because?

Luckily for him, Meili Portroute's corpse?had not been found?anywhere.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Subaru:??????

The atmosphere around the dinner table is awfully heavy, matching the gloomy expressions everyone wore. This was due to the dangerous circumstances that they had found themselves in? half of them had recognized that their desperate search for Meili's body had been fruitless and that they had already been far too late.

Although they had all been way too fraught with anxiety to call their search an "All out frontal assault", they had still split into groups and mobilised everyone so that they could search for her. As a result, they had spent almost half a day trying to find her without even finding a trace of her. The feeling that it had all been for nothing had grown, it was understandable that many of them were experiencing immense levels of stress.

Ram:?Everything's just been going wrong since we came to this tower, huh??

Subaru:?...even if I think that, I clearly didn't say it out loud!?

Whilst munching on his dinner which consisted of things such as dry bread, he mumbles this, staring at Ram, with a growing feeling of lethargy. Receiving Subaru's protests, Ram shrugs her shoulders, a blank

look adorning her face. However, even for her usual calm and composed self, an aura of fatigue was coming off from her. And it wasn't just Ram, everyone in the tower was in the same state as her.

Emilia:?More or less... I first went to ask Reid about her, but he said he hadn't seen her. He said that no one had come there since yesterday and that he was getting bored… I don't think he was lying. Since Meili had seen what Reid's like, I don't think she'd have gone there alone...?

Beatrice:?It's hard to imagine that even that arrogant man would harm such a little girl… though, I can't say that for sure in this scary place. But, Betty ultimately agrees with Emilia's thoughts, in fact.?

Emilia and Beatrice exchange words between them regarding the red haired, eye patch clad man who guards the second floor. Although in his mind that man had done nothing but cause him great torment, Emilia had faced him and more or less heard him out safely. It seems like she had managed to come back unharmed. Feeling a sense of relief, Subaru shook his head.

There's no reason for him to feel such a sense of relief, rather, he has no right to considering what had transpired before. He doesn't know if he even has the right to comfort Emilia.

Echidna:??Can I mention one thing? It may sound cruel, but I want to propose something, and I am prepared that I may end up being shouted at because of it.?

Draining her bowl of soup, completely indifferent to its taste, Echidna raises her hand as she finishes her meager dinner. Whilst facing everyone around the dinner table, she narrows her turquoise eyes, and says:

Echidna:?Searching for that little girl… I think we should stop for today… and from tomorrow, we should focus on trying to capture this tower again. What are your thoughts about that??

Emilia:??hk! We will do no such thing! What on earth would Meili think of us!??

Echidna:?It is already too late, she has no way to think or feel anything. That was proved by Natsuki-kun's confirmation after he read her?Book of the Dead.?I am against further searching for her.?

Emilia had been the first to oppose Echidna's proposal, which could be said to have been both realistic and level headed. However, Echidna's expression didn't waver when hearing Emilia's argument that had come purely from her emotions. However, on behalf of Emilia who was at a complete loss for words, Beatrice spoke in her place:?Wait, I suppose?

Beatrice:?Your point at first seems to make sense, in fact. But, it seems quite sudden for you to mention it, I suppose. Why is it that you want to stop the search for Meili??

Echidna:??. I guess it was a strange thing to say, right? In this tower, the food supplies we brought in are limited, and as more days pass by, it will likely become more burdensome for everyone in each camp to stay here. If our stay greatly drags on, then you ought to think that a search party will be sent out to look for us.?

Ram:?Naturally. Emilia-sama and Anastasia-sama… well, what's inside of her now is different, but both

of you are esteemed candidates for the royal selection. You both shouldn’t even be in this tower in the desert.?

Echidna’s proposal had been more rational, level-headed opinion. The mood at the dinner table was brimming with tension.

Shaula:?Gee~ This isn’t much fun. If you're going to squabble, I'd rather you did it away from Master and I. But I don’t mind either way, as for meee, I'll build a happy family with Master, just the two of us. A girl first, and then a boy!?[1]

He doesn’t deign to reply to Shaula, who had slipped into the seat right next to him as she babbled on, sticking her tongue out at the tense atmosphere around her. She’d also shown this kind of attitude back at the library. Shaula had pressed Subaru for a choice back at the library; what was it that she had wanted Subaru to say back to her? If she refers to Subaru as her Master and completely idolises him, then how far would she go for him? ?How far would she obey him, if Subaru were to give her a command?

Julius:?We should stop arguing.?

Julius, with anguish etched across his handsome face breaks the tense mood around them. He places his arm in front of Echidna and looks at Beatrice and Ram.

Julius:?Beatrice-sama, Miss Ram. As a member of her camp, I deeply apologise for Echidna’s careless words. However, don’t misunderstand what she meant to say. She didn’t make such a proposal with only rationalism in mind, with no other meaning to it.?

Echidna:?Julius, stop. That speech was?

Julius:?We may have lost the little girl that accompanied us here from Emilia-sama’s camp. That pain can be felt there. If possible, we should be more understanding in this situation.?

Hearing Julius’ sincere remarks, Echidna stops herself from saying any more. Julius then turns to face Beatrice once again.

Julius:?For now, Anastasia-sama’s body has been pretty much taken over by Echidna’s spirit. It’s true that in her current state we can’t find a way to get Anastasia-sama back… but, there are other issues as well. ?Echidna is with every passing moment consuming Anastasia-sama’s Od.?

Emilia:?Her Od… is diminishing? Is it still happening because we can’t get Anastasia back??

Julius:?...Indeed. I imagine that’s why she wants to hurry to borrow the?Sage’s?wisdom by capturing this tower.?

The rest of them react in shock at hearing Echidna’s secret being spoken out loud by Julius. Echidna’s secret had been revealed by her own camp member, shrugging her shoulders at the people staring at her, she says:?Ah!?

Echidna:?No point in trying to gloss over this. It is as Julius said. I, I don’t think it’s a good idea to consume so much of Ana’s Od like this, which isn’t really abundant in the first place. If I can, I want to return this body back to Ana as soon as possible!?

Emilia:?You can’t get free until you are released from her human body??

Echidna:?Even though I am able to move around freely using Ana’s body, I’m pretty much stuck being bound to her body. I don’t know how much I can trust you with what I’m saying, but...?

Echidna paused for a moment, and then continued her speech.

Echidna:?Essentially, my being should ideally stay within its original vessel. Even borrowing her body, though it may look like her, doesn’t have any of her contents. It’s unnatural. ?It’s honestly dreadful.?

Everyone in the room simply looked on in stunned silence.

Casting his eyes down, Subaru felt as if Echidna’s speech had cast a spell on him. Her story had struck Subaru’s heart to its very core. A borrowed body, lacking substance, and having only its exterior appearance remaining ? this similarity pierces his heavy heart.

Echidna:?Anyways, that is why I want to hurry up and capture this tower. By all means, if you don’t believe what I have said, you can let someone like Beatrice poke around this body just to make sure. I suppose they will immediately see how distorted I am as a spirit and how much Od I have consumed.?

Echidna leaves to the others the proof of her own situation without noticing the turmoil brimming inside of Subaru, brought upon him by her words. In fact, after being nominated, Beatrice takes Echidna’s arm and probes into what in principal is her body; it seemed like Echidna’s words were proven to be true. And, receiving that result?

Emilia:?...Okay. I understand the difficult circumstances that Echidn? Anastasia-san is in. It’s no wonder you want to hurry up and climb all the way up to the top of the tower...?

Anastasia:?I do not know if this will bring you peace of mind, but if it is as is it is said and the?Sage?in this tower is omniscient, possessing esoteric wisdoms, then it is possible that he may also know the whereabouts of where the little girl disappeared. Putting it in another manner, I am fully aware it is the cowardly option.?

Emilia:?Nono, thank you. It’s better than having no hope left at all… you’re also looking out for me, and Meili too, aren’t you??

Echidna:?Hmm. Maybe. Or maybe it is just that my? Ana’s body is far too cute??

Echidna, her face showing traces of embarrassment and unsease, turns away from Emilia who seemed prepared to agree with her opinion. Emilia narrowed her amethyst eyes seeing Echidna react like this.Taking a deep breath, she once again spoke:

Emilia:?I am reaaallly worried about Meili. But, I also get Echidna's point. So, starting from tomorrow again, let's do our best to try and get to the top of the tower. Of course, I will keep looking for Meili as much as I possibly can, but...?

Julius:?Remember to not neglect the importance of capturing the tower, Emilia-sama.?

Emilia:?I know. ?What's important, is that sometimes, I don't have to think about everything all by myself.?

Putting her hand on her cheek, Emilia chastises herself, a firm resolve grows deep in her irises. Turning back, she look towards Subaru, who had been observing the exchange as if he was a spectator. For a moment, the intensity in her gaze overpowered him, but the words Emilia continued with did not scathe into him.

Emilia:?Is that okay with you too, Subaru??

Subaru:?I-I guess that's okay. That way Meili can also rest in peace… No, I guess we all need to move forward… No, no that… uh, why are you asking me??

Emilia:?Because Subaru read Meili's book, mhm? When I saw Subaru's reaction immediately after reading it, I…. that's why I think the one who is the most worried about Meili should be Subaru.?

Emilia reminded him about it. Hearing her words, Subaru held his breath. It wasn't just Emilia who was looking at him. Beatrice, Ram, Echidna and Julius… everyone was looking at Subaru.

What sort of intention is present in those gazes? He can't hazard a guess. Without even realising it, Subaru moves his lips in accordance to the treacherous spirit inside of him.

Subaru:??I'm definitely worried. But, I think Meili also would have wanted us to go on.?

Perhaps, he is just the best in the world when it comes to uttering such shallow words.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

?Late at night, Subaru springs himself into action, finally having the time to freely act without anyone interfering.

Subaru:??????

After the group resolved to wrack each other's brains for ideas on how to capture the second floor, and after having established a firm plan for tomorrow, the meeting at the dinner table ended. They then proceeded to get ready for bed. It was a night in which unforeseen problems had occurred to one of their companions. Naturally, they recommended that they put all their bedding together in one room and sleep together. So, more or less, they gathered together in one room and made an improvised partition across the room using a blanket to act as a curtain between the male and female sides.

However, Subaru had insisted on sleeping inside the spirit room.

The after-effects from reading the?Book of the Dead?, was most of his excuse. Practically, after having experienced what followed Subaru reading the?Book of the Dead?, no one had tried to argue with him. Of course, Beatrice had shown particularly strong disapproval at letting Subaru sleep alone, but the spirit room has a fixed capacity limit. Sick with worry, Subaru's voice had trembled, but Beatrice had to withdraw her opposition to it.

Rather than it being a boon of Subaru's acting prowess, it had likely been his awfully pale face that had influenced them. Honestly, it was a miracle that he hadn't collapsed, he was aware that he was in a terrible state.

Meili:?I think Meili also would have wanted us to go on. ?What an actor you are, e~h? ?

Subaru:??????

Meili:?Fufu, don't get mad no~w. It isn't sarcasm. I truly think that, and I admire i~t.?

He had thought she had been surprisingly quiet during the meeting at the dinner table. He wonders if she had something to do with the barefaced lie he had told at the end. Even if he refuses to listen to this troublesome hallucination, blocking his ears to her voice has no effect. That sweet voice continues to cause him discomfort just like the sound of scratching a chalkboard with nails.

Meili:?H~mm, so, tonight you're not going to take care of the blue haired Onee-san's neck??

Subaru:??????

Her shade kept repeatedly hinting to Subaru, who had waited for the evening to grow dark to take action, about the existence of the sleeping beauty in the room. To the same shade's temptation from several hours ago, Subaru's answer remained the same as before.

Subaru:?It isn't her turn yet.?

Saying that, Subaru leaves the room without even looking at the sleeping beauty's face. At that moment, his eyes met with Patrasche's, who had slightly opened her eyes. He handles the situation by bringing his finger to his lips, shushing her, a gesture that indicated to her to keep it a secret. He did not know to what extent the intention has been transmitted to his reptilian companion, but at the same time it feels like Patrasche is more clever than creatures like dogs or horses. Whether or not she is, it would be nice if she remained silent.

Subaru:??????

After ensuring he had made it so he ended up being left alone, the reason why Subaru started to move in the dead of night— wasn't to take the lives of his sleeping companions and to put the plan of the?Book of the Dead?into practice.

Of course, he had carefully considered that scheme too. With Subaru's abilities, it would be best for that plan to be realized with surprise attacks, and you could say that while they're sleeping would be the best opportunity. However, it is still too early. It is a last resort, a deed that goes against humanity, that he shouldn't do unless they force his hand.

Then, for what purpose had Subaru started acting in the dead of night? It was because of?,

Meili:??My corpse, what are you going to do about it??

Realizing where Subaru was going, the voice of the little girl, as if standing behind him, poses him that question. Subaru doesn't reply to her, but, the direction he was walking towards was just as good as a confirmation to her question.

?Subaru is acting to dispose of of Meili's still hidden corpse.

Subaru:??????

Whether you can call this a ridiculous story or a lucky situation or whatever, in any case, he had no other choice. That today, Emilia and the others hadn't found Meili's remains should be called nothing more than a devil's plot, rather than God's plan.

Thinking back on it, in regards to the situation, holes were appearing in his cover-up operation. It's up to himself to curse his own poor thinking. Unexpected as it was, she hadn't been found. That had saved him. However, from tomorrow, whilst committing himself to capturing the tower, he would not leave whether they find her or not down to guesswork.

At least, he expects that Emilia will not abandon searching for Meili. Seeing that she is a girl without any troubles of her own, her heart will not give in until the situation is resolved, it's easy to imagine that she'll continue to look for the little girl that had vanished.

Therefore, it was necessary for Subaru to have peace of mind. If he can't have peace of mind, he wouldn't be able to lay the groundwork for his success. Unless he lays the groundwork, he won't be able to build his castle on top of it, in the future. If the groundwork can't be built, he will not be able to achieve his future.

To Natsuki Subaru's peace, the existence of Meili Portroute is an obstacle.

Meili:?I guess it kind of feels like you're being... even more restless now inside your he~ad?

He turns a deaf ear to her. He had just made his affirmation clear, she would not get in his way. He firmly refuses to let that happen.

As Subaru travels stealthily through the night, making sure not to draw any attention to himself, he arrives at the room where he had hid Meili's corpse. Although the rooms in this area all looked the same, you can see discoloration in the stone wall near the entrance of this one, making it so that the room is easy to identify via this landmark.

Subaru:?Honestly, this is going to leave a bad aftertaste...?

Taking her out from the tower's entrance into the desert and burying her in the sand would be for the best. She would continue to decay if she was left for a few more days inside the building. And although the temperature aren't too high or too low. A body, after ceasing biological functions, cannot be expected to avoid rotting.

Indeed, if he wanted to never have to see it again. The best would be to do something somewhat impossible and leave it far from the tower. Outside where it would become food for the prowling witch beasts. However, He imagined how that would weigh on his heart. No matter what, It was an impossible decision.

Subaru:??????

At the back of the dim room, was enshrined a square lump of rock. On the opposite side of it, her corpse was hidden. You couldn't overlook it if you consciously looked at it. It was an awfully childish manner of hiding. While he was feeling pathetic at losing his head, Subaru went around to the other side of the stone.

There, Meili's approximately half a day old remains??

Subaru:???Huh??

Without thinking, his voice leaks out. His head renounced grasping the view before him.

On the other side of that stone, was absolutely nothing. At the very least, he had made arrangements for the little girl's corpse, closing her eyes, crossing her arms together on top of her chest. The bruises adorning her pale neck, even the corpse of the poor little girl… they were nowhere to be found.

Subaru:?Wh-...y...I was sure... I left it here...?

It was supposed to be here. He couldn't have possibly mistaken the room. He didn't make such a fundamental mistake when coming here. He didn't. So if he didnt, where was the dead body which had to be here?

?Where did Meili Portroute's remains disappear to?

???:??What are you sneaking about to search for this late at night, Barusu??

Subaru:??hk!??

Astounded, the voice coming from behind him made his body go stiff, and Subaru fearfully turned around. Paling, within his field of vision, at the entrance of the not so small room, stood a single silhouette.

Bobbed pink hair, sharp, light pink irises; with crossed arms, her imposing yet lovely features staring in

his direction with coldness. With that out-of-place feeling in her chest, while staring at the petrified Subaru, the girl? Ram, gazed at his eyes and with an absolutely cold tone of voice said,

Ram:?Or I guess I should call you a fake. A worthless excuse of a Barusu? of Natsuki Subaru?

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

- [1] I would like to credit /u/WintryOne for basing my translation of Shaula's dialogue using their translation as the basis, which you can find here.

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Arc 6 – Chapter 50, “To You, The Absolutely Worthless Excuse”

by admin - Tuesday, November 27, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/27/arc-6-chapter-50-to-you-the-absolutely-worthless-excuse-2/

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Translated by :

- PaperLightning
- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism

Proofread by:

- Shifty, /u/Shiftyfish87
- Nana
- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd

Fan Art Created by :

- Art Source

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

At the sound of her cold voice, Subaru literally felt his heart freeze.

Subaru:??????

Looking back at the front of the room, Ram stands still at the entrance, her light pink irises ablaze, boring into the shell-shocked Subaru. Though Subaru had only came in contact with her a few times before, he had rarely ever seen her reveal such emotion on her face? in that Ram, there was a fervour that easily

betrayed that impression.

Subaru:?Nhh, uh...?

Ram:?What are you getting so flustered for? Ram asked you a question. Now it is your turn to answer Barusu….No, it's your duty to do so.?

Subaru:?I- I am… just…?

Ram:?Just??

Promptly, Subaru's head begins to spin as he tries to explain himself. Somehow he manages to move his tongue, cursing the slow, stammered response given by his sluggish mind; he needs to meet this situation with a silver tongue. However, in addition to having been thrown into this unexpected turmoil, in the first place, before this had occurred, Subaru hadn't? he hadn't even processed how Meili's corpse had disappeared. He hadn't even prepared the words to talk his way out of things, he wasn't even able to prepare to come to grips to what was happening right before his eyes.

All that Subaru can do is open and shut his mouth awkwardly as he tries his best to not to say anything improper. Subaru's manner now supported his suspicious behaviour louder than any words could.

Subaru:??????

Ram narrows her eyes at Subaru's silence. The coldness in her gaze, which he had already thought to be at the level of absolute zero, falls even further. It almost feels as if he had been assailed by a sharp, bone-chilling blizzard. While desperately trying to keep his knees from trembling, Subaru slowly starts to understand, too little too late.

?Had he been set up?

When Meili's body hadn't been found, the meeting at the dinner table had been a bluff. When they had reported that Meili's body hadn't been found, Subaru had been relieved that he had escaped from a chance of being blamed.

Desperately searching in vain, they hadn't found the little girl's body that hasn't even been hidden that well. His bad luck had prevailed even in these unnatural circumstances, Subaru had accepted the convenient truth, putting off any niggling doubts that had concerned him then. And that resulted in him being caught up in this act.

Hadn't Subaru also repeatedly seen this in various TV shows? In the final scene,the murderer who had meticulously put together his perfect plan returns back to the crime scene and gives himself away as the police and the detectives are closely watching the crime scene. And due to that, they give away that they committed the crime by showing themselves as being the smoking gun. A time where such a thing had been comedy…

Somewhere in his heart, Subaru had thought that. Any connoisseur of mysteries will take note of the

sheer foolishness of the dumb criminal slipped up at the very end. He had acted completely the same way ?rather , worse, for his shock of being caught up in this act had made him quite a miserable sight to behold.

Ram:??Fake.?

Ram's quiet mutter barrels into him as he is stricken by his own absurd actions. With just that single word, Subaru's brittle heart crumbles and sinks in his chest, as if he had been shell-shocked by a mortar attack. As soon as he had heard it, his face had turned as white as a sheet, his lips trembling. Ram let out a sigh.

Ram:?So, you have nothing to say to defend yourself. Even I wonder if you are truly aware of how obvious your poor acting is. You didn't prepare well enough when disguising yourself as him. There's a limit when it comes to not being diligent, don't you agree??

Without hiding her contempt in her voice, Ram starts to tell Subaru why she had suspected him. Fakeness, poor acting, and showing insufficient understanding towards?Natsuki Subaru?were all pointed out by her. Not only was Subaru lost for words, but his heart felt as if it was going to crack, and the flow of his blood ached with each heartbeat. In fact, Subaru bit his lower lip, and blood started to stream out, accompanied by a sharp stinging pain.

A fake fake fake fake fake fake fake fake fake fake fake? A poor imitation of ?Natsuki Subaru?, A fake?.

That thought settles into the pit of his stomach as if it were thick, black sludge. A disgusting sludge covering him from head to toe; a weight that caused his knees to stop trembling. Instead, where the depths of his eyes had burned; a blaze glowed, dancing atop the fuse of his dark emotions. One could call it hostility, malice, malintention? or perhaps an intent to kill.

Ram:?There's no way such unnatural behaviour would go unnoticed, well, except for those that are clueless. That could be said of Julius, Anastasia-sama… well, Echidna.?

Subaru:?... you're sure letting it all out. Here I am listening to you patiently without even saying a word.?

Ram:??????

Subaru:?A fake!? I think you're crossing the line here into false accusations. What on earth are you saying!??

Ram:?False accusations, huh??

As Ram's sharp tone started to abate, Subaru, though sensing her sorrow, tries to defend himself. Of course, the point she made had been completely correct. Even if he didn't agree with having been sternly described by her as that?Worthless Excuse?, that unfilled void between Subaru and?Natsuki Subaru?existed. However, she couldn't have noticed this. If she comes to notice it, then it would become impossible for him to worm himself out of this situation. He can't stop here, halfway through?

Subaru:?False accusations upon false accusations. My ears are deaf to them, y'know, I can't hear any of 'em.?

Shoulders shrugging and cheeks distorting into a scowl, Subaru speaks while glaring at Ram. He acts out his response, as if, right in that moment, that barefaced lie was the truth of this world. Even he could have fallen for that lie.

Subaru:?As to why I was wandering about in the middle of the night… it's because I just wanted to stretch my legs and think a bit whilst there was no one around. I just wanted to go somewhere to not disturb your little sister... Rem's sleeping, as well as Patrasche...?

Ram:??No one… Did you really think that nobody had seen anything??

Ram had quietly asked Subaru this as he was rapidly blurting his excuses out. Her words were brief, but sharp, designed to puncture deep into his heart.

Subaru:??????

Holding his breath at hearing her inquiry, he racks his brain, trying to figure out what she really meant by saying those words. See, seen, nobody had seen, she can't have seen him.

?He was caught on Ram's wording, *Seen.* What does she mean by this?

Meili's corpse? Or perhaps the Meili from before she had became a corpse? Or had she seen him working on hiding Meili's corpse? Or maybe?

Ram:?Nothing… even if it was your plan that nobody would see anything, the Earth Dragon was diligently watching your strange behaviour. And because of that, Ram was also able to watch you in the same way.?

Putting her fingers to her lips, Right in front of him, Ram deliberately makes a scene out of showing this particularly uncouth gesture towards Subaru.

Subaru:?...What the heck are you saying!??

Without understanding the meaning of her behaviour behind her gesture, Subaru let out these words in bewilderment. However, he did have quite a recent memory of this particular gesture. It was none other than the gesture Subaru had shown to Patrasche before leaving the Spirit Room. Right now, he couldn't for the life of him understand the meaning behind how it had cropped up again in this place with Ram?

Ram:?You need to study him more, you?Worthless Excuse???

The utter disappointment those two words carry is what drives home that this is Subaru's final warning.

Subaru:??????

Up until now, though extremely cold and unfeeling, Ram had kept up her stance of wanting to talk, even

if her intention of exchanging words with Subaru was disappearing by the second. The instant Subaru had seen the look in her eyes, he realized that his excuses were meaningless.

Ram will turn a deaf ear to whatever excuses Subaru comes up with. Since it had come to this, Subaru has no other choice but to break through this situation using brute-strength.

?In that moment, Subaru starts to consider how to kill Ram inside of his head.

Subaru:??????

Think about how to kill her. There is no longer any point in feeling reluctant about it. He had already killed one person. One or two, it makes little difference. *A while ago,* ?*I*?*had a lot of experience in snatching away the lives of a great number of people.* From here on out, there'd be no hindrance in the execution of his?Book of the Dead?plan.

Meili:??Bu~t, that Onee-san...?

Countless choices within Subaru crumbled away noisily. On the verge of being left with only his dangerous thoughts, the shade of the little girl that had been keeping silent up until now had chimed in.

Though invisible, the presence of the shade beside him was so strong he could practically feel her breathing. It hugs Subaru's body from behind him, softly whispering into his ear and tempting him. And the contents of that sweet, sweet, saccharine temptation is?

Meili:??Surely she's in a poor position, ri~ght? Her centre of gravity is shifted onto her left side, her balance is po~or.?

Those sweet whispers had whispered to him the weaknesses of that awe-inspiring, yet terrifying girl? when it comes down to it, she had given him instructions on how to kill her.

She is smaller than him, she is weaker than him, she has less experience when it comes to killing. With the knowledge?*She*?had accumulated by spending so much time with the assassin in black, it should be easy to kill this woman.

Meili:?Knock her over towards her left-hand side, and bash her head against the wall. That'll do the tri~ck.?

As he was taking into account the difference in strength between himself and Ram, relevant advice comes from?*Her.*?By just following that, the girl's skull will crack, and flowers of deep crimson will bloom upon the wall.

Crimson flowers that would marvelously complement this lovely young girl's pink hair?

Subaru:??tch?

Without any cues, and without any obvious openings, Subaru faces his opponent, preparing to step

forward and attack her. Receiving a round of applause from the shade, Subaru steps forwards without hesitation towards Ram's body which was slightly tensed. Towards her right hand side. He will throw her body against the wall and then?,

Ram:?Since you're lost for words, you're now resorting to violence. What a barbaric, boring conclusion.?

In that moment of offence and defence, before Subaru's arm could reach her, Ram had opened her lips and uttered these words. Meeting each other's gazes, Subaru's breath was knocked out of him seeing the Ram's cold eyes.

Ram:??Did you really think that the oh so frail and feeble Ram would challenge such a barbaric man alone??

Rather than mocking him, Ram's words feel similar to pity. As she speaks, Subaru hears a crackling sound in the air mingling in with her voice. In fact, he was not hearing things. The moisture in the atmosphere freezes rapidly, the air around him was being forcibly changed from gas to solid.

Subaru:?Wh...a??

That crackling sound he had heard, had been caused from Subaru's own foot stepping against the pile of ice rising at his feet; it had stopped him in his tracks, causing him pain.

Subaru:?I-ice…!? ?

Ricocheting from the hard, cold impact, Subaru could hardly believe his eyes. But, the transformation didn't just stop here. Bars of ice weren't just materializing where his foot had been, rather, they rose from all around him? enclosing him, materializing into an ice cage.

Subaru:?You're kidding me… what the… magic!??

In the blink of an eye, the ice cage finishes materializing, Subaru was completely trapped within. Seizing the bars of ice with his hands, Subaru tries to violently shake them in an attempt to break that prison; however, his efforts only result in him being astounded at the strength of the ice. The bars did not yield even an inch. Even if he kicks and punches with all his strength, he doesn't at all believe that he'll be able to break through. And thus, Subaru had been imprisoned within that ice cage?

???:??Everything would have been so much better if Ram had been wrong about this...?

Looking at him with her sad amethyst eyes, Emilia comes into view from behind Ram.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

What had happened was hardly surprising; Subaru finds himself dumbstruck like a monkey inside a cage.

Subaru:??????

Ram and Emilia had banded together to restrain him; that much was obvious. Unlike Subaru, however, they had the option of cooperating with each other. From the very beginning, Subaru had been forced to fight alone in this place; confronting a dangerous person alone had probably never been considered a choice by them. Ultimately, Subaru had definitely been dancing in the palm of their hands at every step of the way.

Ram:?In this scene, I also had to feign superficiality, but I sure as hell didn't open my mouth as brazenly as you. As an actor I can barely say that you are below third-rate, let alone second rate.?

Ram spits this out, crossing her arms and looking at Subaru sitting in the cage. Looking at her, he noticed that she hadn't even moved a single step away from the place where she had first made her entry. Even worse, she hadn't even changed her posture. Between her and Subaru, that's what differed between the two actors, that's it.

Ram:?With such acting, only a seriously oblivious person could be fooled. Then, who the most mentally tough person was amongst everyone, there's nothing left to even consider.?

Subaru:?From that way you're speaking…aren't you praising me? Thanks.?

Ram:?...You're welcome.?

Next to Ram who had reacted with a faint air of bitterness, silver hair flew up as Emilia stepped forward. Judging by what Ram had said, this ice cage had been handmade by Emilia? in other words, it can be concluded that this was the kind of magic she is able to use.

Had he not been stuck in this situation, Subaru would have definitely been impressed by her enchanting ice magic which suited its owner's beautiful, mystical face quite well. But, seeing that practically he was a captive in the ice cage, and witnessing just how strong it is, at a glance he can understand the difference in strength between him and her, and just how inferior he is.

The difficulty level of executing his?Book of the Dead?plan, that ranking had now greatly changed. But, before that?

Emilia:??Subaru, what were you trying to do at this time? Weren't you supposed to be resting in the room??

Subaru:?I...?

Looking worried, Emilia asked Subaru what he had been doing here at this time. A serious look of anxiety dwells in her eyes, but, when it comes to this situation, the only possible conclusion is that she's torn between simple honesty and foolishness. They were all mistaken about the reason he had taken this path.

Even Subaru has a say in this. A reason how he had ended up like this certainly exists. However, telling them would be like grasping at thin air; who on earth would believe Subaru's words.

Ram:?Emilia-sama, it’s pointless to ask him that. I doubt he will answer your question honestly. I am doubtful in handling it as if it were Barusu.?

Emilia:?But, Subaru is Subaru! Ram, you must understand that, right??

Ram:?You have to remember that a counterfeit will have a similar appearance only… that’s how Ram judges it.?

If anything, it seemed to resemble something closer to one of Subaru’s own thoughts about himself; Ram had rebuked Emilia’s notion. Most likely, it had been Ram who had suspected Subaru and also proposed to keep an eye on what he would get up to at night. For sure, Emilia must have been standing by as the rear-guard, brought along in the case of an emergency.

In other words, the answer that the equivalent of?*Natsuki Subaru*?*is not Subaru* had already been noticed by Ram a while ago. And afterward, all that was left was to take the steps to confirm both the fact and the accompanying grievances.

Ram:?Thanks to Emilia-sama, you were captured without any harm done. I wonder if a bit of pain will make you willing to tell us what we want to hear??

Subaru:?Pain… like torture? That’s not only extremely sadistic, but isn’t there a famous saying that doing things like that necessitates careful thinking!!?

Ram:?I will do what is necessary. Besides, I don’t really like inflicting pain on others? but, it is a specialty of mine.?

Keeping him in a cage with a space of not even 2 meters square, Ram wasn’t going easy on Subaru. Pale and slender though her fingers may be, her humble claim of ?Inflicting pain is my specialty? feels frightfully convincing to Subaru.

If he keeps going like this without doing anything, if the opportunity to launch a counterattack doesn’t present itself, it will end up becoming a case where no matter how hard she searches for his secrets he would just be meaninglessly confessing his miserable behavior.

Emilia:??Wait. You can’t hurt him. I won’t let you do that.?

However, Emilia, who herself had imprisoned Subaru in the ice cage, was the one to stop Ram before she could resort to extreme measures. She turned her back on the cage Subaru was in and faced Ram directly.

Ram:?...Emilia-sama, Weren’t you supporting Ram??

Emilia:?I endorsed your opinion of questioning him because I also felt that Subaru was acting strange But it’s because I thought this might happen….that I decided to stay here.?

Ram:?It’s because I didn’t want something like this to happen that I asked Beatrice to keep Julius and the rest company. And yet, I did not think Emilia-sama would be so… disobedient. I was too naive.?

Without hiding her irritation at the difference in their opinions, Ram points at Subaru, who was hiding behind Emilia's back. Regarding them, she utters the biting words ?Is that fine??.

Ram:?He's too lacking in the points that the original Barusu should obviously have. I heard you talk about the Water Gate city… Pristella. It seemed like there you'd met a shape-shifting Sin Archbishop.?

Emilia?...Yes. Another reason for us coming here was to change back those people who that Sin Archbishop changed into a different form.?

Ram:?Then what are the chances that Sin Archbishop could have become any of us??

Emilia:??????

Ram:?Even if they're a Sin Archbishop, If they are able to freely change their shape then we can't go by outward appearances. Their normal conduct, the feeling when they try to talk, if all of those things are different...?

Ram responded with logic while holding back her anger towards Emilia's emotion driven opposition. They're nothing but deductions and baseless accusations towards Subaru, but they didn't have any basis to deny them. And no less important than that, Subaru? No, ?*I*?felt like rejecting the topic at hand.

Subaru:???hk?

A flashback, white memories. They come not from Natsuki Subaru, but from a small fragment of the memories seen in The?Book of The Dead?. The memories from when?*I*? was?*Herself*?.

?Training, That's what they called their actions towards?*Me*?

Even though dread was carved into me many times, the most terrifying thing to happen to me, was when my body was made to change into countless innumerable?*Frogs*?.

Even though my consciousness existed only in one body, my infinitely fragmented consciousness did as it liked, leaping whenever it wanted, running wherever it wanted.

Dreading the thought of not being able to go back to my original self, brought the realization that I had forgotten what my ?*Original self*?*was in the first place, Having my reason for existence as a living being crash like that, I was thankful from the bottom of my heart to*?*Mother*?*the moment I was returned to normal.*

And at the same time, the Idea that I should never, under any circumstances, go against her orders was etched into my soul.

Subaru:???hk

Recalling that dread directly, almost as if he'd personally lived it, Subaru's field of vision blurs. One's own appearance is something that is directly linked to one's identity and sense of self. Tampering and

changing that as one liked on a whim, that could only be called blasphemy. The most detestable deed of all?.

Emilia:?That's too extreme, this is quite unlike you Ram! Speaking like that, trying to shut me up!?

Ram:?Can you even say nothing's up? Before that man behind us...?

Emilia and Ram continue their arguing while Subaru alone drowns in anguish, feeling like his stomach was churning. However, Ram's claim proved to be a "probatio diabolica". As for something happening, even if there can be proof of it, no one at all would be able to do prove it not happening.[1]

This Natsuki Subaru was not the ?Natsuki Subaru?that they wanted. To explain that theory, some kind of shape shifter power was helpful. It made it simple? and at the same time, it was unbearable for the current Subaru, from the bottom of his heart. That feeling of being inside all of that enmity was too much for him to bear, Subaru was wheezing in pain.

Ram:?I need to make him spit it out, right now! So I can know where Meili and the real Barusu are.?

Subaru:??ah??

That complaint from Ram, like a surprise attack, overloads Subaru's consciousness. It was a bolt out of the blue, a truly unexpected comment.

Subaru:??????

Raising his face, Subaru looked between Emilia and Ram, at their continuing quarrel. Gazing at her back, he couldn't see Emilia's emotions; however, Ram's face was clearly visible to him. Her eyes, burning with rage, contain no schemes like the lie she used to trap Subaru in this place. At least, what she just stated was what she really meant.

In other words, this means that Ram and the others hadn't found Meili's remains. She had just been lying in wait ready to launch the blame on Subaru right here, his suspicious behaviour being too much to convince her that he was?Natsuki Subaru?in the end. That was it. He understands where the confused Ram's questioning was coming from. But at the same time, he didn't understand.

If it hadn't been Ram or Emilia, who was the one who had moved Meili's remains? If it had been neither Ram, nor the others, nor Subaru, then they were operating under a different motive?.

Emilia:?Real or fake, you can't just decide like that! I mean, the Subaru that is here right now is...?

Subaru??I have… Amnesia!!?

Ram:?Huh…??

Holding onto the ice cage bars, Subaru's scream cuts into the duo's quarrel.

Hearing that screaming voice, Ram appears taken aback and confused. That one unexpected angle of attack leaves Ram's mind blank. If it had been a trick, employed to poke gaps between her logic and disturb her thoughts, then it had been a success. But there had been so much intent; this had been Subaru's scream of truth.

Subaru:??tch?

As for why he had cried this out right at this moment, even Subaru himself has no clue. In this loop, Subaru had hidden the fact that he had lost his memories, and had tried to imitate how the old?Natsuki Subaru?had seemed. Thanks to that, his life hadn't been snatched away this loop.

But in truth, concealing his amnesia had complicated everything else in this loop. So what will happen now, after his grand reveal?

Ram:?After all this time, you're still joking like that…!??

In reality, the moment her stagnating thoughts had resumed their activities, Ram's expression became dyed in anger. The girl probably thinks that Subaru's desperate cry now was a desperate lie? that it's nothing more than nonsense.

Emilia:?Ram! Listen to what Subaru is saying! There was a reason after all!?

Ram:?Are you serious, Emilia-sama!? That was completely unbelievable...!?

With arms stretched, Emilia stands in front of Ram, rallying Subaru's words. If she thinks he had only jumped up in taking advantage using this absurd excuse, Subaru may as well give up on continuing to speak. However, standing in opposition to Ram, who wants to reject it completely, Emilia still faces her with resolve,

Emilia:?It's worth believing him! Didn't we all up until now!??

Ram:??tch?

Ram's cheek slightly stiffens at Emilia's appeal. For a second, a trace of doubt flits through Ram's light-pink irises, various thoughts seeming to spin through Ram's intelligent head. She starts to open her stiffly closed lips, and,

Emilia:?Ram, let's listen to Subaru and…?

Ram:??What about Rem??

Emilia:??ah?

In an instant, Ram's teary-eyed, petite form spins around and leaps at Emilia. Deciding in that moment to fall back, Emilia had prepared herself to hold down Ram. But, the approaching Ram's movements prove to be faster, and Emilia's left hand was caught by Ram's right.

Ram:?Don’t get in my way now!?

Emilia:?Kyaa!?

As she spoke, demonstrating her excellent footwork and defensive movements, and minimally moving her wrist and shoulder, Ram flings Emilia’s body aside, in a manner that had demonstrated maximum effectiveness. As Emilia flies away, her figure slowly somersaulted to the side. Through her surprise at her world’s sudden revolutions, she quickly grasps her situation and attempts to swing her long legs onto the floor below.

Emilia:??hk?

In the spot where Emilia landed, lay one of Ram’s shoes which she had flung off. Tripping, Emilia loses her balance and lands on all fours.

In that close combat, Emilia had been overwhelmed by Ram’s technique, and Ram slips into the gap created. Thrusting her wand between the bars of the ice cage, towards the tip of the frightened Subaru’s nose,

Ram:?I dare you to say that again.?

Subaru:?It’s?....Not like that……?

Ram:?With that face. And that voice. Say that you forgot Rem. One more time…?

Tightening her jaw and grinding at her molars, Ram was collecting something on the tip of her trembling wand, and he knew what it was. It was invisible to the eye, a power which you would probably call mana was accumulating in front of his eyes, but even then, Subaru couldn’t follow with any words.

He couldn’t think of what to say to Ram. To that girl in front of him hanging on the verge of tears. If he wasn’t Natsuki Subaru, but?Natsuki Subaru?Would he have been able to do it?

Emilia:?You cant, Ram! Stop!!?

Emilia, having just clambered back to her feet, screams in an attempt to stop Ram. However, she doesn’t make it in time.

Emilia:??????

A white light blinks through the ice cage’s bars, and the shock engulfs Subaru. That shock flings his body all the way to the back onto the ice bars, the back of his head banged against them.

Subaru:??hgh?

His head shook violently, and his consciousness became hazy. Without even having time to explain himself, Natsuki Subaru’s consciousness slipped away.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Subaru:??huh??

Letting out a faint, weak groan, his consciousness starts to resurface. Gradually, gradually, his consciousness rises to the surface from the sludge of darkness. Feeling as if he were somewhere vast, steady, steadily accelerating, stretching into reality, and finally?

Subaru:??Ghuua!? Owww!??

In the instant in which he had flitted back into consciousness, he had been yanked up by a force that felt like it had seized him by the scruff of his neck; sharp, hot pain burned within Subaru's mind. Groaning and writhing in pain, Subaru wakes up on the cold, hard floor.

Subaru:?Ow, ow, owwww, what, what is this...??

His body roused by throbbing pain Subaru reaches out his hand to his left shoulder. The moment he touches it, scorching pain once again burns across his mind. He couldn't move his left arm at all.

Subaru:?Did it get yanked out of my socket…? Is it dislocated? Ugh, never felt this one before ...?

Dangling about, his arm cannot move to his will. However, when he had tried to move and touch it, he had felt a sharp pain. Thus, Subaru stood up with great care. Looking around at his surroundings, he sees that… there was nobody around. And this room was?

Subaru?The room where I hid Meili...?

In other words, he was in the same room where he had been conscious up until just before. As evidence for that, behind Subaru, the ice cage Emilia had magically crafted was still there. It was strange that Subaru had been lying down outside of the cage. Looking at the cage, it didn't appear opened, and it didn't look like he should have been able to get out of it by any normal means?

Subaru:??So does that mean my shoulder was...??

Thinking to that extent, Subaru notices the relationship between his dislocated shoulder and his escape from the ice cage. The gaps between the bars of the ice cage were so small that it would be impossible to get through them unless he was the size of a child. By force, it should be possible to get through with his shoulder dislocated. The question is how did Natsuki Subaru manage that whilst unconscious? Also?

Subaru:??Where have Emilia… and Ram gone??

Their figures could not be seen anywhere.They had been arguing in this room up until not long ago. Perhaps, their argument had blown up to the point that they had killed each other. That situation was far too unnatural. ?No, it was more like a terrible situation than an unnatural one.

Subaru had been knocked out of consciousness, and thus knew nothing about his shoulder's dislocation,

or Emilia and Ram whereabout, or anyone else who should have been here. Subaru looks around the room, wondering what had happened during his unconsciousness, looking to see whether anything strange had occurred? and there he saw it.

?Natsuki Subaru was Here?

Subaru:??????

On the walls, everywhere he could see, those words were engraved. Cut into the stone wall, crudely shaped words were carved as if scribbled into a notepad.

Had it been the fragment of stone that was near the wall that had done that? It seems like it was part of the stone that had been in the back of the room, which had been originally used to hide Meili's dead body. Using that stone fragment, the phrase?Natsuki Subaru was Here?was engraved onto the wall. ?If it was just that, then the impact had not been as great as when the same words had been carved into his arm.

Under the influence of the surprise and astonishment that the redux had brought along to him, he should have laughed it off as no big deal. But, however?

?Natsuki Subaru was Here?

?Natsuki Subaru was Here??Natsuki Subaru was Here?

?Natsuki Subaru was Here??Natsuki Subaru was Here??Natsuki Subaru was Here?

?Natsuki Subaru was Here??Natsuki Subaru was Here??Natsuki Subaru was Here?

Tightly packed together, abnormally so, the words were engraved so that they completely covered the walls inside the room. They had even looked so natural that he hadn't truly noticed the uncomfortable feeling from the start. The words were so abnormally and stubbornly engraved to the extent that it had looked somewhat like an optical illusion, due to the excess of that pattern on the walls.

Inside this room, for what purpose? Engraving these characters?

???:??Hmm? *OY*, th'fuck is all this? Th'fuck is this evil feeling in the room? *You*, th'fuck is this crap decorating the walls??

Subaru:??????

Shuddering, standing stock still, the voice coming from behind Subaru inspired fear, and it wasn't down to the fact that he hadn't detected its presence. After all, Subaru's attention right now had been firmly fixed at the writing on the walls. He wouldn't have noticed anyone approaching.

Thus, he was not surprised because of that. Subaru's surprise had come from how familiar that crude voice sounded. The terrible memories of it that he wanted to forget?

???:?*You*, th'hell ya doing looking so blank, small fry. What's a small fry doing so far away from his flock? Aren't ya just asking to be a bigger fish's prey??

As he spoke from behind Subaru, who dares not to look back, the red-haired man's laugh rang out like a shark's. Oh how he laughed indeed, that man who should by all means not be here.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

- [1]Find more about the "devil's proof" here!

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Arc 6 – Chapter 51, “Tower of the Living, PART 2”

by admin - Friday, October 12, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/10/12/arc-6-chapter-51-tower-of-the-living-part-2/

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Translated by :

- Ice_Occultism, /u/Ice_Occultism
- Nana
- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd

Proofread by:

- Shifty, /u/Shiftyfish87
- Nana
- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd
- Review, /u/ReviewR524
- Tournament, /u/Tournament1112

Fan Art Created by :

- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd, with the sources being:
  - Art Source 1
  - Art Source 2
  - Art Source 3

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Hearing the voice of the familiar man from behind him, Subaru trembles in fear, to the point that he forgets to breathe.

Subaru:??????

Right in that instant, he even forgets about the pain from his dislocated left shoulder. His mind is dominated by a vast succession of negative emotions, such as fear and cowardice; a tempest of hopeless feelings clouds over his thoughts, a single word repeats inside his head:?Why??

Why, his list of questions is inexhaustible. *Why* is his left shoulder dislocated? *Why* is the phrase?Natsuki Subaru was here?carved all around this room to this extent? *Why* are Emilia and Ram's figures, who had captured Subaru, nowhere to be seen? *Why* is Meili's body, which he had hidden, nowhere to be seen? *Why* had Natsuki Subaru lost his memories? *Why* had Natsuki Subaru been summoned into a different world? *Why*… couldn't he ever tell his mom and dad the truth about everything? *Why*?

???:?What're ya doin' all huddled up. Don't be so silent, gross bastard.?

?Why is the man who wasn't supposed to be able to come down standing here?

???:??Urgh?

Suddenly, irritation rises in that man's voice, causing Subaru to whirl around in a panic. To look directly at the figure behind him is a frightening notion. In most cases, what triggers this sense of trepidation is a fear of the unknown; however, the fear that this man inspires comes from more than just the immediate risk of looking.

This is far deeper than just unease from being unable to see, for this specific opponent's intent is not merely to inspire fear. Subaru can't help but think it's a much closer to a straightforward urge to maim or even to kill.

???:?Hah. What ya lookin' at. With that face. Are ya that scared!? Ya look like you're about to cry. A disgusting bastard, in this fucked up room.?

Smiling sardonically at Subaru, who is still trying to make up his mind, the man dressed in a male kimono brazenly bares his white teeth. Long, red hair, an eye patch covering his right eye, his bare chest wrapped in white linen strips, and a muscular, well-built body; he is looking down at the pitiful Subaru.

Pleiades Watchtower's Second Floor Guardian? Reid is the man that is calling out to him.

Subaru:??????

Reid:?... Does yer mouth not work? Can ya not hear me speak? Or, are you trying to show that ya have no plans of speaking with me? If that's th'way it is, I don't really mind, but still, I guess it feels more dignifying that way.?

Bluntly saying this out loud, with words that show utmost arrogance, Reid stares at Subaru with an angry expression on his face. Whilst being overwhelmed by the hostility coming from Reid, Subaru forces his lips into a mumble.

Subaru:?Righ...t… eye...?

Reid:?Haaah??

Subaru:?Wasn’t your eyepatch… on your left eye…? Why... is it on your right eye...??

It was a question that he should not have uttered right now. As Subaru asks him, Reid’s eyes flicker slightly. And just after, the man clanged his teeth together with a?CLACK.?

Reid:?Whim, it’s a whim! Either eye is fine for me. That’s th’ way it is, I put it on just when I feel like messing about. I wear it and don’t see outta of the eye. It’s just for show.?

As Reid said that, he turns over the eyepatch covering his right eye using his fingers. And there below his eyepatch, there are no wounds; his eye is in good health exactly as he had stated. And of course, there are no signs of injuries in his uncovered left eye. In short, his words had been completely true, he understood that his eyepatch was really only an item for *doing something because he wants to.* Even so, when it comes to him, it’s a means of bridging the power-gap between himself and others, messing about and?,

Reid:??what th’. OY, isn’t yer shoulder dislocated, I did think‘t looked a bit weird.?

Subaru:??GH??

Immediately following that paroxysm, a burning sensation scorches the lining of Subaru’s brain, with a sudden impact.

Subaru:?GH, GHA…!?

His throat is constricted by sharp pain, and his field of view around him flickers, pierced by great anguish. Looking at it with no consideration or hesitation, Reid had grasped Subaru’s dislocated shoulder with his right hand. With a mere twist of the wrist, he had casually inserted the dislocated bone back into its socket.

The dislocated bone was fixed, echoing a dull click across the room, and freedom of movement returns to his left shoulder. However, the pain that for a moment had become negligible returns to him, tears pour down Subaru’s cheeks, the pain makes him feel like cursing the world around him.

Reid:?Don’t ya be acting so over the’ top. It looks like I’m pickin’ on ya when you look like that, damn it. As a matter of fact, it’s not me who's pickin’ on ya, more so it’s that smokin' hottie!?

Subaru:?Smoking.... hotting??

Reid:?That smokin' hottie with th’ silver hair. The ice cage behind ya’, I can pretty much tell by looking at yer dislocated shoulder. Did ya fall out with yer friends, hah, how amusing!?

Reid snorts this back at Subaru, who is holding his left shoulder, and groaning in pain. Having heard those words, Subaru understood he means Emilia when he described them as a smoking hottie. And, at

the same time, when it comes to what had happened in the room, between Subaru and everyone else? Subaru fears that Reid's observant eye must have grasped what happened.

Subaru?How… do you know??

Reid:?Stuck inside the sullen tower, the stuff between a man n' woman'll either improve beyond imagination, or deteriorate beyond imagination, those're the only two options. When it comes to ya, yer the type t' piss people off beyond belief. 'S not so hard t' figure that out.?

In all honestly, none of those conclusions are wrong. Therefore, Subaru has no way to refuse those words. Tearing his gaze away from Subaru, Reid turns to glance at Emilia's ice cage.

Subaru:??????

Twisting his neck, he strides huffily away from Subaru's side, eyeing the ice cage for a moment before he stomps on it, applying force but for a brief moment. In that instant, the structure gives a sharp cracking sound; in the next, the destructive force spreads to all of the resilient prison, shattering the lattice entirely.

Needless to say, no matter how hard Subaru had tried, he couldn't shift that ice cage even slightly; the cage's integrity had refused to yield. Whether in terms of magic or strength, with a simple glance, the disparity between is immediately revealed, leaving Subaru dumbstruck. Ignoring his reaction, Reid stretches his hands and feet lightly.

Reid: ??Well, looks like ya can move it again all right. Excellent, excellent indeed.?

Muttering that, making sure he had some kind of feeling in the arm, he slowly steps out from the room. He takes absolutely no notice of Subaru, who stood stock still, perplexed out of his mind. The confusion still hadn't settled down, he isn't able to completely grasp what happened, but he knew that in this place, taking his eyes away from Reid would result in nothing good.

Subaru:?Wait up! Didn't you… didn't you say you couldn't come down from the floor above? Why are you walking around this floor like it's normal!??

As Reid walks along the corridor of the fourth floor with complete indifference, Subaru rushes out of the room. Quite unpretentiously, staring at Reid's back as he strides across the floor with an air of majesty, Subaru throws out that one question which had been inside his head since the very beginning. In response, Reid waved his hand without looking behind him,

Reid:?When did I say I couldn' walk out th' second floor? If that's what yer saying… then isn't that a lil' bit off? Don't worry. Yer assumption that I can't leave has a bitta' truth to it. I only became able to leave jus' now.?

Subaru:?Just now… wait, so may I ask why my assumption collapsed??

Reid:?I'm not gonna give ya a full lecture 'ere and explain everything. I'm about t' leave. Yer about t'

piss yerself. That's that, the end. —Ah, wait, 's not th' end yet.?

Following Reid in his wake, Subaru catches up to him. Changing the tone of his voice, Reid narrows his eyes at him. Subaru's body shrunk in place, as Reid distorted his cheeks at him, it looked like he could kill him just with his sharp eyes. The red haired swordsman, who didn't carry around weapons, unarmed. ?With merely the glint in his eyes, this man's gaze would be enough to put someone to the sword; Subaru takes a deep breath.

Subaru:?Wh.. What the...?

Reid:?Excellent, keep blusterin' on like that, you. 'F you can't even do that, y've no right to call yerself a man. 'n so, I've a question for ya, y' borderline failed man. I'm about to bid this sullen tower farewell, but where th' hell did yer annoyin' buddies run off to??

Subaru:?Huh??

As the hostility exuding from the man nearby squeezes his heart, Subaru hears this surprising remark, causing his eyes to widen. Seeing the dishevelled Subaru's reaction, Reid naturally continues with a?*YOU*,?

Reid:?I plan t' get outta here, where there's food, water, and sake. Let's not even talk about th' women. Well, from yer friends, that smokin' hottie and that woman with such a slutty figure are certainly fine prospects. Though, since I'd feel guilty seducing th' smokin' hottie, the slutty woman would have to be th' prime candidate for it.?

Subaru:?Lea… ving? This tower? But… what about… your?Trial?, no, what about everyone else? What're you going to do about this situation, and everything that's going on!??

Reid:?'S nothin', everythin' y' said doesn't have shit t' do with me. Yer issues should be solved by yerself, I've got nuffin' t' do with it. Ah, hold up. 'S one last disgustin' task I need 'f ya.?

Subaru:?Disgusting… task, ?gha!??

Reid's facial expression suddenly changes, jabbing at Subaru's forehead with his finger, as Subaru's eyebrows had knitted into a grimace at those words. Subaru's back crashes against the wall of the corridor due to the sheer strength of the poke. Looking down at Subaru laying in a painful heap beneath him, Reid snorts out a?Hmph.?

Reid:?I already told ya. I don't think yer able to accept my answer, ya lil' chicken. Is it a small fry, or a lil' chicken, trampled underneath my feet. ?

Subaru:?That's a problem with your own definition...?

Reid:?Don't use th' me, who so fortunately appeared before ya as a tool to dispel yer worries, questions, or regrets with. Yer issues're for ya to solve. Don't use me as a crutch.?

Subaru:??????

Calling those words akin to something like anger was not be quite right. Feelings of anger have some emotion to it, but Reid does not care at all for what Subaru was feeling. His feelings do not stir at all for him, his mind is one of indifference. Thus, there isn't any anger present in his voice.

However, just these "over the shoulder" words were enough for Subaru to feel as if a knife had been stuck into his heart. Groaning from that pain, once again the questions left behind filling Subaru's mind lurch as if they were going to bury him alive. But, just before that happened.

Reid:??Aaah, it came.?

Swiveling his head to look towards the end of the aisleway, Reid grumbles this as if something was up. Lifting his head up, Subaru's eyes are also lured towards that direction, pointing them towards where Reid was looking at; however, he couldn't spot anything different there. However, he realizes that it was delayed. Crouched down, his buttocks against the floor, he notices it. A faint tremor. The tower is shaking. Faintly, not quite on the same scale as an earthquake, but he felt tremors nevertheless.

?*BANG*?

Clacking his teeth together and laughing, his eyes shining, Reid steps forward, sandals firmly treading against the floor. Seeing his unhesitating manner from the corner of his eyes, Subaru confusedly follows in his trail.

Reid had said that he shouldn't use him as a tool to dispel his own worries. It's undeniable, there was no doubt in Subaru that Reid's words had cut right into his frail heart. Subaru's issues could not be solved by merely complaining about them to Reid. However, apart from that, Subaru now has a responsibility to get to the bottom of why Reid was wandering about the Fourth Floor, and what was happening in the tower in general.

Subaru:?Reid!?

Reid:??????

Subaru:?Hey, wait up! Wait up! At the very least, tell me... what are you going to do…??

With long strides, and a quick pace, Reid's back was proudly advancing forward, and he did not deign to stop and answer Subaru's question. His shoulder is in pain, there is bewilderment and confusion in his heart, he doesn't have any assertiveness. Subaru is driven by his half-hearted obligation, he has no other choice but to chase with utmost effort after the man's back who was striding forward.

And suddenly, the back of the man with the swaying long red hair abruptly ground to a halt and stopped.

Reid:??????

Reid had stopped his feet as he reached the spiral staircase present in the atrium at the end of the

corridor? It was the place where the amnesiac Natsuki Subaru had twice been pushed to his death.

As Subaru had been busy frantically chasing after Reid, he only noticed where he is standing at the last second. He holds his breath, frozen in place. However, his desire of wanting to break the deadlock in the feelings of hopelessness surpasses the feeling of avoiding this place that brought about his “death” and gives Subaru the strength to move forward.

?It wasn’t the place that had killed Subaru. It was evil that had killed Subaru. It isn’t the place that ought to cause him to harbour these feelings of avoidance, rather the main cause of this should be attributed to the criminal.

Subaru:??????

The beating of his heart, and the sound of his blood flowing through his veins feel frightfully loud. Ignoring that, Subaru wipes off a bead of sweat and pushed on forwards towards where Reid had stopped. He is standing at the edge of the drop, looking down below at the scene beneath his eyes. Wherever he may be, he is a man who really suits the posture of looking down on things. Whilst thinking such a useless thought in the depths of his mind, Subaru follows his gaze.

Following his gaze, he finally notices it. Having been lost in his noisy heartbeat, the sound that he hadn’t heard before was now audible to him.

Subaru:??????

?Right beneath him, at the bottom of the large staircase, on the fifth floor, having appeared out of nowhere, a repulsive herd of Witchbeasts of flame were filling up the hall, presenting to him a spectacle of absolute hell.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Witnessing this display from beyond even his wildest imaginations, Subaru's vision went completely white.

Subaru:??Huh??

The cracking of the scorching crimson flame makes it sound as if countless wailing infants dwelt in the tower. Connecting those two factors led to a only one conclusion— that was, this terrifying Witchbeast, which wore a mane of flame around its neck, is only one part of a violent chaos of a horde.

Four legs and a torso akin to that of horses, an upper body with arms that are comparable to a human’s, and a gaping maw complete with fangs spreading through the human half. The dreadful heat’s flames scorch and devour the oxygen within the tower.

There are about 20 witchbeasts here, more or less; he can see them rampaging about below him on the fifth floor. The dreadful heat reaches below towards Subaru and Reid, who are dozens and dozens of metres above. Flinching back, being taken by surprise by this heatwave, to the extent that he felt like his

eyeballs dry up in an instant.

What is…really… what is going on.

Reid:?Seems like they're some eerie Witchbeasts. You, d' ya know what they are??

Subaru:?...I don’t know. Without counting the Giant Earthworm Witchbeast, it’s also my first time seeing them…… ah!? ?

Next to Subaru who cannot keep his eyes off of the scene, stands Reid looking at the exact same spectacle, issuing that question to him. Subaru shakes his head at that query, his voice unintentionally trembling at the change in his view.

The Witchbeasts are rampaging about inside the tower, bearing standards of flame? looking like both horse and man, a more convenient term to call them by would be Centaurs. The Centaurs let out a piercing yell. Coming out from their warped maws is a violent yell, a shrill roar as if caused by sheer fury. And the reason for that was due to the lone knight who was fighting back, swinging his slender sword, weaving his way through the herd of Witchbeasts.

??KSHEEEEEEGHHH!!?

Holding his breath, an elegant sword slips through the gap between the herd of the Witchbeasts who carried swords of flame. Blood scatters, the arms and legs of a Witchbeast is severed, its delayed shriek reverberates around the surroundings. Whilst listening to this, the knight who risked being overwhelmed by the amount of centaurs springs forward and leaps towards the next beast, sword poised.

Subaru:??JULIUS!?

Reflexively, Subaru’s lips calls out his name, deeply moved at having found a survivor. He can’t tell which emotion is stronger within himself, the one of joy or grief. Nevertheless, immediately after his consciousness leapt he had done something unknown, there had been a situation like that once when he found himself with Meili’s corpse beside him. He can’t say for sure if the next time he meets with someone, whether they’ll end up as a corpse. There’s always such a fear in him. Therefore, it was good news that he had broke through this fear.

Subaru:??????

Without paying attention to the expression of surprise from above, beneath Subaru’s eyes, Julius wields his sword and continues to fight against the Witchbeasts. Although he is at a disadvantage in terms of numbers, is it a situation where the strength of one isn’t equal to that of Julius? Althought, if the Witchbeasts which freely emit flame think of swarming Julius, who had only a sword to fend off against them would mean his limits would be called upon.

?And if he burnt to death, then his?Book of The Dead?should appear in the library.

Reid:?Where are all th’ others? ?Oh, this sure ain’t lookin’ good.?

Subaru:??Tch?

In that moment, a dark thought had floated across Subaru's mind, desiring for the "death" of his companion, that idea fought in the depths of Subaru's heart. Reid's muttering as he gazes at the scene below jerks his thoughts back to reality. But, Reid wasn't aware of Subaru's internal conflict. Baring his fangs, he takes a step forward. Already on the verge of falling down to the depths below, he steps forward again.

Subaru:?H...Hey, what are you going to do??

Reid:?You, 's your only ability askin' questions? Stop relyin' on me n' try to pull some darin' moves every once in a while. Talkin' t' ya's completely pointless. Yer not a sexy lady for me t' feast my eyes on, nor're ya interestin' t' talk ta. You, with what intents're ya tryin' t' talk t' me with??

Subaru:??????

Reid:?Lemme ask again, th' hell're ya goin' t' do? One of your comrades is just right there, trapped t' face a bunch've disgustin' witchbeasts, n' yer still bein' indifferent? T' say that weak guys don't have options's just a pitiful excuse.?

Just as carnivores held supreme authority in nature, so did Reid's philosophy echo the right of the strong.This philosophy's incompatibility with Subaru only serve to reinforce its veracity; that was the sheer disparity between the strong and the weak.

Reid:?Haaaaah?

Without neither a word nor glance to Subaru, Reid at last stepped into motion, leaning forward slightly. There had been no chance to stop him. Like this, Reid fell forward, weightless, tracing the path that Subaru had followed to his death.

Straight, straight, straight down Reid fell. Back then, Natsuki Subaru's consciousness had left him before he had crashed into the ground, and he hadn't been able to even see the moment which had actually caused his "death".

That red-haired swordsman, Reid dropped down in the same way, falling, falling?

??*THUMP THUMP*!!?

Its back being struck by sandals falling from such great heights, the centaur's equine body is crushed. Its limbs, unable to bear that impact, shatter. It's unbelievable how the Witchbeast's huge body was crushed, blood the color of ink spraying out, staining the floor of the fifth floor.

Completing this scene is, falling from a height that would have been fatal to Subaru, energetically stomping on the remains of the Witchbeast, the violence of Reid Astrea.

Subaru:??????

From an observer’s point of view, the mindless Witchbeasts cease their movements. Noticing the chaotic appearance of this red-haired man, their childlike wails stopp. Looking closely revealed that these headless Witchbeasts were using their non-visual senses to gauge their opponent; this is what Subaru surmises.

Reid’s abnormality is clear to even those who were blind. That observation is equally apparent to the knight, with all five senses intact, who had been engaged in a vigorous battle with these creatures.

Julius:?You… why are you… here...?

Reid:?Why, why, why. 'S there anythin' else ya’ll can ask at all? What's th' secret to bein' popular with woman, what's the best kinda alcohol, how'd ya get t' be so strong, for instance??

Standing in front of Julius, whose eyes are wide open in sheer shock, Reid brushes away the pieces of meat on the soles of his sandals. He turns his hand to another Centaur standing beside him. Was it a joke? In his hand, he held a thin, wooden stick? he could see that he was holding a chopstick.

Reid:?My secret t' being popular with women's my face. Th' best kinda alcohol's?Granhiert?. —N' 's fer how I'm the strongest in the world? 'S simply because I'm me.?

Pausing for a moment after he finished speaking, Reid lightly began moving the chopsticks at his fingertips. In the next moment, the frozen centaur’s body exploded in a shower of blood. Slow to detect the collapse of its body, the Witchbeast finally released the cries of its throes of ?Death?.

Those screams, reminiscent of the cries of a baby, clinging desperately to this world, are indeed the cruelest of tactics. However, a smile remains firmly on the face of the man who had caused all this. He raises his unbloodied weapons, his chopsticks, once more; this time not towards the Witchbeasts, but Julius.

Then, looking at the yellow irises of the faraway Julius, who seems to dread those chopsticks far beyond what he appears to, Reid bares his fangs.

Reid:?Right, let's get this follow-up?Trial?goin'. Since I'm not bored yet, why don't ya try n' get as close to passin' 's ya can, ya fuckers.?

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Arc 6 – Chapter 53, “A Voice Chimed”

by admin - Tuesday, October 02, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/10/02/arc-6-chapter-53-a-voice-chimed/

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Translated by :

- Ringo, /u/Ringo_17

With Contributions by:

- Ice, /u/Ice_occultism

Proofread by:

- Ice, /u/Ice_Occultism
- Nana, /u/Nanashi-tan
- Furuta, /u/GracedHarperd

Fan Art Created by :

- Art Source

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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The flying tail stinger breaks through the stone corridor, leading to the rise of a plume of dust and the spread of destruction. As he watched this sight unfold in slow motion, Subaru saw a figure with the shape of a girl’s dress jump right into the midst of the destruction swirling in front of him.

Her drill curls aflutter, it had been Beatrice who jumped straight into the destruction. Courage? no, this was simply brutal. Naturally, the small girl’s body was far more brittle and fragile than the stone that had been shattered by the tail stinger. Any attempts to act as a shield, it would hardly be effective, as she was shorter than Subaru’s chest; she wouldn’t be able to defend against everything. In other words, that impulsive act would only result in a pointless death.

Subaru, his nose running, grabbed Echidna’s sleeve. Similar to how he had unintentionally called out Julius’ name preventing his death. Similar to how he could not follow that shade, that girl’s advice to smash Ram into the wall.

Beatrice also, overlooking the “impossible” and catching the tail stinger—,

Subaru:?Uaaahh!??

Beatrice:? —"Incomplete EMT", in fact!?

At the moment when Beatrice appeared, she grabbed Subaru’s free hand and pulled him towards the front. As the small girl shouted, something stretched out of Subaru’s body, some sort of energy, which was not visible to his eyes, quietly seeped out. Before the eyes of the moving Subaru, in front of the palm which was held by Beatrice, it seemed as if a wall of light had been activated and the tail stinger's blow had been stopped.

Subaru:?————?

The crushing shock waves, just like the falling stones, had been blocked by the defensive wall which centered at Beatrice’s palm. In order to keep it from reaching Subaru, the damage had spread to their surroundings. The striking tail stinger, however, had not been destroyed by this single blow; instead, like rain, it kept striking over and over again. However, all of it had been shielded by the young girl named Beatrice, preventing them from taking any damage.

A tremendous shock wave sweeps over the passageway, scattering debris everywhere; a scattered piece of debris grazes Subaru’s cheek. He buries his face into Beatrice's back as the noise around him faded and his vision became white, giving way to an immense pain in his cheek.

The huge scorpion could be seen for a moment. If it were to attack in a similar manner to like it had done with its tail stinger, like rain, its destructive strength would be no less than that of a mortar. It could easily turn one's body into mere dust.

Protected by the girl’s small back, Subaru barely survives it.

Just now, Subaru had been unable to accept that he was in this world without taking comfort from God, and requested salvation; or was he perhaps wondering that this world itself was the hell he had been sent to?

Subaru, who could not afford to curse his terrible luck right now, noticed someone other than Beatrice and the scorpion that was visible from the corner of the eye.

It was Echidna, who also had also been caught up in this attack and was exposed to the very same damage. Having declared that she was going off on her own, she had been separated from Subaru and the others, but had been seized by Subaru just before this attack had begun. Fortunately, she had also ended up in the radius of Beatrice's shield, so the stinger's damage hadn't reached her, instead being blocked by the defensive wall of light. However, that's was much as it could do.

Beatrice could only prevent the direct damage done by the tailpiece. There was no way to prevent any secondary damage that came along with the destruction done by the tailpiece. Which means—

Echidna:?—uh, ah?

Echidna raises her voice slightly as she loses her balance and falls backwards. Her foot slipped one step back to support her body, but there was no floor to support her falling foot. Crushed by the attack of the tail stinger, half the aisle had collapsed. As a result, the tower's passage had been damaged and caved in, leading to the collapse of the floor, ceiling, and walls, which in turn had made Echidna lose her foothold. It seemed as if she had been thrown into an unknown space, falling to an inescapable death. Instinctively realizing her fate, a sense of fear and panic resides in her eyes.

Subaru:?—tch?

Subaru quickly grabbed Echidna's hand, preventing her from falling to her death.

Echidna:?Natsuki-kun.....!??

His right hand was held by Beatrice, and his left hand caught Echidna's. Reid had aggressively treated his shoulder, and that pain was deep-rooted, so if he were to over-strain it, the shoulder may become dislocated again. Subaru used his feet to make sure Beatrice's weight didn't overstrain him, but, biting his molars, he had no choice but to use his full strength to stop Echidna from falling.

Subaru:?Gh, aaaaah.....!?

Petite though she is, Echidna weighs the same as a normal human being would. Lifting a human being or any other creature, in the first place, is no easy task. Besides, with only one seriously injured hand available, , and even in this case of emergency, where the other person was unable to help— the odds of getting dragged and falling alongside her weren't not low either. It should be understood without the need to think why this was a risk that should not be taken.

Echidna:?.....Please, don't try doing anything you can't do.?

Subaru:?I... don't care....! It's a spur of the moment thing.....!?

Echidna:?That answer is…… typical of Natsuki-kun, huh!?

Amidst the turmoil of his endlessly repeating questions, he refuted Echidna's protests. Her body turning slightly, held up by Subaru's hand even as it nearly almost fell, she finally managed to somehow prop herself back up onto the semi-collapsed floor. Subaru looked down and gazed at his arm.

—Characters had been engraved as wounds, patterns of mysterious black spots formed a covering, and other painful and spectacularly white scars were also visible on his body.

Subaru:?My movement is much better than how I remember it…… huh??

He had no clue what these scratches criss-crossing across his arm were from. His physique was only slightly strong, but he had managed to save Echidna from falling. This was the same imperfect and limited body which had to carry out the?The Book of The Dead?but was unable to kill anyone.

Echidna:?Somehow... managed to crawl up.....! Beatrice, how's things on your end!??

Beatrice:?Barely hanging on... I am at my limit, I suppose! Sooner or later I'm……?

Packed with emotions, the crawling Echidna calls out to Beatrice with a grave expression. Beatrice responds by stiffening her pretty cheeks, and right after that—

Scorpion:?—TSSSSSSHH!!?

The scorpion, which had kept up that barrage of stingers, was now sticking to the ceiling. Giving out a shrill cry, it now lunges toward them, huge pincers extended.

Subaru:?—hk?

Subaru processes his thoughts slowly, as the pincer approaches him right in front of him.
Generally speaking, scorpions typically are shown as possessing strong, venomous stingers, however, over the thousands of sub-species of scorpions, there are only a few dozens that are actually venomous. Then, what weapon do scorpions use for hunting when they don't possess venomous stringers? –Of course, their pincers become their weapon.

Would it be its sharpness or its crushing force? Although it seems like slightly less of a risk compared to the venomous stinger, the scorpion was still to be enormous in size, and thus its killing power cannot be dismissed That was evident from this very scene, where walls and floors of the tower had barely retained their original shape, somewhat resembling tofu that had been cut with a kitchen knife.

Beatrice:??MURAK!?

Avoiding the destruction and slaughter with an unnatural flight, Beatrice flew back with unbelievable leaps? no, she was disobeying the Law of Inertia. A strange feeling, as if escaping the effects of gravity, centered on Beatrice. She grabbed both Subaru’s waist and Echidna’s clothes, and distanced themselves away from the scorpion’s fierce attack. After some distance had been put between them and the scorpion, Echidna pointed the fingers of her right hand towards the scorpion’s face.

Echidna:?EL JIWALD?!!?

Each of her fingers emitted white rays of heat, lighting up the entire passage, burning the face of the scorpion which was clinging to the ceiling, as well as the exoskeleton of its right pincer. Would the

scorpion be able to endure such damage? After the attack, the scorpion had violently swayed its stinger and left pincer violently, destroying the aisle and creating a plume of dust whilst scuttling backwards in retreat.

Echidna:?JIWALD! JIWALD! JIWAAAALD!?

Subaru: ?Wait! Calm down, Echidna! Ran away! It ran away! It really ran away!?

As Subaru restrains Echidna, who had not stopped attacking the scorpion, from behind, it plunged into the plume it had created. Echidna continued to struggle for some time, glaring desperately at the edge of that plume, and stubbornly continued to strike the fumes. But, eventually her strength left her body, and she leaned back against Subaru.

Echidna:?Huff, hh, haah..... did we... did we do it??

Subaru:?……That did it. It probably ran away.?

Subaru nods his head at Echidna’s question; Echidna herself was out of breath and could not believe her eyes. Although the plume had not cleared, it did not seem like the scorpion's huge form was there. Rather, at this very instant, even if its stinger gave no counterattack, it was still putting up a hard fight.

Subaru:?But, what was…… that? The one from earlier was……?

Beatrice:??A Demon Beast, in fact. Its uncanny figure appeared in the fourth floor, I suppose. The tremors coming from the lower floors, and the Demon Beast of the fourth floor; adding to that, the mess of the upper floors?

Subaru:?Up, down, middle…… Is this problem happening in all of them??

Subaru, turning away from the bloody scene, looks back after hearing Beatrice’s report, whose face was adorned with a serious expression. Certainly, Julius was still fighting on the lower floor, and now the scorpion—the Demon Beast that was present in the fourth layer had been revealed. It was also likely that the issues of the upper floors were a result of Reid coming down.

Echidna:?…… One of the problems is you yourself, but you don’t seem to realize that.?

Subaru:?————?

Breaking Subaru’s train of thought, she spoke while disentangling herself away from Subaru's chest. Wiping the sweat off her forehead, she kept her eyes on Subaru, vigilantly watching him. Alertness, doubt, uneasiness, and confusion were all present in her turquoise eyes.

Echidna:?You…… just what exactly are you? What do you want to do, what is your position??

Subaru:?I, don’t know the details. I am the same as you in not knowing anything, what will come up, what is going to happen. Because I am……?

Beatrice:?—an amnesiac.?

Subaru, who had come back to being confronted by the very same questions once again, weakly tried to respond to Echidna's questions. But before he could, Beatrice, who had until now been immersed in her own thoughts with a rather grave expression, took over the ending.

Memory loss—in this loop, Subaru had conveyed that to only two people, Emilia and Ram. In other words, Beatrice was well aware of the cage and Subaru's excuses.

Being aware, Beatrice lets out an 'ah'. Echidna as well, tries to think of words to say.

Echidna:?How did you escape from that cage??

Subaru:?.....When I realized what had happened, I found myself collapsed outside the cage, my shoulder dislocated.?

Although an honest answer, it was hardly believable. However, this was a situation in which his lies upon lies had lead them into great danger. Up until now he had looked a state, having plead to God, with his nose running, his appearance completely disheveled. Being in such a poor mental state, Having seen his awful mental state, Echidna hesitated to reply to the honest Subaru and took a while in choosing her words. Even so, she still continued to stare at Subaru.

Echidna:?……Right now… why did you save me??

Subaru:?————?

Echidna:?If you had not reached out to me, I would have definitely died, and, I suppose, Ana's body would have had suffered a terrible death as well.?

The question reminds him of how much he had shortened his distance from other people's affairs. However, it was the same reason as to why she cared not if she never saw Subaru's face again. In other words, this was an effort to make sure that her judgment hadn't been wrong. Facing Echidna's judgment, Subaru thinks. Why, did he reach out to her? —Was it because Julius had been committed to Subaru until the very end?

Had those words... extended their hand to Subaru?

Subaru:?……It was in the heat of the moment, I don't knowww.?

But, Subaru involuntarily shakes his head, denying that thought. Certainly, once, Subaru remembered what Julius had said, but Echidna had acted differently from that. However, when her very life was exposed to danger, the reason why Subaru had acted was not because of such thoughts, for he had no such thoughts in his mind at that moment. He doesn't know. Why, had he undertaken such an action?

Subaru:?Does there really need to be a reason needed behind everything that happens? It was so sudden. Everything was so sudden. That's why I……?

Prepared to disappoint, Subaru releases the emotions he was hiding within himself. He thought that he would receive an equally cold response from Echidna, but—

Echidna:?—That, may just be the essence of humanity in you.?

Subaru:?Huh.....??

Suddenly, Echidna's stiff body relaxes her shoulders and spills out those words. Hearing that, Subaru is completely astonished, and somewhat taken aback. Sensing the dumbfounded expression in Subaru's gaze, Echidna shrugged her shoulders.

Echidna:?It can't be helped that we quarreled in this place. Chatting away for a long time, only to be re-attacked by those Demon Beasts is also a stupid idea. Let’s get moving. I want to join Julius.?

Subaru:?Ah, yeah.....?

Beatrice:?Completely agreed, in fact. For now, let’s get away from this place, I suppose.?

Leaving Subaru flabbergasted in their wake, Echidna and Beatrice decide their next course of action. Echidna confirms that Subaru and Beatrice were behind her, while Beatrice holds Subaru’s hand tightly. Feeling that small sensation, and looking at the little girl, Beatrice nodded deeply.

Beatrice:?You don’t even remember... when you took Betty out from there, I suppose.?

Subaru:?I'm... sorry. Whatever you’re telling, to me, that is, I—?

Beatrice:?It's fine, in fact.?

Hearing Beatrice’s fleeting and lonesome voice, Subaru feels as if he had committed the utmost unforgivable sin in the world. Beatrice, however, shakes her head at Subaru, who had now been exposed to an unfamiliar fear. Hiding her emotions of loneliness, she carves out a fearless smile on her face.

Beatrice:?Even if Subaru has forgotten about it, it is still within Betty. What Subaru has carved inside Betty, will never fade away, I suppose. That’s why, for now, it’s fine, in fact.?

Subaru:?Beatrice.....?

Beatrice:?Even if Subaru forgets, Betty will not forget. Betty will always remember. And, Betty will also make Subaru remember, I suppose. Betty will do whatever it takes to make that possible, in fact.?

Subaru:?————?

This is something too dazzling for Natsuki Subaru, who stands alone in this place. Indeed, if he could steal his heart, any difficulties could be overcome, and this little girl shows enough willpower to achieve this.

Subaru:?—Ah?

Feeling as if he had been saved, Subaru holds his breath. Unexpectedly, the feeling behind his eyelids felt as if it was about to kill him, but he fully endures it. Beatrice does not say anything to the struggling Subaru, she just supports him by holding his hand. Just holding his hand, is a support.

Echidna: ?Because of the attack of that Demon Beast just now, it's unlikely we can take the path Natsuki-kun came from. I cannot deny the danger, but we have no choice but to take the same passage as where the beast ran off to.?

Subaru:?Echidna, you too.....?

Echidna: ?This situation isn't one in which we should discuss whether I will let you go, or not let you go, whether I still doubt you, or whether I don't doubt you anymore. I indeed have the perfect skills to prioritize trade, but the situation does not allow that. This is something I had seen when I was by Ana's side.?

Therefore, she shouldn't press it anymore, is Echidna's conclusion. Subaru, as well, decides not to oppose her judgment, as she had compromised with her feeling of refusal and followed the judgment of the two.

Even now, there is no change in his feelings of wanting to just run way. But he wants to believe that this is better than bowing his head and praying to God on his lonesome.

Subaru:?————?

Behind Subaru is the passage from which he had escaped, now in terrible shape. According to Echidna, it had faced a storm-like attack by the Demon Beast's tail stinger, and now it was practically just a mountain of debris, making passing through it quite impossible. Beatrice's magic defense had managed to protect only Subaru's life in the end. Even if they were to head down to Julius, who was defending the fifth floor, or Emilia who was acting entirely on her own, they would need to go through the side-passage, where the scorpion had withdrawn.

Subaru:?Ugh....?

As the smoke due to the white heat rays drifting up from that dangerous, collapsed hole which had nearly killed them finally cleared up, something there makes Subaru groan unexpectedly.

—It was... the tail of that Demon Beast which seemed to have had fallen from its base.

Echidna:?I see. So it didn't counterattack. It's at least some good news that its means of attack got cut off.?

Beatrice: ?Indeed, I suppose…… By the way, the floor will not hold, in fact. We will jump over it, I suppose.?

With the fallen tail stinger behind them, Echidna and Beatrice nod at each other. Although its grotesque

appearance was overwhelming, indeed, this proved that the Demon Beast had lost its ability to make long-range attacks. Of course, downstairs were the centaurs were still fighting within the endlessly rising flames, so it could not be said that their chances of saving the tower had increased just because the scorpion had lost the power of its attack.

Subaru:?—All right?

Gathering momentum, Subaru jumps over the hole while holding the Beatrice's feathery body. Beatrice's body was light, far too light when compared to a girl of her age. Was this the result of the one year Subaru did not have in his memory, the unrelated agility he feels in his own physical body?

Subaru:?————?

Subaru, once again, looked at the fallen tail of that scorpion as he jumps over, just in the edge of his vision.

The tail stinger had been fired like a storm, but its mechanism, even in this separate dimension, was not any different from Subaru's ecological understanding. Needless to say, if going by Subaru's knowledge, the poison stinger did not get ejected, and so there was not much it could do now. Above all, it could be understood by looking at the extent of destruction caused in the aisle, that the tail stinger was not released only as an object. —It itself resembled the shape of the needle that it released.

In summary, against Beatrice's light barrier and Echidna's white heat rays, the scorpion had released something like a magic needle. Of course, it had been treated as just a tail stinger, so it could also be said that way, that it could no longer pull anything off now that it had been separated.

Subaru:?— ??

From on his thoughts till now, Subaru finds a sense of incongruity. However, looking at the fallen tail, he notices it. That fallen part of the tail had been cut off almost by, what seemed to be its root, and that wound looked strange.

If it had been scorched away by Echidna's rays of heat, the wound should still bear traces of burns, regardless of the effectiveness. Indeed, there were marks of burns in that area all around the passage. However, the scorpion's tail showed no evidence of that, simply having only a tidy cross section.

Subaru:?— Bea,?

Subaru had noticed that something was strange. Too slow. The fallen piece of tail, just at the edge of Subaru's vision, trembled.

—Immediately afterwards, a light shoots out.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

—Indeed, it follows its own mechanisms.

This was a phenomenon mainly seen in arthropods and lizards, which are said to separate a part of their own body to have themselves escape from the enemy, also known as the “cut part of the lizard”, and so on. This action can also be seen in clawed crabs and the like. In the end, the scorpion-shaped Demon Beast also did something similar to that.

When a lizard separates its own tail, the separated tail continues to move for a while, and plays the role of attracting the enemy’s attention while the main body escapes. Of course, the tail had no such purpose, for otherwise it should have had been constantly wriggling about, but what it did was an example of being able to do independent actions. Then, does that mean that it was incapable of that?

—When the predator approaches the separated tail, it plays the role of a “landmine”, exploding instantly, damaging everything around it.

Subaru:?U~gh, ghk, u~u~gh.....!?

A groan. Subaru spills out a groan, as he slowly and steadily drags his legs. He isn’t dragging his legs due to fatigue. It’s a matter of his own physical ability; he had a huge laceration on his left foot, and he was shedding blood from an innumerable number of scratches, so it was practically impossible for him to move fast. Adding to that, Subaru’s body wasn't dragging just itself.

Echidna:?.....Enough, already. Leave me and, go.?

Echidna says, completely exhausted, now being dragged along by Subaru. Subaru puts her arms on both of his sides and pulls her from behind, leaving the site regardless. If they don’t get away from this place, that Demon Beast would come back.

—The scorpion Demon Beast had left behind that explosive bomb as its parting gift, and had torn Subaru and the others to bits.

Subaru:?—Shit, shit, shit, shit!?

Careless. He had been careless. His head had been completely immersed in lukewarm water. Before he had begun to speak his last words to Beatrice, Echidna’s attitude had slightly softened up, so a a lapse of concentration had cropped up in his mind, and this is the result.

Miserable, feeling miserable, feeling sorry for himself, he starts to tear up. Why must he go through this struggle, even though he is so young? That can’t change. Aren’t hardships and trials just a way to increase the chances of getting an opportunity from God? If being beaten down, broken bones, shed blood, a crushed soul and being deprived from your own life, ultimately leads to nothing but suffering, then, for what exactly, did human beings work so hard for?

Echidna:?Natsuki... kun..... you’ve... done... enough?

Subaru:?It’s not enough! Not a single thing was enough!?

Echidna:? …...You'd rather have Beatrice here... instead of me, right??

Closing her eyes, Echidna mutters those troublesome words. After replying to her with a yell, Subaru takes in a breath at her subsequent words. Echidna's words were tragic but true. For Subaru, between Echidna and Beatrice, although it was tragic, he would choose Beatrice. The weight of lives may be equal, but the weight of the individuals was not equal. The relationships depend on one's own self. In a situation in which a person must choose, he would go by his own ranking.

—However, Beatrice wasn't there. She wasn't there. She was gone.

In that instant when the tail left behind by the scorpion Demon Beast exploded, sensing it was dangerous, he had pulled himself closer to Beatrice. He had wished he could have protected her. But sadly, his action had been too little, too late, and Subaru's wish was left unfulfilled.

When the tail of that Demon Beast exploded, it had scattered countless stingers around. Although Subaru had been the closest to that explosion, it was thanks to Beatrice, that he didn't even sustain any serious injuries. The moment Subaru had embraced her, she'd tried to protect Subaru's torso. He had been bathed in an intense light that followed, and—,

Subaru:?—hk?

Echidna:?Is that... so. That child... was indeed... that tragic child?

It seemed that Echidna, who had closed her eyes, was able to imagine the words that did not follow. Unable to refute her sighing voice, Subaru, who was groaning with blood and pain, was unable to have a last exchange with the girl that had disappeared, as if she had melted away. —However, he remembered what she had said at the end.

With eyes that were relieved and compassionate towards Subaru, a facial expression that was something too convenient for Subaru, in Beatrice's final moments.

If that happened, the girl would disappear without leaving a trace on this world, and the fading girl gave "Natsuki Subaru" such an expression.

And, with Beatrice's disappearance, by the process of simple elimination, only Echidna was left breathing, being dragged along by Subaru as they flee the scene. Just as if he was seeking atonement, redemption, or retribution.

Echidna stops Subaru's actions, breathing feebly. If even that proved to be useless, she would never be able to rightfully return that body to Anastasia. That too was something obvious. —Both of her legs had

been blown off from her body.

Subaru:?————?

Although there was barely any flowing blood left, feeling that her body was lighter than even Beatrice; as he dragged it along, he wondered what kind of a future awaited her, with barely any medical help available.

Echidna & Subaru:?Ugh, ahhh!?

The very moment when that thought came up, Subaru stumbles on some rubble and falls. As soon as he went down, Echidna was thrown into the aisle as she turned over. The two groan and curse this world, their voices echoing through the aisles.

Echidna:?That hurt..... ow, that really,... hurt. Really... human bodies... really hurt.....?

Subaru:?M-my bad, I'm, I'm sorry.....didn't mean to, I'm.....?

Echidna:?Do not apologise, there is no need, Natsuki-kun. Besides..... I no longer have a face that can confront Ana but..... this pain, is my only repayment to Ana.?

Subaru:?Re... payment??

Falling onto the ground, Subaru crawls up to the immobile Echidna and shakes his eyes trying to understand Echidna’s words. What the hell did she mean by repayment? At Subaru’s questioning expression, Echidna relaxes her mouth and replies with a?I mean, isn’t it exactly like that??

Echidna:?If I return Ana's body to her, now..... Ana would, be able to taste this pain which will seem like the end of this world along with, the fear of, death..... That would, be hell. I should... be the only one... to taste that.?

Subaru:?Ah, ugh....?

Echidna:?I couldn't return this body to Ana, or assist Julius..... I deserve, to be in this hell.?

He can understand Echidna’s sentimental feeling of self hatred and the chaos within her heart. Subaru can see in the speaking Echidna’s eyes that her inevitable “death” had started its countdown.

Unable to do anything, completely helpless, betraying all responsibilities, unable to accomplish anything. Regretting that, Echidna will die— abandoning Subaru, she will die.

Subaru: ?Well..... —hk?

Echidna:?Don't you think you could... make this easier for me? I'm... yeah... that would be good.....?

Fearing that Echidna too, may lose her life and fade away, Subaru finds himself terrified. However, as Subaru is unable to quickly do anything about it, her words opened new options.

—Make it easier. It’s too late to save her now, but Subaru could help shorten her time of suffering and speed up her “death”.

Subaru:?————?

Echidna is still faintly breathing raggedly. Subaru manages to stand, pushing his pained body up, and he picks up a chunk of rock from the collapsed passageway. It’s about the size of his palm, and could just fit in his hand. However, just to snatch away the life of this dying girl, this weapon would be sufficient.

Subaru:?.....Echidna?

Echidna:?————?

Piece of rubble in his hand, Subaru stands beside Echidna and calls her name. Her eyelids closed, she doesn’t reply. However, her consciousness hadn’t disappeared, as he understands that by her pursed lips and her stiffening cheeks.

She no longer has any strength to stop him. If Subaru were to raise the piece of rubble above his head, and swing it down towards her head, her life will easily crumple out of existence.

Meili: ?Smashing a person's head open with a stone, even I haven't done something like that.?

Subaru hears the sweet voice of the girl in his mind, which seemed to come from the direction of the rubble behind him. However, this was not due to reading the "Book of the Dead". It might be that, at that moment, that voice wasn't in Subaru's head. This was assisted suicide. Assisted suicide to give the dying person a more comfortable send off.

If a person has full right to take away that life, surely that person's actions would be justified—. This was atonement, an opportunity for atonement for Natsuki Subaru, who was unable to do anything in this place. Although it was his only chance for atonement—

Subaru:?————?

His hands were trembling. The back of his eyelids were in constant pain, the back of his throat had stiffened, forgetting to breathe. Constant shivering. Despite being such an extremely simple thing to do, the current Subaru couldn’t manage it. His body does not move, as if he had forgotten how to move it.

Subaru:?—ah.?

A bruised breath leaked out noisily, and the rubble falls to the floor of the aisle. Making that sound, as his knees lose all their strength, Subaru falls onto his knees.

Subaru:?.....No way.?

Natsuki Subaru can’t do even such an easy thing. He can’t even deceive himself into swinging that measly weapon, easing someone’s suffering and facilitating their death. Speaking of atonement for himself, using the feeling of guilt as per his own convenience, even still, what was the result of that.

Echidna:?.....Natsuki-kun?

Subaru:?I, am...?

Echidna:?For the sake of helping me die.... you were unable to... even hold a stone.?

Slightly opening her eyelids, her feeble turquoise eyes looking at the kneeling Subaru, she barely gasps this out. Barely breathing her words out as if they were a sigh, as if she was pointing blame at Subaru, all the while breathing raggedly, clearly fighting for each breath. However, to the torn Subaru, Echidna unexpectedly loosens her lips.

Echidna:?.....I'm so sorry... for ever doubting you.?

Subaru: ?————?

Echidna:?————?

As her breath fades away, she apologises. Echidna, apologises. She had said that she was wrong to suspect Natsuki Subaru, and had apologised for it.

—And, without even being able to confirm the meaning of her words, she dies.

Killing Meili and concealing her corpse, acting without telling anyone about his amnesia, repeatedly doing something suspicious, escaping the ice cage he had been trapped in, not fulfilling the wish he had committed to, being unable to protect the girl who had captured his heart and tried to save him, and finally,not being able to get blood on his own hands for the sake of the dying girl... Echidna had apologised to Subaru for her intolerance towards him as she died.

Subaru: ?————?

He wants to die. Right now, he wants to forget everything that happened, and just die.

He wishes for Natsuki Subaru to die, he wishes that everyone in the world would sentence him to death. Natsuki Subaru despairs for the sin he had committed.

He despairs.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Desperation had eroded away the heart of Natsuki Subaru.

Subaru: ?————?

He couldn't move. He was not worthy enough to move. Nothing good would happen, even if he moved. He had proven it. Natsuki Subaru was naturally incompetent— no, if he was incompetent, there would still be some hope for him. Rather, he proved that he was nothing more than a plague, an odious person, a pest to God.

Subaru: ?————?

If you cage up all your despair in your chest, it will kill your heart, and would erode away your soul before your life. If that happens, you would not be able to stand up. You would not be able to oppose anyone. That would be a natural consequence if you realise that you have genuinely, irrecoverably harmed yourself.

I want to disappear. I want to end up disappearing and becoming non-existent. I should have had made my decisions earlier. Before coming to this different world. Before coming to this other world, I am supposed to have had known all that, no?

Why, just by existing, must I bother others' hearts? Am I not worthy enough to occupy even a small corner in others' hearts? I am merely a dirty stain on the wall. The dust that has accumulated in the corner of the room, a wasteful maggot that deserves to be in the bin. A scar that never disappears, a leftover scratch that can always be seen.

Natsuki Subaru, why won't he just die off.

Even of he dies, all that awaits him, is a restart? Who decided that. Who made sure that it will stay that way forever. If once was not enough, he can die ten times, a hundred times, a thousand times.

Die until he disappears.

Until everyone's memory of you disappears, and you no longer have any influence on others, until your name, your presence, your trace no longer remains.

—I love you.

Be quiet. Disappear. Let me disappear.

—I love you, I love you, I love you.

Shut up. Don't talk to me. Don't get in my way of disappearing. Disappear, I want to disappear.

—I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you.

I want to die. I want to disappear. I want to be shattered completely. I don't want any traces of me left. I want to become something that doesn't exist. I want to erase my existence. I want to disappear from all history. I want to disappear from all memories. I want to disappear from all memorable moments. I want to disappear from the girl who said that she also won't forget. Nothing is worth it. Nothing has any meaning. I cannot take anything. Nothing can be taken. Anything, everything, disappear, stop existing, from this world.

—I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you I love you I love you

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Arc 6 – Chapter 67, “Little King”

by admin - Thursday, February 21, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/02/21/arc-6-chapter-67-little-king/

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Translated By :

- Ringo

Proofread By :

- Nanashi
- Graced

Art Source:

- Twitter

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? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Seeing the figure of the man in front of his eyes ridiculously claim himself to be Louis Arneb, Subaru voiced out in surprise.

The man's way of appearing was unforeseen and unnatural, but what was further unexpected was the name he had given for himself.
It was difficult to conceive it as a mere prank, and even when considered as a phenomenon, it was still difficult to accept??.

Ram: "??They did say something about a form changing Sin Archbishop, it seems it was regarding this. However, the choice of the form taken is rather questionable, did you think you will receive any mercy if you chose this appearance?"

Louis: "Form changing, huh..... A~h, you mean that prattling loudmouth woman? Grouping us with that thing hurts even us. Besides, the principle of that thing and our ?Solar Eclipse? is totally different. That is

being a copycat, while this is reconstruction."

Ram: "Copycat, reconstruction.....?"

Using that interim powerful body, Louis replied. As he frowned at that answer, hearing Ram mention "another Sin Archbishop" left a bad taste in Subaru's mouth.
Though it was only to be expected that there would be Sins and Sin Archbishops other than ?Gluttony? existing, knowing even one of them stemmed into an immediate dislike for all of them.
Though they are supposed to be form changing, it was intriguing why they had not used that ability till now.

Louis: "That being said, this body, being treated as an unknown person, was actually quite a famous person, you know? Though sadly, nee-sama and the others wouldn't have any memory of the people eaten by us."

Ram: "Famous person..... in other words, borrowing the form of an eaten person? Is that so, truly the worst kind of thing to do, totally fits you people, who have committed themselves to doing evil. Nauseating."

Louis: "Wa~h oh, nee-sama geez, your words are so dirty they hurt, you know? If you say that then we, who still have the memories as your younger sister, will feel ashamed....."

And, that was as far as the talking of the interim Louis went.
The interim Louis flexibly leaned forward, and the blow that came from behind?? he dodged the blow of the hammer of ice. Of course, the attacker was??,

Emilia: "Ah, yah!"

Louis: "Huhuhu ~tsu, how merciless, Emilia-sama! Onii-chan may have had eaten it earlier, but such an ambush won't hit us, you know?"

Emilia: "If it won't hit, then I will just keep attacking till it hits! I don't even want to ambush you, I just want to strike you down!"

Saying that, Emilia changed the hammer of ice she held in her hands into twin swords of ice, and attacked the interim Louis. However, the interim Louis dodged her extraordinary attack by jumping above, and aimed for Emilia's slender hands from a higher angle,

Louis: "Here ~tsu!"
Emilia: "Kya~!"

Sharply rotating the body, Emilia's body was thrown off balance. Emilia twisted her body and used her arms in order to prevent herself from falling on her back. However, the interim Louis aimed straight for her face with his toe.
If it was too late, Emilia's face, which was the cutest in the world, would get squashed. ??At that point,

Ram: "Stop ignoring Ram and fighting all by yourself already."

Emilia: "Ram!"

Ram, confirming the movement of the opponent, who was aiming for Emilia's face, pointed the wand that she held in her hands, towards the face of the interim Louis.
At that moment, an extremely small wind was born, and turning into a blade, was launched to slice up the opponent's face.

Louis: "??Palm of the Fist King!"

Nullifying Ram's powerful attack with minimal strength using his palm, the interim Louis avoided the damage and then pounced downwards.
His perforating palm received the blade of wind from below, swallowing the wind in it's shockwaves and scattering it away subsequently.
Crushing the wind from his right hand, the interim Louis then tried to grip onto Ram with his free left hand. However, by the time his hand reached, Ram had already taken Emilia away with herself out of the opponent's reach, diving into a downward position outside the battle.

Louis: "You're do~ing it!"

Ram: "Hah ~hk!"

Clenching her swinging free left hand, the interim Louis applauded Ram's judgement and strength of action. Shaking his praise away with a ridiculing exhale, Ram then pulled Emilia's hand towards herself.

Ram: "Emilia-sama, are you unhurt?"

Emilia: "Y-Yes, thank you. It would have had been really painful for me if it wasn't for Ram saving me. Even so..... did you see that just now?"

Ram: "??It seems, he has clearly gotten stronger."

Ram nodded, gesturing her knowledge, at Emilia's response.
And, witnessing the short dialogue between the two, Subaru also held the same opinion as them.

??Although it was only a short exchange of moves, the interim Louis' manoeuvres were swift and accurate.
Though it was the opinion of someone inexperienced, these abilities probably exceeded those of Batenkaitos. At the end of that exchange, Ram's attack had been completely crushed, as if reality was messing around with them.

Louis: "The one right now was Palm of the Fist King..... Named by the one who possessed this body and memory, ?Fist King? Neiji Rockhardt. With the strongest palm, capable of blasting away anything, and a powerful person with no enemies on the Gladiator Island."

Ram: "......It seems that you are not familiar with revealing your strengths. In the end, you are just trying to show that you are at the disadvantage. Ram will not be fooled and hesitate because of this."

Louis: "We would not mind that at all, nee-sama! To the point that if you can corner us then we want you to corner us! See, don't you look back onto the sweet memory of defeat later on?"

Ram: "Who knows. Ram only knows of victory so she doesn't understand that."

Louis: "Is that so? That's? just the waste of not knowing the sourness of life."

The moment he said that, the interim Louis' figure was scratched out of visibility. It would seemingly be more accurate to say that he literally disappeared rather than just moving swiftly.

Ram: "??!?"

Ram widened her eyes at the enemy's unexpected move. Even she had been unable to grasp the opponent's position.
There was no way for her to escape??,

Emilia: "??Ram, watch out!"

Saying that, this time it was Emilia who grasped Ram and leapt backwards. Several of Emilia's beautiful silver hair were too late to escape that attack, as they were caught up in the impact and got cut off scattered around the aisle.
And, the one visible was not a fast warrior, but instead a bald man, as he laughed saying "Haha ~tsu!".

With a somewhat jumpy appearance and wearing an orange gown, the man smacked his lips at the form of the fleeing Emilia.

Louis: "How nice, so nice, isn't it nice. Can you dodge the next one?"

At that moment, the form of the famous person disappeared into thin air and that of a different one appeared. This seemed to be, as if it was a payback for the earlier surprise ambush.
From one blind spot to another, a flashing dagger made accurate attacks energetically. Emilia, while holding Ram, continued to defend the attacks off as she got completely dominated.

Louis: "Hahaha! You're doing it, doing it, doing it! How did you see through these secret manoeuvres of ?Leaper? Dorkell? It's truly a mystery!"

Emilia: "That's obvious! I guessed? it!"

Ram: "Of course, that is not all to it, there is also Ram's support. ??Emilia-sama!"

Emilia: "Y-Yeah."

Flying into a blind spot, the interim Louis launched an attack.

Although the opponent was someone capable of flying around freely, all while maintaining that vicious smile, Ram was able to see where he would appear next. On Ram's call, Emilia swung her long legs rapidly.
With that, when the bald man appeared next, Emilia's heel struck his side.

Louis: "Ghu..... ~tsu."

Emilia: "Hiya~h--!!"

Emilia thrusted her heel into his face, and struck the opponent down. At that moment, Emilia grabbed one of the pillars of ice erected on the ground in her hands and launched its sharp, pointed tip towards her fallen opponent.
If the blow was not defended away, the strike would penetrate right through his chest, and it would make for a truly unpleasant finish.
However, unfortunately enough, that was not effective.

Emilia: "Eh!?"

Louis: "?Carnivorous Beast? Beli Heinelga's skin cannot? be pierced, not even by the Holy Sword, is what they used to say."

Shattering the pillar of ice with his bare back, was a middle aged man with an enormous beard, smiling ferociously.
Lying down, he aimed for Emilia's waist with his arm, which was seemingly as tough as a log-- and somehow defending away that attack, Emilia, making haste, flew, flew, flew backwards.

Emilia: "Uh! Ah! Uh! Hey, at this pace.....!"

Ram: "Emilia-sama, please let go of Ram."

Emilia: "No! As if I will abandon Ram.....ghk."

Ram: "That is not the case."

With Ram in her grip and escaping from the enemy was Emilia, and Ram sealed her lips by gently placing a finger onto them.
Ram shook her head, looking at Emilia, whose words she had interrupted.

Ram: "It's about time you let Ram also attack is what it means."

The moment she said that, she swept away Emilia's gripped arms, and stood firm directly against the giant. Seeing that, the interim Louis smacked his rock-hard lips, and launched his palm towards the young girl.

Louis: "Huhu ~tsu! Get crushed!"

Ram: "Assuming that is even possible, politely say "please be crushed, Ram-sama"."

With that comeback, Ram charged straight towards the approaching palm. If the situation was to be slightly exaggerated, then it could be said that the palm was enormous enough to crush Ram's entire body. Recklessly clashing with the palm up front would be the same as clashing with the front of an approaching car?? at the very least, that appeared to be so in Subaru's eyes.
At that, Ram,

"????"

Ram: "At this level, you shouldn't even think you can catch Ram."

At the moment those fingers were about to reach her, Ram, with her lips relaxed, dodged the attack with minimal movement and launched her elbow onto her opponent's face.
That white elbow, with its sharpness resulting from its fragility, came in contact with the opponent's nose, mercilessly sending shocks through the body of the ?Carnivorous Beast?. And, at that moment, Ram's left hand was visibly coming down to grab his throat.

Louis: "??~Tsu."

Ram: "You have continued to blabber nonsense for quite some time, it is getting irritating now. Embrace your misfortune, and choke to death at the hands of Ram here, you despicable thing of a person."

The interim Louis faced problems, as he tried to pursue the crucial points of the body while lacking proper training for doing so. Using that to her advantage, Ram continued to rip into him, and this time, pointed the tip of her elegant wand towards him.
And, as its tip became the centre of a beautiful gathering of energy, it subsequently released wind magic, pushing the giant slightly behind.

Subaru: "Strong.....!"

Subaru intently stared at the sight of the interim Louis, jumping and rolling around the passage, splattering blood.
Till now, he had concentrated on observing the fight so much that he had forgotten to breathe, but the moment Ram stood upon the battlefield, the flow of the fight changed immediately.
Of course, though all of it was based on the fact that Ram could not drag on battling for too long,

Subaru: "Ram fighting this much is a miscalculation I'm happy for....."

Beatrice: "That, is not the case, in fact. You cannot rely on just Ram, I suppose."

Subaru: "??? What does that....."

Mean, was what Subaru intended to ask Beatrice, who was in his arms, while tilting his head. And, before Beatrice could answer his query, the answer itself appeared before him.

"????"

Ram's posture, as she tried to step ahead, broke down. Subaru observed whether she had accidentally slipped, but that was not the case.
Ram's forehead and neck were flooded with sweat, and it was visible that every continuing breath was hurting her.
At that moment, he wondered how much of defence and the dragging on of the battle he could actually speak of, considering the unforeseen scene before him.

Beatrice: "If it is for a short period of time, then Ram's fighting sense can follow. However....."

Subaru: "She has a time limit like that.....!? Oh no, Ram??"

Unaware of such a weakness of hers, he had sent Ram into that dangerous situation. Along with Subaru's panicking voice, at the same time, the interim Louis changed into the form of the muscle-rich huge man once again.

Aiming for the stationary Ram, the enemy moved forward briskly with his palm pointed outwards, in an attempt to make a successful attack. If she were to receive a direct hit, it was unknown how much of it Ram would actually be able to take.

Subaru: "Ram??!"

Louis: "Shut your mumbling, you are so damn loud for a man."

Subaru called out desperately, but Ram showed no signs of response.
At that moment, the interim Louis' blow captured Ram's face directly??,

Emilia: "I know Ram the most, almost as much as I know my own weaknesses. That's why??"

Emilia: "I am fighting alongside Ram!"
Louis: "??~Tsu!?"

Jumping over Ram's head, with her silver hair fluttering, was Emilia, positioning her knees elegantly.
Against the opponent, who had his palm pointing towards the front, the tactics Emilia had chosen were very simple.
The move she had chosen was to have an innumerable amount of weapons of ice float in the air, and fire them all towards her opponent at once.

Emilia: "Hi, yaaaaa??!!"

The interim Louis launched off his body, as he had positioned his empty palm, against the rain of ice.
The interim Louis avoided, dodged, defended away, destroyed, and crossed through the range of the overwhelming storm of ice. That ability was again, that of an expert who had achieved heights in proficiency.

The truth was, the ?Fist King?, who had been victimised by ?Gluttony?, was perhaps a true warrior, who had trained with extreme perseverance to gain such prowess. ??That power was now being exploited by this.
The power he had trained to achieve, and the fame he had received for being such a great warrior, ?Gluttony? had stolen everything away from him, and continued to mock and ridicule his journey of life. In fact, it was possible that they had achieved a new height in skill, one which had not been achieved by this memory originally.

Louis: "Ha~!"

He could not help but despair seeing the form of ?Gluttony?, who had defended away all of Emilia's attacks and blows, and now sighed an exhale of achievement.

Louis: "How nice, this is the best! How do we put it, sort of like, we had completely reconstructed the catalogue specs of this memory, but only after we exceeded even that, we felt as if living in this body would be worth it ~tsu! Sort of feels like we made better use of the borrowed soul than its original owner? We're glad we were able to live it ~tsu!"

Ram: "??For someone who is into such evil deeds, you are quite thoughtful of such things, aren't you."

Louis: "Perhaps so! But you see, for us, who are different from people, don't you think it is only natural that what we find happiness in would be different too? Don't you think so. Perhaps you think so. Possibly you think so ~tsu?"

Ram: "Who knows? Isn't that so, Emilia-sama?"

Emilia: "No, you're wrong!"

At the words of Ram, who shrugged her shoulders, Emilia responded to the interim vicious looking man?? no, Louis Arneb, who was letting go the chunks of ice he held in his palm.
Doing that, upon receiving that question, Emilia upheld the spears and axes of ice that got erected from the floor,

Emilia: "No matter how different you may be from people, you can still be happy and sad by thinking of the same things! I, for example, was always alone but, I enjoyed stacking rocks on river beaches."

Ram: "......That, as well, feels unique in its own way though."

Louis: "We see. Indeed indeed, we also have memories of stacking rocks on river beaches, but that's."

Emilia: "See!"

Louis: "But, we didn't do it because it was fun. It's just that there was nothing else to do. There was just no other thing to kill our time with."

Emilia: "Eh, is that so.....?"

Surprised, Emilia made a confused expression, seeing the happiness of her memories get rejected down. And, behind Emilia, who had that reaction, Ram called out "Emilia-sama" with more strength than normal.

Ram: "Please do not get swayed by the enemy. The opponent is a Sin Archbishop..... if they want to demolish our plans, they will use whatever words necessary. Don't get deceived."

Emilia: "Is that so? That is so. Yes, I know. I won't be deceived anymore."

Louis: "What can we say, we~ll, that was a truly hurtful thing to say. Even though our one and only nee-sama would leave us behind, so we had no choice but to do it."

Ram: "??Shut up!"

Once again, Ram kicked the frozen floor, launching her body towards Louis, who had repeatedly voiced words which had pierced straight through her heart.
Her body's condition was not at its best. Well aware of that, Ram charged straight towards the enemy, because she knew that she must get her own hands dirty in order to clean up this mess.
Ram's intimidating roar stabs right through Louis.
However??,

Emilia: "This time I'm with her, so if you want to surrender yourself, this is your chance!"

Louis: "Gratitude for such graciousness, but there's no need for it!"

Ram: "Enough of your stubbornness!!"

Making a cute expression, but using brutal attacks which were not cute in the least, was Emilia. The duo of the enraged Ram and Emilia went in together, however, Louis repulsively kept switching his form and battle style with absolute freedom, controlling the battle's pace as per his own will.

"????"

In this overwhelming duel, there were two things that would surprise the observer.
First, was the flawless, breath-to-breath coordination between Emilia and Ram.

In the previous loop, Emilia's ?Name? had been stolen away, due to which her existence was forgotten and her battle style was unknown to all, and there was discrepancy between her and Julius, who was unaware of her style of fighting, however, there was not the slightest of that discrepancy in Emilia and Ram's case, not even the slightest of lag.
Of course, though it does not mean that the adjustments Emilia made were meaningless, what was of utmost relevance here was Ram's wonderful sense of combat.

Ram: "Ha?? ~hk!"

Louis: "Tch~! Truly, what a nuisance you are, nee-sama!"

Just when he was about to counterattack, her wand was pointed towards his nose, and barely managing to dodge the subsequent piercing blades of wind, Louis pulled out his tongue.
Although what Ram did was not something too substantial, Emilia used such gaps to their advantage by further pressuring Louis and stopping him from counterattacking.
Although her moves weren't too showy, it granted her a convenient position to launch attacks without holding back.

The breathtaking cooperation between the duo of Emilia and Ram was all thanks to Ram's judgement.
That was one of the things which surprised Subaru the most.
And, there was something else which was equally surprising. That was--,

Louis: "Haha~! How nice, so nice, very nice, perhaps it is nice, surely it is nice, isn't it nice, maybe it is nice, probably it is nice, as it is probably nice! Gluttonous drinking ~tsu! Gluttony ~tsu! Our mood and feelings are also perhaps gradually pumping up ~tsu!"

Emilia: "Kh ~hk! He's right, his strength is gradually increasing.....!"

Ram: "Irritating.....!"

Chewing on her own teeth, Emilia launched the twin sword she held in her fist, while Ram darted a blade of wind aiming for the opponent’s feet. However, Louis, becoming the ?Fist King?, crushed Emilia’s twin sword with his palm, becoming the ?Leaper?, dodged Ram’s attack, and becoming the ?Carnivorous Beast?, rolled his body through the passage of ice.
The shockwave he released impacted Emilia and Ram, pushing them backwards, as they let out a sigh.

“????"

The coordination between Emilia and Ram was undoubtedly highly refined. However, as surprising as it seemed, Louis’ prowess in using and switching memories was even faster.
Possibly, by changing forms, Louis was able to perfectly reconstruct that ?Memory?, with no limitation whatsoever.

???Solar Eclipse?, that is indeed what Louis had said.

Batenkaitos, before he had lost his body-- Louis’ elder brother too, in the previous loop had copied Emilia’s awesome technique called Ice Brand Arts, but it’s reconstruction was limited to him maintaining his own form. Louis had exceeded that.

Solar Eclipse was a phenomenon in which the sun got hidden behind the moon's shadow, consequently becoming invisible, that was perhaps, Louis' true body is treated as the sun, which got shadowed by the moon, the reconstructed ?Names? and ?Memories?.
In other words, ?Solar Eclipse? can be safely assumed to be an ability to change into the form of that respective eaten ?Memory?. ??Consequent was the Louis before him, using that ability's advantage.
And--,

Subaru: "If there's ?Solar Eclipse? then it's natural to think that there would be ?Lunar Eclipse? existing too, but what kind of power would come by the hiding of the moon..... no, can I even figure it out beforehand?"

Often times, what happens in such patterns of copying abilities, was that the user's inexperience and lack of proper knowledge to use those abilities results in a discrepancy, becoming a cause of defeat.
However, the copying abilities of ?Gluttony?, which obviously would include Louis as well, overcome that weakness perfectly by using ?the victim's body and memory?.
It was clear that this was a flawless, perfect copying ability.

Subaru: "This is bad..... if Emilia-chan and the rest get overpowered, the situation will change."

Tightly grabbing his own chest, Subaru gnashed his teeth at the sense of helplessness which was visible straight in his eyes.
Echidna, who had evacuated Meili, Rem and Patrasche away from the horde of Witch Beasts surrounding the tower to ?Taygeta?. And, considering Julius' battle was still continuing, the violence had spread to two layers in the tower.

Subaru: "??Julius, must be struggling a lot too. On second thought, should the opponent here really be Reid?"

Beatrice: "??Subaru? Just what are you saying? Where are you looking, at what?"

Subaru: "Where are you looking, and what are you saying, huh, Beatrice. That's....."

Beatrice, within his arms, heard his muttering and looked up, blinking once. Subaru tried to respond to her and clear up her confusion.
Unquestionably, right now, he would be unable to firmly state what he was saying or looking at.
But??,

Subaru: "What's, this? I can sense what everyone is doing and where. I can see it?"

Grabbing his chest in a crushing grip, Subaru slowly realised?? the existence of that incongruous feeling, those blurry, faint dots of light.
They enlightened Subaru regarding the actions of his comrades in the tower. He could also sense Ram and the others, and at that moment, Subaru accepted this as if it was something natural, like a third arm by birth.

However, this was nothing like being naturally born with a third arm.
The moment he noticed that, Subaru realised what an unnatural situation he was in, and a sense of rejection and unacceptability rose within his own heart for his own thoughts.

Subaru: "??Ghu."

However, grinding his molars, he swallowed the thought back in so that he didn’t spit it out.

Right now, if his third arm had developed out of nowhere, then he should rightfully accept it and reject his feelings of rejection for it.
He was able to get a rough grasp on where everyone was, in what situation everyone was in. ??In a situation in which all his comrades had to split up, could there be any power more suitable than this for such a situation.
That's why??,

Subaru: "Momentarily, silently, belong to me??"

The form of this unnatural power appeared before Natsuki Subaru's soul, when he did this.
The nature of it reminded him of the ?Corridor of Memories?, where he had first faced Louis Arneb, and the strength that had bloomed within him before he left that place.
He had given it a name as well. Yes, that name was??,

Subaru: "??Cor Leonis."

The moment he called that name, the presence and control of that power flooded over Natsuki Subaru's soul.
And, the power, which bore itself with ?Lion's Heart?, rightfully gave the ability?? no, the authority over itself to Natsuki Subaru. The result of that was,

Subaru: “Nuu, gh..... ~hk!?”

Beatrice: “Subaru!”

Suddenly, Subaru’s feet experienced a crushing weight coming from his body. Beatrice, as soon as she noticed that, shouted in panic, but he was unable to respond due to his headache.
A sudden headache, to the point that was almost seemingly hazardous, strained Subaru’s body. What was even worse was the awful fatigue his body was suffering with, accompanying a tear jerking pain in his bones?? the combination of pain and exhaustion crushed his entire body, making Subaru kneel down instantly.

Subaru: “Gh, a~h.....”

A voice sounded within his mind, questioning what this was.
The overwhelming strain on his body, a combination of pain and fatigue, his body felt heavy, as if poisoned, and he was panting like he was continuing to run after his stamina had exhausted itself.
Rubbing his back, Beatrice screamed in panic at this sudden development. As he felt somewhat easier by the touch of her palm, Subaru turned his eyes towards the situation.

At that moment, Subaru was trying to properly exercise his newly gained Authority, ?Cor Leonis?.
??No, it felt as if he were merely continuing to exercise it.
His very condition right now as well, was the result of the usage of ?Cor Leonis?. If that was so, then just what meaning did that ability hold?
Subaru's body felt heavy, stamina was exhausted, and till now he had done nothing that would??.

Yes, Subaru himself could not do anything.
Instead of him??,

Louis: "??Ah?"

Out of nowhere, a dry voice echoed, as Louis continued to look while his attack slashed through the sky.
Louis, who had taken the form of the ?Fist King?, was showing off his violent combat techniques, overpowering Emilia and Ram, and just when he raised the fingers of his detestable body.
Louis' arms were grabbed, and his joints got stabbed. And,

Ram: "Ha~ ~hk!"

Without any hesitation or mercy, Ram kneed his joints, breaking Louis' right arm. A repulsive sound echoed, and the white bones within got broken and became visible, as the fibres of his light pink muscles hung down, and the colour of blood spread through the frozen white passage, a sight painful to even look at.

Louis: "Igh, ya..... ghkhe ~hk!"

Ram: "Too slow!"

Ram's iron-hard elbow rotated, smashing right into the opponent's face. With the same pace, Ram clutched the enemy's hair at the back of his head and smashed him into the wall, while continuing to stab his torso with her right fist.
When Louis' body, just after the sounds of his ribs cracking echoed, tried to get back onto her, Ram delivered her own kick, with an unaccepting face, as the giant's body rolled at the floor at a fast pace, splattering blood around.

Ram: ".....Ram's body feels lighter?"

Clenching her fists, Ram widened her eyes at the unexpected surprise of her body.
Emilia, who had witnessed the sight of her strength, also commented "Amazing....." at the power she got newly acquainted with.
Beatrice had been concerned about Ram's fatigue, so her actions right now were completely expected.
??And that was as far as Subaru's thinking went, before he realised.

Subaru: "This, can't be..... could it be, that I took Ram's fatigue?"

Comparing to the improvement in Ram's physical condition and the worsening of Subaru's, that indeed seemed to be the case.
The truth is, the lights Subaru was able to sense?? there were two in front of him which seemed to stand for Emilia and Ram, and he could sense something flow into himself from there.
If his assumption was right and it indeed projected his comrades, who were all facing challenges, then that was.

Subaru: "???Cor Leonis? means, ?Lion's Heart?."

The answer to that, lay in Subaru's knowledge of the stars.

"????"

The Authority of ?Greed?, that Subaru had unintentionally named ?Cor Leonis?.
That is in fact, a Latin word which meant ?Lion's Heart?, referring to the star named Regulus, the brightest of the Leo constellation. However, Regulus also meant something else aside from Cor Leonis in Latin, which is ?Little King?.

???Lion's Heart? and ?Little King?.

As lions themselves were called the king of all beasts, the alias of ?King? was well fitting, it was understandable. But, what did the ?Little? attached to it mean?
A little, lion king. ??The king of, a pride.

What exactly made one deserving the title of king? That was??

Subaru: "??One who stands by everyone's wishes, that is who a king is. That's why."

Natsuki Subaru's ability of ?Cor Leonis? will lighten the burden on the back of his comrade.
So that his comrades can fight without restraints, he shall take all damage for them.

If that was the case, then it was decided what Natsuki Subaru was supposed to do.

Subaru: "If I'm spitting blood, then that means the preparations are all okay."

Beatrice: "Subaru?"

Subaru: "My ba~d, I made you worry. My head just hurts a bit, my legs feel strained, my joints ache like all hell, my hands and feet feel like they've been victim to some ambush attack, but I'm alright."

Beatrice: "Ambush attacked!? When, where, I suppose!?"

Subaru: "Probably, when I wasn't looking at the fight."

He was unable to clearly explain to Beatrice, whose eyes were filled with concern.
However, the source for the pain in his hands and legs was if he was hiding the wounds taken by Emilia or Ram, and in worst case scenario, by both of them at the hands of Louis.

And, Subaru doesn't mutter a single word about the wound on his back. For some reason, that person was cool, that's why.

Subaru: "Just like this....."

If Ram was able to keep these abilities up and overpower Louis, they might manage to actually overcome

?Gluttony?, unlike how they had failed last time.
Win against Louis, and hurry to catch up to Julius, who was fighting Reid, or in worst case scenario, face the titanic scorpion and the shadow??.

Subaru: "???"

Thinking that far, Subaru, once again, looked at the existence of the lights within his chest.
One was Julius, who was battling above the layer Subaru and the others were on, and Meili, who was confronting the horde of Witch Beasts from the balcony. Echidna and the others seemed to have had safely evacuated to ?Taygeta?, and there was one whose position could very well be felt by Subaru.
However??,

Subaru: "??This, who's that?"

At a point distanced away from them all, Subaru could feel the existence of the light coming from the same layer as he was in, in the direction opposite to him.
That was the direction the dignified Reid had first appeared from in the previous loop. Wishing for it to not be Reid, Subaru confirmed the presence of certain confidence within him, as he looked on with somewhat of hesitation.
And??,

Subaru: "Beatrice!"

Beatrice: "??~Hk! Minya!!"

As he shouted from the back of the aisle, Beatrice instantly came to notice the mishap, and widened her palm. At that very moment, a shining purple crystal was born as the consequence of her chant.
Floating in the air with a terrifyingly sharp tip, it was fired like a bullet from a gun the very next moment.
It flew overhead Emilia, Ram and Louis, who were fighting in the aisle, towards further beyond.
And, from there, it collided with an attack which was aiming right for Emilia's back.

"????"

As a hurting sound of shattering glass echoed, a blinding light broke through and exposed the white corridor to itself. Amidst the sparkles of the shattered ice and crystals, a blinking red light was visible in between darkness.
As soon as he laid his eyes on it, the pain in Subaru's heart multiplied several times. Once again, the threat repeated itself, further worsening the situation.

However, at this point, the pain in his heart was not because of seeing that dot of red light.
The red dot of light and the faint light Subaru could sense within his chest?? which showed him the position of his comrades, they overlapped.

That could mean, only one thing.

Subaru: "What does, this mean. You....."

"????"

Swinging its tail which wielded a long and sharp needle, the black shadow, wearing an armour-like black shell over its body?? was the form of the titanic scorpion.
However, at this moment, the scorpion's appearance held a totally different meaning for Subaru.
As the existence which had revealed itself there was??,

Subaru: "??Is it you, Shaula!!"

Facing a reality he did not want to face, accepting a truth he did not want to accept, Subaru called out in a voice mixed with rage and despair.
Hearing that voice, the scorpion, lacking a mouth to respond with words, lifted up its enormous pincers and clanked them, as if affirming his words.

A clank was heard.

Arc 6 – Chapter 68, "The Woman of Scorpius"

by admin - Thursday, August 29, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/08/29/arc-6-chapter-68-the-woman-of-scorpius/

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Translated By :

- Ringo

Art Source:

- Twitter

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??When he had first heard of Shaula's name, it's not as if he thought nothing of it.

It was not because he had any emotional attachment to the name ?Shaula?.
It was because, Subaru had memories of that word.

?Shaula? was the name of a star which glowed in the sky Subaru was acquainted with?? the single word which bestowed meaning to the Scorpius.
To think the true identity of the one who took upon the name of the Scorpius was the scorpion clad in a jet black shell, that answer was something truly straightforward and simple. So straightforward, that you would actually grow suspicious of the one who chose that name.
However, at present, the first candidate for that lack of sense was the one she referred to as "Master", Natsuki Subaru.
The problem here was how unlikely it was that Subaru got the chance to bestow her with that name, regardless of the presence or absence of his memories, and how they had no flexibility right now to confirm that.

"????"

Before his eyes, the tag team of Emilia and Ram continued their fierce battle with the Sin Archbishop of

?Gluttony?, Louis Arneb. Interposing in the space of that battlefield, in the interior of the aisle, the jet black titanic scorpion let out a fiendish sound by clanking its huge pincers, staring towards them with deep red compound eyes.
The ominous huge pincers had evolved for the purpose of slaughter, wielding such sharpness which gave rise the conjecture that they possessed enough strength to easily cut apart bones or internal organs of the human body with a single clank of its edges.

Red compound eyes, two ominous huge pincers, multiple legs supporting its large frame, a shell boasting the strength as that of an iron armour, all of them were symbols of refinement for the purpose of destruction and violence.
The truth is, its fighting strength did not contradict the sense of ferocity its outer appearance gave.
Time and time again, Subaru had confirmed that with his very eyes, through the conflict till now, through the world he had seen till now, rather, he had experienced the true feeling with his own body.

Subaru: "Y....."

The moment that realisation spouted within him, certain happenings of a previous loop appeared before Subaru.
Driving away the brutal attack of the titanic scorpion, the moment they thought they had somehow managed to temporarily withdraw, Subaru and the others had bathed in the explosion caused by the parting gift of that evil beast, resulting in Beatrice and Echidna, the two of them being deprived of their lives.

The intolerable rage he felt back then, it was something he was incapable of forgetting.
The wrath he embraced directed resentment towards the powerlessness of his own self, and at the same time, he also had that rage pinning down the titanic scorpion who had been behind that slaughter.

??The subject of that wrath, the titanic scorpion, its true identity had been of one who was supposed to be his comrade, Shaula.

Now that he knew that, what occupied Subaru's mind was merely violent emotion with no place to belong, along with suspicion.

Why, had Shaula taken the form of the titanic scorpion.
Why, was Shaula attacking Subaru and the others, and trying to kill them.
Why, did Shaula reveal her true nature at this stage of the game, and was interrupting in between the battle.
Why, why, why, why, why, why, why, why, why, why, why??.

Beatrice: "??Subaru, calm down, in fact. First, take deep breaths, I suppose."

"????"

Subaru was tormented by such thoughts after greeting such shocking truths. Softly calling Subaru's name, who was in that state, and restoring him back from insanity was Beatrice, standing next to him.
With his hand grasped by her tiny palm, Subaru noticed, for the first time, that he had forgotten to even

breathe. Slowly, abiding by the command, Subaru inhaled deeply, then exhaled.
And,

Beatrice: "Keep it up, in fact. ??Is it true, that that thing is Shaula?"

At Beatrice's question, once again, Subaru affirmed to himself.
?Cor Leonis? ??though the Authority, a characteristic unique to him, had just blossomed within him and he had only recently managed to get a grasp on it, it conveyed the whereabouts of his comrades to Subaru, and took over the inferiorities in the physical form of allies, that alone was unquestionable.
Henceforth, Subaru could vaguely catch onto the locations of all his comrades within the tower, Emilia, Ram, Beatrice, Julius, Meili and Echidna.
And, that faint, warm sensation he could feel from those comrades of his, he could feel the same from the titanic scorpion.

If the relative positions of all his comrades within? the towers were to be considered, no other candidate came to mind.
Henceforth, that titanic scorpion was unmistakably??,

Subaru: "It's Shaula for sure. I don't know why but, she's turned into a huge scorpion....."

Beatrice: "??. It is true that she was a girl with an uncertain true identity in the first place, in fact. That true identity, being that of a slightly big bug isn't even worthy of astonishment, I suppose."

Subaru: "Amazi~ng courage you have....."

Asserting the scorpion to be a bug, Beatrice warded it off with not the ability to comprehend but the ability to respond to the call. Coiling his tongue at that approach of coping with the situation, Subaru at that moment, for once, glared at the titanic scorpion.
Red compound eyes with the aim of their gaze unknown, stabbed by the scowl coming from the opposite direction,

Subaru: "How about you give some answers! Your true identity has been uncovered already, you bastard!!"

"????"

Subaru: "Making excuses, or flicking your tongue before the prey, there must be something? you have to do..... ~hk."

When he raised his harsh voice, he felt his head ache with the weight of the atmosphere and inferior physical form. However, Subaru ignored that pain, and sought a response from the titanic scorpion.
However, the titanic scorpion, maintaining its outward appearance which suggested its inability of will and communication, never even once tried to respond.

Subaru: "Are you, not going to make a single excuse....."

Murmuring powerlessly, Subaru thought while fighting his urge to vomit.
Just as the recollected memories of earlier, Subaru had been made to taste hardships time and time again, by this titanic scorpion.
With unruly naivete, the one who had continued to show her courtesy and affection to Subaru without ever attempting to conceal it, Shaula?? having been cheated by her, deceived by her, that truth sharply stabbed through his chest.

How her smile, her words, her attitude, anything and everything had been made-up fakes.
How she had deceived Subaru and others, and had been a traitor.

Subaru: "No....."

Traitor, sadly expressing that notation, Subaru stiffened his cheeks with a dicey sense of unease.
Shaula betrayed them. ??That thought itself was a conclusion which could not be helped considering the existing situation. However, whether or not everything relating to Shaula had been truly been fiction, that had room for argument.
Of course, all of Shaula's words and deeds till now had been acting, and it is plausible that her smile, bonding, anything and everything were all just swindles for deceiving them.
It was plausible. But, for what???

If she intended to crawl into Subaru and the others' trust by her acting, her intentions would pose her as an opponent to Subaru and the others.
However, if Shaula aimed to do that, even without doing something like diving into the battle at this stage of the game, she must have had obtained the timing to chop off their sleeping heads time and time again.
Precisely that, as she had crawled into gaining such deep trust from Subaru and the others, while doing so, she must have had infinite chances to slowly and secretly poison them as well.
Missing those chances, why did she unconceal her betrayal now.
That, could never be a completely rational enemy.

Going out of her way and putting up a dubious pretense, and becoming a comrade for Subaru and the others, what could be the point of all that.
Listening to Subaru's requests, and even cooperating in stopping Meili, and displaying hyper magic against the hordes of Witch Beasts from the balcony, it was unknown what meaning all that held.
None of it, made any sense, did it.

Subaru: "The reason why I end up thinking that, is it because I got mesmerised by her white legs visible in her hot pants?"

Beatrice: "If Subaru's thoughts are becoming blurred by that, then Shaula's plan has not been discarded completely, in fact.

Subaru: "Right. My feelings are aligned with Emilia-chan..... argh, the end!"

Just when they jointly felt discomfort towards Shaula's conduct?, suddenly he had his arm pulled by Beatrice. It was not objection, but an action of overbearing extrication.

Overhead Subaru, who had unintentionally stepped upon that foot bellow, a white corona striked through, and he picked up his life from within the breadth of his hair.

Beatrice: "It seems, there's no time to sit and chatter, I, suppose!"

While saying that, raising Subaru's hand other than the one which she had grasped, Beatrice's environs gleamed faintly.
Clad in the violet light which evolved, along with sharpened pointed tips in large numbers. As if enclosing Subaru and Beatrice, the violet arrows unfolded, facing the titanic scorpion directly, they were shot.
At that moment, the white corona from the same frontward came flying and clashed with the violet arrows, and the light performed a boisterous dance.

Subaru: "U~o~o~o~o~o~o~!?"
Beatrice: "Duck down, in fact! It won't be good if you receive a direct hit, in fact!"

The glittering violet light raged on, a sound like that of shattering glass beautifully chained through the aisle.
On the other side of the spectacle where the glitter seemingly grilled his eyes, the flash which was launched by the titanic scorpion?? no, that attack by the sharp tail stinger, had been established? to relentlessly take away Subaru's life.

The single arrow by that advancing intent to kill was warded off, repelled away by the hundred arrows stemming from the magic Beatrice had spun, making it protect itself by jumping.
However, that resource consumption had been overwhelming.

Beatrice: "Gh, not good, in fact.....! At this rate, our mana will get exhausted in no time, I suppose.....!"

Subaru: "What'll happen if it gets exhausted!?"

Beatrice: "Betty and Subaru will get pierced through by that single arrow together, in fact!"

Being together aside, he could not come to accept that circumstance.
Against the assailing attack, Beatrice's remaining strength could not last for long, that was what she had reported herself. With their circumstances continuing to deteriorate, before they got crushed under pressure, there was a need to somehow defeat the situation.
And at the moment immediately after Subaru gritted his teeth due to the impending sense of crisis??,

Emilia: "??Swishing right above someone's head, it's dangerous, you know!"

The sound of silver bells chimed potently, and a large rock of ice energetically struck the shell of the titanic scorpion. A hammering sound echoed, and surprise was reflected in the emotionless compound eyes of the scorpion.
The one who managed to draw out that reaction, was the one who created a wall of ice in the aisle and subsequently kicked it, and decisively plunged into the bosom of the scorpion, Emilia.
Her silver hair fluttering, leaping upon the scorpion with magnificence, she wielded a longsword of ice,

Emilia: "Targeting Subaru and the rest..... bullying the weak ones shows you are a coward!"

"????"

With the sword slash capable of slashing down anything with a single hit, she brushed away the large pincers, and the titanic scorpion made a speedy withdraw using its multiple legs, wriggling like a worm. However, Emilia pursued the retreating large build, and in the cramped aisle thus commenced the three-dimensional battle between the beauty and the scorpion.

Emilia: "Hiyah! Eyah! I~ya~h!"

The longsword, twin sword, lance, large hammer hence given shape to smashed a light report, and the falling, glittering ice shards flutter around the gracefully dancing Emilia.
The potent pincers of the titanic scorpion, the strength they had was their highlight, as they easily shattered the weapons of the enemy they had come to accept, and hid their herculean cutting strength. However, that destruction of weapons did not pass on to Emilia.

Emilia's Ice Brand Arts, was an ability capable of creating countless weapons through her magical power. The disposable weapons of ice, were no greater than trifling articles to Emilia. No matter how many times were they to be smashed, shattered, it neither hurt nor itch Emilia.

Emilia: "Hi, ya~h!!"

The pincers and tail stinger waving about, and Emilia, who had dodged them, launched the picket of ice floating midair. It collided head on with the corona shot by the scorpion, resulting in light scattering across.

It was the overwhelming offence and defence of two, one human and one inhuman.
What was worth admiring was Emilia's sense, against an enemy for whom a coping method different from those used against people was required, having jumped in without any hesitation whatsoever, and was hanging on.
For Emilia, who readily took upon an instinctive battle style, the form and shape of the enemy were not absolute. Not by piling up strict disciplining, but the more than enough battle sense within her body told her of her enemy.

Henceforth, the offence and defence of Emilia and the titanic scorpion was taking alternately favorable and unfavorable turns, and gave rise to a stalemate.
However, with Emilia fighting the titanic scorpion, another progressing battle was unable to avoid remaining unchanged.
For example, if that battle, at maximum, had commenced with an attack by the both of them at the same time, the offence and defence with the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony? Louis Arneb?? had been left to Ram alone.

Subaru: "Ram!!"

Ram: "You are audible, there is no need to shout every second. As it dampens the spirit."

At Subaru's voice, who was anxious regarding her body, she responded with an outrageously cruel reply.
By herself, confronting Louis in the middle of the aisle was Ram. Having her back face his side, she clashed head-on with the large build exerting tremendous pressure.
Of course, with Emilia's fallout, the battle had turned worse, Subaru was able to see that, but??,

Ram: "Kh ~hk."
Louis: "Higyahah ~tsu! Nee-sama is just so harsh so harsh!"

With a smile glued to his face, the large build, shaking his head about, took a single step backward instead of jumping.
The rebuff he had experienced head-on, his retreat was to disperse its impact. In front of the large build who did that, Ram, who sharply gyrated her body, commenced a resolute extremely close combat with the expert who named himself as the ?Fist King?.
The unarmed martial arts Louis was using, had been endowed with immeasurable bloodshed to the name of the ?Fist King?. However, through merely the sense of gaps, Ram was able to overwhelm those fighting techniques, which had been taken to the extremities, and their proper tracks.
Even now, as she unleashed herself, her white fist fired into the median line of the enemy mercilessly.

Louis: "How amazing! So amazing! Isn't it amazing, isn't it too amazing! Nee-sama is just too strong, much more than what we knew ~tsu! What's this what's this, why are you able to move so much!?"

Ram: "Don't talk as if you know anything, kindly keep quiet and die."

Bathing in the vehement impact, passing his comment while writhing in pain was Louis.
Louis, right now, had his right arm broken, and was in a state of plugging the roots of his arm. In that state, even if it is the body of a man who had mastered in unarmed combat, it would not be possible to bring out those specs.
The experience points of the martial arts cultivated within the ?Fist King?, had been ruined in front of Ram, who had been released from her inferior physical form.
To such point, that the inborn natural specs Ram had were overwhelming the enemy.
However, as Ram continued to put up a hard fight, as much as she fought hard??,

Subaru: "Gh, bhugh."

Welling up of nausea, limitless rise in temperature. Within his head, the seemingly cursing noise of gongs being struck buzzing in his ears accompanied with a headache, while experiencing these, Subaru fought against getting distracted and letting his guard down.

This was, what Ram feels and tastes normally.
It was now, mercilessly scraping off Subaru's mind and body with a rasp. Whether it was possible to get used to it or not, the chills continued becoming heavier with each passing second, and as Ram's voltage rose, it's? weight rose accordingly as well.

"????"

However, that nausea, that headache, that sense of fatigue, Subaru kept them at the back of his molars and patiently endured them.
Thanks to this Authority, he could take on Ram's suffering, and grant her the strength to fight. At this point, the recoil of Subaru having to suffer, was a compensation they must accept and pay.
His entire body felt heavy, limbs creaking, ears hurting of noise, the torn thighs aching, the struck abdomen screaming in agony, the rate of breathing rising due to the usage of all strength, and vision flickering in red and white.
??This much, he should simply bluff and show it is of no concern.

Ram: "??Foolish, truly."

And, glancing towards Subaru who had bent down behind Beatrice, Ram's lips faintly murmured something is what it seemed like.
However, the Authority was only capable of taking on the burden, it could not convey everything regarding the partner.
The lightly whispered words went unheard, and the only result of that was Subaru furrowing his eyebrows.
However??,

Ram: "Kindly collapse already. If you drag this on for too long, the ones charged with our household chores will all faint."

Louis: "How cold, so cold, isn't it cold, because it is so cold! Nee-sama, nee-sama! Let's play more! Let's have fun! Even though we are sisters, we've never even once engaged in a bout like this, isn't it ~tsu!"

Ram: "??Then, your wish shall be granted."

Narrowing her cold eyes, Ram struck the side of the frolicking Louis' face with her palm.
At the same pace, as if in flow, she struck countless blows on the entirety of Louis' body, delivering rebuff to the receptacle in the same direction.
Louis turned completely? defensive, and folding up that jaw with her palm directly underneath it, Ram grabbed her opponent's collar and forcefully bashed his face into the wall on the side, and thereafter drove her lovely knees into his head.

Louis: "Pgh, gugh."

With his face caught between the dry wall and knee, Louis had his nose crushed as he collapsed, bleeding.
Towards that Louis' naked nape, Ram turned her palm relentlessly?.
Within that palm was whirling an extremely small blade of wind. However, its size was nothing to be made light of. The swirl of the wind blade thus formed in her palm, had enough strength to gouge out any vitals of the body.
Grand destruction unneeded, a minimalistic attack to merely gouge out the vitals of the body and bring down the enemy. If the neck was to receive it, regardless of how thick the neck of even the ?Fist King? may be, he would still be equally helpless.
And, Ram's attack settled the battle??,

???: "??Geez, alwa~ys doing things as how you please when someone's sleeping. This is why, little sisters who are the youngest child can't be selfish. As an elder herself, nee-sama must also think so, right?"

Ram: "??~hk."

The moment when the strike to the nape was settled, ?Fist King's? form changed, and Ram's palm missed its aim.
The moment initially afterwards, what seized Ram's petite torso from the frontward, was the backwards kick of, with a strikingly short height, Louis?? no, Ley Batenkaitos.

Subaru: "Switch.....!?"

Ley: "No no no no no we're telling you ~tsu! It wasn't something we were aiming for and then did it or anything, by sheer chance, the moment we opened our eyes, little sister was in an unfavorable position, that's all it is. Onii-san can understand, right? The feeling when your sibling is so bad at the game being played so you can't stand it, and end up taking away the controller?"

Languidly stretching out his tongue, with his dubiously long dark brown hair, Ley smiled at Subaru.
With that evil smile of Ley's, Ram, who had received the kick directly in her guts, had been pushed backwards to an immense distance. And, she distorted her cheeks at that singular counterattack, and inhaled a rough and large breath.
At the same time, Subaru took over the origin of what had stopped her in her tracks through the Authority.
And??,

Subaru: "Ghu, gya~a~a~a~a ~hk!"

Pain that was enough to make him give up springing forth in his abdomen, Subaru shouted at the scorching heat difficult to bear.
He was tormented by the extreme pain which seemed as if his guts has been stirred up and damaged with a blazing hot rod of iron. His field of vision whitening at the impact, he understood that his internal organs within were all screeching at once.

Ley: "Huh? Just as thought. So it was thanks to onii-san that nee-sama, for whom it should be impossible to move, was able to move, is what it means ~tsu! Geez nee-sama, in the time your little sister wasn't? there, you deepened your relationship with the one your little sister had feelings for, is that what it means!?"

Blurting out nonsense, Ley, while looking at the screaming Subaru, struck the floor with his heel. In his feet, peeking out from his heel was a hidden blade of short length, and its pointed tip had been soaked with Ram's blood.
She had been stabbed. Subaru had taken up that pain and was now suffering with it.
Otherwise this scorching heat, the blade may have had been varnished with poison or something. His body temperature degraded at such vigour that it made him shiver, and the immense sweat all over his

body started to flow.

Beatrice: "Subaru!?"
Ram: "Barusu, kindly stop!"

Beatrice was frightened by the screaming Subaru, and Ram shouted, seemingly having guessed the situation.
Stabbed, the wound in the abdomen letting out massive? amounts of blood from the guts. It was natural to feel malaise if, by the loss of blood, it still had no effect on movement. However, Subaru desperately shook his head.

He could not return this agony to Ram. The moment he returns it, Ram would be rendered immobile.
It was an obvious flow. It is best if their pain settles upon Subaru. If that were to be done, everyone would still be able to continue without losing. He must assist those fighting.

Subaru: "Not yet....."

Ram: "Beatrice-sama! Kindly take Barusu and stand back! He is only an obstruction!"

At Subaru's condition, who had his voice seem like incoherent murmuring, Ram prompted her quick judgement.
She rolled the tunic she had taken off around her wound in the guts and stopped the bleeding, and on top of that, decided to continue the battle. In exchange for that, she urged Beatrice to have Subaru withdraw from this place.
At that judgement of Ram's, Beatrice abided by and pulled Subaru's sleeve.

Beatrice: "Subaru, it's just as how Ram says, I suppose! For now, get away from this place and....."

Subaru: "T-That won't do.....! If I, get away from here....."

Shaking his head towards Beatrice, who was pulling his sleeve, Subaru tried to remain in this place.
Right now, if he were to get away from this theater, the effect of ?Cor Leonis? may get cut off, and the battle Ram was managing may collapse at once.
If that happened, then what would be the point of having Subaru withdraw from here.

Ram: "Kugh.....! Emilia-sama! For once, come over here!

Emilia: "Eh? Ah, hm! I get it!"

Looking at Subaru, who was attempting to remain here, Ram called upon Emilia.
At that call, Emilia, who had been concentrating on her battle with the titanic scorpion, flew backwards greatly. The titanic scorpion tried to go after her, but that pursuit was hindered by a humongous ice wall which seemingly covered the aisle.
Of course, in front of the titanic scorpion's pincers, the ice wall could stand for not more than a single second, but that single second was sufficient for Emilia's retreat.
At that point??,

Ley: "Woahwoahwoah, justasecondjustasecondjustasecond! Even if you come back with such energy, did you think we'll just say ah is that so and overlook you....."

Ram: "Keep quiet!"

Ley: "Woops."

Ley, slurping on his tongue, swung his dagger towards the retreating Emilia's back. Ram, closing in with a low stance, brushed it away energetically by sweeping it with her legs.
And Emilia flew overhead of Ley, who's attack had been overturned, as if jumping over a hurdle. The result of that, as Ley stood in the aisle??,

Shaula: "????~hk!"
Ley: "Tch~! Hahaha ~tsu! Well well, aren't you doing it ~tsu!"

Fiercely, the titanic scorpion, trying to pursue Emilia, clashed with Ley, who had been left alone in the theater. Though the compound eyes of the titanic scorpion were originally turned towards Subaru, even still, there was no way it could merely ignore the one standing in between as an obstruction and be able to pass freely.

The pincers of the titanic scorpion swung, and Ley warded them off with a miraculous technique of the blade with his daggers. Though the brittle blades seemed that they would get shattered easily by a single strike, Ley's ability was able to do that easily.
At the same pace, glancing backwards, seeing as how the enemy collided with the enemy,

Ram: "Emilia-sama! Take Barusu!"

Emilia: "Leave it to me!"

Hearing Ram's shout while she dashed from the aisle, Emilia held the crouching Subaru in her arms like a baby. Shouldered by Emilia's slender arms, Subaru have rise to a surprised voice saying "Woah!", but,

Emilia: "I'm sorry, stay put for a second, okay!"

Subaru: "To be carried by a girl, my pride got hurt....."

Ram: "There's no way there's any pride even left to be hurt at this point. Kindly stay put and get treated like luggage!"

While shouldering Subaru, who blurted such thoughtless comments, Emilia's speed did not decrease even slightly.
Behind them unfolded the clash between Ley and the titanic scorpion, and regardless of what the conclusion of it became, the two must be obstructing each other's way for some time for the moment.
With that being said??,

Beatrice: "??Shaula must be aiming for Subaru, in fact. The direction in which if you take your eyes off and lose sight of where it may come from is dangerous, I suppose!"

Ram: "That is the problem, Beatrice-sama. ??Is that thing, really Shaula?"

Running alongside Emilia, who was shouldering Subaru, Ram and Beatrice exchanged thoughts on the situation.
What Ram had asked, demanded confirmation of what Subaru had previously convicted. Hearing that, Beatrice gave a sidelong glance to Subaru and nodded,

Beatrice: "That is what Subaru believes, in fact. That, attack of firing light, also coincides, I suppose."

Ram: "......The attack seen from the balcony, or during the time of exiting the sand, is it."

Hearing Beatrice's analysis, Ram furrowed her eyebrows. She then glanced towards Subaru, speaking to Subaru who was being carried Emilia's arms.

Ram: "Barusu, whatever you are doing, disconnect it. At that pace....."

Subaru: "I-I will have to endure it? I'll say this, I'm a man, you know. Enduring and being patient, is the special right of us men....."

Ram: "Quite a thing to say, after being in such a tattered state and being carried by Emilia-sama."

Subaru: "U~ghu."

At Ram's words, he was unable to voice even "Ugh" properly.
The truth is, due to the effect of taking over Ram's inferior physical form, ignoring his spirit, even breathing was painful for him. The burden increased each passing second, and the exhaustion felt as if it were some curse that would eat away his life.
At the strong act being put up by that Subaru, Emilia whispered "As I thought",

Emilia: "Subaru, you're doing something?, right? Midway through, my body also became re~ally light, and the parts where I was struck didn't hurt either..... Beatrice, if in case, you are having Subaru push himself."

Beatrice: "It's not Betty, in fact. This is what Subaru is doing by himself..... through an Authority, I suppose. Even Betty wants to stop him, if he can be stopped."

Emilia: "Authority.....?"

Against Emilia, who had offered her frank advice, Beatrice denied her involvement and made an astringent face. At what she had pronounced, Emilia and Ram furrowed their eyebrows together.
Calling it an Authority, Beatrice gave the impression that she had an idea about the power Subaru was using??,

Ram: "Beatrice-sama, what would be an Authority?"

Beatrice: "??. Something like an upgrade of a Divine Protection, I suppose. Subaru is pushing himself quite a bit and using it, in fact. The state of Emilia and Ram as well, that is the cause of it, I suppose."

"????"

Hearing that, Emilia inhaled, and Ram sharpened her gaze.
Though she was physically supposed to be fine, what dwelled in Ram's light crimson eyes was powerful rage. With such eyes, she glared at Subaru,

Ram: "Taking up Ram's burden as how you please, when did you become so admirable?"

Subaru: "My bad..... I'm a gentleman. That's why, I end up smartly taking the girls' luggage....."

Ram: "And as a result of that, becoming a girl's luggage instead? It can be said countless times, you've got it backwards."

Ram's continued sighs, somewhat felt that she had given up on Subaru's attitude. She must have understood as well, that Subaru had no intentions of returning that burden.
Honestly speaking, possessing it forever would be tiresome, but even so, at least while they are in the middle of the conflict??,

Subaru: "??That's, it."

Thinking that far, at last, Subaru finally turned his consciousness towards?? not the internal organs within the depths of his abdomen, but something else.
His consciousness passed through the body of what was his self, and largely spread out to the scope perceivable to him. And, grasping onto ?Cor Leonis?, he connected to the conditions and positions of his comrades.

Without any change, in ?Taygeta? were Echidna and Rem, along with Patrasche. Slightly away from? them was Gyan at a lower floor, and then??,

Subaru: "I knew it."

Emilia: "I knew it? What did you know?"

Subaru: "Meili is, even now, obstructing the Witch Beasts from the balcony....."

Though faintly distant, the flickering, faint light on the balcony of the fourth layer was Meili. Though the situation was that Shaula had broken away, she was mobilising her own strength, and was dealing with the horde of Witch Beasts.
He had the deepest admiration for her hard fighting, and he felt grateful as well??,

Beatrice: "That girl, was not attacked by Shaula is what that would mean, in fact."

Subaru: "Exactly."

Subaru affirmed what Beatrice had stated, while on top of Emilia's shoulders.
The moment immediately after the battles had broken out in each of the respective places, Subaru had left dealing with the Witch Beasts advancing towards the watchtower to the duo of Meili and Shaula.
Thereafter, with Shaula, in the form of the titanic scorpion, becoming visible to the attack of Subaru and the rest, of course, the well-being of Meili, who was supposed to be with her, became a matter of concern?? but Subaru could feel her safety.
In other words,

Subaru: "Shaula turned into that after parting with Meili. At any rate, Shaula hasn't laid a finger on Meili....."

How relevant that was to the present situation, he could not think about that with an exhausted mind.
On top of that, even if they continued running at this rate??,

Emilia: "We need to solve the problems rising up, otherwise we'll just get cornered no matter how much we run!"

With a shout similar to a cry, Emilia perfectly expressed the present condition of Subaru and the others.
The first of the five problems, the horde of Witch Beasts, for that was Meili, the titanic scorpion and ?Gluttony? were continuing trying to devour each other, and he felt no signs of the arrival of the jet black shadow.
However, equipped with absurd violence like the hammer of god, Reid Astrea was??,

Ram: "??~hk, kindly stop!"

"??!?"

Ram, who was running and leading the vanguard, stretched her hand towards the rear and restrained Emilia and the others. In front of the momentarily stopped three, an instant later, a shockwave pierced through.
The shockwave diagonally bisected the aisle seemingly made of stone, creating an entrapment of rubble and smoke. Seeing the destruction of the watchtower, which has professed itself as indestructible, taking into account Subaru's memories, this would be the third time?? but, if the crushing by the shadow was to be kept out of the picture, this would be the first.
And, the true identity of that destruction was??,

???: "Miss Ram..... along with Emilia-sama and Beatrice-sama, is it."

Subaru: "Julius!?"

Evading the erupted smoke, flying backwards greatly, the figure with a white outfit contaminated by blood and dust was the good-looking man, Julius Juukulius.
Stepping onto that place and the cause of the shockwave, he quickly turned his yellow eyes backwards,

and glanced into the dark-coloured eyes of Subaru, who was sitting atop Emilia's shoulders,

Julius: "Though I believe it has only been a few minutes since we parted ways, it seems you were damaged quite harshly, isn't it."

Subaru: "Shut u~p..... For once, I'm unhurt."

Julius: "I do not see the cold sweat of an unhurt human, though....."

Julius closed a single eye at Subaru, who had a pallid face and blurted out abusive words with a faint breath. Even he, who possessed good judgement, as expected, had not been able to understand the effects? of the Authority of ?Cor Leonis?.
And unfortunately, no longer remained any time for them to calm down and converse about it.

Subaru: "I'm begging you, please say you slashed Reid's throat....."

Julius: "Reporting what differs from reality, is an extraordinarily difficult? choice as a knight."

Beatrice: "......That, already makes for the answer, I suppose."

Subaru's wish, which seemed more like a prayer, had been implicitly repudiated by the excessively serious response. While feeling his hope turn into despair, Subaru made a bitter expression.
He felt his earbuds hurt, by a sound as that of crushing of the wall's fragments,

???: "Hah! So you're greetin' all the women you've gathered up here, you. It was jus' startin' to get a bit borin’ after walkin’ around freely. So are y'all gonna be my opponents, huh?"

Ram: "......The worst progression of events, isn't it."

Following Julius, the one who showed his form through the smoke was, the great man with long red hair, casually dressed on only a single side, with a tall figure built with muscularity??? red violence, Reid Astrea.
At the form of Reid, boldly stepping into the aisle of the fourth layer and not the second layer, Ram commented with a low voice. With identical astonishment, Emilia said "You.....", with a quivering voice.

Emilia: "Why are you on this floor? Aren't you supposed to be unable to exit from there....."

Reid: "Heyhey, don't make me laugh, fiercely frizzlin'. I live where I can live, slash down those whom I can slash down, and sleep with women I can sleep with. As if I'll be abidin' by the customs of others."

Beatrice: "......Just how cheap is this guy, in fact."

Beatrice, while trembling with fear, smacked her lips at Reid's self-centred philosophy.
However, it was fact that Reid had appeared in this place, and was standing in the way of Subaru and the others and obstructing them.
With this was, Reid at the main gate, and ?Gluttony? and the titanic scorpion at the rear gate. ??This was

the location of a tremendous battle.

Subaru: "Though it may be useless to just talk..... Right now, everything happening in the tower is....."

Reid: "Ah, I know it's becomin' quite a ruckus, ya know? But, it ain't concernin' me. If the ones that got in will be gettin' in my way then I'll slash 'em down, or if they'll open my way then I won't kill 'em at least. ??Woops, well those takin' part in the ?Trial? will be a special case. Though, that still ain't different from pickin' a fight with me."

Subaru: "Then....."

Reid: "??Hey, young fish. Don'tcha say anythin' borin' now."

Twisting his words, somehow trying to extract information? out of Reid was Subaru. With his spirit of the sword losing its proper way, he made him shut his mouth.

"????"

As if an electronic shock, pressure which caused physical numbness, jolted Subaru?? no, not only Subaru, but all four standing in the aisle. Otherwise, it may have had jolted the entire tower itself.
This merely brought the displeasure of the lone man. So this was just his sense of intimidation.
Upon Pleiades Watchtower, were threats aside from this giant man??,

Subaru: "The way to deal with one of ?Gluttony? and that shadow hasn't been found either, and still....."

Julius: "??Subaru, regarding that, I have a good news and bad news from my side."

Said Julius, preparing to use his knight sword, commencing with his words. At his commencement, with words as those from some overseas drama, Subaru stiffened his cheeks.
Good news and bad news, though it was an expression common in literary works, but hearing those words in reality like this gave a terrible feeling of his chest being scratched apart.
Gulping down saliva for once, Subaru affirmed the words "Good news and bad news" in his mouth,

Subaru: "Then, say the good news first."

Julius: "Regarding the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony? nowhere to be seen whom you are getting anxious about, there is no need to be on the lookout for him. I can assure you regarding? that."

Subaru: "??? I don't know on what basis you're saying that, but it's certainly good news. Then, what's the bad news?"

Whether he found his tracks, or whether he got his hands on proof of him having not arrived in the first place or having exited the tower, at what Julius had pointed out, Subaru raised a single eyebrow.
If there was to be only one Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, then certainly, the problems they had to deal with would reduce by one.
If the cards in their hands and the cards in the hands of the opponent were to be seen and compared, what

would be the ideal course of action, Subaru considered that with his body in a horribly bad state.
Against that Subaru, Julius softly exhaled, and continued.

Julius: "The Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, Roy Alphard is over there."

Subaru: "......Ah?"

With an earnest tone, Julius turned the leading edge of his knight sword towards the front.
What stood ahead of the pointing tip of that knight sword, was only the great man with the smile of a ferocious shark.
It could not mean anything else. ??The man with the smile of a shark, was standing there.

However, Julius continued his words, as Subaru and the others stood stunned.

Julius: "The one before our eyes, the first generation ?Sword Saint?, Reid Astrea. ??He is, Roy Alphard."

Arc 6 – Chapter 69, "The Absurd Iron Hammer of the Sword"

by admin - Friday, September 06, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/09/06/arc-6-chapter-69-the-absurd-iron-hammer-of-the-sword/

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Translated By :

- Ringo (/u/Ringo_17)

Art Source :

- Pixiv

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??Gulping down those words he had heard, he required several seconds to chew their meaning.

Subaru: "Reid is, Roy Alphard.....?"

At the report betraying his expectations, Subaru's? thoughts were disturbed into a shape unlike that of the suffering he had taken over.
The pain and suffering he had arbitrarily taken from his comrades, due to those negative feelings his mind was working slowly, but this was a situation where even that could not be put to blame.
After taking some time provisionally?, and with his brain seemingly melting out of his ears, his thoughts were endless.

"????"

In front of him, the majestic figure standing boldly about whom this revelation had been made, the red-headed swordsman, unmistakably the existence who was the biggest nuisance in this Pleiades Watchtower, Reid Astrea, all whilst staring at him, Subaru whispered.

Julius, who had readied his knight sword on his side, focusing on Reid, his expression possessed no signs of falsehood.

In the first place, he was not a person with a personality who would make such unfunny jokes in a gambling room where it was all a matter of life and death. That was the commentary on Julius by Subaru, who had once forgotten everything, and aligning with that, the one in question was fully serious.
Because it meant that Julius' remarks, who had that conviction, were certain truth.

Subaru: "If Reid, is ?Gluttony?, then that means....."

One of the obstacles that existed in the watchtower, however, standing at a vague position when it came to demarcation as ally or enemy was Reid.
But if that existence were to explicitly be one of those who were distinctly the enemies, then??,

Subaru: "So that's why, you were..... again and again, so persistently.....?"

Reid: "??Hey, just wait, you. That's? a pretty borin' misunderstandin', ya know."

Subaru: "Eh?"

Reid: "It's no joke, you. Hey, you. You. You, sayin' that I'm takin' the form of that unrelated idiot, don't go trustin' that borin' conclusion, you."

Hearing Subaru's trembling voice, Reid distorted his cheeks with seemingly painful displeasure.
The meaning of that reaction, Subaru was unable to comprehend.

??The Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, Roy Alphard was manifesting in the form of Reid.
Subaru, who had just previously seen the transformations of Louis Arneb, had reached that extremely respectable conclusion. The Authority of ?Gluttony? of extorting the shape, form and combat power of the opponent, the result of that was Reid in front of them.

However, Reid's? mood turned worse quite frankly at that conclusion.
The cause of that seemed to be, instead of the behaviour of a coward hiding his true identity without knowing when to give, something much more simple, like the displeasure of a child upon being teased.
The real meaning of that was??,

Reid: "Ain't it obvious that I'd be me. Because that'll never change, I'm standin' here. Do ya disagree? You, are ya sayin' I'm wrong?"

"????"

Touching the eyepatch on his left eye, as if baring his sharp fangs, Reid declared towards Subaru.
Receiving that, Subaru inhaled and furrowed his eyebrows, deeply reading into his words.
And, noticing a certain possibility, he shortened his breath.

Subaru: "It can't be, Julius....."

Julius: "Ah, likely, what you are imagining is correct."

While keeping his line of sight maintained towards Reid, Julius pulled in his jaw upon Subaru's hoarse voice. The good-looking man, rubbing the cheek stained by his own blood with his shoulder, and while continuing to erase that bloodstain,

Julius: "My wording earlier, was at fault. Let me correct it. ??He, in front of our eyes, that flesh body belongs to Roy Alphard. However, that spirit is different."

Subaru: "??Spirit."

Julius: "Roy Alphard, ate the ?Memories? of Reid Astrea, and had the control over his own spirit stolen by those ?Memories?. Henceforth he, with no restrictions, descended from the second layer and is now here."

"????"

The absurd possibility he had thought of, having that affirmed by Julius, Subaru found himself dumbfounded.
Thinking that something like even that was possible, was Subaru?? no, each one aside from Subaru, Emilia and Beatrice, even Ram as well, all of them together widened their eyes.

Certainly, everything's reasoning was logical with Julius' explanation.

Originally, as the trial-taker of the ?Trial? in Pleiades Watchtower, Reid Astrea, who was not? supposed to able to leave the second layer, wandering about in the tower making an expression as if he owned the whole place, the reality behind that.
Subaru, in the worlds he had continued to repeatedly witness, and had been confused in the mayhem which brought the end of the tower, in those, he himself had not been able to attain freedom, but had taken advantage of the actions of ?Gluttony? and had acquired freedom.
Yes, that's right. With that, all of the baffling situations surrounding Reid made sense.

??However, as that excessively went through all standards, he was unable to close his mouth, which was hanging open.

Beatrice: "Dragged along by the ?Memories?, and lost sight of the true self, is what it would mean, I suppose."

Ram: "Simply put, it must mean that the one with the stronger self won and remained. ??In terms of self principles, one chased away the other."

Though a bit late compared to Subaru, Beatrice and Ram arrived at the same conclusion.
Though it was an unstructured way of speaking, Ram's words expressed the truth with frankness.

Subaru: "But, I have a doubt too....."

That was, why the eaten Reid's existence had not disappeared from everyone's memories.
Till now, the ones who had fallen victim to ?Gluttony? aside from Subaru, Rem and Julius, had their

existences erased from the memories of all people, is how it seemed.
The truth is, in the previous loop, the existence of Emilia disappearing from the memories of Ram and the rest was something Subaru could confirm. If so, then the same thing not happening to Reid was,

Julius: "Principally, what ?Gluttony? had eaten was not Reid's ?Name? but at maximum his ?Memories?, is what that would mean. It is not possible the eat both the ?Name? and ?Memories? of a dead person. That is what Roy Alphard had asserted."

Subaru: "??~hk! Did you witness the scene of Reid getting eaten!?"

Sensing Subaru's doubt, saying that, Julius closed a single eye. He responded with a short "Yes", looking at the crumbled wall he himself had passed through,

Julius: "When I went to the second layer in accordance with your instructions, you see. Timely enough, that was when Roy Alphard and Reid were having negotiations. Negotiation, to name it that, would be suspicious in itself, though."

Subaru: "What's suspicious, about that?"

Julius: "Because Reid was making no effort for resistance. ??Perhaps ?Gluttony?, for some reason or the other, may have had been subjected to the ?Trial?. That is why he, the trial-taker, was unable to attack the opponent."

Reid: "Hah ~hk! You, that's about half correct and half incorrect."

At the conjecture stated by Julius, none other than Reid called a halt to it. While crackling his thick neck bones, he had his nails touch the pit of his stomach,

Reid: "Certainly, there's no way they were gonna be participants for the ?Trial?, but if I had thought of doin' it then I would have had done it, you know? If I did that then I won't be here right now, ain't that so?"

Julius: "You have attained the opponent's self. Are you, saying that you already possessed confidence in that?"

Reid: "Just actin' as if focusing on only the strong parts is somethin' I won't allow. Placing everythin' one's side has and gamblin' on it all is what's interestin'. Though, that was somethin' that runt didn't understand."

Regardless of the truth of him having obtained that physical body, whatever had been the interests of ?Gluttony? who had been affected by that sequence of events, Reid declared about Roy, whom he had confronted, with terrible indifference.
Merely, the fact is, the reality in front of their eyes was the truth. ??The self of Roy Alphard, had been painted out by the monster known as Reid Astrea.

Reid: "If you wanna eat and taste me then there's a stomach large enough to fit me in. He didn't have that.

That's why, I bit and tore apart the stomach. That's all there's to it."

Subaru: "That's all, there's to it, you say....."

Aside from his bearing nausea and the sense of abrasion of his mind and body, Subaru felt his head starting to hurt.
In other words, if what happened in Reid's body was to be said straightforwardly, then,

Subaru: "Revived..... Resurrected from the dead, is that what this is about?"

Julius: "In terms of results, you could say that. Above all, a situation where it is possible to meddle with the ?Memories? of a dead person, and the existence who wielded that ability is encountered for the first time and then arriving into existence, it is a happening like that of a miracle."

Subaru: "Miracle....."

A life who was supposed to have had vanished four hundred years ago, and to witness the moment of it being resurrected like this, even if Julius did not intend to, he might have stated it to be the embodiment of an ironical miracle.
Although, he did not intend to state the reality of his resurrection alongside that as well??,

Emilia: "Um, can I ask one thing?"

Reid: "Ah?"

Abruptly, when all of the happenings were being arranged into order, the one to raise her voice like that was Emilia.

Hereafter the encounter with Reid, Emilia had kept her mouth shut so that the topic of discussion may not get diverted. Seeing the discussion reach a point where it could halt, she turned her amethyst eyes towards Reid.
And,

Emilia: "You have..... Reid has been revived, right? With that, also becoming able to leave that place, that's something I give you my bi~ggest congratulations for."

Reid: "Ah, thanks. With this, I can teach ya all sorts of stuff at a proper place, fiercely frizzlin'. Let's have drinks tonight, you. Other than that..... ah, heyhey we'll do stuff as I teach you."

Emilia: "??? Are you inviting me to go out with you? But, I have only gone to a "date" with Puck and Subaru, so, I'm sorry. Also"

Though it was an exchange Subaru would never want to miss out on, getting caught on by Emilia's comment on her date was something Subaru currently? had no spare time for.
Keeping those innermost thoughts of Subaru's for some other occasion, Emilia repositioned Subaru's body which she was carrying on her shoulders,

Emilia: "Even though you have become free, can't you stop being in our way? In case you don't know, we, right now, are rea~lly busy....."

Reid: "Don't make me say it, fiercely friendly. I more or less have a grasp on what's happenin' here. After all, the tiny brat of this body was unusually well-informed, I hate it. ??Ah, I really don't like it."

As if throwing up, Reid annoyingly gripped to his guts.
It seemed as not merely resurrection, but Reid also had the ability to read the memories of Roy Alphard?? in other words, he apparently even had the power to catch a glimpse of an edge of the Authority of ?Gluttony?.
Above all, it seemed as it was something he aesthetically found strongly, terribly repulsive,

Reid: "He didn't have a standpoint of his own, that's why he got himself involved in such stupidity. He's an irredeemable kid. Though he ended up disappearin' 'cause he was doin' it without knowin' his position, it's gotta be a natural reward."

Subaru: "......Talking about just this place, if you're free then how about you go conquer the world and the vast oceans? I rea~lly feel like you're just postponing the problem, if that's the case"

Reid: "You, don't start preparin' to run away. As it is, a situation where you're bein' carried on the shoulders of a woman, it's so pathetic it'd be better to die. Do ya wanna be coated with embarrassment?"

"????"

Subaru's experiment to avoid the battle and having the situation ameliorate ended with a failure.
Perhaps, even the ones other than Subaru may have had failed to understand the current proposal as well.
In the end, even if Reid were to gain freedom, he intended to respect his role as the trial-taker.
Otherwise, not being particular about his title of the trial-taker, he simply would not let an opponent, whom he had decided to cross swords with, escape.
At any rate,

Emilia: "??Is that so. If you won't move aside then there's no choice."

With a long sigh, while being filled with the nuance of it being unfortunate, it was a reply which sufficiently suggested Emilia's decision to attack Reid.

Emilia: "I'm sorry."

Those words were directed, not at the confronting Reid, but at Subaru, who was atop her shoulders, and he was a second late at noticing that.
Because after a second, Subaru's body had been brought down from Emilia's shoulders, and gently handed over to Beatrice, who was beside them.

??In an instant, crossing the aisle with the speed as that of a bullet, Emilia slammed an ice sword onto Reid.

The atmosphere gave rise to a high-pitched sound, giving birth to ice, and the beautiful and cruel blade of ice fluttered through the aisle enshrouded in erupted smoke. In any case, the attack with no hesitation whatsoever aiming for a fatal wound?? once Emilia had decided to do so, there was no faltering in her then. That was, something clearly understood after all of the battles till now.

Emilia: "??Ha ~hk!"

The slash attack Subaru's eyes finally caught up to, the strike which was almost like an ambush, Reid easily received it with his arm outside of the breast pocket of his casual dress, and the chopsticks he was holding in his hands.
This was not the first time seeing Reid wield chopsticks as his special weapon. However, it was not something which could be gotten used to after seeing it multiple times. Abnormalities were abnormalities, and there was no change in that recognition.

Subaru: "He.....! Emilia-chan!"
Beatrice: "S-Subaru! Don't push yourself, in fact! Stay put, I suppose!"

At Reid's abnormal swordsmanship, Subaru shouted, feeling perturbed about Emilia's body. Appealing to that Subaru to take care of himself was the one whom Emilia had suddenly released and entrusted his body to, Beatrice.
Being supported by her petite frame while kneeling down onto the aisle, Subaru pushed his eyes open. Meanwhile, Emilia renewed her arms which had been smashed, or rather, slashed by the chopsticks, and continued the performance of her swords dance like a fairly within the sparkling diamond dust.
Easily brushing that away, Reid laughed, saying "Haha ~hk!", like a shark,

Reid: "Hah ~hk! As expected, you got it quickly?, fiercely frizzlin'! But, you, don'tcha know? Your "Trial" is already over, ya know?"

Emilia: "If that's so! Then pass everyone else too!"

Reid: "Heyhey, what kind of a reasonin' makes ya say that. I've got no reason to be doin' that."

Emilia: "I request you!"

Reid: "There's nothin' cute in beggin' like that. For now, take off your clothes, you."

Though she had been making a serious expression, Emilia's entreaty did not wield anything to Reid's ears. Identical to the first strike, Reid warded away, chased away the subsequent strikes using vivid techniques of chopsticks, it was hardly believable. At that abnormal swordsmanship, Subaru was unable to close his mouth hanging open.

Of course, Reid's irrefutable mastery was not something unknown.
However, even Emilia, who had not drawn a single step behind against even the enemies of ?Gluttony? and the titanic scorpion, when compared to such a variety of warriors, she had shown overwhelming capacity. At the very least, even a hundred of Subaru would not be able to oppose Emilia. ??For Reid,

that was, quite literally, a child's play.

Emilia's offence and defence with the spirit of do-or-die, was the play of an unskilled child for Reid.
Subsequently, Emilia, after a mere few exchanges, was unable to reach through and experienced defeat.
There was a difference in their ability, such that even the untrained eyes could identify that.
However??,

Ram: "??The reason to abstain from using full force? That should be quite simple."

Reid: "Ah ~hk?"

Ram: "Because you, will face an unsightly defeat here at the hands of Ram and the rest."

Interrupting the battlefield with a petite frame, said Ram, behind Reid.

??And caught hold of that Reid's back.

That alone was more than worthy of admiring, but Ram's fearsomeness was not the end of it.
Against the opponent Reid Astrea, attacking without? any relent, was Emilia. Ram matched the timing with her, who had left her battle style upon her senses, with godly intuition.

Precisely this, which Subaru had not been able to read at all, was Emilia's initial surprise attack?? movements suggesting whether or not he had been able to read them, and the truth is, they were movements such which gave the impression of having already possibly been read.

"????"

The very next instant, Ram's unleashed fist, stabbed into the side of Reid's casual dress.
At the moment of the impact, with the sound of the flesh and bones creaking, Ram's white fist's piercing strength penetrated through Reid's internal organs, and the aisle was split open by the bottom of Reid's feet, who continued standing his ground.

Subaru: "It reached through..... ~hk!?"

Looking at that, Subaru thoughtlessly hugged Beatrice tightly.
He wanted to cheer, but he was unable to voice anything further. Instead of that, he felt his body heat up as if his blood was boiling. Because that was, not out of sheer luck, as far as Subaru knew, the first time Reid had taken damage.

Ram: "Ha, a~a~a~??!"

The unimaginably powerful fists fired from her slender arms, were hammered into Reid as if a storm.
Reid received that with his defenseless lower body, and retreated.
It was not as if he lacked all defense. Even for blocking Ram's attacks, his two chopsticks were being used to block Emilia's fierce attack, so he merely lacked the defense to direct there.

Henceforth, pressurised by the might of her tremendous fisting, Reid's? body was pushed back greatly. And as his figure was blown off, Emilia threw the twin swords she had created with both of her hands, and the sword slash which drew an arc was cleared away by Reid's chopsticks' slash, and he collapsed in the aisle, lying spread-eagled.

Subaru: "Did they, do it.....?"

Seeing the form of Reid collapsed, lying flat on the aisle, Subaru lightly whispered in astonishment, with widened eyes.
Blocking Emilia's surprise attack had been a final desperate tactic of his, and the one other than that, Ram's attacks was what he had gotten a taste of. Every blow had wielded enough power to make his bones creak.

Emilia's hard fighting was a matter of course, but perhaps misjudging Ram's combat power had been Reid's cause of defeat.
As an effect of ?Cor Leonis?, having been able to move without any hindrances, Ram, her ability had been enough to mow down the opponent's consciousness before Reid could get serious??,

Subaru: "??~hk! Right now you can quickly? tie him down and render him unable to battle! Emilia-chan! Constrict him with ice....."

For a moment, his thoughts had come to a halt without confirming their victory, but he was unable to overlook that extremely? valuable situation. Panicking, Subaru instructed Emilia to constrict Reid.
At the same pace, he tried to call out to Ram, who had been making strenuous efforts??,

Beatrice: ".....Subaru, when did, your health come back?"

Subaru: "Eh?"

Suddenly, so asked Beatrice, who had been supporting his body.
Receiving that doubt, Subaru tardily came to notice the truth of him standing on his legs and giving instructions to Emilia. ??The agony which was eating into him as if a curse, it had disappeared.

Ram: "??Ka, fugh"

The moment immediately after he judged what that must mean, Ram's body shivered, trembling violently. The upper body of Ram, who had turned her back towards this side, jolted, and collapsed down to her knees without being able to support her body.

Subaru: "Ram!!"
Julius: "Ku~gh!"

Unable to even stretch out her hand, collapsing visibly like a puppet whose threads had been slashed away was Ram. The one to jump at that collapsing body of Ram's, was Julius, who had been awaiting an interval to plunge into the battle.
Supporting Ram's fully exhausted body, Julius confirmed her condition, as his expression? froze. The

reason for that was Ram's complexion, and the crimson of thick blood which dyed his clothes.
From the wound in her abdomen whose bleeding Ram had stopped, massive amounts of blood was flowing. Though it was true that the lost blood brought serious danger to her life, but that alone was not the issue.

The greatest problem was linked with the healing of Subaru's condition.
In other words??,

Subaru: "The effect of ?Cor Leonis? has, been cut off....."

???: "??A~h, so it finally got cut. You, don't go about doin' borin' things. Aren't ya jus' hidin' behind a woman. You're a disgrace for a young fish, you."

"????"

In front of the speechless Subaru, the collapsed Reid swung and stationed both of his feet and vigorously stood up. Reid lightly patted and swept his back, and swung his arms, which were gripping onto the chopsticks, in circles from his shoulders.
Attitude which did not feel as if he had taken any damage Ram had done to him, though that alone made his body shudder, but what made Subaru uneasy were his words immediately afterwards.

??Reid said, that it got cut. Just, what was he referring to.

Reid: "Playin' around like that will always be borin'. First of all, somethin' like feelin' no pain or ache even when the guts are all torn up, are ya makin' fun of me, you."

Subaru: "U, wa....."

Reid: "If ya say ya wanna do it with perfection, then ya gotta stand what you receive too. But, this one's done for. You, this one's done for, ya know. You, can't ya see. This woman, was gonna die even before gettin' cut."

Intimidated by Reid's words, in a low tone, Subaru turned his line of sight towards Ram, who was in Julius' arms. Receiving that gaze, Julius lightly pulled in his chin.

Julius: "His words are correct. Miss Ram's wounds are no trivial matter. Even now, she is on the verge of death."

Subaru: "??~hk."

Julius: "The reason why the bleeding is not stopping, is perhaps because of the usage of a chemical which hinders in the clotting of blood. Other than that must be the recoil of her pushing herself which is present on her body."

Every single word of Julius' analysis, tried to carve a painful fissure onto Subaru's chest.
He, failed. ??Subaru's ?Cor Leonis? overlapped with his complacent failure.

"????"

Taking over Ram's inferior physical form, he had created a circumstance under which she could fight. Though that was not a mistaken judgement, he ignored the injuries she had taken?? no, having Rem herself ignore those is what had been a mistake.
If Subaru were to take over the pain and hardship of the injuries, she would not be able to be conscious of the wounds' seriousness. If Ram were to conduct herself in a way suggesting she was unharmed, Emilia would not come to notice anything either.

Julius: "A magic similar to ?Nect? of sharing sensations, a bit different from that, or perhaps something entirely ?different. Something much more different, had been put to use. And, you said that you had cut it."

Reid: "I'm good at cuttin' invisible stuff, ya see. Well, the trick is intuition. With that, a bit of time got used up. Took a pretty grand hit."

Reid exaggerated the reason he had bathed in Ram's storm-like fists. However, returning to the original topic, the truth is that he was more or less not feeling any of the damage he had taken.
The trick for that, again, was pronounced from Julius' mouth. While keeping Ram in his embrace, Julius gently turned his gaze backwards?? facing the aisle which had been fissured by the melee combat.

Julius: "You let all of Miss Ram's attack, escape onto the floor with the bottom of your feet, huh."

Reid: "It's a technique which a woman friend of mine, Trisha used to be good at, ya see."

Reid laughed, saying "Kaha", as he firmly stomped into the aisle.
Hearing the conversation of the two, Subaru, continuing to shiver, glanced at the crevices of the aisle. The endless wounds born onto the aisle, were the proof of Reid having directed Ram's attacks onto the aisle.
It was perhaps some technique, to direct the impact of the blows towards someplace else. ??It could be said, that it was the culmination of martial arts.

Subaru: "......Ah."

The truth is, when Ram's initial blow had struck, Subaru too had witnessed the aisle grandly fissure with his own eyes. That also applied to all subsequent continuous strikes.
Both this and that, everything was??,

Subaru: "To slash down the connection between me, and Ram.....? In the first place, how did that even....."

Reid: "I just said. I slash down what I can slash down, live where I can live, and sleep with women I can sleep with. ??I slashed down that borin' game, all while hummin'."

Leading a carefree life, was Reid.
Cutting things which could not be seen. Otherwise, cutting connections which do not physically exist.

Was the capability of doing that, the true ability of the existence named, the ?Sword Saint?.

Emilia: "But, when I struck you from above with a lot? of strength, you had been in pain.....!"

Reid: "That time the situation was different ya know, fiercely frizzlin'. Right now, I'm here to enjoy the fightin' more than the ?Trial?. If it's a fight then you gotta be more serious than the ?Trial?, ya know. Do ya disagree, you."

Slashing and repelling away Emilia's response, Reid snorted his nose and prepared his chopsticks.
Adjusting the stance of his chopsticks, as if he was ordinarily commencing a meal, and pointing their ends towards Julius, Reid's blue eyes gleamed with a blaze.

Reid: "That's how it is. Ya got what I'm sayin', right, you. You. Hey you."

Julius: "??To settle this, with the sword. That is your intention, correct?"

Reid: "Yeah, that's right. Let me tell ya, I'll allow any damn thing aside from the sword too, ya know? Whether you wanna throw magic at me or clash with me, it doesn't? matter. If you wanna win against me....."

Quite boldly, Reid gestured with a finger touching his chest, and pointed towards his heart.
In other words, that was the only way to bring an end to his life, that is what his expression indicated.

That was the evidence that Subaru's card of waging war had been correct??,

Julius: "Why, must you be fixated over myself?"

Reid: "A~h? I'm fixated over you? Gimme a break. Bastards of just mere words, with nice faces are the race I hate the most, ain't that so. On top of that, why would I be fixated?"

Julius: "Then....."

Reid: "??You're the one who'd have a reason to be fixated over me. If I draw back from here, do ya really think that would be fine?"

"????"

Reid's response to Julius' Question could not be described as one that was clear.
He himself, belonged to a race of those types who did deem worth in conveying all things as words.
Furthermore, a large part of his response had been occupied by something similar to sensation, it was difficult to comprehend.
However, for those who understood that, merely had the answer which was limited to that??,

Reid: "??Tch. A troublesome one ended up comin' here."

Before that answer could be chewed, what preceded was Reid clicking his tongue in discontent.

And, the cause behind the click of his tongue, revealed its figure from the interior of the aisle Subaru and the others had crossed through?? no, in the form of a corona, it pounced upon them.

Emilia: "Subaru!"

Immediately before the corona could evaporate away Subaru, what separated and distanced away the two from each other was Emilia's ice sword. As the sound of shattering of ice echoed, the repelled light stabbed through the aisle. ??An extremely long tail stinger, disappeared as if having frayed.
That was namely, the baptism by the guardian of the "Sage's" watchtower??,

Subaru: "??Shaula."

"????"

From the interior of the aisle, red compound eyes emerged, possessing multiple legs, the humongous scorpion revealed its figure. Jet black shell and fiendishly large pincers, that figure, was both ominous and healthy.
However, the form of Ley, who had been left behind to battle that titanic scorpion, was nowhere around it. If he had faced defeat at the hands of the titanic scorpion and had fallen then it was all good, but,

Subaru: "Reid and Shaula, at the same time....."

Beatrice: "S-Subaru....."

Caught between the two formidable enemies, within the situation where they could not take any inadvertent action, Beatrice called out to Subaru with a trembling voice.
Looking back towards that Beatrice, he noticed her pale expression. Beatrice's expression painted with fear, he tightly hugged it with his chest.
Somehow or the other, trying to clear away the unrest in her heart, he searched for words,

Subaru: "Beatrice, it's alright. At any rate, we haven't managed to find a plan yet, but it's alright. Recovery is still....."

Beatrice: "That's not it, I suppose, that's not it, in fact! ??It's coming, I suppose!"

Subaru: "It's coming?"

As he heard Beatrice's worries, who had widened her eyes and changed her expression, he glanced at the titanic scorpion once again.
Reid was here, and Shaula was on the other side, this was the very meaning of threat. In a situation where such terrifying ones had gathered, what was going to come now??,

Subaru: "It can't be."

Reid: "I just said, didn't I. That a troublesome one ended up comin' here."

The thought which had passed by Subaru's mind, as if affirming that, said Reid.
That way of speaking was serious, seeming as if it were feeling trouble digesting this situation.

??An instant later, an impact reached their feet in the form of a severe earthquake, jolting the Pleiades Watchtower.

"????"

Without exaggerating, when Subaru receive the impact which had emerged on his body, heaven and earth got overturned for him.
Blown off without even the use of a technique was Subaru. ??In the field of vision of that Subaru, the residents of the fantasy world were each displaying astonishing movements respectively.

Midair, Emilia kicked the foothold she had created with ice, and repelled away the consecutively fired tail stringers by the seemingly concentrating titanic scorpion towards her comrades?? no, towards Subaru.
In the world which was tilting diagonally, Julius seemingly dashed on the wall and closed in on Reid, and commenced with an extremely high class sword slash with his knight sword.
And, Beatrice jumped towards Subaru, who had tightly held onto Ram and kept her close,

Beatrice: "??Murak!"

The moment she chanted that, Subaru felt himself envelope within the feeling of suspension, different from that of the impact. Released from the force of gravity, the feeling as if he had been thrown into a world without gravity.
The effect was not as little as just having restored heaven and earth for him.
Each one respectively?, was acting at their very best with whatever each one of them respectively could do??,

Subaru: "??Ah."

As if sneering at those very best of actions, multitudinous volumes of the jet black shadow swallowed the tower in its entirety.

"????"

Dreadful pressure echoed, and the watchtower, which boasted strength enough to make it difficult to believe that it was mere stone, was crushed. That was the tyranny of the shadow, which was not originally supposed to possess mass.
The arrival of the impact, which could no longer be named a single happening of destruction but rather was closer to a natural disaster, easily swallowed, chewed, even those who possessed extraordinary abilities, enough to be called superhumans in this world.

Going up against the titanic scorpion, making free use of magic and her physical abilities and putting up a brave fight, Emilia, as well.

Swinging the knight sword, and charging towards the legend who was entertained by his self, Julius, as well.
Protecting Subaru, and using magic with her small body, Beatrice, as well.

In the juncture where they were twinkling brightly, the stretching shadow entwined, and they turned invisible.

"????"

Without sound, without reverberation, the forms of Emilia and the others vanished.
What name should be given to what had occurred to their bodies in the matter of an instant, Subaru was unable to find any pertinent words within himself.
Merely, there existed something he could clearly say.

"??I have failed."
???I love you.?

At the same time, he accepted reality, and was whispered words of dusky love.
While being whispered into his ears, or otherwise, while being kissed, or otherwise, while his entire body was being embraced, or otherwise, while having his soul caressed, frighteningly direct, words with the soul of love.

He immediately understood. Amongst the five obstacles, the greatest problem.
The shadow which swallowed everything had arrived, whether it was possible to deal with it, even that alone was questionable.

"????"

This was his third time seeing that shadow, and each time he came across it, Subaru's life had been lost.
This time was no exception for it, now that the shadow had arrived, and reached through??,

Reid: "??You, what are ya doin' by thinkin' about sleepin', hey."

At that moment, the jet black shadow which enclosed Subaru, was mowed down by a flash that had been swung.

Subaru: "??You've got to be joking."

Reid: "Widen your eyes and see. What's the joke, you. You, do ya have your eyes open. Open your eyes and take a good look, you. What's the joke about me."

Saying that, casually swinging the knight sword, and having slashed away the shadow was Reid. He wielded in his hands, not chopsticks, but a knight sword?? which belonged to Julius, and exhaled through his nose.
It was truly ironical that the sword which had lost its owner, was displaying more ability in the hands of the ?Sword Saint? than its owner, but there present was no time to be having such thoughts.

That was because, Subaru, who had been standing upright, had his torso kicked by Reid.

Subaru: "Ghu, egh."

The narrow aisle, his suspended body was unable to hit even the ceiling or the walls.
The structure of the watchtower had already been destroyed, and he no longer was able to determine where the ceiling was or where the walls were. What was present in Subaru's environs was the endlessly black sky, endlessly black sole, endlessly black world.

Anything and everything, became incomprehensible. ??No, there was slightly moving heat, within his arms.

Ram: "??Ugh."

The warm body of the unconscious, fainted Ram asserted her existence.

Subaru: "??~hk."

Directing strength in his molars, biting and tearing into his own lips, he directed life into himself.
At this moment, when anything and everything was being painted black, Subaru, by giving up on comprehend?ing the situation, was he not just entrusting his body to the end.
In front of this life who was trying its best to live at this moment, this was unforgivable.

Subaru: "??Still, something."

Though the situation was in this state, there still must be something he could attain.
Till now, Subaru had been swallowed by this jet black evil influence, and had lost his life twice.
However, those two occasions had been abrupt, and he must have had no time left to do this.
What he had attained through that, was Ram who was asserting her fragile life, and??,

Reid: "??Hah ~hk."

The kick he had received by Reid, who was within the same shadow as Subaru, wearing a ferocious smile.
Of course, he was not grateful for that.

It hurt as if the pit of his stomach had been gouged out, and in the first place, the reason why they had lacked time till the shadow swallowed the watchtower was because of Reid's unnecessary interruption.
That's why??,

Subaru: "You will, get crushed too. ??By the ?Greatest Knight?, I know."

Reid: "That's, you, keep actin' cool as how you are till the very end, young fish."

Under his eyes, Reid, with a backhand grip to the knight sword, set his aim at Subaru. There was distance between them, but from? Reid's perspective, distance of a few metres must be as good as nonexistent.

And, below Reid, who had established Subaru as his enemy, the jet black shadow with vigour yet remaining advanced closer. Something like that, Reid's? sword spirit didn't even deem it to be something.

Though he was unaware of it, at this moment, Subaru may just be witnessing it.
A long time ago, said to have happened four hundred years ago, the legendary act of the ?Witch? and the ?Sword Saint?.

However, something like that was meagre, as the absurd destruction and violence, namely ?Death? drew near Subaru??.

Subaru: "At least"

Even just a second longer, I want you to stay alive.

Enshrouded with that wish, Subaru tightly embraced Ram's body, who was in his arms.
The next moment, a torrent of light, unbelievably stemming from a sword, swallowed Subaru??,

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??Each time he vanished, each time he redid, each time he made a wish, he was faced with vicissitude.

Countless times, repeating, repeating, he continued to pile up the ends which are supposed to happen only once.

Suddenly, he thought.

Always, having someone by his side in the moments of end, may be something to feel happy for.

If never having been alone in the moments of end, granted him the strength to stand.

However, alongside, he also thought this.

About why, always, Natsuki Subaru was unable to rescue that someone whom he nestled close to, in the moments of end.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

"????"

Clouds of sand, were rising up to extremely high skies which they were never supposed to reach.
Pleiades Watchtower's balcony, several metres above ground, underneath where present were the

advancing hordes of Witch Beasts, commencing with their attack to bring down the watchtower.
Holding them back, with her own ability to control Witch Beasts, was Meili, making strenuous efforts.

Julius was underneath, heading for Reid on the second layer.
And, Subaru and the others must make haste and dash to Emilia and the others, who must be clashing with Ley Batenkaitos??,

???: "Master-sama? Are you alright?"

In accordance with Subaru's summons, she tilted her neck, with her long, black braid swaying about.
As she pronounced that question, in her expression, in her eyes, sentiments such as those of impatience or irritation could not be felt. Of course, no light of cunningness planning to deceive them could be perceived either.
Whether that was her camouflage, or her true intents, there was no definite answer to that, but??,

???: "Master-sama, are you listening? People other than master-sama or me seem to have gotten involved in troublesome stuff but..... is there something I can do for master-sama?"

Subaru: "Ah, is that so..... Something you can do for me, huh."

???: "Yup. If it's master-sama's request, then into fire, into water, even into large explosions, I can energetically FLYWAY into 'em!"

Energetically, possessing no malice, the personality with her arms stretched wide while saying that, Shaula.
Staring at that carefree smile, Subaru turned back, and inhaled.

He made his return. To this moment, he was made to return.
There were no changes in what he was supposed to do. There are people he must save, people he must defeat.

That is why, without losing his way, Subaru, for settling what all he was supposed to do, undertook a necessary ceremony.
That was??,

Subaru: "Shaula, will you listen to anything I tell you to?"

Shaula: "Course of of! If it's master-sama's request then I'll listen to anything! If it's master-sama's demand then I'll even listen to something which may be a bit extreme. Ah, ah, ah, could it be master-sama, finally reached the limit of holding back in front of my DYNAMITE BODY? That's why you kept away all others and it's just the two of us now? Ah, you you you! Geez master-sama??"

Subaru: "??Shaula."

Twisting and turning, with her cheeks sandwiched in her hands, Shaula blushed at Subaru's words.
However, Subaru did not pay heed to such of her words, and stared at her face with a serious face.

And??,

Subaru: "??If I tell you to die, will you die?"

Arc 6 – Chapter 70, "The Earnest Star"

by admin - Thursday, September 26, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/09/26/arc-6-chapter-70-the-earnest-star/

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Translated By :

- Ringo (/u/Ringo_17)

Proofread By:

- Jaerek

Art Source :

- Kagerou378

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? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??Within the collapsing tower, basking in Reid's decapitating slash, Natsuki Subaru's? life had burned out.

Quite literally, burning out had accurately been his moment of death.
There were various things which he was pained by and which he needed to confirm, such as the way to cope with the mass of the shadow drawing near, or what he intended to do afterwards, and above all, somehow or other confirming a scaffold within the crumbling tower, and all those of his efforts had gotten abandoned.

What alone was confirmed was that Reid's final flash had swallowed Subaru, and vaporized him away.
Perhaps, it had not hurt, is what he thought.
Of course, he did not believe it had been Reid's benevolence at all, but pain and fear not accompanying the moment of ?Death? was an unexpected occurrence for Subaru, who had died several times within a short frame of time.

Yes, neither had he felt pain nor fear. ??Merely ?Rage? was what he held.

Subaru: "??I will"

For just how many times continue to pile up meaningless deaths, is what he thought.
Things he had taken with him, hints that would break him out of the deadlock, as long as those were present, Subaru's ?Deaths? would not be meaningless, and the ?Deaths? he was continuing to pile up would not be put to waste.

That was, terrible deceit.

That was, merely an excuse to turn his eyes away from his own powerlessness.
He had died meaninglessly, powerlessly, without will, without heart, aimlessly, and he did not want to think that, that was all there was to it. That is why, for not having merely died, he desired meaning in his ?Death?.

If only he could have had been more strong.
If only, he could have had been more smart.
If only, instead of his current self, he could have had been stronger, smarter, bolder.

Subaru: "But....."

The only one here was merely the weak, stupid, pathetic Natsuki Subaru.
Because nobody, ever, tried to leave that Subaru alone.
That was, because they were supporting his current self's wound-filled resolution.

Subaru: "That is why, I am??"

That is why, Natsuki Subaru is??.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Subaru: “??If I tell you to die, will you die?”

The moment he declared that, it was not as if he felt no hesitation.

That was because he had been unable to anticipate what kind of a reaction his opponent would give him the moment she received that question. ??No, if it was merely anticipation, then he had done so.
With various patterns of imagination, he had thought of what it eventually would be.
If so, then the faltering he had embraced while declaring that question, for what reason did he possess that indecision.
At any rate??,

Shaula: "??? If Master-sama told me to die then I'll? die, you know?"

He felt his chest ache upon Shaula's indifferent response, who had a finger touching her cheek.
As if he was being stabbed, to the point it would form cracks, painfully, he let out a shriek within the core of his chest.

"????"

Oozily, upon the painful optical illusion, Subaru gripped to the pit of his stomach and deeply exhaled.
Though he himself had voiced out those wounding words just now, he thought himself comical for feeling hurt. Looking at that Subaru's state, Shaula rounded her eyes in curiosity.

With no ill intent, Shaula's attitude seemed as if she had been asked about the menu for today's evening meal and she had merely responded appropriately.
That reaction of hers, was the second worst in the patterns he had predicted.
With no pretence, selecting the option of accepting the instruction for her to abandon her life was Shaula.
That was no lie or humour, that was her real intention with no second thoughts, he was able to understand that by a single glance into her straightforward eyes.

Subsequently having caught a glimpse into her dark self-interests or plans might have had saved Subaru's heart.
However, the reality was that Subaru had not prepared for such an escape route. Whether that was compassion or mercilessness, at this stage he would not be able to even differentiate between the two, but??,

Subaru: "......Is that, so."

Shaula: "Does Master-sama, want me to die? Hmm, if it's Master-sama's request then I'll listen to anything, and I'm perfectly fine with it personally, but again, isn't it quite a weird timing for such a thought? Right now, it's a total fiasco inside the tower....."

Subaru: "I know. I know."

Hearing Subaru's husky reply, Shaula tilted her neck while having her finger remain on her cheek. Going along with that movement of her neck, her long braid?? scorpion tail swayed about.
Scorpion tail. If considered, that was quite an ironic naming as well.

Similar to ?Shaula? which bestowed meaning upon the Scorpius, her name was expressed even upon her body. That was made apparent not merely through her name, but through various other aspects of hers as well.
That was surely because she had no intentions of concealing it.
That is why??,

Subaru: "??Shaula, you, aren't you capable of taking the form of a large scorpion?"

Lacking any sluggish phraseology, Subaru frankly cut into the opponent's secret.

The five obstacles that attack the Pleiades Watchtower?? one of those, the existence of the jet black titanic scorpion. Subaru had been halfway convinced that it had been Shaula.
However, for Subaru, that answer he had sensed was merely his interpretation of the feeling he got from the powerful Authority of unidentified nature, ?Cor Leonis?.

If he were to try and gain confirmation for that answer he had sensed, enquiring the opponent directly about it would be the fastest.
Of course?, if he had time to then he may have chosen a different option as well, and if he had been unable to trust his opponent's response, then he might have been obligated to employ a different method.
However, Shaula kept her neck tilted at that inquiry of Subaru's,

Shaula: "Take the form of, the nuance is a bit different from that, but yup I can~. Ah, but, it damages my PRETTINESS so I don't really like it too much. I just think that the design given to me by mother-sama and Master-sama is the best."

In spite of the question being one lacking any chain of logic, Shaula readily answered with no hesitation yet again.

"????"

She possessed no intentions of hiding anything.
And the nature of Shaula herself, it could be said that it had been established with this proof. At the same time, the titanic scorpion which made its appearance in the tower?? its true identity had been her, he had gained that confirmation now.
The effect of ?Cor Leonis?, the moment he perceived the positions of his comrades within the tower, the reason why the titanic scorpion had been indicated in that perception, that had indeed been the trick instigating it.

Shaula: "Master-sama? Are you okay? Your face has a pretty bad colour, you know? Would you like to REFRESH yourself with my lap pillow, arm pillow, chest pillow, hug pillow or something like that?"

Subaru: "......Don't say things which dampen my spirits. First of all, we don’t have such time, you yourself said that, didn't you."

Shaula: "It's true that it's a fiasco inside the tower, but for me, Master-sama is on the top of my priority list, everything else can be kept for later. That's why, if Master-sama slips into confusion and says he wants to be locked in a grapple with me, I'd welcome it super openly. I'm getting fired up."

Subaru: "Don't get fired up. Get some water."

Shaula: "Just as always, geez Master-sama~."

Sharpening her lips, Shaula made a pouting face.
His back and forth with her, along with her expression, if only these were to be taken into consideration, it could be misunderstood that the situation that had come up around Subaru and the others was seemingly one of peace.

"????"

However?, reality was not kind to Subaru and the others at all. It was the farthest thing from peace.
Whilst Subaru and Shaula leisurely conversed like this, Emilia and Ram were making efforts in order to hold off ?Gluttony?, and Beatrice had joined in with them for support. Julius was colliding with Reid = Roy on the second layer, Echidna had grouped with Patrasche, and must be evacuating to ?Taygeta? along with Rem. And, Meili was holding off the hordes of Witch Beasts?? the very best they could do to strike the five obstacles.

However, even that was merely deceit for the sake of conversing with Shaula.
Because, in these surroundings, Natsuki Subaru was??,

Shaula: "M-Master-sama? Are you seriously alright? If you stare at me with such imposing eyes, I won't be able to hold back this four hundred year old wait I have experienced, you know.....?"

At Subaru's gaze staring at her self, Shaula hugged her slender figure with her arms. It seemed to be the usual feign, but that was not it.
She truly was in a situation where she was feeling uneasiness by Subaru's attitude. It was unlike her?? no, that's wrong. Perhaps these were her true feelings.

She had not felt shaken even when Subaru had told her to die, but when Subaru acted abnormally, her fragile heart had shaken up, almost astonishingly. ??Akin to, a baby bird innocently yearning for its parents.

"????"

When he had fired his first question at Shaula, Subaru had thought of several possibilities.
Amongst those, the worst one was that the instant she would get struck by those heartless words from Subaru, she might murder him impulsively at the very same pace. ??In the case that Shaula's attitude till now had been mere acting, and anything and everything had been fabricated.

It was not impossible.
Though he had possessed no confirmation before that question, she had a track record of having changed into the form of the titanic scorpion and murdering Subaru, Echidna and Beatrice. Otherwise, in the tragedy where Subaru had been unable to find a single person alive in his surroundings, it was highly possible that she had a hand in that after turning into the titanic scorpion.

That is why, the first question, for Subaru as well, had been a gamble.
Once he said that, the instant immediately afterwards Shaula had gulped down that question, it would not have been strange if Subaru's head had been sent evaporating, it had been that kind of a gamble?? he could now say that he had won that gamble.

However, merely once is never an end to gambling.
The debt Subaru had unconsciously piled up, the stakes prepared by ?Gluttony? and the Pleiades Watchtower, in order to regain whatever he had lost till now, piling up such little victories would be far

too lacking.

For a huge victory, it is a necessity to make a huge gamble. Henceforth??,

Subaru: "Shaula, sorry for having so many questions, but I want to ask something. From what I've heard, there are supposed to be some rules for the ?Trials? of this Pleiades Watchtower, is that so?"

Shaula: "You ask that now at this timing when I'm getting all hot!? .....Well, yes there are? I had talked about it before Master-sama crashed his head into the urinal too, though....."

Subaru: "Tell me, about them."

Without hiding her sulking attitude, Shaula gently positioned her fingers opposite to her chest. And, she immediately swayed about her positioned fingers, whispering "Umm".

Shaula: "First, it is forbidden to leave without? completing the ?Trials?. Second, it is forbidden to violate the rules of the ?Trials?. Third, it is forbidden to disrespect the libraries. Fourth, it is forbidden to do anything which causes destruction to the tower itself. ??Yeah."

Whilst keeping her fingers folded, Shaula explained with an awfully fluent tone.
Of course, she was a girl proficient in speaking if she were to limit her thoughtless comments, and nothing felt odd in her explanation, which was lacking any pauses. Though nothing felt odd, there was a catch to it.

That went for the serious tone of her voice which was unlike her, at but the end of her gesture of counting with fingers, she had touched her final finger and then stopped there, that too.

Subaru: "??The fifth one?"

Shaula: "......That's not there. Master-sama, didn't you hear me? I must have said up to four. Master-sama, can't you even count numbers now? That won't do~. Numbers aren't my strong point either, but even I can count that much....."

Subaru: "Shaula."

"????"

Staring, Subaru raised his voice and took a single step, shortening the distance between him and Shaula. Those two had been facing each other head-on beforehand, but the distance between them now was enough that one could extend his hand and grasp onto the other one. ??Even that action was a gamble for Subaru.
Of course, just because he had opened up the distance between them being only of a single arm, just because he had shortened the distance between them to that of only a single arm, the war potential of having the capability of doing something which belonged to both of them was nothing so superficial.

Shaula: "Master-sama..... could it be, you’re toying with my heart? Not my will, but Master-sama getting

closer on his will, if you want me to open my mouth, then, it's that. At the same pace and with the same energy, hug me and melt me....."

Subaru: "If your mouth really will open by that, then I'll do it. That can even be said? to be a side benefit..... But, if what you believe is my purpose based on your intuition isn't actually my purpose, then that won't be the case, I think."

"????"

Subaru: "Shaula, I shall ask again. What is, the fifth rule of the tower?"

While accepting Shaula's mild refusal, Subaru asked for the second time.
That was an action not inching closer to her physically, but instead stepping onto her heart. Those repeated words, although perhaps bitter, were something she could not make it seem as if she did not hear them.
Embracing that resolution, in front of Subaru who had clenched his fists, Shaula slightly exhaled, and,

Shaula: "??NG."

Subaru: "......NG?"

Rotating her neck right and left, Shaula crossed her arms in front of her voluptuous chest, making a symbol of her discomfort.
Though her behaviour was childish, her eyes were far beyond seriousness.

"????"

Intently staring at Subaru, who was standing at a precarious spot, Shaula's? eyes had been filled with heavy emotions.
Those quiet, yet boundlessly deep, heavy emotions, which should be named as an appeal, were brittle and ephemeral.
With unwillingness, she once again rotated her neck right and left,

Shaula: "NG. No, I don't wanna talk about it. The fifth rule? Does something like that, even matter. In my and Master-sama’s honeymoon, it has nothing to....."

Subaru: "As if it has nothing to do. I am, and everyone is challenging the ?Trials? of this tower. I can't be as optimistic as to think it'll all be fine without even knowing the ?Trials'? rules. That's why, Shaula."

Shaula: "......I'd rather not."

Subaru: "Shaula!"

Like a disobedient child, Shaula covered her ears and averted her eyes. At that attitude of Shaula's, Subaru declared with a strong tone.

Subaru: "You must be having your own duties in this tower. The tower's Star-Keeper.....? You must have been doing that all this time, right. I don't know if it's true or not, but for four hundred years! Then??"

Shaula: "??It's been, four days."

Subaru: "......Ah?"

The spilled voice, as if a whisper, shortly halted Subaru's thoughts.
The years Subaru was questioning, and the time frame too short to even be comparable. Surely, her statements had been lies, and the time Shaula had spent in the tower had always been short?? something like that was not possible.

While retaining possession of the heavy emotions in her eyes, Shaula, with her lips shivering, continued.

Shaula: "It's? been only four days, since Master-sama has come to the tower. Within those, as Master-sama was in bed for two days, that makes only two days since Master-sama and I have met with each other, spoken to each other, have been side-by-side with each other..... even though I've waited for even four hundred years! It's been only two days....."

Subaru: "Shaula....."

Shaula: "I thought just a single moment, a single glimpse, would be fine."

Covering her eyes, Shaula immediately ceased to have her gaze slumped downwards. Seemingly, as if she were saying she regretted to have Subaru out of her field of vision for even a single moment. ??No, upon considering, that was indeed the case.
As far back as Subaru could recall, Shaula had been in the same space, at the same time with Subaru, always watching Subaru. That was not for a shallow purpose like surveillancing Subaru with minimal effort, but certainly??.

Shaula: "Four hundred years, I waited for Master-sama in the tower. I thought, I would be satisfied with a single glimpse. ??But, that wasn’t the truth."

"????"

Shaula: "I mean, Master-sama is my everything, after all. Master-sama's everything, and all of my feelings for Master-sama, are what make me. The four hundred years it took, I can't? convey them to Master-sama. All of it, in just two days..... I can't, come to terms with that."

Subaru: "......That's why, you won't tell me the fifth rule?"

Acute emotions enfolded the entirety of Shaula's body, and moulded the existence known as her.
Four hundred years?? the weight of those words he had perceived through mere appearance of words, finally became an actual time frame for Subaru, and he stood at a disposition? where he? could feel that.

After all, her attitude had been too casual to speak of four hundred years.

He thought that perhaps there existed no instrument in her to embrace feelings such as hardship, sadness. Perhaps she was inhuman like that scorpion, down to her very heart, down to her very soul.

Shaula: "I don't wanna talk about the rules. NG. After all, if I talk about that....."

"????"

Shaula: "If I talk about that, Master-sama will notice the way the clear the ?Trials?. That's why, if I talk about that, if I end up talking about that..... my time with Master-sama will end."

Poignantly, Shaula hugged her body, and expressed her own true feelings to Subaru.
As if vomiting blood?? no, as if restraining herself from crying, that tone of her voice stabbed through Subaru's heart.

It was a reply, he had not anticipated.
Just as his initial question, Subaru had thought of some patterns regarding the answer to this question. The true motives behind Shaula hiding the rules of Pleiades Watchtower?? if she had colluded with the person who created the rules of this nasty tower, she had certain plans as well, is what he thought. Otherwise, unrelated to such dark plans, the reason why she had not spoken about the rules was on a simple whim or had slipped out of her mind, and that may not hold any significance, he had thought that as well.

But, neither was the truth.
Shaula did have a reason as to why she did not want to speak of the tower's rules. And that reason, was unrelated to the ideas of the ?Sage? or whoever who created the tower, but rather, an earnest wish.

??Four hundred years, having lived that time in solitude, and had continued to await the reunion with the person she was waiting for, was Shaula.

That had come true, she had gained happiness, and that is why, she wished for that time to last longer, even slightly.
If it was for the sake of fulfilling that modest desire??,

Shaula: "Master-sama, will you hate me, who lied to you?"

"????"

Shaula: "Hating me, not even wanting to see my face..... will you be like that?"

For what reason, was she making a face much more pained than when told something like "Will you die". For what reason, did she view being hated by him to be more crucial than losing her life.

??For what reason, did she think of everything like a goal, despite waiting for four hundred years.

Subaru: "......I won’t, hate you or anything."

"????"

Subaru: "Because you kept quiet, I do think I probably had to face really hard situations, and sometimes I honestly thought I'd never been cornered this badly."

Facing the silent Shaula, Subaru spoke his mind.
There were no lies here. Those were his true feelings. Because Shaula hid information as per her true intentions, Subaru had been unable to make crucial investigations and had to repeatedly face mercilessly cruel deaths.
Not just Subaru. Aside from Subaru, Emilia and Beatrice had to, as well.

He could never forget the despair, discontentment, and hopelessness he felt during those moments.
That is why, if there were to be an existence who were the originator of all of that evil, Subaru would certainly never be able to forgive them, is what he believed.
Then, at this instant, in front of Shaula like this, was he going to do the same.

Subaru: "??No."

He did not think of Shaula, she, who had lived four hundred years in solitude, she, who had fulfilled the meaning of her being born in mere two days and was satisfied such that she gained happiness, to be the originator of that evil.
If there were to be an originator of that evil, it would be the unfairness of this world itself, and the one who created the circumstances where it was impossible to do anything about that, the "Master-sama" who commanded Shaula for four hundred years??.

Shaula: "??Ah."

Suddenly, a hoarse exhale leaked out of Shaula's lips.

Subaru: "Shaula?"

Shaula: "Ah, ah..... a~h, ah....."

Feeling abnormality in Shaula's condition in front of his eyes, Subaru called out her name. However, Shaula, without responding to Subaru's call, concealed her face with her palms.
A painfully trembling voice, unbefitting her, could be heard from that throat.

Shaula: "No, good..... no good..... Master-sama! Master-samaMaster-samaMaster-samaMaster-sama.....!"

Subaru: "Shaula!? Shaula, what happened!? So suddenly....."

Shaula: "??Somebody, violated the rules."

"????"

Rushing over, as Subaru jolted her white shoulders, his arms got grasped instead. And, while painfully? gripping to Subaru's arms with her slender ones, Shaula spoke.
Gazing intently into Shaula's eyes, who had said that, Subaru inhaled.

??A queer change was occuring in the dark pupils? and irises of Shaula's? eyes.

Within her spherical eyes, the dark pupil and iris of her eyeball split into three, turning red and pulsating. The transfiguration which occurred in the right and left eyeballs alongside, it meant that her dark pupils and irises split into six.

??Six with both right and left, six compound eyes.

Shaula: "Master-sama.....! Right now, I can still make it....."

Subaru: "Make it?"

Shaula: "Right now, if Master-sama commands me, then I can..... I can, still kill myself."

With her eyeballs pulsating red, white steam started to arise from the entirety of Shaula’s body. Her white skin got engulfed with a tint of red, and even Subaru, who was standing right next to her, could feel the abnormal rise in body temperature.
The principle behind it was ambiguous. ??Just that Shaula's body was generating heat, and change was ensuing in it.
Perhaps, it was the initial phase of transforming into the form of the titanic scorpion.

Shaula: "If I transform, I won't make it. I will become a KILLING MACHINE lacking any blood or tears, and kill Master-sama. I mean, I want Master-sama so much..... I want Master-sama so badly, so badly that I can't bear it, that's why."

Subaru: "Before that happens"

Shaula: "Please tell me, to die..... If you do that, I will, for Master-sama"

Will come to an end before killing you, Shaula was unable to continue her words on to say that.
In place of words, her eyes, her shivering voice, her entire body and soul, were conveying the same.

"????"

An incomparable dread welled up in Subaru's body as well. That was, surely the instinctive reaction of a human faced with otherworldly fear.
The ?Human? known as Natsuki Subaru, was being frightened by the ?Monster? known as Shaula, who was in front of him.
That is why, Subaru was??,

Subaru: "Shaula, tell me the fifth rule."

Shaula: "Master-sama, this is not the time for....."

Subaru: "If you tell that to me??!"

Subaru interrupted the words of the appealing Shaula with a loud voice. At that menacing glare, Shaula's shoulders shivered. He grabbed those shivering shoulders. They were warm. Such that his palm could melt, Shaula's body temperature had already risen to the level of a fire.
However, he did not let his hands go. Right now, he did not release her body, burning and scorching.

Subaru: "If you tell that to me, I'll command you. ??Stay calm. Before you turn into a monster, I'll command you."

"????"

Hearing Subaru say that straightforwardly, Shaula widened her eyes.
She then called out to Subaru, saying "Master-sama",

Shaula: "Master-sama, such a womanizer."

Subaru: "I don’t remember being one....."

Shaula: "Then, Master-sama is a Shaula-izer. My favourite kind of -izer....."

Smiling weakly, Shaula softly overlapped the hands grasping her shoulders with her own hands.
And??,

Shaula: "??Fifth, it is not forbidden to destroy the ?Trials?."

"????"

Shaula: "Look, the colour of my eyes has changed. ??At my beloved, Master-sama."

Saying that, Shaula thrusted away Subaru's chest.
At that greater than expected might, Subaru was thrown back, unable to keep his grip onto her shoulders.
When he looked towards the front while lightly coughing, Shaula, while? hugging her own body, crouched down??,

Shaula: "Ah, ah..... a~h, a~a~h..... ~hk!"

Red steam, like the colour of blood, ascended from the entirety of her body. The steam had changed its colour, it was a sign of danger. Shaula's? eyes lost its dark pupils and irises as well, and before one could notice, turned bright red.

Shaula: "Master-sama..... hurry. Before I, lose myself....."

"????"

Shaula: "Please tell me..... to die ~hk! If Master-sama says that, I will....."

With the same mouth which had argued being against Subaru and the others completing the ?Trials? and leaving the tower, Shaula, using up her life, indicated the path where she could remain without killing Subaru and the others?? no, Subaru.
Hearing that desperate voice of Shaula's, Subaru inhaled.
And then,

Subaru: "Shaula."

Shaula: "Master-sama....."

Subaru: "??My bad. What I said just now was a lie."

Shaula: "Eh?"

At Subaru's informing words, Shaula rounded her eyes. Watching Shaula's reaction for himself , Subaru halted his breath, and at the same pace, leapt backwards.
Having been pushed away by Shaula had been a blessing for him amidst all this misfortune. ??Had Shaula kept his wrists grabbed, he would have never been able to perform this act.

??Subaru's body crossed over the narrow open-air verandah of the balcony, and was launched into the air.

Shaula: "Ah??."

Shaula's instantaneous voice got engulfed in the vehement sand gusts and was rendered inaudible. At the same pace, Subaru's body, without any support, fell non-stop for several hundreds of meters.

"????"

Falling down, he possessed no plans to save himself.
He had not prepared any plans to save himself. What Subaru had done was purely throw himself to death. He did not desire to do this at all, nor did he want to speak of it but?? this was his intention from the very beginning.

If these surroundings, these actions could be excused, he intended to surely do this.
That is because, Subaru could then trust his choice without any indecision.
After all??,

Shaula: "Master-sama!!"

Similarly jumping out from the balcony herself as well, Shaula chased after Subaru.
Widening those eyes, desperately stretching out her hand, Shaula chased the falling Subaru, and leapt trying not to take away, but save that life with her own hands.

??The true identity of the titanic scorpion, was Shaula.
??Shaula purposefully, hid the rules of the tower.
??Shaula had repeatedly killed Subaru or his comrades, and stood in the way as the fifth obstacle.

But??,

Subaru: "??I just, want to save you."

"????"

He could never forget her form, she, who had enduredher transformation against her own feelings, and had requested to be ordered to kill herself so that she does not kill Subaru, till the very end of the end.
Though it was quite a nasty thing to say, he wanted to confirm that.

Whom he should save, whom he should not save, whom he should defeat, whom he should protect, whom he should love.
Because Natsuki Subaru believed he could not advance further unless he confirmed that.

He will no longer perplex over, whom he should love.

Shaula: "Master-sama~a~a~a~a~a~a~a~a~a~a~a~!!"

Shaula's form, while she stretched out her hand and tried pursuing Subaru, changed mid-air.
Her hand stretching out enlarged, and transformed into large pincers clad in a jet black shell. Her white skin was covered with a rough shell, without leaving any trace behind, and her flesh body expanded, as if bursting open from the interior.
For a single moment, the seemingly painful transformation as if bursting open her blood and flesh, reached conclusion as if a tape being reversed, and finally, the immense ominous incongruity?? the titanic scorpion, had achieved completion.

And, that titanic scorpion's tail's tip nimbly established its aim at Subaru.
Perhaps, tail stingers similar to that white lustre would be fired from there, and burn Subaru's life to nothing in an instant. The mid-air Subaru lacked any technique to avoid that.
However??,

Subaru: "??I won't let myself be killed by you, because Shaula would cry."

"????"

The tail stinger was fired?? but before that, arrived the terminus of his fall.
The two of Subaru and the titanic scorpion came falling down above the hordes of Witch Beasts fiercely advancing onto the sand tower.

The existence known as Natsuki Subaru did not have the ability to endure the several hundred meters long fall.
Bursting open, his life was shed.

However, on the verge of his life being shed, he said a few final words??,

Subaru: "??I will, definitely save you."

??He got the meagre time, to convey the message to the sandy gusts, incomprehensible to the titanic scorpion.

Arc 6 – Chapter 71, "Count One"

by admin - Monday, October 07, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/10/07/arc-6-chapter-71-count-one/

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Translated By :

- Ringo (/u/Ringo_17)

Proofread By:

- Nanashi
- Jaerek
- Gracedharperd

Art Source :

- Zhukzubast

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? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??With his final words washed away by the wind, Natsuki Subaru's consciousness came to an end.

"????"

Speaking of irony, ironically enough, his ?Death? this time had been a ?Death? of his own volition. Perhaps that is why, his mind and heart had remained calm at the moment of ?Death??? that was not the case, of course, he possessed uneasiness and nervousness for jumping into the circumstance of ?Death? on his own accord.
However, unlike till now, he had faced the ?Death? he had anticipated with much more sincerity than his other ?Deaths? up to this time.

Of course, he did not believe that him choosing to die had truly saved Shaula.

She did not want to kill him, so she wanted him to command her to die.
Shaula, who had been concerned about Subaru to that extent, had let Subaru throw himself to his death right in front of her eyes. The weight of that impact was unknown, and it must have? greatly shattered her heart, which had continued to await for four hundred years.
That is why, that was nothing more than Subaru's self-satisfaction. The worst kind of self-satisfaction, of exaggerating and not seeing the result for himself with his own eyes.
However??,

Subaru: "??So what."

If all that is fastened to him was nothing but self-satisfaction, nothing but hypocrisy, what was wrong with that.
In the end, the method to catch and halt the impact of all happenings in this world can only be wielded in one's own weighing scales. Unaccomplished good deeds hold no meaning, and the word known as hypocrisy doesn't ultimately exist.

??All of them, surviving.

After his discussion with Shaula, Subaru cemented the final objective he had touted.
??No, precisely speaking, the survival of all of them had been his goal from the beginning. Just that judgement had decided whether to include Shaula in that or not, and Subaru chose to love all of them.

He shall lead the way to solve all of the catastrophes surrounding this sand tower.
For that purpose, he would do anything he could.
That is??,

Subaru: "The meaning, behind why I am myself. ??Isn't that so, ?Natsuki Subaru?."

Along with that instantaneous decision, he awakened from the deep, deep abyss of ?Death???.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

???: "??Subaru, are you certain of what you said earlier?"

Subaru: "Yeah, don't be doubtful after coming this far. It's the information I collected after meeting it face to face and everything. If it couldn't be made the best use out of, I wouldn't bring it up!"

Replying with harsh language to the sideward face of the good-looking man running at an average speed, Subaru dashed while pulling the tiny palm.
Running past the fourth layer's aisle, they aimed for the second layer ?Electra??? carrying frustration, as

Subaru sprinted while pulling Beatrice's hand, Julius' yellow eyes glanced sideways at him.

Julius: "Subaru, the colour of your face has not gotten any better. So indeed, the happening in the book was....."

Subaru: "I'm not hiding how worried I am. Don't even try telling? me I should have quietly caved into the Green Room, you."

Julius: "I would recommend you to stay calm here if it weren't for this situation, but unfortunately things are quite bustling. Right now, we must use anything we can, even if they are grains of sand."

Subaru: "You have nothing to say so you'll call me as using grains of sand, huh....."

Julius: "They can be exposed to the wind if it is meagre enough. If possible, when in a position capable of reaching the eyes."

Narrowing his eyes at his elegant manner of speaking, Subaru thought of his words about exposure to the wind to be sarcasm.
The truth is, in terms of experience, Subaru's ?Death? just a few minutes ago had been exposed to wind.
Julius comparing Subaru's existence to grains of sand was not necessarily a mistake either.

Subaru: "But, grains of sand have their own qualities."

Beatrice: "On top of that, those grains of sand have Betty with them, I suppose. In other words, they are grains of sand with the cutest companion, in fact."

Subaru: "What, I guess you're talking about the sand that got into your shoes."

Beatrice: "That's not what that means, I suppose!"

Smiling at Beatrice, who puffed her cheeks, Subaru pulled that body by directing strength into his arm.
Beatrice let out a shriek, saying "Wa~h ~hk", and her light frame tightly fit into Subaru's chest.
Running while pulling her hand was something quite romantic, but right now he wanted to give import to speed. Fortunately, Beatrice's body was light like an angel's feather, so carrying her and running was an easy victory as well.

Subaru: "Well, I haven't ever carried an angel's feather, though."

Julius: "About time, idle talk ends here. ??Subaru, I do believe it is annoying but"

Subaru: "Yeah, it's annoying. Though I can't tell you to relax even if I rip my mouth apart, but..... it is absolute that that guy Reid, and ?Gluttony? will come in contact. We have to go, to hold that off."

Halting his legs, Julius asked while gazing at the humongous stairway that led to the second layer, which lay right ahead of them. Interrupting that enquiry, Subaru affirmed that he possessed confirmation.
It was inconceivable for that to be untrue. After all, this was something he had heard from Julius himself.

And, if they could obstruct this??,

Subaru: "We can put out a safe, against Reid messing everything up."

Julius: "......At any rate, it would be better if his trespassing can be avoided in this chaos. Even if it is just for confirming his movements, it is well worth it to make our way here."

Positioning his legs ahead of the humongous stairway, Julius nodded at Subaru. Returning a nod to that, Subaru, while keeping Beatrice in his grasp, stepped onto the final level of the stairway.
And??,

Subaru: "??Gugh."

Beatrice: "Subaru, your condition really is bad, in fact. The book's effect is visible, I suppose."

For a single moment, looking at Subaru, who had shaken his head violently, Beatrice touched his cheek out of anxiety. Whilst gaining tranquility from the warmth of that small palm, Subaru shook his head, saying "I'm fine".

Subaru: “Exhaustion from reading did not lower my wisdom. On top of that, it's just as what I told Julius. This is no time to stay in bed. ??This is the time when everyone should put their strength together."

Beatrice: "......When about to really reach the limit, absolutely tell Betty, in fact."

Subaru: "......Yeah, I know."

Responding to Beatrice, who was pressurising him based on her senses, Subaru took in a long, deep breath.
His body felt sluggish. His head felt heavy. His nausea was increasing without pause, and he felt congestion in his blood vessels, as if in place of blood, coal tar had been poured into them.
All of this, was the result of Subaru taking over Ram's inferior physical form through ?Cor Leonis?.

"????"

What he had harvested was the aftermath of having strode across ?Return by Death", and the continuation of ?Cor Leonis?. ??Equal to his uneasiness by the memories of ?Death?, what he carried over by the Authority.
Thanks to that, he was able to grasp on the positions of his comrades at the current moment. Everyone, was abiding by Subaru's instructions, and had started to respond to each of the respective attacks.
Within those responses of his comrades, also existed Meili, in the balcony, and Shaula, struggling fiercely. She was certainly there, and fighting for Subaru and the others'?? no, Subaru's sake.

Subaru: "I will, definitely save you."

Whispering behind him, Subaru followed Julius' back, who had gone ahead of him.
The humongous stairway, which cleared over the first layer of the tower and went through the layer above

that, was long. But, neither was this the time to spit up complaints, nor the situation to leak whining.
His entire body was sore, his bones had been shattered to pieces, they were a necessary compensation to break out of this situation.
And??,

Julius: "Subaru, let's advance!"

Julius' dignified voice resounded, and Subaru raised his face while running out of breath. And, Julius, who had reached the utmost step, turned half of his body back and gestured to Subaru with his hand. Abiding by that, the moment he galloped over the stairway, he was met with the space that opened up.

"????"

The complete opposite arrangement of rooms from the fourth layer, which had multiple rooms dividing the floor, like a spherical wineglass that had been shattered. The second layer ?Electra?, which divided all of their worth of existence by the ?Trial?, is where they had arrived.
And, in ?Electra?, where the three of Subaru, Beatrice and Julius had arrived, the first generation ?Sword Saint? Reid, and the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony? were??,

Reid: "??Hey, you. Is that all ya've got, you. It ain't no joke, you. Didn't ya come here to entertain me, you. It's lackin', you. Don't make me laugh, you. No, at least make me laugh ya know, you. It's not interestin' or anythin', you."

They came across the scene where the ?Sword Saint? Reid Astrea went on and on complaining, having grabbed a single leg of the young boy that had been mercilessly struck down onto the floor.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

"????"
Julius: "This is....."

Staring at the spectacle before their eyes, the one to whisper that in blank surprise was Julius. However, the mental state of Subaru, who was looking at the same scene, was absolutely the same as what he had whispered.
Then, what scene had they been expecting, was something quite difficult to determine now that if it were to be mentioned??,

Reid: "A~h? What is it, you all. Y'all comin' here too, ain't that some enthusiasm. Or, do ya have business with not me, but this guy?"

Gluttony: "Kah, kah, kah....."

Saying that, Reid scratched the area of his chest with his right hand, and with his other hand, the leg of the young boy he had in his grip?? the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, he lifted him upside down, and made a look of suspicion.
Just as mentioned before, what scene had they been expecting was something quite difficult to determine now that if it were to be mentioned, but at the very least, this scene far surpassed what Subaru had assumed.

Subaru: "I had heard that Reid and ?Gluttony? were negotiating, but....."

Beatrice: "Negotiating..... this, I suppose? Betty thinks that even battle would be a lacking expression for this, in fact."

Julius: "Yes, I agree. It is difficult to even call this a conversation."

With that, Beatrice and Julius arrived at the same conclusion at the words Subaru had whispered.
However, the reaction of those two did not make sense from Subaru's perspective.
Because the contact between Reid and ?Gluttony?, the one to express it as negotiation from what he had heard, last time, had been Julius, who must have witnessed? a similar situation.
In any case??,

Subaru: "The scene where ?Gluttony? got overwhelmingly whipped down, would that be correct?"

Though nobody had asked for it, that is what Subaru worded what he say as.

In the white space of the second layer ?Electra?, indeed, the one-on-one battle ?Gluttony? and Reid had engaged in, traces of it remained in various spots.
They were, the crevices on the floor caused by being stepped firmly upon, or the cracks in walls which gave the impression of being caused by slashing strikes, aside from those, the traces of black burns caused by firing, or the scattered lumps of earth which were not supposed to be here, that precisely made clear the characteristic of ?Gluttony?, it was unmistakable that the departments of all kinds of special moves had been lavish feasts.

??The departments of those techniques, had been struck and smashed to atoms by the natural calamity known as Reid.

Subaru: "Earthquake, thunder, fire, are all of them Reid....."

Reid: "So, what're ya'll gonna do, you all. Do ya wanna go for the ?Trial?? Ya can go for it since ya've a slight good expression. But, young fish, you can't. Ah, you can't."

Julius: "Why do you say, he is an exception?"

Reid: "Don'tcha get it jus' by takin' a look. A guy who ain't perfect or can't even become a game companion, instead of bein' imperfect, is jus’ full of holes, ain't that so. Don't stand in front of me when ya're like that. I start wantin' to kill ya with a single finger, ya know. "

Gluttony: "Gi, gughya~a~a~!!"

While saying that, Reid stabbed his right hand's finger into the torso of ?Gluttony? whom he had in his grip. With his guts mercilessly gouged, the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony? gave rise to an unseemly shriek.
Though it was unknown how old ?Gluttony? physically was, even so, from the standpoint of his outward appearance, the young boy of thirteen or fourteen was being harassed by an adult, was the emotion he felt, difficult to suppress upon that sight.
It seemed as if Julius also had the identical feeling, and so??,

Julius: "Reid Astrea, you must also be possessing the dignity as a knight. Then, what reason is there to torment that young boy any more than needed....."

Reid: "Hey, you, don't be sayin' idiotic stuff."

"????"

Said Reid without changing the tone of his voice, and declared, while possessing only the sword spirit similar to penetrating cold, at Julius, who tried to offer commencing conversation from a fresh start.
Reid shook the body of ?Gluttony? left and right whose leg he had grabbed,

Reid: "The dignity of a swordsma~n? If ya scatter that about in exaggeration, that's exactly why the thing known as the preparedness of a swordsman exists. Are ya gonna fight without even the preparedness to die. If ya're gonna have an attitude that makes light of it like that, then there'd be no choice but to teach it to ya with pain. Huh?"

"????"

The preparedness and dignity of a swordsman, if the argument was to be placed such a sumo ring, the one to be at the inferior position would be Julius. On top of having pride hang outside earlier, Reid's? words about preparedness possessed a constant persuasive power.
On top of that, though the visible person was painful to even look at,

Subaru: "If ?Gluttony? collapses, then the result certainly is alright....."

Though it was obvious, the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony? was not included in his touted objective of everyone's survival.
The ones Subaru wanted to save, were at maximum Emilia, Beatrice, Ram, Rem, Meili, Echidna, Julius and Shaula. On top of that, the two of Patrasche and Gyan.
?Gluttony? and Reid were not subject to that. If the two of them were to crush each other?? to call it that results in an outcome too unilateral, but it was advantageous? for Subaru and the others if that happens.

However??,

Reid: "First of all, you. Is this guy your friend. If that's so, then it's not as if I don't get why you're gettin' so heated up....."

Julius: "No, absolutely not. That Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony? is a bitter enemy for myself as well, an opponent with whom, in the worst case scenario, if I were to fight to the extremity, one may end up taking the other's life."

Reid: "Huh? Then why're ya gettin' so mad? Because your prey got snatched away?"

Julius: "??It is because, you are kicking the pride of a swordsman."

Julius told the ?Sword Saint??? the man who was the first one to that title, bestowed upon only those who stand at the pinnacle of the sword.
That declaration of Julius', which couldn't even be an insult, was silently being heard by Reid, who narrowed his eye which was not covered by the eyepatch.
At the waitful watch of that ?Sword Saint?, Julius continued, as if slashing the atmosphere.

Julius: "If battling swordsmen, warriors, knights is something where one must prepare his body for death beforehand, then it is fine to submit to losing one's life at the extremity of the battle. However, that, at most, is the extremity of battle, death at the extremity upon one's desperate efforts all being exhausted is how it should be. The victor, absolutely, must not play around with the life of the defeated."

Reid: "......You're sayin' stuff which make my ears itchy. Who the hell is gonna listen to all that."

Julius: "I do not mind should they be named as even inexperienced ideals, or sweet nothings! Merely, embodying those ideals and sweet nothings, is the way of the knight I believe in."

"????"

Asserting that boldly, Julius unsheathed his own knight sword.
From what he had heard, the knight sword which had gotten fractured once?? it was not supposed to be a sword he had a habit of using, hence, it was something suspicious which his hand was growing accustomed to.
But above all, what must have always been in his fundamental? values, those will never waver.
That is because they had certainly, always continued to glitter within his self.

That glittering something, did not let Julius overlook Reid's unjustness.
Even if the one to fall victim to that unjustness was to be a Sin Archbishop, someone who had committed grave atrocities, as an example.

Reid: "??The way of the knight, huh."

Unexpectedly, that whisper jolted the atmosphere in ?Electra?.

That was, a quiet tone of voice.
That was, not a voice harbouring emotions of little significance.
That was, nothing but an echo which seemed as if it had slipped in amongst the other nonchalant and bored echoes.

??However, that was, the signal of eruption of the first generation ?Sword Saint?, Reid Astrea.

Reid: "Hey, you. For how long are gonna ya keep sleepin'. Wake the hell up."

Gluttony: "Gughi ~tsu!"

While groaning, directing strength of grip such that he could crush that grabbed leg with his hand, gave rise to ?Gluttony? shrieking upon his leg almost being crushed. And, Reid looked down onto the upside down Sin Archbishop,

Reid: "You, ya said some interestin' stuff, isn't it. Did ya say ya were gonna eat me up, taste me up, lick me up. ??I will, let ya do that."

Gluttony: "??. Gihi, gaha, ahahaha ~tsu! What's up with that ~tsu! What's that what's that, what happened so suddenly ~tsu! Why so suddenly, do you feel like that, red-haired onii-san! Even though you swung we or us around this much because you were against that hu~h!"

Reid: "I changed my mind. ??Ah, that's right that's right."

While distorting his face to the pain, ?Gluttony? tried to regain his state of health, as Reid glared at him. After that, as if having suddenly noticed something, Reid rotated his neck around,

Reid: "Ones like ya'll will be intrudin' right away anyway, ain't that so."

Remarkably saying that, Reid stepped ahead diagonally.
At that moment, shining violet crystals were thrown into the spot Reid was standing on. A shrill sound as that of shattering glass reverberated, and the violet arrows themselves along with the floor smashed and got scattered about.
However, they missed their aim. And, Reid, who had been their aim, took a single step and leapt, and shortened his distance to Subaru and the others, who had commenced that attack just now.

Beatrice: "??~hk! Subaru, not good I suppo....."

Reid: "Here."

Beatrice's warning rendered fruitless, ?Gluttony? got struck at Subaru's torso, delivering a side blow. Handling a human as a blunt weapon, the unstoppable force mercilessly sent Subaru flying, who had been carrying Beatrice.

Subaru: "Gahagh ~hk!"

Reid: "It's good ya didn't hesitate, you all. This is much better than that beautiful girl in terms of fightin'. Well, the broken fragments of your ability haven't been reassembled, though."

With no flexibility to even respond to Reid's brief review, Subaru rolled over while holding Beatrice with

all his might. He must not feel, with his internal organs overturned by the single blow just now, accompanied with Ram's burden, his physical strength and, if anything, the origin of his life had been shorn off.

Julius: "Subaru! Beatrice-sama! Kgh..... ~hk."

And, whilst fearing for the blown away Subaru and Beatrice, Julius, in a single instant, piercingly charged towards Reid, who had shortened the distance in between?. However, Reid strode on and crushed that with his feet, and hammered a kick into Julius' abdomen, who had tilted the axis of his legs.
Though Julius received that with the handle of the knight sword he had instantaneously drawn, he could not block even being lunged through by the shock wave. With his guts churned by the perforating single blow, he fell back greatly.
And, in the mean time??,

Reid: "Here, try it out and see. To eat me up, or to die at the same pace by bein' played around by me, choose one, if ya'd like then I'd have no choice but to make a move. Ain't that the thing called life, hey you."

Gluttony: "??A~h, ah, ah ~tsu! We get it, we do get it, we really get it, we completely get it, as we get it, so we get it, as we want to get it, because we get it! Gluttonous drinking ~tsu! Gluttony ~tsu! We'll do as your wish ~tsu! We can't stay without eating ~tsu."

Remaining upside down, raising his face right towards the front, ?Gluttony? smiled at Reid. And, ?Gluttony? stretched his hand, grabbing the area of Reid's left eye, which had been concealed by the eyepatch.
He subsequently opened his mouth and??,

Gluttony: "Reid Astrea."

Licking, ?Gluttony? let go of Reid from his hand, as if tearing something off. And, gazing lovingly at his palm where that something was not even present, he exposed his tongue.
At the same pace, he chewed that invisible something, and reverberated a slurping sound as if indulging in it.
Afterwards??,

Reid: "??Ah."

Suddenly, change arrived in a single instant.
As if it had been an illusion or something, Reid's form vanished in the blink of an eye. With the tall figure disappearing from the space it was certainly supposed to be in, ?Gluttony?, whose leg had been grabbed, fell onto the floor. At the same pace, his hands skilfully made a reversal, ?Gluttony? made an agile landing, and looked at his own palm.
What was recurring in those eyes, was something close to the nothingness, desolateness, dismay of seemingly a gourmet delicacy, which had exhausted its extravagance, disappearing from the top of the plate??,

Gluttony: "A~h, so ama~zing. That kind of flavour, this kind of flavour, which kind of flavour would be it be like, we imagined a lot a lot a lo~t about it but..... it was above expectations ~tsu!"

Subaru: "He ate, Reid.....?"

Gluttony: "A~h, you saw that, right ~tsu!? We did eat him! We indeed ate him! Really, isn't it the best, this is the flavour which cannot be imagined ~tsu! Even we, who are called something like?Bizarre Eating?, at this guy's rich taste, are able to to get it ~tsu! Even when Ley's say is unknown??"

Leaning backwards, while touching his own sharp canines, ?Gluttony? praised Reid's flavour. As far as thought could go, it was the worst food report in human history?? it got, stopped in the middle.
It was not as if something had barged in as an obstruction. The origin lay in ?Gluttony? himself.

Gluttony: "??Wha? Ah, ah, a~h, a~h, a~a~a~a~h?"

Beatrice: "J-Just, what is being started up this time, in fact....."

Subaru: "No, that is....."

Putting his hands on his own throat and abdomen, ?Gluttony? started making movement as if practicing speech. Though Beatrice found that condition to be ominous, Subaru had an idea regarding the abnormality.
If the exchange between Reid and ?Gluttony? just a moment ago?? if that, was what Julius spoke of as "negotiation" then,

Gluttony: "Wa-Wa-Wa~-Wait, hieh, gihi, gihihi ~tsu. Strange, it's strange, isn't it strange ~tsu! After all, this is..... *you*, odd, isn't it?"

"????"

Gluttony: "*It ain't odd, you. To eat or be eaten, that's how life works, ain't that so.*"

Strangling his own throat, ?Gluttony? fired words as if answering his own questions. That tone of voice met clear change, as if pulled into the change of that tone of voice, and change ensued in ?Gluttony's? flesh body itself.
It was a change as if the waxing and waning of the moon, and the expression of questioning when it even happened was appropriate for it.

Subaru did not avert his eyes at all.
The same went for Beatrice, who was in his chest, and of course, Julius, who had prepared his sword.
However, while remaining captured in the field of vision of the three, ?Gluttony? erased that form of his in an instant.
And instead, the one standing at the spot where ?Gluttony? had been was??,

???: "??Ah, a fresh body really is different. It feels as if blood is flowin' through flesh. I'm already feelin' hungry. At least come after fillin' your stomach, mentally adult brat."

Saying that, the one who had carried out substituting for the former player, having exited the stage known as the Pleiades Watchtower for merely a few ten seconds, the existence who was blooming a second time at the centre of the stage, was Reid.
Reid Astrea, had stolen the flesh body of the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony? and had achieved resurrection into the present world.

Julius: "This is....."

The result of the negotiations between Reid and ?Gluttony? from Julius' perspective.
Of course, the details of the content of conversation between Reid and ?Gluttony? must have changed due to Subaru and the others' intervention, but approximately it should have remained the same.
In other words??,

Subaru: "What the hell's the negotiation, speaking while putting on airs....."

Beatrice: "Subaru, this is not the time to be saying all that, I suppose. ?Gluttony? has disappeared, and Reid has....."

Using rough words for Julius' pretentious phraseology the previous time, was Subaru. Within those arms, Beatrice called for further vigilance but Subaru patted her head lightly, and gazed towards Reid??,

Subaru: "Strictly speaking, taking a backhand grip onto the Authority of ?Gluttony? which reconstructs eaten opponents, and painted out the opponent's self..... is that right?"

Reid: "Don't go around sayin' difficult stuff. As if I'd know such convenient stuff. So, don't swagger with stuff I'd no way in hell know, damn young fish. Young fish? A~h, hm? You..... ah? You, this, you, that's it, isn't it, you."

"???"

Though his spirit had hijacked that flesh body, Reid made a wry face unrelated to that truth. He unusually groaned, saying hm, and gently put a finger in his own eyepatch. And turning that over, though there was no particular need for an eyepatch, he looked at Subaru with his healthy blue eye.
Looking, gazing, staring,

Reid: "??You, ya're pretty disgustin'."

"????"

Reid: "Good job not havin' your head gettin’ screwed up with that. No, has it gotten so? What it'll be precisely because it has gotten so, I ain't got an idea. I haven't even given it a thought."

"????"

What was he saying, thinking that, Subaru became truly perplexed at Reid's attitude.

On top of being perplexed, the shivers and nausea enclosing his entire body were about to hit critical point. Though it was obvious, Ram's inferior physical form was worsening as much as Ram's body increased its voltage, and was throwing the backfire of recoil she was originally supposed to have felt into Subaru.

This time, Subaru had not personally met up with Ram, so there were no means for Ram to find out the reason why her body was favourably working.
If that were to be thought now, it seemed as if Ram had been substantially? concerned regarding Subaru last time as well.
Though he had noticed that concern of Ram's, who was not in this place, only after dying twice??,

Reid: "I see I see I do see. I ain't got any idea, but it looks like ya're the ones these guys are aimin' for, ain't that so. Then, that makes things faster."

Julius: "Reid! Your opponent is myself!"

Stepping ahead, Julius fired a slashing strike. But Reid attempted receive that with the chopsticks he had drawn out from his bosom??,
However,

Reid: "Ah?"

The slashing strike lightly touched the tip of the chopsticks, and blood spouted out of Reid's right hand, despite him wanting to receive it. Looking at that, Reid made a suspicious look, Julius raised his eyebrows in faint surprise as well.
And??

"????"

For having witnessed that with his own eyes, that alone was a harvest for Subaru.

Reid: "Tch."

Clicking his tongue, Reid gyrated his chopsticks as if spinning a pen between the gap of his fingers, and skilfully repelled Julius' knight sword. At the same pace, stepping ahead with a single blow he lapsed the distance between him and Julius, who had instantaneously drawn his body back, and aimed his palm towards his abdomen,

Reid: "Your opponent is myself, did ya say that?"

Julius: "Kh??"

Reid: "No way you'll be gettin' to have an exchange with me, after carryin' around a princess in your arms back there!"

The further twisted sole of the palm burst open Julius' abdomen, and the slender tall figure, while

continuing to bleed, was blown away backwards. He tried to position his lengthy legs to the floor in order to kill off that vigour, but still unable to kill it, Julius' body turned upward at the bottom on the floor, and tumbled over at the same pace.

And, concluding his battle with Julius, who had widened the distance in between, Reid turned back,

Subaru: "Shi ~hk!"

Aiming for that sideward face of Reid's, Subaru fired the whip which was at the back of his waist.
However, without the occurrence of a miracle such as his body continuing to remember it, the tip of the whip flew towards the wrong direction.
The effect of lost memories, was not only in his mind but also affecting the recursive actions of his flesh body. As a result of fully realising that, Subaru took in a heavy inhale.
At the same time as that??,

Reid: "You, with such a borin' trick....."

Beatrice: "??That boring trick, is the recommendation of you getting an end of being buried, in fact."

Going past his amazement, Reid expressed his rage, and from his hind echoed the loud sound of striking hands. Upon observing, that was Beatrice, who had both her hands her free, away from Subaru.
However, even if their hands were detached, there was a certain connection between them. Beatrice extracted an extremely small amount of something like MP from the path of Subaru?? and exercised great magic.

Beatrice: "??Ul Shamak."

The moment immediately after Beatrice's chant had achieved completion, what arose in the space was an enormous black hole.
That which had appeared all of a sudden in the air, manifested as an existence accompanied by primordial fear such as its unknown bounds and unknown depths, and tried to swallow Reid, who was right in front of it.

Subaru: "That, is....."

At a single glance, it could be understood that it was the great magic in effect within the space.
That was more of an issue of imaging it so, rather than having knowledge about it. Subaru had heard of Beatrice being a wasteful spirit, but the intensity of the real great magic could not even be in the same league of comparison.
Subaru had been unaware, that this was even possible. This was, a harvest.
That black hole swallowed Reid, and repelled away his ?Sword Saint? off to somewhere unknown??,

Reid: "What, it's jus' air. Somethin' like air's everywhere, as if it can stop me."

"????"

With just a single swing of his chopsticks, Reid broke through that immense magic with extreme easiness. A carefree attitude as if, quite literally, slashing through air?? no, for him, it truly was exactly that. He did not have the nature of taking roundabouts around something which he was capable of doing and then boasting about it.
He had slashed the air, so that was his explanation. That was all there was to it.

Subaru: "Slashing dimensions, I image it as quite a superior ability, you know....."

Reid: "Heyhey, don't put such cool names on it, better food can be served, ya know. If ya'll stay persistent jus' because things have gotten a bit lively, that won't be interestin' or anythin', ya know."

Swinging his chopsticks at the same angle as when he had slashed Beatrice's magic, the moment immediately afterwards, Subaru's? body had been diagonally burst open from his chest to his waist.

Subaru: "Gha, a~a~a~!!"

Beatrice: "Subaru!!"
Julius: "Subaru?? ~hk!"

Tasting the sensation of scorching heat, Subaru collapsed on the spot, as Beatrice and Julius call for him. At the voices of those two, Subaru gnashed his molars, and glared at Reid with bloodshot eyes.
And, turning his palm towards the two trying the rush up to him, he managed to halt their legs.

Subaru: "I'm, al, right....."

Shaking his head left and right, he urged the two to not worry for him. Of course, just by conveying such words to the two, there was no way he could truly convince them.

The chest wound, was shallow. ??No, it was not shallow. Though it was not shallow, it did not ache. It could be expressed as not being unbearable. At any rate, though it was bitter, it was alright. It was not worthy of making those two experience bitter, painful emotions. Gnashing molars, the blood on the verge of being vomited?? nausea? Whichever it was, vomiting must be restrained from. Facing the front, glaring ahead, Reid must be carefully observed.

Reid: "As if ya can reach me with that, you."

With a stunned expression, Reid was looking at Subaru, who was bleeding from the area of his lips. Facing that Reid, Subaru stretched? out his hand, and raised a single finger.

Subaru: "??Y-Yeah. I will, reach you."

Even right now. I can reach you. In a place not necessarily here.
I will, for sure, save Emilia, Beatrice, Ram, Rem, Meili, Echidna, Julius, Shaula, Patrasche, Gyan.

Without failing, a single person.
?Gluttony? and Reid were exceptions. ??The ?Natsuki Subaru? who is not Natsuki Subaru as well.

That is why, right now, at this moment??,

Subaru: "??This is, count one."

Overlapping with ?Death? necessary for a counterattack, was an accomplishment of?Natsuki Subaru's? as well.
At the very end of the end, Reid's blue eyes sheened a dull flash towards Subaru, who had made that declaration.

?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

? Count 1.
? The fight between Reid and ?Gluttony? cannot be stopped.
? If it's Julius, then there is a chance for them to succeed.
? ??Natsuki Subaru, has no chance of succeeding.

Arc 6 – Chapter 72, "?? ?"

by admin - Tuesday, October 15, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/10/15/arc-6-chapter-72-%e2%96%a0%e2%96%a0-%e2%96%a0/

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Translated By :

- Ringo (/u/Ringo_17)

Proofread By:

- Jaerek
- Gracedharperd

Art Source :

- Ringo

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? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??Upon the advent of unforeseen ?Death?, Natsuki Subaru heard the sound of ? cracking.

However, upon each instance of that inexorable sound, he thought.
That was certainly the proof of his progress not having come to a halt. That was, the footsteps of the approaching future.
No matter how small those steps were, no matter how trifling the path he had advanced upon was, he was certainly, walking and progressing.

???: "??Subaru."

"????"

The moment his consciousness was led to awakening, blue eyes of a characteristic pattern were reflected into his own. In front of his eyes, peeping at Subaru worriedly was Beatrice.

Beatrice's hand was gently placed at Subaru's cheek, and Subaru inhaled.

He had parted with Beatrice's crying face not too long ago.
That consciousness' switchover had not been carried out well. Just previously, though it could not be associated with something as extravagant as a parting, but she certainly had been in Subaru's eyes.

Subaru: "......Ah."

Beatrice: "Is your consciousness firm, I suppose? It took time for you to wake up till now, it was worrying, in fact. It would be better to confirm you did not lose any memories accidentally, I suppose. To start with, Betty, do you recall who....."

Subaru: "Bea, trice....."

Beatrice: "??. It seems you do properly remember, in fact. Good boy good boy, I suppose."

Saying that, Beatrice stretched the hand she had at Subaru's cheek towards his head. At the same pace, she patted him with her tiny palm, and slowly?, his consciousness caught up to reality.

Subaru: "Count, one huh....."

"???"

Beatrice tilted her head upon the whispering voice.
However, neither did she know what it meant, nor did he intend to explain it. She might not understand even if he were to explain, and he did not intend to make her understand either.

She was kind. Beatrice, was extremely kind.
That is why, what Subaru? was testing out. If he were to tell her about that, it was a given that she would be absolutely against it. ??That was, something which Beatrice must be restricted from getting to know.

Beatrice: "So, how did it go, in fact? Was the purpose of reading the book fulfilled, I suppose?"

Subaru: "??Yeah, about that."

That is what Beatrice asked Subaru, who still had the book placed on his knees.
The moment immediately before the immediately previous moment?? the moment immediately before Subaru had disregarded his own physical state, Subaru had just been seeking a way to capture ?Reid Astrea? and was just about to read his ?Book of the Dead?.
That had come to a standstill due to complicated reasons, and multitudes of situations got caught in between the interval such that that would feel as if it had been quite an old topic?? though that went only for Subaru, at maximum.

Things he ought to do, things he must do, they had all been decided.
That is why??,

Subaru: "Beatrice, it'll be getting? a bit confusing. ??Lend me, your strength."

Beatrice: "??. That is a given, in fact. Betty is Subaru's partner, I suppose."

Promised Beatrice to Subaru, who had broken the ice without any explanations.
Her existence was, truly, very truly, reassuring for the ?.

???????

??The impact, jumped around freely in the aisle of the stone tower.

???: "Haha ~tsu! Hahaha ~tsu! You're doing it, you're quite doing it, you're surely doing it, perhaps you're doing it, you've been doing it, you've done it, because you've been doing it ~tsu! Gluttonous drinking ~tsu! Gluttony ~tsu!"

???: "Is there any time to be playing around? That is quite the pliability, isn't it."

Using the walls, ceilings of the aisle as a foothold, making free use of transforming tactics at will from next to next was the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, Ley Batenkaitos.
And the one rushing around at high speeds, was the one who had kept the inferior physical form of her body someplace else and was moving around nimbly, Ram.
Her petite frame fluttered about and danced, and the sounds of blows mercilessly blew away ?Gluttony's? body. At that point, rushing in as having been waiting for that was??,

Emilia: "??Wroom and, boom!"

Wielding a large ice hammer in both of those hands, swinging it as if aiming for a home run was Emilia.
The damaging portion of the ice hammer, as large as a human's trunk, turned into a strike with all of her might and made a firm hit onto Ley's back. The small frame bounced and jumped along with a thunderous roar like a gum ball.

??No, he bounced too far off.
Instantly kicking the ice hammer, he by himself had jumped ahead and killed the impact.

Ley: "Ahawaha~! You're doing it doing it doing i~t! But but, that won't do! That can't defeat us!"

Emilia: "??~hk, he's fast!"

At ?Gluttony? displaying moves with a touch of acrobatics, Emilia made a frustrated expression on her cute face.
Past and present, east and west, chewing the experts of all kinds of master arts, demonstrating abilities that had, quite literally, become "every single kind of martial arts" was the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?,

Ley's fighting strength?? or perhaps, it should be called his opposing pressure. It had attained preeminence, a remarkable difference of unleashing optimal techniques of the highest peak each moment to the next.

Subaru: "If the ?Memories?, the efforts or the training, if they’re all being completely included, then....."

Though it was quite hateful, perhaps ?Gluttony? did not even have a need to possess a consciousness? such as one saying "let's pull them out". When noticed the body already moved, that was the kind of Authority it was, of pulling them out in all kinds of scenes.

??The stolen ?Memories? even included the experience points of the physical body.

That was also evident by Subaru not remembering how to use the whip he carried around at all. It seemed that whip had been Subaru's main weapon before losing his memories, but the correct way to hold it and swinging it, he could remember none of it altogether.
In the first place, why did he choose something like a whip as his main weapon.
It must be easier to make better use out of than a sword or a lance, it must have been a shallow thought like that. Though there were no objections to that itself??,

Subaru: "I wish I would've thought of a counter plan, in case I lost my memories.....!"

Of course, he was aware it was an absurd request, Subaru, however, still cursed it. By doing that, for single moment, he was able to forget his effeminate jealousy towards his disappeared ?Memories?.
The jealousy towards the disappeared ?Memories? = ?Natsuki Subaru?.

Beatrice: "Subaru, asking again, in fact. Are you really alright, I suppose?"

At that sideward face of Subaru's, Beatrice raised her voice.
At her question, who had been supporting Subaru's body as he shrugged his shoulders, Subaru nodded with a "Yeah",

Subaru: "Right now, the fight’s a struggle..... if that collapses, our way to victory will....."

Beatrice: "??But, there is opposition in Subaru being taken away from here, in fact."

Subaru: "But, it's necessary. You understand, right, Beatrice....."

Beatrice: "That is??"

Subaru: "Lend me, your strength. Once again..... I request you."

While maintaining meticulous caution among the ceaseless shocks, trying not to have his voice tremble, Subaru blackmailed Beatrice with an unfair manner of speaking.
At those cruel words of request of Subaru's, Beatrice closed her eyes, making a difficult expression.

Lend your strength, that was the flow of conversation they had also had in ?Taygeta? library.

However, that time had been before Subaru had activated ?Cor Leonis? as well, and Beatrice had not known that the situation of Pleiades Watchtower had deteriorated this much.
That is why, this was a heinous technique of Subaru's which gripped onto Beatrice's kindness.

"????"

Scrutinizing Subaru's proposal with a difficult face was Beatrice.
The sudden deterioration of Subaru's physical condition, and the recovery of Ram's fighting strength which accompanied it?? the associativity between them was evident, and Ram, Beatrice, and even Emilia had noticed Subaru's rash perseverance.
But still, everyone knew they could not tell him to stop.

??That Subaru being burdened with his hardship was why the war front was being barely maintained.

Talk in name only, if Subaru was to unfasten ?Cor Leonis? here while caring for himself, the first to follow would be the collapse of Ram, Emilia will get her ?Name? eaten by ?Gluttony?, their cooperation will crumble down and they will be defeated.
And if ?Gluttony? was rendered free, the power balance of the tower would fall into an unrecoverable state, ultimately everyone would die in defeat, and it would be game over.

Subaru: "......In the end, me being burdened is the best, the better option."

Subaru, who could never really be of any help even when he was acting rash, was making strides in the fighting strength by taking over Ram's inferior physical form. That was, an absolute requirement for capturing the tower.
Correctly speaking, even in the efficacy of ?Cor Leonis?, there lay a trap not easy to solve.
That was, consciously or subconsciously, Ram saving up her fighting strength.

"????"

With overwhelming sense and techniques beyond comprehension, Ram was in complete control of the place.
In spite of that, the reason why she had not overcome the opposition, was because Ram had imposed a limiter on her own fighting strength, for whom only a single step further was required. ??The reason for that was her faltering due to carefully considering Subaru's status.

If Ram were to move to the fullest, it would impose an enormous burden onto Subaru.
Subaru would not be able to endure that. That possibility, was putting a halt on Ram's hands and legs.

The truth is, something similar had occurred when he had gone around towards Julius and Reid.
It had been confirmed he was capable of taking over Ram's inferior physical form through ?Cor Leonis? itself, without having to meet up with her?? however, in a situation where Ram does not know of the interrelation between her own favourable state and Subaru's state, Ram does not save on her fighting strength.
As a result, the backfire, lacking any regret, scorched only Subaru and did not lead to mutual harm.

It also meant the end for Ram's time as standing unrivalled, the worst kind of mutual harm.
It was not possible to continue sprinting with the entire strength for long in a state of lacking oxygen.
That was all there was to it.

Henceforth, drawing up Ram's fighting strength through ?Cor Leonis?, in terms of results, Ram's judgement to save onto her abilities was correct. Being balanced was the best.
However, that improvement of Ram's combat power, ?Gluttony? was narrowly following it with the limitless arts of war he had plundered. Emilia was compensating for the parts where he could not be pushed away, but still, ?Gluttony? could not be distanced away from, continuing to eat away with an extraordinary ability to survive.
That is why, towards that??,

Beatrice: "??Minya!!"

Enough to envelop the entire aisle, violet crystals materialised and were fired in a single action.
Acting in consent with Beatrice's chant, who swung her small arm downwards, the concentrated attack of the magic called shadow magic, swooped down onto Ley, who had turned his back towards this side, with tremendous vigour.
Immediately afterwards, the boisterous dance of violet light swallowed the petite frame, engulfing the aisle with the sound of shattering glass.

"????"

Within the fluttering flakes of violet, dancing and falling, leaping away from the attack's span were the two of Emilia and Ram. Evading the fire with instantaneous judgement, it was as expected of their physical ability to quickly avoid it.
On the other hand, having been in the same circumstance but only having delayed the part of him facing it with his back, Ley could not evade it easily the way Emilia and Ram had done.

It was a magic to be feared, which crystallised the struck targets, turning them into a brittle and transient existence and smashing them.
Minya, capable of fatally wounding even through light contact, if it were to be recklessly fired this much in such a confined range, it would be difficult for an enemy, even if it were to be a transient being, to cut through unhurt.
When the dance of the light which had been given rise to by the violet arrows came to a halt, the form of ?Gluttony? who had taken enormous damage was?? not there.

Beatrice: "??~hk!?"
Emilia: "Eh!? Where did....."

Beatrice inhaled in astonishment, Emilia made a strained expression and looked around.
Within the chaos, the one to get a grasp on the situation the fastest truly had been Ram.

She put her hand on her own right eye, and with only her left eye open, turned back. Subaru knew there was something like a path connecting him and Ram through ?Cor Leonis?.
Ram, activated some type of a technique. Using that peculiar power, she understood where specifically

the disappeared ?Gluttony? was.
His whereabouts were??,

Ram: "Barusu!"

"????"

Ram shouted, widening her light crimson eyes.
At that moment, from her line of sight Subaru comprehended the arrival of a hazardous presence right behind them. That was aiming for the back of Subaru?? no, Beatrice.
With the interruption by Minya just now, did it intend to convey that it had polluted the battle.
At any rate, it was not vastly different from the transpiring happening.

Ley: "??Must say, if the one right now was to be continued consecutively?, it'll be getting tiresome, that's why."

Accompanying the sneering words, the dagger fastened to his arm flashed.
That was the strike by Ley, who had leapt through the space and escaped the concentrated attack of violet arrows. In line with the frequent usage of the ?Fist King?, the odd talent of the one who became the ?Leaper??? it could be named, short range warp.
According to what had been seen, it seemed as if there were certain limits to the distance, but still, the compatibility of the strange talent of jumping over space and the encircling attack was the worst.
Carrying no significance regarding the type of the surprise attack, in the end, anything aside from getting involved in the head-on match was??,

Subaru: "Beatrice"
Beatrice: "Suba??"

Thoughts and actions, ? and body did not always coincide.
The moment initially? after he pushed the small body away reflexively, a sharp sensation deeply gouged out his chest.

Subaru: "Kah."

As if scratching scab with claws, the pain and impact was several thousand times that. He instantly regretted having received that with his chest. Though he regretted it, no other convenient shield had been present there.
Bewildered by the momentary judgement, he shuddered at the mere thought of Beatrice having been slashing down. So much so, that he thought it would be better for him to become a shield of flesh compared to that. It was painful, though it was painful, if it was merely pain, merely the wound on his body, they would last for only an instant. Not even an instant. But, it was much better than ? being wounded.
Much better, than ? dying.

"Subaru?? ~hk!!"

The loud voice echoed within the tower, when he tried to turn back and see to whom? it? belonged, his knees snapped.
Strength faded away from his limbs, surprisingly easily. Pathetically fragile, he was unable to support his head. Even an infant could hold his head still, but what was this man, who had significantly aged, doing.

Such that even this frivolous talk wouldn't come to mind, his consciousness fell into the sole of the deep, dark hole.
A vivid ache and sense of loss, scorched his brain.

Subaru: "??Ghi."

Giving rise to a shriek, he endured his voice trying to fly out by grinding his teeth.
It was not as if he would feel any better if he were to let it out. It was not as if he would feel any better if he were to not let it out. However, there were people here who, if Subaru were to cry out now, would surely have their ? shattered.
He could not allow that. Because he could not do so, stay silent and die. Natsuki Subaru.

Ley: "??How nice, onii-san. So you will be going to the next one by doing tha~t?"

There echoed a voice overlooking Subaru, who had powerlessly crumbled down while continuing to resist his screaming.
He had endured his screaming. However, he could not possibly endure that mocking voice.

"????"

In a situation where his limbs had been rendered completely incapable of moving, he directed strength into his arm, and moved his finger.
And, with a single middle finger raised, his lips moved.

Subaru: "Die, idiot."

After that, his consciousness came to a halt??.

???????

? Count 2.
? Having Emilia and Ram cooperate, aiming for an early settlement with Ley Batenkaitos, failure.
? Timing is essential, for taking over Ram's inferior physical form through ?Cor Leonis?.
? ??Beatrice's surprise attack, is incompatible with ?Gluttony?.

???????

??Fiercely, the enshrouding clouds of sand were trying to enwrap the field of vision.

"????~hk ~hk."

With his entire body swinging around at the sensation of violently swaying about, Subaru desperately clung on, trying not to be thrown off. Ahead of him, a pigtail was shaking about left and right.

???: "??Work hard, Sand Earthworm-chan!"

In accordance with Meili's call, the Sand Earthworm trembled its large build and intensely hammered in and struck its face. Swallowed by that shock wave, gave rise to an immense loss in the troops of the advancing horde of Witch Beasts.
However, those lost troops were covered in the matter of a few seconds, trampling upon the scattered corpses of their own kind, the hordes of Witch Beasts continued to push in without halting their feet.
??The war situation, was unfavourable.

"????"

Under their eyes?? no, in all directions, advancing in were the innumerable Witch Beasts. With those as her opponents, Meili made free use of her preparations, which in no way could be stated to be sufficient, and was struggling fiercely.
Honestly speaking, Meili's efforts, as she controlled the Witch Beast, were hard to notice by an outsider's perspective. She ordered instructions to the Witch Beast, and obeying that, the fiendish monster rampaged about. There was no mystery in that if that alone was to be observed.
However??,

Meili: "Hah, hah ~hk."

Looking at her shape, with sweat on her forehead and occasionally inhaling agonizingly, it could perhaps be understood at a single glance that it was a recognition too difficult to observe.

Meili: "Hah, fu~h..... enough, geez o-onii-san, treats people so rudely~."

Wiping the sweat dripping down her chin by the back of her hand, Meili's eyes, who had stated some harsh words, had become bloodshot.
It was not as if she had directly linked with the Witch Beasts, like Subaru's ?Cor Leonis?, but to bend the atrocious Witch Beast's instinct as per her own notions, an immense strength of will was needed.

For Subaru, who had read her book once and personally experienced her half death, the weight of that indemnification was clearly known. That is precisely why, it had been transmitted to him.

??That Meili was seriously thinking of capturing the tower, along with Subaru and the rest.

Subaru: "??~hk "

Meili: "He~y, onii-san!? If you don't grab on properly, you'll die~, you kno~w!"

Subaru: "I-I know.....!"

The moment immediately after he profoundly thought of those deep emotions, his body felt as if it was being carried away in the horizontal jolts and his posture crumbled. He had momentarily withstood his ground, but he was shouted at by Meili when she discovered that.
While complying with those words, Subaru calmed down, and clung to the protuberance of the large build.

??At present, the figures of Subaru and Meili were on top of the large build of the Sand Earthworm.

Meili: "If instructions were to be given directly from a close distance?, there is supposed to be a child which listens to what is said even within children who cannot learn anything, isn't i~t."

Subaru: "Like I said, I never thought, I'd get to have a Witch Beast ride.....!"

Swishing through the air, with his body being jolted by the velocity of the Witch Beast's body cutting through the atmosphere with a roar, Subaru skilfully moved around his body weight, stuck in admiration of Meili, who was managing the Witch Beast's back.

This time as well, Meili's battle with the hordes of Witch Beasts commenced from the balcony of the fourth layer.
Making use of several Sand Earthworms which had been prepared in advance, having the hordes of Witch Beasts advancing towards the watchtower suffer an attack, to block the invasion of the Witch Beasts into the tower was Meili's role.
However, she quickly? gave up on the attack from the balcony, jumping onto the back of the Sand Earthworm underneath, and then in one go, plunged into the Witch Beast, with vigour like that of a high wave, from the middle of its forehead.

At that heroic tactic of Meili's, accompanying her as a bait was what Subaru's current state was.

Meili: "Really, Witch Beast-chan's all love onii-san, isn't i~t."

Subaru: "And that's nothing to be happy about..... ~hk."

Looking at the excited state of the Witch Beasts drawing near, Meili sighed as they were crushed by the Sand Earthworm. While agreeing with her comment, Subaru narrowed his eyes at the hurriedly approaching hordes of Witch Beasts.

Though the principle behind it was unknown, it was something he was aware of in terms of the result.
The Witch Beasts who surrounded the watchtower, strictly speaking, were not aiming for the watchtower, but had gathered aiming for Subaru who was inside of it. ??That was, evident from this situation as well.
The spearheads of the Witch Beasts were concentrating on the extreme towards the Sand Earthworm, which was giving a ride to Meili and Subaru.
Turning their legs around, which were supposed to have been facing towards the tower, hastily making way towards this side with unraveled fangs, were merely the instincts of Witch Beasts trying to kill a

living being, nothing more.

Subaru: "It wasn't as if I was half-convinced, but....."

Him having the physical constitution which attracted Witch Beasts, was a peculiarity Subaru, who had been in present-day Japan till yesterday, did not even need confirmation for as a real feeling. In the past, he had gnawed the pocky for the dog kept in the neighbourhood, but could that have been a symptom of the early stage of this physical constitution.
He was utterly unaware now. Though he was unaware??,

Subaru: "It seems it's no mistake that I am responsible for a large part of the five obstacles."

The hordes of Witch Beasts advancing towards the watchtower, and the ones of ?Gluttony? putting his approach toward?s the tower to test through Subaru's ?Memories?, and Reid who took in that ?Gluttony? and acquired substance, and Shaula who commenced aiming for Subaru by the virtue of her transformation, and the jet black shadow which swallowed the entirety of the watchtower??.

Looking back now, the thought of the responsibility for their origin seemingly truly coming down to Subaru could not prevented. Of course, inevitability was no possible part of it.

Subaru: "My mind, is getting depressed....."

However, if the Witch Beasts, Shaula, and the jet black shadow could be lured outside of the watchtower, there may possibly form a way to break out of the deadlock of the present circumstances.

Subaru: "......It is not forbidden to destroy the ?Trials?, huh."

The fifth rule, behind capturing Pleiades Watchtower.
When he thought of the feelings of Shaula's ?, who had hid that, he felt his chest ache, but the rule he had finally fished out of her mouth granted a new viewpoint towards the place known as the Pleiades Watchtower.
It was not as if his eyes had opened innovatively, by getting to know that rule.
However, granted with a scale he had never thought of, his way of looking at the world had expanded remarkably. Things which do not exist cannot be obtained. That was, the fundamental law of the world.

To pass over the ?Trial? without finishing it, to act contrary to the established routine of the ?Trial?, that had been prohibited.
Without even getting involved in that, destroying the ?Trial? itself had not been prohibited. What, could that mean.
What could it??.

Subaru: "Mei??"

Li, trying to continue his words on, that is when Subaru witnessed it.
By changing the course of the Sand Earthworm, whether the terrain of the watchtower's environs were usable or not, while attempting to confirm that, the objective came to a standstill.

Because an assailing corona, from overhead, had scattered away the thick trunk of the Sand Earthworm.

"????~hk ~hk ~hk."

With more than eight meters blown off of the around ten meter wide waist, the Sand Earthworm shrieked, giving rise to its death wail.
The proceedingly lowering roar of the Witch Beast also resembled a howl, and Subaru, who had basked in that at close proximity, felt his vision dye white with its explosive intrusion into his eardrums.
On top of the Witch Beast, which had experienced that and was disseminating bluish-purple bodily fluids, having been unable to stop its body from getting blown off into a thousand scraps at both the front and back of its trunk, Subaru and Meili's bodies were thrown down.

Subaru: "??Ah."
Meili: "Gh?? ~hk!"

Instantaneously stretching out his hand, he took Meili's petite body within his arms.
Patting his shoulder and trying to call out to him was a byproduct of it. By reflexively leaning his body forward, he had been able to catch her falling body.
However, that had not been a drastic settlement. The Sand Earthworm's large frame somersaulted, and not only Meili, but Subaru had also been thrown off.

Even if he were to pull her in, in the end, they would fall on top of the sand, a place surrounded completely by Witch Beasts.
If that happens, the two of them would become feed for the Witch Beasts while they attempt to reorganise themselves.
Above all??,

Subaru: "??Shaula."

Clinging to the outer wall of the tower, with its tail stinger facing towards Subaru and the rest, the titanic scorpion?? Shaula, with her large build slipped into the twilight, she was distantly visible having made her appearance.

They were out of time.
Within the tower, someone broke the rule. In accordance with that, Shaula lost her self and transformed into the titanic scorpion and just as what she had reported about herself, she commenced attacking, aiming for Subaru.
That single bomb had scattered away the Sand Earthworm's trunk, and mid air, towards Subaru and Meili??,

Meili: "Onii-sa..... ~hk."

Hugging Meili tightly, who was within his arms and had raised a voice as that of a scream, Subaru did not let his eyes avert from the titanic scorpion?? no, Shaula. The red compound eyes, within the presence of night, emitted a distinct glow, and the line of sight unbeknownst to any course of action, clearly

understood it was him upon looking at Subaru.

Light gathered at the tail stinger, and now once again, a corona was fired.
They would get vapourized away should they be struck by that. However, they must not get struck by that.

He wanted to avoid being killed by Shaula, regardless of how much that may abrade away his ?. If he were to bend away from that, he would surely become a miscreant this time.
However, a way to defend themselves while they were mid air was.

"????~hk ~hk."

The moment the corona was fired, the Sand Earthworm writhing in agony thrusted itself above the line of fire. Was that the simply instinctive movement of the Sand Earthworm, or did Meili influence it in some way, he did not know.
However, the single blast Shaula had fired, had been avoided at the moment when it was supposed to vaporize Subaru away.
And??,

Subaru: "Gah, gugh."

With vehement vigour, Subaru and the rest fell on top of the sand from their sands.
Meili, who was strongly embraced within Subaru's arms, was perhaps safe. However, Subaru himself had not been safe. Unable to defend himself, he had gotten his head within the extensive sand.
A dull sound echoed, the joints of his bones, which must be avoided from getting smashed, had gotten broken.

At that instant, his field of vision was rendered completely black.
His nerves, which must be avoided from getting slashed, had gotten cut a thousand? times.

Not only what was visible to his eyes, but sounds, sensations, anything and everything turned distant.
Merely his nose remained alive. It was baffling. The nose, which was not even expected to be capable of doing something useful normally. For some reason, till the very end of the end, he could sense scents.

The sweet, scent.
Within his arms, having been there till recently, that sweet scent.

Perhaps, yet remaining alive, that sce??.

???????

? Count 7.
? Escaping outside of the tower, the effectiveness of luring away the Witch Beasts.
? The Witch Beasts' aim is Subaru. The aim of the shadow and titanic scorpion as well, is perhaps the

same.
? ??With Natsuki Subaru alone, Meili cannot be protected.

???????

Subaru: "Ghu??"

Enduring the nausea welling up within him, Subaru glanced at the front once again.
Stepping firmly pouring immense strength in the legs, he somehow managed to have his body remain still. His anguish had not been eased. He was merely skilfully deceiving his anguish.

???: "Hiyah! Hiyayah! Eiyah!"

Crushing the bitterness of gastric juices in his teeth was Subaru, and in front of him, fiercely welding two ice swords was Emilia. Evading those attacks of Emilia's calmly, with a deriding smile was the bitter enemy he was tired of looking at, Ley Batenkaitos.

"????"

Since the restart point of ?Return by Death? had been set up to the moment immediately following the confrontation with Louis Arneb in the ?Book of the Dead?, Emilia and ?Gluttony's? encounter was inevitable.
At the point in time Subaru had ?Returned by Death? to, the battle between Emilia and ?Gluttony? had already commenced.

The simple way to change the situations, was to tamper with the match-making. However, activating ?Cor Leonis? immediately after ?Returning by Death?, Subaru was able to see the positions of his comrades within the tower, and he naturally? understood? that this fight was unavoidable.

Henceforth, he did not have the situation of the tag team of Emilia and Ram fighting Ley change.
??However, something could be done about that in its own way.

Subaru: "??Julius!"

Julius: "I know!"

At Subaru's sharp call, in accordance with that, a single shadow stepped in.
That was, with a knight sword in his grip and running through the frozen aisle, Julius. Having his light purple hair flutter in the icy wind, he commenced his gallant piercing sprint from a lower posture.

Ley: "Haha ~tsu! Even the nameless knight-sama shall be partaking in the battle hu~h!"

Julius: "Unfortunately, if that was intended to be a provocation then that is quite weak. Subaru pricks at spots much more painful."

Ley: "That, despite being comrades, what's up with that?"

Brushing away the advancing piercing dash with his dagger, Julius and Ley exchanged words at close proximity. Even during that, sword strikes unfolded between the two, and special moves being exchanged opposite to the content of their conversation were being performed.

??Having Julius accompany them to this place, was a type of a gamble.

When the five obstacles had attacked the watchtower for the first time, Subaru had Julius accompany them for going around this as well. At that time, Emilia had gotten her ?Name? eaten, and her cooperation with Julius, who had been rendered unknowing to her battle style, had been shoddy, lacking in the ability to corner ?Gluttony?.
However??,

Subaru: "This time, nobody has forgotten Emilia-chan. On top of that....."

Emilia and Julius' coordination, was soundly driving Ley into an inferior position. At that point, ahead of Subaru's line of sight, was the shadow of a person kicking the ceiling and making a sudden descent?? Ram severely cut in between.
Of course, increasing her fighting strength through ?Cor Leonis? was Subaru's greatest duty. That had been practiced this time as well, and Ram advanced closer to Ley's torso with unordinary body handling.
And,

Ram: "Just, kindly take the exit already."
Ley: "Ghu, egh."

Cold words, and her palm, with equal sharpness, drove into Ley's side. At the palm strike seemingly directly damaged the internal organs through the gaps in ribs, and a distinct rumble of pain spilled through Ley's lips.
At the same pace, Ram's knee assaulted the snapping body, and grabbing the hair of her opponent from the back of the head, and slammed it into the floor. On top of that, she consecutively swung down her heel into his face.

Merciless might, continuous attacks, those drove away Ley into certain defeat.
However, Ley had not been harmed and dealt with. The heel Ram swung down onto his face, having grabbed that slender ankle while lying down, he was glaring at Ram from below with a bloodstained evil countenance.

Ley: "Nee-sama, cau~ght....."

Emilia: "Hiryah!!"

Ley: "??Gah ~tsu!?"

Attempting to express a smile on his evil countenance was Ley, that body, from a directly horizontal

attack?? by the ice hammer given shape to and swung by Emilia like a golf swing, got blown off.
It was a nice save, just when he was about to put his wickedness to work by grabbing Ram's leg. At Ley, who went rolling, somersaulting, Emilia gallantly raised her eyebrows and pushed out her chest.

???: "......As merciless, as always, I suppose."

Right beside him, Beatrice, while supporting his body, whispered at those actions of Emilia's with admiration, amazement, and somewhat of pride.
The truth is, Subaru felt the same. She had a cute face, she could truly be relied? upon.

Ram: "Emilia-sama, gratitude for the rescue."

Emilia: "Mhm, it's fine. Ram got grabbed because she's moving around this much, after all. Julius as well, thank you for coming here."

Julius: "Not at all, ?Gluttony? is an opponent I am deeply connected to as well. Rather, my deepest apologies for exposing Emilia-sama and Miss Ram to danger. This was originally supposed to be a spot where I would tell you to kindly stand back, but....."

Ram: "With that as the opponent, there must be no room to be acting upon chivalry or gentlemanliness, isn't it."

Ram, while hugging her elbow, flatly intercepted Julius' words. Even Julius could not refuse that. It seemed as if he felt ashamed of his feelings towards that itself.

There is a certain style to battle, there are certain rules to warriors.
However, adhering to that, and becoming too obsessed over pride, would result in large losses. ??For Julius, this was a difficult spot. However, there was no choice for him but to respond to it.
At the very least, with the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, an atrocious gang as the enemy??,

Ley: "......A~h, you sure are doing it. To do this much with us as the opponent is quite something."

Saying that, the aforementioned Sin Archbishop stood up while shaking his head.
Whether that was him resounding having received Emilia's heroic blow from his shoulder, his right arm was still loosely handing down. Possibly, the shoulder bones had perhaps been fractured.
If that was true, then it could be said it was possibly fatal for the Authority of Ley Batenkaitos, of reconstructing battle styles through ?Memories?. No matter how proficient a battle style may be, it would be rendered meaningless if it was not exercised perfectly.

Subaru: "......Or instead, by substituting with the little sister, are you going to be switching the body and everything to the other?"

Ley: "??. Waha~n, we see, huh. Onii-san is aware of our ?Solar Eclipse? and ?Lunar Eclipse? is what that means. Well well, got seen through, isn't it. But you kno~w."

Putting an abrupt halt to his words, ?Gluttony? stuck his tongue out as if mocking Subaru and the rest.

Though Subaru furrowed his eyebrows to that gesture, the answer was provided immediately.
That was??,

Ley: "??In such a disadvantageous situation, i~s there any meaning for us to still continue fighting?"

Subaru: "??~hk! Not good!"

Obvious logic, Subaru shouted while cursing the shallowness of his own thought.
Hearing that call of Subaru's, Emilia and the others also seemingly reached the same thought, but they were too late.

Ley: "Baha~hayee."

Lightly swinging his hand, Ley's figure jumped over the space.
Using the odd talent of the ?Leaper?, he erased his form from the aisle.

Julius: "Stay on the lookout for the surroundings! We don't know where he may appear from yet!"

Ram: "??It is futile. That bunch, once they are allowed to get away, they escape. That must be why, they haven't been caught even once yet, isn't it."

Rendering his form invisible was ?Gluttony?, Julius called for vigilance for that surprise attack, but Ram, while shaking her head left and right, probed into the situation with composure.
Subaru too, felt the same as Ram. Just as the words Ley had left, there lay not a single reason for him to continue fighting in such a disadvantageous situation.

Ley Batenkaitos, was a Sin Archbishop, not a warrior.
He did not possess the qualities of continuing to fight until the very end, or enjoying hard battles either.
According to Louis' statement, what they desired was the greatest life, the itinerary of optimum solutions.
??The hazards of hard battles or defeat, those could not even be forgotten desires for them.

Emilia: "......Then, it's over already?"

Dumbfounded, Emilia whispered while reducing the ice hammer she held in her hand to air.
In those words was, not the relief of the enemy having disappeared, but the disappointment having let a bitter enemy slip from their hands?? no, something differing furthermore, despondency.
The reply to that despondency, that was??,

Ram: "??Just, a little bit more and yet!"

"????"

Ram: "Just, a single step more, and the bunch who made Rem go through all that could have had been..... ~hk."

Kneeling down, raising a high-pitched voice was Ram.

She powerfully struck her fist to the aisle's floor, trembling her voice for ?Gluttony?, who had artfully succeeded in running away.

Everyone in this place was painfully aware, of the feelings of her regretful self.
The reason why Emilia prevaricated her words, why Julius hid his yellow eyes, why Beatrice, beside Subaru, lowered her shoulders, all of it collected upon that.

They did possess a sudden clue.
However, unlike relying on knowledge of the tower, enquiring ?Gluttony? about the damage dealt by the Authority of ?Gluttony? directly, it was a way that had been thought over with certainty.
To have that slip away from right in front of the eyes, it was obvious to feel despondency for that.

Subaru: "......With this, Ley has been repelled away, is that what it would mean?"

Understanding the feelings of Ram's ? sinking deep into lamentation?, Subaru possessed a different kind of doubt.
Seeing the disadvantage of three against one, Ley decided to withdraw from this spot. However, speaking in terms of whether he had withdrawn completely as a threat to the watchtower, that was yet unclear.

Though Ram had informed Julius of the futility of looking out for a surprise attack, but that was something limited to only this place. Within the tower, dangerous ?Gluttony? were wandering around, that situation yet remained unchanged.
If so, then it could not possibly be said that one of the five obstacles had been eliminated.
On the contrary, they had left an opponent about whom they had no idea where he may clash in from, to take care of himself, that was all there was to it.

Subaru: "??~hk, should the guy who escaped be ran after, or should another problem be looked after. At any right, right now....."

???: "??The thing known as a situation, is all about the opponent where one should be movin' around without thinkin' anythin'."

"????"

Suddenly, the moment he was giving consideration to the possibility of not making a move, he felt his hair rise at the voice which originated from? behind. When everyone turned back instantly, slow footsteps approached from ahead of the aisle.
Its owner, as if simply taking a walk without halting a single step, that was not something the aforementioned bunch would do.
For some reason.

???: "I'm takin' a walk around my garden, yet why should I be worryin' about other fellas?"

Boldly, without feeling shy for a single thing, the man?? the figure of Reid who descended down from the second layer, at that, Subaru felt the situation deteriorate further.
Keeping the issue of Reid for later, he had hastened Ley Batenkaitos' subjugation, but in terms of results,

Ley had escaped, and obstructing Reid's revival had completely failed??,

Emilia: "Since when, has this tower become your garden?"

Reid: "Heyhey, don't go around havin' misunderstandin's, fiercely frizzlin'. Let me tell ya, when I said garden I wasn't refferin' to this gloomy tower. You, ain't it obvious I'd? be callin' the whole world as my garden."

Julius: "......If the man who became legend by a single swing of sword says that, then that comment must not be a trifling matter."

At the arrival of Reid, who was not supposed to be able to leave the second layer, Emilia and Julius fired their own respective astonishment and words. The response to that was extremely typical of Reid, that could be said straightforwardly.
For this warrior who surpassed all human intellect, the idea of thinking over his footsteps?? no, not just footsteps. The thought of taking other people into consideration, was completely unbalanced.

Ram: "??Why, have you descended down here? You were not supposed to be able to leave that floor, isn't that so, trial taker."

Reid: "Talkin' to women knelt down and sunken ain't to my likin'. If ya want me to answer then try requestin'. I don't think strong-hearted women're bad. Though I don't think weak-hearted women're bad either."

Ram: "Is that so. ??Such a sleazebag."

Without expecting a direct response, Ram promptly halted her response to Reid.
The next instant, Ram, who had kicked the floor with enough force to burst it open, rushed towards the opposing Reid's bottom in a straight line, and turning into pink whirlwind, leapt towards the ?Sword Saint? standing bolt upright.

At the same pace, making the best use of her petite build, a high speed rotating kick was fired from her heel towards Reid's head. Without any exaggeration, a kick strike with enough force to mow down his head.
It was stark kick which, if it landed a direct hit, would blow off his head physically, if not that then at the very least, his consciousness.
Of course, the respective recoil would flow into Subaru from Ram, and pain like a strike of lightning would bolt through his body.

Subaru: "Ghu, ghu~u~u~ ~hk."

It is said that when an artery explodes, it pains to an inconceivable level. Right now, it could be boasted that what was running through Subaru's entire body was something close to that.
Ram's attack which had been unleashed to this extent, the fruits it bore were??,

Reid: "Not bad. But, that's all it's? got. Had it been Trisha she would've broken the floor with a single

blow, ya know."

Ram: "......Monster."

Reid: "Don't lump me together with somethin' like monsters. There's a limit to how low my worth can be, ya know."

Intercepting the kicking leg, he had the impact flow into the ground.
Having been witnessed earlier, physical attack killing?? that made the floor and walls of the aisle develop cracks, however, the damage to Reid himself had been blocked perfectly.
And, towards Ram's abdomen, who had halted movement??,

Reid: "Here, try endurin' this, you."

Spinning and turning around his body once, Reid's bulky and sturdy leg sprang up. At the same pace, the sole of his foot captured Ram's body, and swept it right upwards energetically.

Ram: "Kafugh."

With the air within her lungs squeezed out, Ram's lips, as she widened her eyes, vomited a large amount of blood out. While bathing in that without dodging it, Reid narrowed his eye unconcealed by the eyepatch and distorted his lips.
However, immediately opening? up his narrowed eye again, he spilled out "Wha~t?" with his voice.

Ram: "It was successful, wasn't it."

At that instant, Ram grasped the leg caved into her abdomen, and using her entire body, settled the joint of her knee. With an attitude as if unaffected by the impact of the strike which pierced into her abdomen.
Seeing that, Reid carved a puzzled expression??,

Reid: "??What. Ya're behind this too eh, young fish."

"????"

With a damp voice, he told Subaru, who gnashed his molars at the anguish like a bowling ball had been thrown into the pit of his stomach.

Emilia: "??~hk, no! Don't get any closer to Subaru!"

Immediately afterward, observing hazardous emotions levitating across Reid's blue eyes, Emilia stepped ahead. However, at her advance, Reid swung his arm in annoyance, purloining the ice sword driven into him and mercilessly struck Emilia's shoulder with its handle, and energetically kicked her fallen self.

Emilia: "Ah ~hk!"

Reid: "Ya're in my way."

Receiving the kick, Emilia got physically blown away. Much frighteningly, Reid did that with the leg whose knee was supposed to be captured in grip.
In other words, while continuing to have Ram cling to his leg, he had kicked and sent Emilia flying. In the end, no matter how much strength Ram may pour in, it could not do anything to Reid's knee.

Ram: "Kgh, his limits know no end!"

Julius: "??Prepare yourself!"

Casting aside the advantage of locking him, Ram, like a chess piece, and Julius drew near him alongside. However, the result of the attacks of the two was just as miserable.

His kick, his hand being used like a sword, respectively shot down Ram and Julius who were supposed to be at the pinnacle as warriors. Ram had her neck struck, Julius had his leg broken, all of them rendered incapable of standing.

Subaru: "??Shit."

And, in the aisle where comrades had fallen, Reid approached further, having literally eliminated the obstacles in his way. In front of his eyes, was merely the groggy Subaru, who had taken up Emilia and others' damage, and Beatrice, who had spread both of her arms wide as if shielding that Subaru.

Subaru: "Bea..... it's no use....."

Beatrice: "It doesn't matter if it's no use or if it's absurd, in fact. This is Subaru's property protection..... in that case, it is a special field of Betty's, Subaru's partner, as well, I suppose."

Beatrice's voice of acting strong, right now, echoed far too vainly.
Even when trying to respond to that strong spirit of Beatrice's, Subaru's hands, legs, made no reaction to the fighting spirit. What Subaru had taken up was only damage, which seemingly rendered the actions of his comrades futile.
Three of them were merely conscious, that was the fruit their willpower bore.

Beatrice: "Reid, why are you aiming for Betty and the others..... for Subaru, in fact?"

Reid: "Because it's in the middle of the ?Trial?, sayin' that'd be a pretty outdated response. My original plan aside, that actually goes for that pretty one....."

Beatrice: "So what, I suppose."

Reid: "By meetin' that one firsthand, my mind changed. It's disgustin', so I'll erase him."

A judgement grounded on peculiar sensitivity, conversation could not work against such an opponent.
At the same time, with the possibility of him turning over his view wiped out, Beatrice gnashed her pretty molars and glanced at Subaru behind, who had crumbled down and rendered immobile.

"????"

The reason why she took a tiny breath, was because she resolved her preparedness to fight and protect Subaru.
He wanted to tell her, to run away. However, what spilled out of Subaru's lips was merely a hoarse breath.

Reid: "There's no need for ya to go outta your way and rush to your death ya know, kid."

Beatrice: "Unfortunately enough, living as if dead is utterly unwelcome at this point."

Reid: "Hu~h, that so. Then, there ain't any choice."

With his name bearing the expression of a hero and a legend, he would not hurt a girl child.
Believing such thoughts are as though illusions, the glint in Reid's eye remained firm. It seemed to be sentencing as if the one standing in his path was not but an infant.
Henceforth, without expecting any benevolence of ?, Beatrice was the first one to use all her might.

Beatrice: "Ul Minya."

The emerging countless violet arrows submerged the aisle entirely, and completely blocked off any paths for Reid to escape through.
To fatally wound with the slightest contact was the special trait of Minya's, fathoming that with a single glance, without flinching whatsoever, Reid curved his lips.

Beatrice: "Natsuki Subaru's Great Spirit, Beatrice."

Reid: "Good goin'. ???Stick Swinger?, Reid Astrea."

With the mutual exchange of names, the atmosphere froze. Beatrice, with the violet crystals spread out in the air, and Reid, having picked up Julius' knight sword that had fallen at his feet, prepared themselves.

"????"

Until the very end of the end, Subaru was unable to voice anything.
However, he kept his eyes open, he never closed them for even an instant.

His own decisions and choices, from their results, he had been unable to avert his eyes.
He had been unable to avert them??.

???????

? Count 15.
? ?Gluttony? deserts, upon observing the situation to be visibly unfavourable.

? Neglected Reid, ultimately comes to kill Subaru with absolute certainty.
? ??Never again, will he let someone die before his own self.

???????

Subaru: "Beatrice ~hk."

???: "Wah!? W-What happened, I suppose!? Subaru!? Subaru!?"

The moment he opened his eyes, he hugged the young girl before him with no forethought.
Astonished by the sudden action, the young girl?? Beatrice, stiffened her petite body.
It was his reunion with her, who had persisted with tragic preparedness until the previous moment. It turned? into relief within his chest, along with unbearable guilt and breathed a painful wind into his ?.

Subaru: "Beatrice....."

He was grateful, he was able to meet her again.
Along with that, he felt apologetic for having her go through all of that.

Beatrice: "Subaru?"

Subaru: "??No, it's nothing. I do remember. You are Beatrice, I am Natsuki Subaru. You and I, are each other's partners, now onwards too, please take care of me, please have fun with me, very good."

Beatrice: "V-Very good, in fact....."

Beatrice, perplexed, raised her thumb at Subaru's rhythmic words.
It was an expression that must not be existing in this different world, so it must be the result of Subaru poisoning her with it. Patting that head of hers, Subaru took in a deep inhale, and exhaled shortly.
Following that he switched over his consciousness, believing he must grasp the situation??,

Beatrice: "Calm down, I suppose, Subaru."

Subaru: "Eh?"

Beatrice: "Properly tell what happened, in fact. Did something happen inside the book, I suppose? Were Reid's memories displayed? Betty aside, what about Emilia and everyone? Confirm whether you remember them, in fact. Properly recall, all things precious, I suppose."

Subaru: "T-That's..... yeah, hm, that's right."

Holding both of Subaru's cheeks in her hands, Beatrice brought that to attention.
Hearing those words of her, in front? of her hurried self he fell into slight reflection. It was a phenomenon might happen to someone who was looping often.

For an individual piling up loops, the fresh taste of a happening eventually fades away.
With that, experience points gained with people for whom that happening is for the first time and react accordingly slips off, and suddenly people start to appear as not being people??,

Subaru: "......I never thought, I'd be in that position."

In those kinds of works, the mind and body falls into that state due to trials run tens, hundreds or times even more than that.
Compared to that, for Subaru it was?? merely, the fifteenth time.

To stop thinking of people as people in merely fifteen times, perhaps it could be said his ? was turning harsher.

Subaru: "Am I an idiot. No, I am an idiot."

Casting away the weak, brittle, pathetic nature of his own ?, Subaru braced his mind.
He had only, died fifteen times yet, that is all. Without having made any progress, he had merely exhausted his life in indolence. How come did his such self, hold any right to proclaim he was exhausted. Such a thing did not exist for him. It did not.

Stand up, raise your face, clench your fists, Natsuki Subaru.
There's nobody else except you. Except you.

??Had it been ?Natsuki Subaru?, such failures never would have.

Beatrice: "??From the very beginning, Subaru has never been some superman capable of doing everything, in fact."

"????"

Suddenly, Beatrice told Subaru, who had been repeatedly wondering to himself.
Subaru inhaled at that comment, and widened his eyes. Gazing into those black eyes of Subaru's straightforwardly, Beatrice shook her head left and right, conceiving grief in her blue eyes.

Beatrice: "It can be said countless times, I suppose. Subaru is no such superman who can do anything, in fact. Always frantic about what lies in front, gets hurt for everyone's sake..... even enduring pain is not something he is good at, he is a normal boy, I suppose."

Subaru: "T-That's not, possible. That's not. After all, it should be like that....."

Beatrice: "It should be like that?"

Subaru: "It should be like that, only then can this....."

He firmly gripped to the pit of his stomach, gritting his molars, thinking back to the wounds of his arm, to

the wounds within his body, to his arm which had grown slightly sturdier, to everyone who relied upon Subaru, to Emilia, to Beatrice, to Ram, to Julius, to Echidna, to Meili, to Shaula.

His guts were rumbling such that it was irritating.
They were rashly pushing away, more than the moment of being on the verge of death, but perhaps Subaru's ?.

???: "So you have returned, Natsuki-kun..... Did something, happen?"

???: "Geez onii-sa~n, just when I thought you've worried everyone, it's because of tha~t? No fighting with Beatrice-chan now onwa~rds."

Disputing with Subaru and Beatrice?? no, it was nothing so stern.
However, looking at the state of the two facing him, they were Meili and Echidna returning from their patrolling of the library. Neither could he look at the faces of those two straightforwardly.

Echidna: "Beatrice, did something happen to Natsuki-kun? Was the impact, indeed, too much?"

Beatrice: "......It's not as if that's not true, in fact. But, Betty and the rest's proper thought was far too lacking for Subaru, who had to experience that misery, I suppose."

Echidna: "That is....."

Echidna furrowed her eyebrows at Beatrice, who turned her gaze downwards after staring at Subaru. However, she immediately pulled her chin in, as if having judged the circumstances,

Echidna: "Shaula, who had jumped out, and Julius, who went after her, have not returned. I am also worried about Emilia-san and Ram-san who went to see Rem-san. I would like to join up with at least either of them, but....."

Beatrice: "......Echidna and Meili, head to the balcony, in fact. Betty will head to the Green Room and search for Emilia, I suppose. Stay sufficiently careful."

Meili: "That's okay bu~t, what's onii-san going to do~?"

At Beatrice's brisk instruction, Echidna and Meili's lines of sight turned towards Subaru.
At those gazes, naturally, Subaru wanted to say he would accompany Beatrice but,

Beatrice: "??Subaru, will quietly stay here, I suppose."

Subaru: "Wha.....! Don't say stupid stuff, Beatrice! I'm alright! My senses may certainly have had dulled down after returning from the book but, they'll immediately be in their place.....!"

Informed by the standing Beatrice, Subaru reflexively snarled at those words. At the same pace, he poured strength into his legs in order to stand at the same level as them.
He poured strength into his legs but??,

Subaru: "??Ah?"

Beatrice: "Be in their place and, what happened, in fact?"

At Beatrice's question, Subaru looked down onto his legs in astonishment. Even if he tried to pour strength somehow, especially into his knees, he was unable to retain balance.
No matter what he did, his posture crumbled, and he was unable to stand up.

Subaru: "Why....."

Beatrice: "It's a matter of course, I suppose. Subaru is always, working too hard, in fact."

Subaru: "No, wait, please wait! Everything somehow working out when I'm at this level, that's....."

"????"

Subaru: "That's, not possible. I am....."

Shaking his head left and right in refusal, no matter how many times he tried, the result remained unchanged.
Even though he possessed no pain, no anguish, no fatigue, his will did not get conveyed to his limbs. And whilst he remained occupied with that, Beatrice ultimately took a single step in the direction of the staircase.

Beatrice: "??Subaru, Betty and the rest will cover whatever remains lacking, I suppose. That is why, you don't have to think of doing anything and everything all alone, in fact, after all"

Subaru: "Beatrice....."

Beatrice: "After all, that is Natsuki Subaru, I suppose."

Leaving behind a smile for Subaru, who widened his eyes in astonishment, Beatrice dashed. As if equalling her energy, Echidna and Meili also turned their backs towards Subaru,

Echidna: "Natsuki-kun, I have expectations from you. That you still might be able to give one last push."

Meili: "I think? it's fine if you rest. But, it was onii-san who said some pretty grand stuff to me so~, work hard on that a bit more."

Saying all they had to say, the figures of the three disappeared from the library, leaving Subaru behind, whom they had all spoken to.
If they were to take the staircase from the third layer, the three will clash with Julius, who must be making his way back around this timing. Or perhaps, at the same pace, Julius would not come and drag out Subaru, he had embraced that expectation as well??,

Subaru: "No way, he'd come..... if Beatrice, says all that."

He respected that.
Much less, the Subaru's after returning from the ?Book of the Dead? had been seen by the two of Echidna and Meili. There was no way their kind selves, would not trace that.
However, that solicitude came at the cost of life. Even though, he did not want to see someone among his comrades die before him.

Subaru: "All because, I'm so weak..... because I'm losing my spirit, at just this level, why."

Had it been the true ?Natsuki Subaru?, he must not have halted his feet by just this. His rage towards his own worthless self, gave rise to warmth in Subaru's chest.
However, alongside that, a separate feeling was also gushing forth.
That was, the words Beatrice had left behind.

'??From the very beginning, Subaru has never been some superman capable of doing everything, in fact.'

'It can be said countless times, I suppose. Subaru is no such superman who can do anything, in fact. Always frantic about what lies in front, gets hurt for everyone's sake..... even enduring pain is not something he is good at, he is a normal boy, I suppose.'

What Beatrice had recited, the image of the ?Natsuki Subaru? not present here.
Despite hearing that, Subaru was unable to believe that. It was difficult to believe in. After all, in accordance with that, that would truly mean he was just a normal human, isn't it.

Subaru: "Something, must have happened. That must have changed you, isn't it, ?Natsuki Subaru?....."

Something like, an extravagant meeting with someone.
Something like, attaining an unbelievable power.
Something like, experiencing something his current self couldn't even imagine.

Because something must have happened which had allowed him to grow out of being the hopeless Natsuki Subaru, that ?Natsuki Subaru? must have won the faith of everyone in his life in a different world.

Subaru: "It has to be like that....."

Without change, beating his legs, Subaru rolled up the sleeves of his clothes. Over there, a sarcoma with its origins not within Subaru's memories had engraved a pattern.
Personally experiencing as if taking responsibility for that seeming curse over his body, the root perhaps still remained unchanged. That was not possible.
That is why, ?Natsuki Subaru? was??,

Subaru: "?Natsuki Subaru?, I summon you....."

Suddenly, what he had mouthed was the genesis of the suspicion he harboured for this world's "Natsuki

Subaru".
The message for the existence absent here he had, upon times, engraved upon his arm, upon times, written and composed as if it were a curse in his room.
Seemingly thinking, as if hexing someone who had stolen away the role which originally belonged to him.

Subaru: "If, you really are within me, then..... come out now.....!"

Gripping his arms powerfully, with such strength that his bones would grate, Subaru called for ?Natsuki Subaru? who was within?? no, who was not present here.
The existence who could achieve ideals which Subaru, who was present here, could never attain. He asked ?Natsuki Subaru? to come out, if he was here.

Subaru: "Come, come, come.....! Show yourself, ?Natsuki Subaru?!!"

His arms had been lacking, so he latched to his neck with his hands. Of course, the deed of strangling oneself with his own hands, neither was it easy, nor could it be properly done.
In the first place, something as convenient as ?Natsuki Subaru? showing his face when his life was in a predicament would never occur. Had that been the trigger, Subaru would have drawn him close twenty times now.

Just how many times ?Natsuki Subaru? would have shown his face through that.

Subaru: "Shit, shit, shit.....! I am! I can't, do it! You're needed for this, ?Natsuki Subaru?!"

Seizing the grasp on his trembling knees, Subaru powerfully struck the floor with his fist. Though his fist pained at the floor of the library with unknown material properties, it could not possibly equal the sense of hopelessness tormenting his chest.

He wanted to save them. He truly, wanted to save everyone.
Nobody was in the wrong. Nobody would mutually hurt each other. He knew that. He could believe, without any wavering, that he could save, he could love everything.
Even though he wanted to save his beloved everyone, he did not possess the power to save them.

Subaru: "Precisely now, is when you are needed, isn't it..... and yet, why is it me. My weak, cowardly self, cannot save..... and yet."

Even now, his legs could not move.
Due to that, he ended up making Beatrice, Echidna, Meili, those who had not been there, Emilia, Ram, Julius, Shaula, face their point of death.
Because Subaru had not been able to do anything, they, who had been destined to die, could not be saved.

Subaru: "......?Cor Leonis?."

Whispering weakly, Subaru activated his own Authority, in order to be wounded.
The power of the ?Little King? that dwelled within him, immediately reported the positions of his

comrades within the tower. On top of that, the reality of them heading to face their own end, of the tower heading to its demise.

Distant, having unrolled a violent battle, that light was Emilia. This time, Ram, who was supposed to stay by her side, her light was slightly distanced away?? two separate lights, Patrasche, and Rem. She was accompanying them.
In the balcony, Shaula was struggling fiercely, and perhaps Meili had joined together there with her.
Julius and Echidna seem to be moving together, and Beatrice, acting independently, was heading towards Emilia and the others is what he comprehended.

The flow was precisely as Beatrice's instructions, and Subaru's knowledge of the situation.
At the same pace, the current circumstance headed towards failure as well??.

Subaru: "???"

With his mind directed by such negative thoughts, Subaru picked up a curious sense of discomfort.
As he turned his head towards his hind?? Subaru took an extensive look of the enormous library, filled with countless ?Books of the Dead?, ?Taygeta?.

"????"

It was an odd sensation.
Unmistakably, it was a sensation he was feeling for the first time. After all, ever since he grew conscious of his Authority of ?Cor Leonis?, he had been activating it at this spot after ?Returning by Death?.
Each time after that, Subaru headed for his comrades below, changing the cards he played repeatedly, running about for the sake of changing the situation, and used and exhausted his own life.

That is why, activating the Authority in ?Taygeta? was a matter of course for him.
However, after what Beatrice told him, stopping his feet here, a single step distant from the core and getting to overlook the situations within the tower, might have been the origin of this.
Thanks to that, what could this have been,

Subaru: "??This, response is."

Faintly, he could feel it, so dim that it felt as if it was about to disappear.
That was, distant from his comrades within the tower, however when compared to being felt with certainty, it was a distant, frail sensation?? but, a sensation that was certainly present there.

Pushing himself and having his trembling legs move, Subaru advanced tardily like a caterpillar. After that, he quickly had his body lean onto the bookshelf, and elevated his upper body with all his might.
Somehow leaning his body weight on the bookshelf, he stood up. And, he stretched his hand out to the frail light about to disappear, and grasped it.
That grasped light, a single ?Book of the Dead?, drawing that out??,

"????"

He gulped down a single inhale.
A single book, with just the title upon its black binding, a book terribly dull and dry.
However, it possessed profound meaning for Subaru.
Because??,

Subaru: "??Natsuki Subaru."

??There present was, the ?Book of the Dead? not supposed to be there.

(Translation Note : The “Book of the Dead” has Natsuki Subaru’s name in Kanji (????) instead of Katakana (???????).)

Arc 6 – Chapter 73, " "Natsuki Subaru" "

by admin - Saturday, November 02, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/11/02/arc-6-chapter-73-natsuki-subaru/

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Translated By :

- Ringo (/u/Ringo_17)

Proofread By:

- Nanashi

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??With the ?Book of the Dead? which had ?*Natsuki Subaru*? inscribed on it in his hands, he stood still.

Subaru: "????"

Widening his dark eyes in astonishment, Subaru felt his throat rapidly turning parched.
Modest expressions such as astonishing or stupefying would be far too lacking. What had struck Subaru at that moment was something much more serious, something as if numbing harm.
A lethal toxic which would wield affect only when used on Subaru, and nobody else??.

The ?Book of the Dead? of ?*Natsuki Subaru*?, was piercing through Subaru whilst commanding such powerful connotation.

Subaru: "Wh, y....."

So, the ?Book of the Dead? not supposed to be here was present here.
What was supposed to be present in the third layer of Pleiades Watchtower, ?Taygeta? were the ?Books of the Dead? recording the lives of the departed. Having the book of a living being was contradictory.
Or perhaps, could this mean he simply, by chance, had found the book of a human with the same name and surname.

Subaru: "That would have actually been convincing, had this not been a different world....."

The possibility that rose to the surface in his mind, was instantly repudiated.
Though it was a matter of course, this place was a different world?? in this place, where even the rules of naming would be vastly different from what Subaru was aware of, why would a name like ?*Natsuki Subaru*? take birth here.
Even before that, there lay a decisive issue.

The title of that book of ?*Natsuki Subaru*?, had been written in Kanji.

Subaru: "????"

From what all Subaru had witnessed till now, even letters were disparate in this different world. That is why, even if someone else, aside from Subaru, who did not know of the world's letters were to see it, they would probably perceive this title as if being hieroglyphic characters or something of that sort.
If that were to be considered, the unbelievable chances of Subaru finding the ?Book of the Dead? of ?*Natsuki Subaru*? here through sheer luck were??,

Subaru: "??It's predetermined and established, whom this belongs to."

He could only think of that being true.

Subaru: "????"

Once again, with the ?Book of the Dead? in his hands, Subaru silenced himself and pondered.
The reason why Subaru happened upon this ?Book of the Dead?, was because he had depended upon the dim response he had spied out through ?Cor Leonis?.
This had not been the first or second time he had searched for a book in the library, though Subaru was mindful of it, discovering the book being aimed for in this enormous archive was a deed next to impossible to achieve.
Perhaps, the kind unattainable unless god's invisible hand was being put to work.

Subaru: "Or perhaps, not god, but someone's....."

Subaru convicted, as if having anticipated that.
The rest lay, in the authenticity of this ?Book of the Dead??? whether what was depicted here, was truly the life of ?*Natsuki Subaru*? or not. If it was depicted indeed, then what sort of a trick was behind it.

As the solemn truth, Subaru was here, alive.
If the ?Book of the Dead? of this Subaru was truly here then??,

Subaru: "Am I being treated as deceased, ever since I lost my memories..... the ?Books of the Dead? of ?Taygeta?, that Hall of Memories, is even observing the worlds I die in.....?"

If that were the case, then in no way is it inconceivable that it was depicting Subaru's ?Deaths? in some type of form through the ?Book of the Dead?. However, in that case, what did that make of ?Return by Death?.

Subaru: "Whether it rewinds time, or does it rebuild the world itself, I had given a thought to both but....."

For the argument's sake, in the case that the ?Books of the Dead? assumed a method to generate the book of ?*Natsuki Subaru*?, it could not be helped but to reach the conviction that the latter had much more likelihood. If that holds true, then the phenomenon which encased this Natsuki Subaru was not something as charming as ?Return by Death? but??,

Subaru: "Am I, an idiot. No, I am an idiot..... Damn, coward."

Sensing his contemplation disarray into a slant, Subaru abused himself.
Why his thoughts had gone astray, he understood the reason for that by immediately noticing his own cowardice. ??He was merely, frightened of the ?Book of the Dead?.

What would happen when he would read the book of ?*Natsuki Subaru*?.

He was frightened, of that happening whose course was completely unfathomable. That is why, pursuing the hypothesis lacking all foundation, he was trying to delay it and keep delaying it.
Of opening up the first page, of the book within his hands.

Subaru: "????"

Though it was not a hypothesis which came into being merely five minutes ago or anything, the fact that the ?Book of the Dead? of ?*Natsuki Subaru*? was present here was strange, but for Subaru, it was also salvation.
Subaru also considered the evidence that it had not popped up and appeared at just this instant.
However, along with that, it also held the meaning that a ?Natsuki Subaru? other than himself, had certainly existed and had walked his own path in this different world, and also that Subaru was trampling upon those footsteps from above, laying waste to them, and painting them out.
That is why, all that was left was to gain confirmation.

Subaru: "First of all, as the ?Book of the Dead? of ?*Natsuki Subaru*?..... where does this thing start from, and where does it end at?"

At Meili's instance, precisely from her infancy onwards?? ever since she gained awareness of ?, ever since her memories had been established as memories, even her half death was able to be followed up to.

However, how would things unfold in Subaru's case. ??Having read the ?Book of the Dead?, it originated with sprouting as self-consciousness identical to that of Meili, facing growth over time, and finally, where it all came to an end.

If ?*Natsuki Subaru*? is being counted as deceased instead of the present Natsuki Subaru who lost his memories, to follow up to ?Natsuki Subaru's? memories till the moment immediately preceding the loss of memories, would be natural, or perhaps not.

Instead, perhaps it would follow up to the memories of the present Subaru, who had lost his memories, and awakened inside the tower. In that scenario, which ?Death? would it choose for the end.
Otherwise, as Reid's ?Book of the Dead?, what would merely be present would be a wreckage of memories turned void.

Just as the memories of Reid, which had been recorded in the ?Book of the Dead?, had disappeared from within the book in order to reconstruct him as the trial taker of this tower, the memories of ?*Natsuki Subaru*? had also possibly disappeared.
That is why, what would be visible after opening this book would not be the memories of ?*Natsuki Subaru*?, but??,

Subaru: "??In the end, what do you want to do, cowardly bastard."

Does he desire to see it, does he desire not to see it.
Disdaining his own self, who had been unable to easily respond to that, reprimanding the fearfully curled up ?, he exhaled.
After coming this far, it was inconceivable to opt for not seeing it. Even if it had risen to the surface as an option, he could not even envisage the lunacy of choosing it.

That is why, that is why, that is why, that is why, that is why??,
And then, and then, and then, and then, and then??,

Subaru: "??~hk."

Taking a powerful breath in, he opened up, the ?Book of the Dead?.
And, the journey of ?*Natsuki Subaru*?, of an unknown origin and an unknown termination??.

???????

??This is seriously bad.

Tasting a solid sensation on his face, his brain was being scorched by the flaming heat in his abdomen. Violent fever which restricted even his breathing, his head felt hot as if magma had been poured into his blood vessels. Yet his limbs turned colder and heavier, the inconsistent sensations jolting his existence down to the very soul itself.

His thoughts screamed about what had occurred. His thoughts screamed that he must do something.
With those flowing in and intertwining, he gave rise to a screech.

However, his consciousness, which was screaming he must do something, proved to be futile.
The moment he moved his hands in an attempt to break out of the deadlock, and touched his guts, which were the origin of the scorching heat, his palm was drenched wet with thick blood, and he understood that further blood also had the floor drenched.

??Ah, is all of this, my blood.

Though he was unaware of the amount of blood that had flowed on and inundated the floor, the bleeding had not been of the level of blood donation and so forth. The source of his life streaming out, did not put a halt to the fragile lamp of life.
In short, his flesh body had already commenced the countdown to death.

Even still, the reason why ? had not died yet, was because for this life of his, which was heading towards its death, there yet remained a mission to fulfill.

??He had, to raise his voice.

He must raise his voice.
Watch out. It's dangerous. Don't come here. Run. Without turning back even once, run at full speed.

And, he must inform about the hazard.
He must convey it to her, inform her about danger, so that she does not enter this place.

And yet??,

"????"

He was unable to raise his voice.
What spilled out instead, was the nauseating warm blood clot. With his throat clogged by that, he was rendered incapable of bringing out even a single uncouth word. Violently coughing, the scorching heat in his abdomen expanded.
Ache and agony, misery and disorder, and??,

"??baru?"

The tone of the silver bell's voice, eventually took a step into the space it must not enter.

"????"

He had to stop that, no matter what.
And yet, he did not make it.
Though he had to do that even if it meant selling his life away for it, just because his guts had gotten lacerated.

"??~hk!"

A scream echoed, someone collapsed down onto the floor along with a violent report.
The hand of that fallen someone, overlapping with hand of his fallen self, was an offensive prank on part of the far too ironic fate. In all ways, the wickedness of the one known as fate was far too onerous to describe with words.

"????"

Those weakly trembling fingers, softly grasped that overlapping hand. Grasping back that sensation of fingers, as if they were clinging and relying upon, Subaru deeply, deeply, along with that clump of blood, inhaled.

"......ait."

The overflowing clot of blood, the seeping and streaming away life. He could not, stop that outward flow of blood.

No longer, could he do anything. This situation, had reached its absolute limits.
All due to a single powerless, incompetent man, everything was going to start afresh.

That is why, his vow dyed with this blood, wielded no significance.
Even though he knew nothing could be done, his idiocy yet commanded him to vow.

Even though he knew it was over.
Even though he knew it will be over.
As if those were not coming to an end, disgracefully, he vowed.

"I will, for sure??"

??Save, you.

At the next instant, he?? Natsuki Subaru ?Natsuki Subaru? ?*Natsuki Subaru*? lost his life.

???????

The moment the connection was severed, Subaru sensed firm pain at the back of his head.

Subaru: "Gah?? ~hk."

The impact reverberating in his skull, he hallucinated as if he had been suddenly struck from behind, but he immediately understood that he was mistaken. Because, Subaru's body had collapsed right behind, and he could feel the entirety of his back make contact with the chilling floor.

Subaru: "This, place is....."

Icy and dim, not in the soiled building, but he was in the library of ?Taygeta?.
Slowly pouring energy back into his body, turning about his dumbfounded head, Subaru turned his neck around?? and then, touched his own guts with great perplexity.
There supposed to be present, was the wound which would diminish his life.
However??,

Subaru: "Not, there..... not there, not there, the wound is, not there. The slash, in the guts, is not there..... ~hk."

Touching his guts countless times, he confirmed the disappearance of the origin of scorching heat. Within the spectacle he had witnessed immediately previously, that utmost vivid sensation was vanishing.
He had heard that the brain hallucinates ache far too scorchingly hot as a "fever". A phenomenon identical to what had occurred. In other words??,

Subaru: "??A memory, of having the guts be slashed open, and dying."

The end of having the guts cut open by a sharp edged tool, drowning in the foam of blood and powerlessness, and dying.
Finally, if he himself had alone been the one to die by that, it was still excusable. However, that was not how it had been.

Subaru: "Satella....."

What he whispered, at the very end of the end, the girl he had been unable to save, her name?? her alias.
Within that memory, the silver-haired young girl he recognised had fabricated her name and come in contact with Subaru. What had been the reason behind that. Though it was evident no evil intent was the reason for it.

Subaru: "......Still, dying such an uncouth way."

Putting his hand on his forehead, Subaru ruminated about what had occurred to his own body.
Summoned to the different world, wandering aimlessly in the town with foolish positivity, picking up a quarrel with delinquents and almost dying, saved by Satella from that, and assisting her in her search for what she was looking for??,

Subaru: "Completely useless....."

At the final moment, without even conveying the crisis he was supposed to convey, he ended up having her get involved as well.
Not just dying wastefully, the word vain in the expression dying in vain could not even make for an excuse.
The life of Natsuki Subaru?? ?Natsuki Subaru? could never compensate for it.

Subaru: "But."

It was not as if he had gained absolutely nothing from it.

Subaru: "??This was, the ?Book of the Dead? of ?*Natsuki Subaru*?."

That alone was the certain, absolute, unquestionable truth.

Subaru: "????"

Hopeless, foolish, weak, irredeemable ?Natsuki Subaru?.
He continued to enlarge his absurd self-consciousness, overlapping with that, averted his eyes away from his lack of filial piety. And finally, using being summoned into the different world as a convenient means of escaping, and by exhibiting pessimistic positivity, he became a swindler trying deceive himself, those around him, anything and everything.

The result of that idiocy, had tied together with the tragedy in that loot storehouse.

What a pretentious, naive, and foolish failure had it been.
How come, could he stay defenseless at that hazardous place. What gave your idiotic self such baseless confidence. Like that, it would not be odd to get killed overseas, let alone in a different world. That lack of vigilance was to blame. The result of it all, must be that.

It had been so unsightly, such that he would have wanted to kill himself had he survived.

Subaru: "That hopeless, idiotic bastard..... but."

Evidently, it had been fatal foolishness, but it was fortuitous to have it affirmed.
Putting a check on his rage, enduring it, he scrutinized that truth closely.

The ?Book of the Dead? was certainly functioning. That book had recorded the death of ?Natsuki Subaru?. And, it thrust a great number of truths, which were a matter of course for ?Natsuki Subaru?, at Natsuki Subaru, for whom there was no way to know them.

??To name it specifically, it was the sequence of events of obtaining ?Return by Death?.
As per convention, an existence who was god, or wielded similar strength, normally in a transcendental state of being, summoned Subaru to the different world.
However, for that ?Natsuki Subaru?, if he were to not have the memories of being summoned by such a transcendental being, there would be no occasion where he would get to know whom he got the power granted to him from and how he grew conscious of that power.
That was something Subaru could affirm, who had seen the end of that ?Natsuki Subaru? for himself.

At the very end of the end, though he had been blabbering things without knowing when to give up, at that moment, ?Natsuki Subaru? was supposed to not have any confirmation that he would overcome death, and rewind time.
At the very least, he himself had been like that. ??Thinking that far, he abruptly noticed.

That he, and ?Natsuki Subaru?, had not been objected well visually.
The reason for that, evident.

Subaru: "It's diving more deeply in, than on, Meili's instance....."

When he had read Meili's ?Book of the Dead?, and personally experienced her life, he had tasted the sensation of having his mind undergo influence quite severely as well. Halfway melting together with her personality, Meili appeared within his mind as a symptom of hallucination, such that she said all what she wanted to say, and was toying around with Subaru.
Above all, that had ultimately been a Meili fabricated by Subaru's consciousness, utterly unrelated to the real Meili, an illusion brought forth by chaos, he was aware of that.

Subaru: "????"

However, this instance's ?Book of the Dead? demarcated a line between itself and Meili's experience.
All things said and done, in the chaos immediately after reading Meili's book, still present were clues to differentiate between himself and her. The difference in gender, the difference in age, the difference in values, there were plenty.
Detaching himself from her through those clues, even if slightly, it was a possibility to withdraw the comprehension that she was an entirely different existence.

However, that was not how it was this time.
None other than he himself was the party concerned. His self who was not himself, a situation which normally would not manifest, it layed expectation upon Natsuki Subaru, and pushed him into his fight with himself.

His fight with himself. ??Judging by mere words, those were not words too cliché, but they were words which evidently and straightforwardly denoted the situation which Subaru? had currently been placed in.

The truth is, he possessed a negative outlook.
Overlapping with his self, rather meant an act of painting his self out. The water washed by the dark paint called ?Natsuki Subaru?, dyed him as if with a paintbrush that had been dipped in that.

Subaru: "??Emilia. Emilia, Emilia, Emilia, Emilia, Emilia."

At the sensation of feeling himself be painted out, Subaru called Emilia's name, as if it were some magic.
The reason why he chanted Emilia, that reason was evident. The ?Natsuki Subaru? inside the ?Book of the Dead?, did not recognise her as Emilia.
Trusting the alias he had been told, he saw through his duties as a buffoon till the very end of the end.
That is why, that was the difference between the present Subaru, and ?Natsuki Subaru?.

Subaru: "????"

With the roots of his teeth quivering, fearing the sensation of his self being whittled, Subaru looked at his feet. The single book he had dropped thoughtlessly, that had fallen there.

Subaru: "????"

He continued to observe, such that ?Natsuki Subaru? would have died.
If considered now, mysteriously? enough, the ?Book of the Dead? commenced from the moment he arrived into the different world, from when he had shouted out the change of worlds with a foolishly bare expression. Even though for Meili's instance, it had properly commenced since she gained the awareness of ??? no, for now, all that was of no significance.

The problem was, the continuation to that ?Book of the Dead?.

Subaru: "You must be thinking, the same, "Natsuki Subaru"....."

Thanks to the ?Book of the Dead?, he was able to witness what was perhaps the ?Death? of ?Natsuki Subaru? when he was first summoned into the different world for himself.
However, that was merely the beginning.
That ?Natsuki Subaru?, must have also utilised the power of ?Return by Death?.
Otherwise, that may have been a power which had manifested not in the form of ?Return by Death? but something further different. ??No, that was the natural state of affairs.

Rewinding time at will, that was much more convincing.
For ?Natsuki Subaru?, who was met by Emilia, Beatrice, Ram, Echidna, Julius, Meili, Shaula, Patrasche, Gyan, and was expected to play an active role, something like that was much more suitable.
In that case??,

Subaru: "That must be there, ahead of this....."

?Natsuki Subaru?, who seemed to be no different from Natsuki Subaru.
However, there present was something decisive which caused that ?Natsuki Subaru? to be ?Natsuki Subaru?. Seeking that, Subaru, at once, held the book in his hands.
And, closing his eyes, took deep breaths.

Subaru: "????"

With the book in his hands, Subaru counted the beating of his chest. And while calming his ? down, he slowly commenced walking.
A slow gait, however, straightforward, lacking all faltering.
Before long, where Subaru had reached was in front of the bookshelf, and as he stretched his hand out??,

Subaru: "??Second book."

The single book following ?*Natsuki Subaru*?, made a weak assertion of itself through ?Cor Leonis?.

? ? ? ? ? ?

??The progress ?Natsuki Subaru? made, was unsightly, haphazard, irredeemable.

"Completely useless. A novice as per appearance, with crude movements. Neither with any Divine Protections nor with any skills, imagined that there would at least be some instinct or intelligence, but not even that. Just, why must you challenge."

Tormented by the self-indulging mighty enemy, he was minced without being able to even launch a proper counterattack.
And in the environs of his wounded self, was a bloodstained old man and a silver-haired girl, collapsed.
Neither of them could be saved. He could not even move.

"Slowly, slowly, slowly, slowly, slowly?, agonize."

Before long, with his guts sliced, with his eyes sliced, within the world where he lost his eyesight, with a time limit running against his life, he lived the time until his death nestling close with dismay.
Until the very end of the? end, all whilst fearing, shivering, dreading, disgracefully??,

? ? ? ? ? ?

"Hey, did you get stabbed."

"It can't be helped, you know. Try running outside. It's more than just difficult."

"A~h, this won't do. If the insides of the guts get wounded then it's death for sure..... The clothes are all a mess too."

Fallen with the opponent overhead of him, did he truly intend to make such heedless dialogue.
He must use his brain for such worthless thoughts, otherwise he would be rendered unable to comprehend the shocking pain piercing through his back.
A technique to escape pain, or a method to protect himself, to have possession of them would have astonished him to the bottom of his ?.

He was unable to save himself, from the truly futile, vain death.
Calling the girl Satella while she was not Satella, having to hear harsh words from her due to that, unable to sense the strikingly obvious situation, killed by the opponent whom he already had tasted before abandoning thought.
A suitable end. Why, from the beginning to the end, could he not live without regretting even for a second, even for a minute.

Enough. This world was going to end. He knew it.
Because from the very beginning, he knew and could see ?Death?, and henceforth came here. That is why, if there was not something decisive present, it was the end of this world. As it is the end, as it is the end, go to the next one. Go to the next, to the next, to the next, to the next, to the next, to the next.
Otherwise, it hurts, it hurts, it hurts it hurts it hurts it hurts it hurts and it hurts and it's painful and it's

unbearably hurtful but something must be carried on to the next??.

???????

The demise that was brought to him whilst he was asleep, contrary to a swift and easy end, was accompanied with mercilessness as if chilling venom was poured into his blood vessels.
The arrival of the ?Death? whereby he couldn't even comprehend he had died, compared to the ?Deaths? till now in which he was unable to detach pain and suffering from himself, was perhaps the easiest one is what he believed.
However, in no way was that true.

Why, did he die. First of all, did he really die.
Within humans fearful of ?Death?, the wish to die as if sleeping is substantially present, but if Subaru, who had experienced that, were to be asked, then he would respond that it was not worth wishing for.

In ?Death?, there lies the meaning of ?Death?.

In the demise, denouement of life, something which is learnt from it must be attached to the end.
Within chaos and despair, fright and yearning, Subaru sought the subsequent ?Book of the Dead?. He must unravel what had occurred. He must unravel, what had killed his self??.

???????

??Mysteries invited further mysteries, as incomprehensible and irrational ?Deaths? followed him.

Overlapping ends, continual tragedies.
Though he had refused dying as if sleeping, dying as if being shattered, as if being gouged out, were indeed not pleasant either.

From next to next, his life was aimed for, robbed, shattered, and finally, betrayed.

Why, was no longer the question for that.
Why, must he have to save the blue-haired girl, who had killed his self.

Why, did his self become so frantic in order to save her, why, did she give such a powerful push to Subaru's back, who was crushed and knelt down.
Why, did he gain strength by her words, and resolve to move forward.

Ahead of betrayal, he earnestly yearned.
For the desire which had actually not been betrayed, for the world which affirmed that it was correct.

?Natsuki Subaru?, offered his life as indemnification for the sake of the fruitless, sorrowful

misunderstanding of saving someone, and prized it open through sheer strength.

Meeting Emilia, meeting Puck, meeting Felt, meeting Grandpa Rom, meeting Reinhardt, meeting Elsa, meeting Beatrice, meeting Ram, meeting Rem, meeting Roswaal, meeting Petra, meeting the residents of Arlarm village??,

??No matter what, he will thrust refusal at any muddy stream that may advance upon them, is what he believed.

???????

Subaru: "Ugh, bhu..... ~hk."

Putting a check on his lips, facing assailing death once again, Subaru knelt down in the library of ?Taygeta?. Without supporting his body, he collapsed onto the bare ground as if falling.

Subaru: "Hah, hah....."

His breath was rough, what drenched the entirety of his body was abundant cold sweat.
Whether it was hot, whether it was cold, whether it was bitter, whether it was sweet, whether it was agonizing, whether it was pleasant, his feelings were blended into a heterogeneous mixture of likes and dislikes, black and white, and he was unable to comprehend the correct answer.
It felt as if he was being struck from all angles and directions ceaselessly, from next to next.

Subaru: ".....With this, eight books."

Discovering the ?Books of the Dead? of ?*Natsuki Subaru*?, and ever since he commenced reading them, he was merely piling up the number of books.
To say the number of books, was something odd in itself as well. Not that the numbering kept on ascending, originally, to have the "next book of the same series" for a book present in this library was not how it was supposed to be.

Yet, the books of ?Natsuki Subaru? kept on piling up the number of books readily, and continued.
Adding to the mystery, the structure of not being able to find the next book of ?*Natsuki Subaru*? unless the first book of ?*Natsuki Subaru*? was read?? it all commenced orderly.
Without skipping a single ?Death? for the purpose of an interval, he followed the footsteps of ?Natsuki Subaru?.

And, whilst following the footsteps, he thought.
About how tactlessly frank, incorrigible, immature ?Natsuki Subaru? was.

Particularly the last book, observing the fate of the eighth ?Book of the Dead?, it was impossible to not feel that way.
Immediately after the announcement of the royal election, fracturing his relationship with Emilia,

ultimately, merely hurting her ? simply because he could, without any apology or retrospection, dying within the chaos was ?Natsuki Subaru?.

His self who was reading the books, sunk with his consciousness equivalent with the subjectivity of the ?Book of the Dead?.
Merely the people concerned were supposed to particularly experience that effect, but it was still difficult to tolerate.

His self, who thought why did he not understand, was present.
On the other hand was his self, who thought why did he lament by not understanding through that, as well.

Subaru: "Don't be trapped, in the past....."

It was a tragedy he had witnessed with these eyes an instant ago, that is why, his body ached as if being torn off.
However, that was the past. At maximum, a happening that had occurred in the past.

Even if it was a happening right in front of the eyes for ?Natsuki Subaru?, who faced ?Death? at that instant.
Even if it was a happening right in front of the eyes for Subaru, who was in agreement with ?Natsuki Subaru?, who faced that instant.

That was the past.
Persisting by turning into a wound difficult to forget, it was the past.
That is why, at the present instant, take a breather and escape the impact. Forget it. That someone, killed Emilia. That someone, committed that terrible spectacle in the village.

If not, then ? would get shattered.

What would he do, should Subaru's ? shatter here, rendered unable to stand up.
How would someone, do something. ?Natsuki Subaru? was not present here. That is why, there was no other choice but for Subaru to somehow manage through.

Subaru: "Not, yet....."

??Has it been found.

Subaru: "????"

There was supposed to be something decisive existing, bestowed only upon ?Natsuki Subaru?.
It would be the key to precisely distinguish between Natsuki Subaru, and ?Natsuki Subaru?. At the very least, until that key was procured, this voyage of going through ?Books of the Dead? shall not terminate.

The decisive key, which made Natsuki Subaru grow wings and attain flight, as ?Natsuki Subaru?.
The key which changed him into the saviour who could catch Emilia, Beatrice, Rem, Ram, Echidna,

Julius, Meili, Shaula, Patrasche, Gyan, from falling.

At the current instant, there were no signs of it.
?Natsuki Subaru? could not possibly possess the mettle, the magnanimity, to be a saviour or a hero, to be able to fulfill the immense duty of saving someone.
What he possessed was merely standing out stubbornness, and the good fortune of being blessed by the people around him.
However, that was not all.

It was not that formless "something".
He possessed the omnipotent key, something which was further apparent, evident, which could be recognised at a single glance, which convinced everyone that he had the ability because he possessed that.
He possessed it. That is why, seeking that??,

Subaru: "??Number, nine."

Once again he tackled, the samsara of ?Death?, whirling with mayhem and chaos, betrayal and despair.
His wish, ?Natsuki Subaru?. To turn into you, as fast as possible.

??Before I, am no longer able to bear with your footsteps, your wounds, ?Death?, in my ?.

???????

???Deaths?, were accumulated relentlessly.
??Ends, were relentlessly accumulated.

Each time he felt ache, each time he was in agony, each time he lost something, each time he was robbed of something, he heard the sound of ? cracking.
Crying and screaming why and how, gritting his molars thinking it ends here, standing up whilst vomiting blood, sheathed in wounds, he advanced.

The struggle of an uncouth man risking his life, was present there.
Not once but twice, not twice but thrice, not thrice but four times and so forth, getting cornered by situations and expiring, yet, he held his ground in order to smash through the lock of turmoil.

That was amazing. Plenty amazing. Truly worthy of respect.
To not give up, that was something quite amazing. Even after experiencing so much, gritting teeth so much, to fight to the bitter end was amazing. Truly admirable. Improved opinions. ??But, that was not it.

But, that was not it. That was not it. That was not it. That was not it indeed.

Subaru: "Something was..... ~hk."

??"Something" was, supposed to have happened, isn't it.

"Something" must have happened. Otherwise, it would not make sense. Otherwise, things would not hold true.
"Something" happened, which made the impotent, irremediable Natsuki Subaru develop wings, attain flight and turn into ?Natsuki Subaru?, who could save everyone?, someone, Emilia and the others, that was how it was supposed to be.

That was why, he was searching for it, dying, losing sanity, with bloodshot eyes.

Upon each instance of reading the ?Books of the Dead?, personally experiencing the impact, terror, and the agony of ?Death? which ?Natsuki? Subaru? had to taste by trifling with the altering situations, he grew further desperate and pursued his search.
Yet, he was unable to find a single clue??,

Subaru: "Ugh, a~a~a~a~a~?? ~hk ~hk!!"

He struck his head onto the floor.
It was alright when he was in the midst of witnessing it. However, the instant he returned, his ? was fomented with disgrace.

Subaru: "Dad..... mom..... ~hk."

There had been ?Natsuki Subaru?, who exchanged words with his father and mother, and apologized to the two of them.
There had been ?Natsuki Subaru?, who was thrown into the different world, and for the sake of residing in this place, bid farewell to those two.
Even after carelessly forgetting what all his self had committed, knowingly of the fact that his parents would be saddened, conveying words of love for self-satisfaction??.

Subaru: "Ugh, bhu, e~e~e~gh."

He vomited. His tears, overflowing.
What was hurtful, what was excruciating, was that he was painfully aware of the feelings of ?Natsuki Subaru?, and the fact that Subaru also got to know, that his parents forgave it.

Please don't forgive. Please curse. He wished his parents would speak ill of him, call him out for lacking filial piety.

However, they did not act that way.
Neither his father nor his mother, be as per Subaru's? wishes. In order to console himself, he wished his parents to call him a petty human or things similar. He was unable to achieve that.
Subaru's father, Kenichi. Subaru's mother, Naoko. ??They were the greatest couple of parents.

There had been his self, who was happy for that, there had been his self, who approved of the judgement ?Natsuki Subaru? took, despite lacking all rights to be saved, there had been his self, who was going to be saved, making his ? unsightly.

??This. Was this the source for it? With this being the reason, did he turn into ?Natsuki Subaru?.

Subaru: "No..... no, no, no! That's not it! Not something like, this!"

Scratching his head violently, striking his aching eyebrows with his fist, Subaru disparaged his own self. What Subaru sought, was not spiritual salvation. What he sought was a key, ??a power further evident, which was established in terms of proper efficacy.

The power which Subaru was ignorant of, which only ?Natsuki Subaru? was cognizant of.

Just as Subaru had succeeded in the manifestation of ?Cor Leonis?, the special "something" which only ?Natsuki Subaru? had awakened, that, that was.

Subaru: "The key to change this situation, I have to believe it is, or....."

The laceration of his guts, which had been the very last cause of his death from the present moment, touching the wound he was supposed to have from that, Subaru whispered.
His memories, started to overlap with what he had witnessed in Meili's? ?Book of the Dead?. The assault on the mansion, Meili's both beloved and troublesome elder sister, Elsa's attack. A natural enemy for ?Natsuki Subaru?.

However?, that was all about a world where everything came to an end.
That was all about a world which ?Natsuki Subaru? already surmounted.

What was crucial, was not sympathising with ?Natsuki Subaru?. But unveiling, and obtaining, the deception only he was supposed to possess, which only he was using.
For that, only for that, read the ?Books of the Dead?.

??Because only for that, Natsuki Subaru had been dying and redoing his actions.

Subaru: "Please tell me, ?Natsuki Subaru?! ??How are you special! How can only you, stay being special! There must be "something", right!?"

Subaru: ""Something", must have changed you! "Something", must have rid you of your uselessness, and turned you into someone else!"

Subaru: "Please change my weak, pathetic, petty self who can't be useful for shit! I'm fed up now! I can't see everyone suffering, not anymore!"

Subaru: ""Something"..... "something"! Is there, right!? If "something" isn't there then, it doesn't make sense..... "something", happened..... that's why, you are..... different from, me..... it has to be that way....."

??It has to be that way, or he will be rendered incapable of doing anything, but to simply watch.

Subaru: "You were, the same as me, weak, petty, completely powerless....."

??Kneeling down time and time again, and on each instance having someone give a push to his back, as he wanted to recompense everyone who acted courteously towards him, as they had acted kindly towards him, he wanted to pay them back.

Subaru: "Please, ?Natsuki Subaru?. I request you. Please, just stop....."

??It would have had been much, much better, had he been a superhuman.
??He wished for him to be an existence completely? dissimilar to his self, one who had transcended above weakness with both his ? and body.

??That is why, he wished to be convinced by him that he had done, what his self could never achieve.

And yet??.

Drawing books out as if plucking berries, having his head struck by continually stockpiling ?Death?, all whilst having ? shatter upon each instance of that, eagerly, earnestly, as if sipping mud, he ate into his life.
But still, until the very end of the end, he did not cast aside the possibility he clung onto??.

Subaru: "????"

He opened up, the book he had in his grasp.
With the preparedness of his brain tissues being churned, his ? being violated, his soul being humiliated, he opened it up.
After all, it was far more painful to have the very last hope severed rather than feeling ache or anguish.

Subaru: "You get it, right, ?Natsuki Subaru?....."

As if, seemingly seeking consent, he called out to the person concerned who was not in presence here.
The tone of that voice, felt as if it had sustained a terrible loss of ambition, it could not be helped.

After all, the person concerned was not someone to be enthusiastic about.
He was not, that great of a man. ??Whilst wishing for that to not happen, his fingers as if pulling a rope, he started to draw the ?Book of the Dead? out.
And, what will follow will certainly be the finishing blow, harbouring such feelings??,

???: "??Yeah, I get it."

Subaru: "????"

A white, white world.
Upon noticing, Subaru was not in the library, nor a shapeless existence overlapping with memories, but

had been sent a place which he recognised, which was not here.
There??,

???: "I get it, Natsuki Subaru."

Subaru: "????"

???: "After all, because you are me, you know."

Standing still within the white world, sanpaku eyes he was well acquainted with, had been awaiting Subaru.

Arc 6 – Chapter 74, "Natsuki Subaru"

by admin - Saturday, November 09, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/11/09/arc-6-chapter-74-natsuki-subaru/

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Translated By :

- Ringo (/u/Ringo_17)

Proofread By:

- Jaerek
- Nanashi

Art Sources:

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? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Short, black hair, legs with the same length as his body, sanpaku eyes enough to kill someone.
Those almost unpleasantly familiar features, regardless of which one chosen, were overlooking Natsuki Subaru, sitting on the white bare ground.

Subaru: "????"

Astounded, fixedly, he gazed a deep stare onto the opposing person's face.
No matter which angle he looked at it from, it was a face he was acquainted with?? no, it looked slightly different. That was perhaps because it was, in a true sense, not the form he was accustomed to seeing.
That which he had grown accustomed to looking at ordinarily, on overwhelmingly? multiple occasions, was something reflected upon mirrors or the surface of water. Strictly speaking, the human face was not

perfectly symmetrical on both halves, that alone shaped a sensitive disparity.
That is why??,

???: "Ah, is that so. It's not the reflection of a mirror, so there's a bit of an uneasy feeling, huh. In that sense, this is probably closer to imaging it as facing a photograph or a video recording, isn't it."

Subaru: "??~hk."

???: "??? Ah, could it be, you thought of the same thing?"

When he slightly tightened his cheeks upon the single voice seemingly having read his mind, the opposing person precisely guessed those feelings as well.
Though ? was flustered by even that, any response he could possibly give could neither be poison nor medicine. In the first place, what was essential for Subaru, was not something on the likes of quick exchange of remarks.
Far greater, precisely that, the problem which seemingly jolted away everything was??,

???: "Once again then..... hey, sibling."

Subaru: "????"

???: "No, sibling feels slightly faulty for an expression, huh. More accurately this'd be..... hey, another me."

Raising a single hand, the personage greeted with a relaxed tone?? no, he was not a person so unduly distant. He was an existence such that calling him someone close, would be a half-hearted expression. After all, because the one present there was unmistakably, with the same face as Natsuki Subaru, was none other than ?Natsuki Subaru?.

Subaru: "???Natsuki Subaru?."

'Subaru': ".....You know, doesn't that have a strange ring to it? On top of that, calling yourself using the full name..... though, I don't know using what else would be correct. Though it's a situation often there in comics and stuff, it's pretty troublesome in reality."

Subaru: "?Natsuki Subaru?.....!"

Discerning rage for ?Subaru?, who piled up remarks as if talking about good weather, Subaru stood right up at that spot. And as he tried to grasp the opponent's collars, instantly his legs tangled.
With no strength driven into his knees, his stance crumbled??,

'Subaru': "Woops, watch out."

Subaru: "??~hk, don't touch me!"

?Subaru?, who was in front, caught the body which was pitching forward and falling. The moment he

came in contact with those arms, Subaru experienced unbearable repugnance, and shook off the opponent's arms.
At the same pace, taking steps and distancing himself away from ?Subaru?, he continued to glare at the opponent.

Subaru: "Why are, you here..... first of all, where is this place!?"

With ?Subaru? within his field of vision, Subaru signalled the surrounding white world with his hands.
White space, a place with nothing, that was just as the cradle of Od Lagna where he had confronted that Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, Louis Arneb.

Subaru: "Shit.....!"

It was a total mess inside of his mind.
His meeting with Louis, in accordance with the real time that flowed within the tower, was not something which happened even a few hours ago.
However, for Subaru, who had stockpiled multiple attempts regarding the five obstacles, it felt like an incident in the faraway, distant past.
Furthermore, Subaru had personally experienced the life and death of ?Natsuki Subaru? more than twenty times through the ?Books of the Dead?. Even if the contents of the ?Books of the Dead?, were something which felt short, running through life and death in less than five minutes, there had also been more than a year's time where nothing had occurred.
He had tasted those successively, indulgently. Neither were there any guarantees to his recognition not getting? disordered.

The passage of time was vague, on top of that, he had much awaited the meeting with the unanticipated opponent.
Subaru widened his eyes, and waving his arms about violently,

Subaru: "Why, are you in this place!!"

'Subaru': "??That is, the proof of you having caught up to me."

Subaru: "????"

'Subaru': "You read the ?Book of the Dead?, and caught up to me. Everything you were not aware of, you must have seen it in the form of personally experiencing it. My, life in a different world, alright."

Subaru: "Huh."

With an indifferent tone ?Subaru? responded to Subaru, who had depleted his breath and clamoured.
Viewing that composed attitude, Subaru gritted his molars.
He was unable to stomach that conclusive expression, that attitude of seemingly knowing all, anything and everything.

??First of all, just now, what did this man, making that odious face, say?

Subaru: "I, caught up to you?"

'Subaru': "That's right. There's not a single thing anymore, which you don't know about me. That's why....."

Subaru: "??Don't, joke around ~hk!!"

'Subaru': "????"

Subaru: "I, caught up to you, you say? Stop kidding! Don't lie! Not yet! I don't know about that which is the most important, which is much more essential, yet!"

Roaring with his eyes open wide, Subaru seized hold of ?Subaru's? collars this time.
At that usage of brute strength, ?Subaru? made no attempt for parrying it. Pulling the opponent's collars towards himself at the same pace, from a distance where both of their breaths entwined, he glared into those black eyes.

"????"

Within the dark eyes of the face which was the same as his, the instant he perceived the same face reflected within, nauseating self-hatred surged within his own self.

Whether he harboured that self-hatred for himself, or for the ?Himself? present before his eyes, was neither known to him, nor did he even contemplate considering it.
Merely remaining at that extremely close distance, he glared at the opponent, and unraveled his fangs.

Subaru: "Tell me! It's pretty convenient you're here! Tell me now! The reason you became yourself must be somewhere! I haven't seen that. I haven't found it. That is....."

'Subaru': "The reason I, became myself?"

Subaru: "That's right! There must have been a cue for you, to turn into yourself! You are, you are....."

'Subaru': "??That, must have been seen by you, no?"

With his collars seized, ?Subaru? was gazing at Subaru, nonresistant.
He did not even try to repel away the arms waving him about. Subaru received that as a hallucination as if he wasn't even doing anything.
He perceived exactly that, as being looked down onto from a higher level??,

Subaru: "Stop looking at me like that!"
'Subaru': "??Gah ~hk."

Aiming at that conclusive side profile, Subaru launched his fist.
The fist wielded firm impact, blowing ?Subaru? off, as if he had been strummed. There was no recoil, no

similar pain striking back at Subaru.
The pain ?Subaru? sustained, injured, through the pain ?Subaru? had sustained.
That was, not identical to what Natsuki Subaru had sustained.

Subaru: "Lining up words, as if knowing that..... is that so, I get it."

Smacked by Subaru, ?Subaru? had knelt down on his right leg. Observing him rubbing his struck cheek with the back of his hand, Subaru consented.
That opponent ahead of his eyes, who spoke with a mouth as if knowing everything, was not mistaken.
First of all, if this was the cradle of Od Lagna?? the Hall of Memories, would that not make him the opponent he should be utmost vigilant of above all other matters

Subaru: "Are you, Louis? The Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?! It's you again, right!?"

'Subaru': "......Me?"

Subaru: "Don't play dumb!"

Last time, Louis, whom he had encountered in the Hall of Memories, through one way or another, attempted to prompt segregation between Subaru and ?Natsuki Subaru?, and eat that existence away from his head.
Back then, he had managed to escape those fangs from a hair strand's breadth worth of distance, but had their behaviour been such that they would be willing to give up through simply that, they would not be called Sin Archbishops.

Just how ugly, how irredeemable the existences known as the Sin Archbishops were, he had witnessed that in its? entirety.
Petelgeuse, Regulus, Sirius, Capella, all of them were the absolute lowest and worst of failures as personalities. Ley, Roy, and Louis were no exceptions to that either.

What if Louis, who had been lying in wait inside of Reid's ?Book of the Dead?, was utilising some form of method and hiding in ambush in the ?Book of the Dead? of ?*Natsuki Subaru*?.
Thus, it was plausible that she had been boldly lingering and awaiting Subaru.

Subaru: "Isn't that true, ?Gluttony?! Louis Arneb! There's no way I can be confused by you, who can change shapes and forms, like this!"

Relying upon the ?Memories? and ?Names? stolen from others, rather than just the opponents' abilities, but extorting even their form, and chewing and digesting them as if they were her belongings was the Authority of Louis Arneb.
She had demonstrated that artifice even within the tower, lacking any regret. Nothing felt out of place, if her place of demonstrating that had merely changed to the Hall of Memories.

Subaru: "This time for sure, devouring me and hijacking me, is that what your plan is? Even after being rejected once, persistent little..... do you really want to ?Return by Death? so much!?"

Without any vacillation, he voiced the words ?Return by Death?.
He had personally experienced the memory of having to taste hellish anguish by voicing that on several instances. The penalty of having his heart be crushingly gripped, accompanied with immense pain.
However, it was still alright if only his self was to be the one to experience that agony. ??Compared to the cases where it befell over Emilia, or the surroundings.

However, the penalty was not invoked for Subaru, who had shouted whilst crushing faint horror.
?Subaru? before his eyes, did not seem to have had his heart crushingly gripped at all either. For a single instant, as if being on the lookout for the same thing, he understood that ?Subaru? had also been relieved at the lack of the evil influence's ingress. That was, infuriating.
With the same face as his, he also bore the same thoughts as him. ??He thought of it as an assertion that, at maximum, he and his opponent were the same.

Subaru: "??~hk! Just, get it already! Is this really that amazing of a power? Is this an admirable power!? It's just dying, and redoing. Dying and redoing..... nothing more than that. If I, who uses it, am shit, then the results it brings are also shit! That's why....."

'Subaru': "????"

Subaru: "That's why, I couldn't save anyone..... I let everyone die. Because I am weak, I make everyone, miserable. Just like how, even now, nobody will get saved.....!"

???Return by Death?, was nothing so adequate.

It was always far better, to not have something like this be of need. Though there had been a Witch who claimed this power to be something splendid, the utmost prime and nonpareil thing in this world, he could never hold the same opinion.
Even if an ant is made to wield artillery, it can never utilise it. Ultimately, it was unsuited to it.

He was a weak, petty, lonely child who kept crying and throwing tantrums.
What the Witches in that dream tea party had stated, was correct. He was hopeless. He was weak. He could never find it. He could never use it. Both ?Gluttony?, and the ?Witch of Greed?, who failed to comprehend that, were damned.

Just, how many times would he have to get deceived, how many times would he have to get his hope trampled underfoot, how many times would he have to get his ? vanquished, until he learns.
Why, after countlessly getting deceived, countlessly having his hope trampled underfoot, having his ? vanquished, does he still think of doing it.

?Return by Death?, displayed all of the unpleasant fragments of the world.
It displayed the absurdities, the irrationalities, the destiny enough to make one avert his eyes.
Yet, how come??,

Subaru: "??I love, everyone."

Without noticing, with his head hanging down, at that very spot, kneeling down, Subaru shouted as if

casting a curse.
And at the disgraceful grievance, similar to weeping, ?Subaru? horizontally shook his head. Whilst shaking his head horizontally, for once, at this instant, he said, converging his words.

'Subaru': "??I love everyone. That's why, I can't stop."

Subaru: "????"

Erasing the tinge of red on his struck cheek with his fingers, ?Subaru? stood up in Subaru's stead.
The same attire, the same expression, possessing the same face and name, ?Natsuki Subaru?, who seemed to be decisively different from his self?? whilst that looked at Natsuki Subaru,

'Subaru': "The position you were put in, to be honest, even imagining its difficulty is rough. Everything completely new, starting from level 6 having the status of initial stage without the option of going back. The complaints you voice out too, I understand all of them. Because those, are wounds I have gotten to taste time and time again."

With immense powerlessness, with immense ignorance, it was a countenance that had gotten to taste that countless times. ??No, he had gotten to taste that countless times.
The defeat, the agony, the grief of ?Death? which ?Subaru? had to taste, Subaru was aware of it all. He had witnessed it all with these eyes. He had tasted it all, with this body, and ?.

Precisely because he had tasted those, precisely because he knew that was not a lie, he could not accept ?Subaru's? words. He did not want, to accept them.

'Subaru': "Had I been strong, had I been smart, had I been more, more..... it must be frustrating."

Subaru: "Speaking as if, understanding it.....! About me, what the hell do you"

'Subaru': "I do know. You must also be aware of what I know. It's a pointless quarrel, actually. For both me, and you."

Subaru: "??~hk."

There was no strength in his words of objection. It had been a matter of course.
An objection, repels away the opponent's words, brushes them away suggesting lack of agreement, crushingly defeating them, stating that you are wrong. Such an intention was essential.
Subaru of now, did not have the ability to face ?Subaru? with that.
After all, he was aware of it.

He was aware that was no lie or deceit, but the entirety of ?Natsuki Subaru?.

Subaru: "I didn't look, at your memories or anything....."

'Subaru': "After looking through one's diary as per your own convenience, you can't be doing this."

Subaru: "I didn't look, at your memories or anything!"

Upon hearing ?Subaru's? seemingly sullen voice, Subaru powerfully clenched his fists.

Slapped, poured with jeers, yet not bending his approach of dialogue, ?Subaru? gave the impression of being far more mature than Subaru. Perhaps even that, was a matter of course.
After all, the truth is, ?Subaru? was supposed to be a year older than Subaru.
That too, having observed rich experiences in a different world, and having personally experienced ?Death? on multiple occasions, on top of that, having woven many bonds, and acquiring the position of his current self.
But still??,

Subaru: "I didn't look, at your memories or anything..... ~hk."

Once again, once again Subaru utilised those words.
For once, right now, ?Subaru? said nothing to Subaru, who stockpiled the very same repentances. Subaru, without even seeking any response, continued, as if incoherently muttering.

Subaru: "I, wanted to have hopes for you. That you were an amazing guy, and that if I got to know the "something" which was supporting your amazing nature, I would be able to do the same thing too. But still....."

But still, he ended up knowing it.
He ended up witnessing, everything.

?Natsuki Subaru? had absolutely no difference from the Natsuki Subaru present here, that he was a weak and petty man, he ended up knowing that.

In the time unknown to Subaru, meeting people unknown to Subaru, running past a chronicle unknown to Subaru, having witnessed a scenery unknown to Subaru, he was merely an ordinary human who had done all that.

Subaru: "??By denying you, I wanted to proclaim something plausible and fulfill it."

However, he could not do that.

Subaru: "After all, I understand your feelings. ??Because you, are me."

The world ?Natsuki Subaru? had witnessed, had tasted, he had witnessed it.
?Natsuki Subaru? had fallen in love with this world, the people of this world, Emilia and everyone else, and the wounds he had accepted for them to persist, he had witnessed all of that.

He had been misunderstanding. He had been misapprehending.
Since it was regarding himself, it may be appropriate to say he had conceited.
The illusion of ?Natsuki Subaru? being a superhuman, had been shattered and cast aside.

Subaru: "Yeah, I get it! I got it! Why you..... why you kept standing up again and again, why you never gave up after dying again and again, is because that's all you can do!!"

Just like Subaru, ?Subaru? had also gotten slammed into walls he could do nothing about on innumerable instances.
Upon each occasion of that, he died recurrently, repeatedly, stockpiling ?Deaths?, amending the way he met, amending the way he connected, ?Subaru? overcame hindrances.
That was all.

Subaru: "Can there be someone who won't stand up despite Rem telling him so much to do so!? Acting conceitedly after getting knocked by Otto, I noticed that! I always knew that dad and mom, were considerate like that! I mean, they are my dad and mom, after all!"

The scenery ?Natsuki Subaru? passed through, the cue essential for surmounting, not the "something" Subaru sought, but merely accumulated wishes, were certainly there.

Subaru: "I love Emilia. I want her to rely on me to protect her. I want to be with her. The reason I wanted to be a knight, was so that she thought of me that way. I was happy. I want to walk outside with her without any failures, she, who is afraid of getting hated, and I want to boast around that she is someone capable of being loved by everyone! I finally had Beatrice accompany me. I want to make her happy as much as the time she had been in pain. She, has the right to be happy!"

That is why??,

Subaru: "??The reason why you don't give up, is just because you love everyone! Shitty bastard! Why aren't you a superhuman! Why, are you still an idiotic brat!!"

'Subaru': "????"

Subaru: "Be strong like Reinhardt! Be someone who can do anything like Julius! If you can't do that then be useful like Ferris! How about exceeding in a single thing like Wilhelm-san!? Choose even one, for you to....."

By taking time, and even experiencing agony, what he realised was merely that.
That ?Natsuki Subaru? was an ordinary human, that he possessed only the cards which were the same as what Subaru did, that he extremely lacked skill in properly utilising them, that neither did he have good fortune when it came to victory and defeat.
Even, a single one of just those??,

Subaru: "Any single one of them....."

With a powerless voice, having forfeited all spirit, he whispered.
Any single one of them, even a single one of them, grasping tightly the hand, incapable of wielding anything.

Subaru: ".....You, are Louis, aren't you."

With a husky voice, he uttered a query unrelated to what he had said till now.
Listening to that, ?Subaru?, who had remained silent for long, nodded, saying "Ah".

'Subaru': "No. I'm not Louis. Unfortunately, I won't? say even that. I'd rather not have her disturbing. You don't need an explanation for her personality being the worst, do you?"

Subaru: "Yeah..... I guess, so."

Responding with a meagre, feeble voice, Subaru hid his own face with his arms.
Concealing that his throat had shrivelled up due to his howling up until the previous moment, oozily, pain started to well up in his fist which had hit ?Subaru?.
If this was the Hall of Memories, then Subaru's body could not be stated to be a real entity here, is how it was supposed to be, and yet, it was absurd that he could feel pain.

??Yes, pain, ?Death?, was ever absurd, and ever difficult to bear.

That was accurately why, the Sin Archbishop of ?Gluttony?, Louis Arneb was mistaken.
The thought of wishing? for that by one's own accord, was unmistakably mistaken.

Subaru: "......Why did you, disappear."

'Subaru': "Hm?"

Subaru: "Why did you vanish away. You disappeared, that caused, so many hardships....."

The impetus of the ever present incomprehension, and the origin of everything.
The reason why ?Natsuki Subaru? disappeared, and Natsuki Subaru was born.
Just what happened to the body of ?Natsuki Subaru?, who had disappeared alongside his memories.

Subaru: "The reason why you disappeared....."

'Subaru': "......That was a total miss on my part. I entered ?Taygeta? with the intention of finding a way to capture Reid. Then, through the series of events, it was all great till I found Reid's book, but....."

Subaru: "......Then, Reid's book turned out to be empty."

'Subaru': "Then I was put in the same bowl as ?Gluttony?. The rest is, you probably get it even without me having to say it."

Scratching his head, looking back onto his own shame was ?Subaru?.
Encountering Louis Arneb in the Hall of Memories, ?Natsuki Subaru? had his ?Memories? stolen. And, forgetting all of his life in the different world until that point, his self, of course, created Natsuki Subaru, who could not apprehend the feelings of the people around him.

'Subaru': "Don't depreciate yourself like that..... Would be difficult even if I tell you so, huh. After all,

you are me."

Subaru: "......?Natsuki Subaru? is a weak, petty, irredeemable huge idiot."

'Subaru': "That's not wrong."

Subaru: "But."

'Subaru': "???"

Whilst making a wry smile and gesturing his agreement, ?Subaru? raised his eyebrows at Subaru, who whispered powerlessly.
While looking at that ?Subaru?, Subaru voiced the continuance of the words he had held back.
That was??,

Subaru: "??You are, an amazing guy, ?Natsuki Subaru?."

??That was, his honest opinion lacking all exaggeration, having witnessed him ?Return by Death? greater than twenty times.

???????

"????"

Steadily, whilst looking at the man before him, he narrowed his eyes.
With a face he was used to looking at, with a face he was tired of looking at, a face he thought that was even was distressful to look at, it was his own self. It was his own self, it was not his own self, though it was his own self, he did not believe it to be his own self.
That face had a reaction as if having been pricked with something unanticipated for the first time, it was gratifying.

Subaru: "......The closest person, huh."

There were not many, who loved their own self from the bottom of their heart.
Subaru particularly belonged to that category, and Subaru hated himself. Perhaps ?Natsuki Subaru?, was no different in that regard either. ??Subaru, ?Subaru?, hated himself.

However, as the closest person, when Natsuki Subaru saw ?Natsuki Subaru?, to say this would be exceedingly embarrassing but, so cool, was the thought that crossed his mind.

Subaru: "I respect you, who is weak, hopeless, unable to do anything, but still, continues to struggle, and loves them. That's why??"

'Subaru': "????"

Subaru: "??The meaning of me, reading your ?Book of the Dead?, was there."

He had not opened up the ?Book of the Dead? merely to gnash his weakness, grieve the cease of trails, in order to slam grudges on his self who had the same face as his own self.
Of course, neither was it to have the megalomania, of following? up to the superhuman Natsuki Subaru's? roots and attaining unparalleled strength, granted.
What he sought was learning that ?Natsuki Subaru? was merely human, his deeds, his path.

Subaru: "......You sure are a guy, who says embarrassing stuff suddenly, you."

?Subaru?, who had remained frozen by Subaru's oration until then, abruptly came alive.
?Subaru? had his eyes narrowed, at the ill humour?? no, in a state of feeling somewhat awkward, he sharply gazed at Subaru and slowly stretched his fingers ahead,

'Subaru': "It's pretty questionable for me to say it myself, but you sure can say all that after staring back at my entirety up until now. Now that it's mentioned, it's ?Natsuki Subaru Starting Life in a Different World from Zero?, you know."

Subaru: "Ah, it feels so weird to have the leading actor's name be the same as yourself."

'Subaru': "It's better than having the heroine have the same name as your mom, isn't it..... No, not that."

Unreservedly reciprocating persiflage, Subaru exchanged a gaze with ?Subaru?.
?Subaru?, who somewhat seemed to have tasted an under-shoulder swing down, he pointed at himself with his hand and,

'Subaru': "I had said all that earlier, but is this seriously okay? The possibility of me, being a fake of Louis is not supposed to have completely disappeared, you know."

Subaru: "It has disappeared. You didn't revert even after I seriously hit you."

'Subaru': "I mean, to revert back by that is just in the case of Yanagisawa's copy ability....."

As per ?Subaru's? objections, that could not truly be used as rationale.
However, at that point in time, Subaru had let go of his scepticism regarding ?Subaru?.
The reason for that, was perhaps what ?Subaru? had commented earlier.

For argument's sake, even if Louis Arneb eats away one's life away from head to toe without sparing a single part, he believed that she would not be able to reconstruct that face, that voice.
Because she did not have the ability to comprehend blessedness, felicity, happiness.
That is why??,

Subaru: "She, who loved nobody, cannot understand the emotion of ?Returning by Death? for the sake of someone you love."

'Subaru': "????"

?Subaru? before his eyes kept silent, as Subaru took a long, painful inhale.
Now that he had voiced it out, it was terribly stale, merely sweet nothings pleasing to hear, nothing more.
Yet, he had been unable to discover any other responses.
That is why, the ?Subaru? before his eyes, unquestionably, was ?Natsuki Subaru?.

Subaru: "Why are you, here? Were you waiting, for me?"

He recognised the ?Subaru? before his eyes, to be possessing the same roots as himself.
On top of that, the doubt surfacing in his mind, was regarding the two Subaru happening upon each other here.
At that question of Subaru's, ?Subaru? firmly stepped on the pure white floor,

'Subaru': "The reason why you and I met each other here, is because this place is the sole point of contact between you and me."

Subaru: "The point of contact, between you and me....."

'Subaru': "The reason me, who has ?Memories? within the tower, and you, who doesn't have ?Memories?, crossed over, is just because of the ?Book of the Dead? of this area. Both ahead of this, and before this, you and I couldn't have met each other."

Subaru: "??. On second thought, let's go back to the first question. Why, are you here?"

Without digesting the explanation ?Subaru? gave, Subaru, once again, cast the same question.
Strictly speaking, he could not comprehend the logic behind the two Subaru coming across each other here. It ends up being that ?Subaru?, who possessed ?Memories?, and Subaru, who did not possess ?Memories?, both existed alongside each other.

??The rules of the formation of a ?Book of the Dead?, its intricacies were unknown.
Now that if it were to be mentioned, the book of ?*Natsuki Subaru*?, piling up the count of deaths up until now was strange in itself. Precisely that, was a phenomenon that if the ?Deaths? of ?*Natsuki Subaru*? were not being observed from outside of the world, it would not come into existence.
Did that mean, that Od Lagna fulfilled the role of that observer.

Subaru: "But, if that's the case then Louis, who was in the Hall of Memories, if she had been observing ?Return by Death?, I don't know for what reason she would be in such high spirits. If she can recognise that from the outside....."

'Subaru': "She may be staying in the Hall of Memories, but she can't be its ruler. It's ruler is..... probably a guy even more nasty, I think. If you consider it from this situation."

Subaru: "I get it when you say it's a nasty guy. The one most plausible is....."

Halting his words there for once, Subaru and ?Subaru? collectively stated.

"??The ?Sage? Flugel."

They called that, to be the ill-natured utmost plausible personage.
The personage who had connections to the establishment of this Pleiades Watchtower, installing a ?Trial? such that Reid was placed in it, furthermore, imposing an ascetic of unknown termination upon Shaula for four hundred years.
In all honesty, Shaula was pitiable. If it would be possible, then he wanted to snatch her away from her master or whatever.

Subaru: "Then, the reason for my self, both possessing and not possessing ?Memories? existing alongside is....."

'Subaru': "??. That's the type of question difficult to find an answer for. Since I am here, and you are here"

Subaru: "That's just how, it is, huh.....?"

Whilst feeling a sense of unease, catching ?Subaru's? words, Subaru drew his chin in.
The truth is, it had been the kind of question lacking a question setter. Even if theories of some kind were to be arrived at, in the end, they could never provide the answer.
If this question must be investigated thoroughly, and the answer must be found, then it was??,

Subaru: "As long as you, truly aren't Louis Arneb, it shouldn't be a problem."

'Subaru': "That's a pretty bothersome way to confirm. Do you, really trust me?"

Subaru: "I trust you I trust you. If you let me hit you one more time on the other side, I'll trust you more."

'Subaru': "Is that so. I wouldn't say it's the best bargain, you know."

Interchanging frivolous dialogue in a relaxed manner, Subaru shrugged his shoulders at ?Subaru's? words.
The cowardly way of conversation for delaying the core of the dialogue like this, with other people aside, when it was used with oneself, it got seen through far too easily.
That is why, Subaru took it upon himself, and for the third time, fired the same question.

Subaru: "He~y, another me. ??For what purpose, are you here?"

'Subaru': "????"

Subaru: "You must also be knowing, I won't listen to something like that."

At ?Subaru's? attitude, who opted for reticence, Subaru whispered with his black eyes straitened. Even after hearing that, he did not return back persiflage similar to the one until now.
Instead of that, what levitated in ?Subaru's? black eyes, was the radiance that had always been present since the beginning.
Perhaps, that was, often called, what is known as, the feeling of guilt??,

'Subaru': "??Hey, what do you think will happen, in unification of memories?"

That was why, Subaru had deliberately asked that question cheerfully.

???????

"??In the pattern of a conversation about this trick, what would be the normal answer, huh."

"I have no idea. Clearly, it feels like something which has no answer to it."

"To be honest, you seem to be the more knowledgeable one here, do you know about any rules it would be advantageous to know about which I don't?"

"You read the book dissecting me, didn't you. It's as likely as not."

"As likely as not, huh."

"As likely as not."

".....If you and I carelessly bump into each other and one eliminates the other, if it's something like that, what will you do?"

"Don't say all that. Whatever you think when you're anxious, generally I also think the same when I'm anxious, that's why."

"That's that. Then, no hard feelings no matter which one wins, hm?"

"No, I sure will be crazy bitter. And so, if I'll be bitter, then that means you'll be bitter too."

"Well, I guess so. That's, probably right. Hm, ? is pretty shallow."

"What did you say?"

"? is pretty shallow..... huh, is something wrong?"

".....No, I just probably misheard, I guess."

"????"

"????"

"Ah, that's right. There are some things you may wonder about their possibility, so there are some things I want to tell you, can I?"

"Well, if you've heard everything I've said up till now then go right ahead and say anything."

"Originally, you were more informed than me regarding this world..... though that advantage has more or less disappeared by me reading the ?Book of the Dead?, there are some things that have changed a bit, you know?"

"Things that have changed?"

"After losing ?Memories?, I talked to everyone, I got to know everyone..... it's the story of ?Natsuki Subaru Starting Life in a Different World from Zero? you don't know about."

"????"

"First up, Meili, okay. She's a bit, in various ways, saddled with bombs upon herself so it's rough, but she understands if you talk to her so please, properly talk to her. I'm imagining Meili-senpai to be pretty angry right now."

"Yeah, got it."

"And then, there's this huge scorpion wandering about inside the tower, but it's true identity is Shaula. That makes things really dangerous but..... she's not doing that, because she wants to. Please, help her too."

"Yeah, got it."

"Oh, by the way, I forgot to say this, but when I met Louis I got my back kicked hard by Rem. Back then, I didn't remember Rem, so it was only after I read the book did I recall what kind of a girl Rem was, but..... hm, as expected, that had been my Rem."

"No, it's my Rem, you know."

"No, mine."

"Mine."

"????"

"????"

"Ram had said. That when the season of snowmelt arrives, things invisible will be visible, and will surely show their faces..... As expected of her."

"Yeah, I guess so."

"About that guy Julius..... well, it'll be fine even if I don't say anything, isn't it. He's not that unreliable,

that I must tell you something about him."

"Yeah, agreed."

"Thank you, for apologising, to dad, and mom."

"Yeah, hm."

"Thank you, for saving Otto, and Garfiel."

"Yeah."

"Thank you, for saving Petra, Frederica, and everyone from Arlarm village."

"Yeah."

"Thank you, for taking Beatrice out, and holding her hand."

"????"

"Emilia....."

"????"

"Thank you, for falling in love, with Emilia. I also, love her. I really love her."

".....Yeah, I know."

"??Natsuki Subaru. You are an amazing guy, I sincerely know that, if it's you then it'll certainly be alright."

"Yeah."

"????"

"Hm..... I guess so."

"????"

"Yeah. ??If it's us, then it'll certainly be alright."

???????

"It'll be alright, huh."

“Yeah, that's right. Yeah, it'll be alright."

"You, are amazing, I sincerely know that."

".....Yeah, but, hm. I have to say, that."

"????"

"??Looks like my summer vacation is, over."

???????

With a shake of their hands, a clichéd exchange had been the finale.

Subaru: "????"

He inhaled, and exhaled.
Likely, the unification had not been conducted in an irregular form. ??No, by all rights, there had been no supposition of the process of unification being carried out in this place.
Subaru's very existence, all happenings that had very much occurred, all of them had been irregular.
That is why??,

Subaru: "????"

Standing stock still, Subaru finally noticed the tears rivulet down his own cheeks, when they dripped down his chin and fell as droplets.
For some reason or another, he did not feel like wiping them off, as seemingly those streaming tears certainly had not been shed by Subaru, is what it appeared as.
The tears shed by someone, who was, right now, steadily melting together with Subaru, within Subaru.
And, repeatedly breathing deeply, he went around the consciousness within his mind. What had been scorched within his own memories, were??,

Subaru: "??~hk."

Suddenly, twenty ?Deaths? Natsuki Subaru was unmindful of, flashed back.
All of them, told of struggling and writhing within the tower, and the numerous ?Deaths? which became a part of the course of events tasted?? as if getting taken over, the visuals of all worrying sections established a connection.
They had established a connection, but.

Subaru: "Even you, are crossing over the bridge more than sufficiently, you know.....!"

His other self, who had lined up words thoroughly commending Subaru. Digesting his fight in solitude, and his heavy struggle for trusting his comrades, Subaru arrived to an understanding.

Certainly, it was just as what Subaru had stated. *??I can, respect you*.

With such thoughts, deep breathing as if trying to decelerate his eccentrically rapid pulsebeat, he bowed his head.
After that, Subaru raised his face, and glared towards the front.

That was, the unchanging white space.
The area of blank space resulting from the Hall of Memories, which had produced his irregular state.
The place where another Subaru had been, until merely a few moments earlier, who had shaken hands with Subaru. ??Looking down onto the petite shadow of someone crowding that space, Subaru straitened his black eyes.
And??,

Subaru: "So. Did you get to see what you wanted to see. ??Louis Arneb."

Subaru softly asked that to the one who had proceeded to read through the ?Books of the Dead? and had reached this place and subsequently disappeared, Natsuki Subaru?? no, Louis Arneb.

Arc 6: Hall of Memories

by admin - Sunday, January 13, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/arc-6/

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Arc 6, Corridor of Memories, is currently ongoing in the Japanese WN, which means that the this Table of Contents may be updated every now and then, and pace of translations is heavily dependent on the author, Tappei Nagatski.

Currently, this arc is being translated by the WCT team.

All credit for header art goes to HaruSabin.

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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Home

by admin - Sunday, January 13, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/

Arcs I, II & III

Re:Zero began as a free web novel written by Tappei Nagatsuki. Only the first three arcs were covered by the anime; there is an ongoing light novel adaptation, but it has yet to reach Arc IV, so the story can only be continued through fan translations of the free web novel, as linked below.

Credit for the lovely art goes to HaruSabin.

Arc IV: Eternal Contract

Click the link above to begin reading. This is the longest of the six current arcs, so prepare yourself for a wild ride! Credit for these translations belongs to the Summary Anon, whose only known identity is his email address, ankaa.burner@gmail.com, as well as his Mega Archive.

Credit for the lovely art goes to HaruSabin.

Arc V: Stars What Make History

Click the link above to begin reading. This arc is not yet fully translated, but translations are proceeding at a weekly pace; once it’s finished, the gap between Arc V and already partially completed Arc VI will be close to being bridged.

Credit for the lovely art goes to HaruSabin.

Arc VI: Hall of Memories

Click the link above to begin reading. This arc is not yet fully translated, as Arc Six is still ongoing. We’ll try to work on it as much as possible. Currently, the beginning and the latest thirty chapters are more or less all translated.

Enjoy!

Credit for the lovely art goes to HaruSabin.

Featured Article

Stars What Make History, also known as **Arc 5** has been fully translated.

It took some time but we have finally completed the Arc 5 translation, many thanks to everyone who worked on it, namely: Nanashi, Ringo, Ferris, Ice and Graced. You can start reading Arc 5 by clicking this link.

Credit for the lovely art goes to aohgvv8lqk2gv0j.

Kasaneru IF - Re: Repeating Life in Another World From Zero

by admin - Monday, February 11, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/02/11/kasaneru-if-re-repeating-life-in-another-world-from-zero/

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Translated by :

- Ice

With Translations and Source Checking by:

- Nana
- Furuta
- Paper

Proofread by :

- Nobi
- Review
- Ringo

Fan Art Source :

- Twitter

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

A dream, I saw a dream.

A dream that wouldn’t fade, a dream that kept repeating, a dream with no end, a dream that wouldn’t end??

Over and over again, many many times over, repeating mistakes over and over, correcting them more and more. 1000 times, spinning. 10,000 times, connecting. 100 million times, overcoming them. And before knowing it, losing count.

Agony, terror, turbidity, ruin, hatred, madness.
Exhausted, shaken, twisted, corrupted, contorted, decayed, anguished; a heart smashed to pieces.

And yet, there was still a place I wanted to reach.

And yet, there was still a wish I wanted to protect.

Even if no one knew about the endless tragedies that repeated over and over, I will not forget. Even if no one notices, only I am unable to forget.

??Even if the people I want to save wept, I still want to save them.

So, even now, I don’t regret having taken that hand. If there is something I regret, it would be that I was hesitant and indecisive in taking her hand, and the frustration towards my own weak, fragile heart that I couldn’t steel.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??Waking up from the empty dream, the first thing he always felt was a throbbing headache.

[Subaru: …]

Opening his eyes, trying to stave off his sleepiness, he blinked rapidly in an attempt to wake himself up. Though his consciousness hung in a bleary haze, his sluggishness only lasted for a few seconds. Immediately after his consciousness came to from his sleep, his waking brought energy back into his body.

[Subaru: Ah, Aaah]

In contrast to his body being awake, all that escaped from his mouth was a dullish voice. At a glimpse, it seemed like he was still half-asleep, but this was one of the most important rituals he did in the morning. By lying on his back with his head up whilst he let out that voice in that manner, a lot of information could be conveyed through to him.

The tone of his voice, the establishment of consciousness, the safety of his limbs, sorting his thoughts out, what he’ll do today, and the existence of his life??

He made sure to undertake each of these actions every morning.

This was the proof that Natsuki Subaru had reached the morning without making any grave mistakes.

[Subaru: *yawn*]

Taking off his blankets as he yawned, he lifted his body up, swivelling his feet down off of the bed. He roughly scratched his head as he looked around the room he was in. It was a room he had become used to seeing?? it was luxuriously furnished, and included a canopy bed in the room in which he entered from. But, where Subaru had woken up was not the canopy bed, but rather a sofa placed further within the room. He passed the nights as of late there, wrapped up in a futon, curled up into a ball.

??Actually, no, this had been a bedtime habit of Natsuki Subaru’s in these years.

Be as it may, there wasn’t any big reason for him not to sleep in his bed. It was just that he'd end up labouring to try and prepare the environment so that it'd be as comfortable to sleep in as possible. As a result of trial and error, he had learnt that he felt more comfortable by lying down and sleeping on the sofa than sleeping in a bed. And ever since, he'd kept doing that. That's all there was to it.

[Subaru: …]

Rubbing his eyes, Subaru got off from the sofa that he had made into a bed and went to the bathroom so he could get dressed. As he washed his face in the bathroom that was adjacent to his bedroom, he deliberately looked at his soaked face reflected in the mirror. His face looked tired, and gave the impression that he was about to collapse. His face looked frayed with dejection. These three things sapped at his morale.

In an attempt to stiffen that expression, Subaru clapped his face with both hands using all of his strength. A dry sound accompanied the tears that welled up; in order to wash away them, Subaru poured cold water onto his face. Once again, he looked at his wet face in the mirror. And whilst carefully kneading his face, eyes and cheeks, he said,

[Subaru: Smile...you gotta smile, if you can't, then... die.]

Chanting this incantation, Subaru bent his mouth into a terrible, crooked smile. He flashed his white teeth, his smile narrowing his eyes so the whites weren’t visible all around anymore. His own countenance was like that of a villain’s he had been friends with for a bit more than 18 years. He could *camouflage* his eyes, his facial expression, and his countenance with no issues.

[Subaru: Oookay, okay. Keep it like this.]

After checking his smile, Subaru dried his face with a towel and hurriedly changed into his clothes. When he spent time at the Mansion, Subaru’s appearance was not garbed in a servant’s uniform… rather, he wore the formal attire of a noble. Even if he took off his jacket, he would keep snug in a casual white shirt with its sleeves rolled up. However, such appearances were now naturally required. They were quite stuffy, but he really couldn’t do anything about it. He was obligated to have an appearance appropriate to his position, because it was the position Subaru himself wanted.

[Subaru: Soon it’ll be the usual time.]

Straight after he had changed into his clothes, he looked up to the Magic Hour Crystal that had been furnished above the room’s door. It had a dark green hue, signifying that it was morning. It showed that his time for getting out of bed was soon. In some way, it seemed like this morning he had spent just a little bit too much time in practising his smile. In a few minutes, a punctual girl would knock on his door as scheduled. Before that, he needed to finish everything he hadn’t done yet.

[Subaru: …]

Shifting his attention, Subaru unbuttoned his shirt down. There, attached by a thin chain was a pendant fastened to the “Black Crystal” which he never removed, even when sleeping. A mysterious, sparkling

black crystal. Squeezing it in the palm of his hand, Subaru closed his eyes. The crystal stone was cold and hard to the touch?? when it tucked into the palm of Subaru's hand, its presence grew stronger as if firing up; it started to pulse as if it was a living thing.

Naturally, he started to unconsciously count its strange beat's rhythm and frequency as it rested in his palm.

With a stronger beat as it reached its full power, the crystal stone's beat grew stronger, and faster. Without even realising it, its pulse perfectly overlapped with the pulse of Subaru's own heartbeat, until the beat of his heart and the beat of the crystal jewel became equal. When his mind realised that, Subaru's consciousness was released from the yoke of his body and was invited to another area which could not by any means be real.

And in that moment, there were no sounds or signs from the world; instead, a dazzling light enveloped his consciousness.

[Subaru: …]

His consciousness that was formed by the light was slowly guided to his awakening. Sunshine pierced into his eyes when he opened his closed eyelids. What he saw in front of him as he blinked his eyes was a beautiful grassy plain with the wind blowing through it.

It was a vast green plain which spread out as far as the eyes could see. The sea of grass stretched on and on further than his eyes could see. Short blades of grass gently swayed in the breeze. Up overheard, the sky was clear with not even a wisp of cloud present. The sunshine glistened like a gemstone. The blue of the sky and the green of the earth went on forevermore, up until they hazily intersected in the distant horizon. It was appropriate of a dreamworld that lacked any semblance of reality; there was a certain stillness there that seemed eternal.

Splendid, perfectly clear, empty space. ??There was just one part that was different to that in this world.

[Subaru: …..]

Right at the heart of the plain, when Subaru stood there and looked back, there was a gently sloping hill immediately behind which continued to form the shape of a slightly elevated hillock. Up on the hillock, there was a modest garden full of flowers. Right next to those beautiful flowers that were basking in the sun, was a parasol and a white table.

Without speaking even a word, Subaru climbed up the hill, and squeezed himself under the parasol. Steaming cups had been placed on the white table, their ceramic interiors filled with a warm, amber liquid. Two cups had been set upon the table, and a white chair had been left set next to the table.

Since she had prepared it for him, Subaru sat down on the chair without confirming it. Though the tea had just recently finished brewing, he held the cup to his mouth, wetting his throat with its amber goodness.

??As always, it was an unusual tea which tasted neither delicious nor unappetising.

Nevertheless, without fail, he always drank this tea from the moment he sat down. It had been an agreement he'd made with the mistress of this place, the tea was a substitute for introductions in their strange relationship. Even so,

Subaru: [Ah, I drank it, I drank it, thanks for the drink. Alright, let's quickly move onto the main subject.]

???: [Of course, I did say that the first sip worked as a greeting. However, I don't think that means that you shouldn't ever give me a simple hello, mhm?]

Finishing his tea, Subaru placed his cup back on the table with these few words. And to what he had said, the one who sat opposite to him at the table gave him a weak smile, whilst voicing out her complaint. Receiving her complaint, Subaru scratched the tip of his nose whilst saying:

[Subaru: ...There's no real reason to greet you, is there? After all, since you're prying inside my head day and night, there's no meaning in saying hello or goodbye to you.]

[???: This and that are different matters, you know? First of all, *day and night*, I'd like for you not to speak of it in such a scandalous manner. Even if it is true, even I am still a shy, young maiden girl, as delicate as a flower. Wouldn't my reputation become all the more worse if it became known that I am always staring into a boy's mind?]

[Subaru: A shy, young maiden girl as delicate as a flower… Did the meaning of those words change without me noticing?]

[???: How scathing of you. Well, maybe it is unreasonable at my age to insist on calling myself that.]

Saying that, the girl relaxed her mouth into a smile; quite in contrast to the contents of her complaints. Completely used to these sorts of exchanges, the girl was quite tolerant towards Subaru's impolite behaviour?? Or rather, it seemed as if she was enjoying herself exchanging these sorts of conversations with him.

Subaru's heart cannot help but feel the distorted feelings of guilt in his heart intensify when seeing that smile. In any case, he doesn't know which way of acting is the right one. Only with the person right in front of his eyes, can he find the optimal solution.

[Subaru: As I thought, you're such an unpleasant woman.]

[???: That makes me glad. For you, who is kind and greedy. Rather than being kind towards everyone, rather than being someone so apathetic who doesn't find any value in having others help him, I always take great delight in becoming someone who cruelly wounds your heart, or the unpleasant someone who lodges an immovable thorn in your heart.]

Neither sarcasm or irony worked against her. Before she had answered him, Subaru made quite an unpleasant face, but that only resulted in making her more pleased.

[???: Now then, any more of this and my heart will get pained for being hated and buying into your

antipathy. Let’s try and achieve what we set out to do for this morning’s meeting now.]

[Subaru: You weren't hoping to be hated?]

[???: It was a girl’s cute bluff, you know? This is what I want you to see and accept.]

[Subaru: Cute…?]

Subaru doubted this from the bottom of his heart. He leaned his head in doubt. As for his companion she merely gave a ironic smile. And then…,

[???: You’re truly a man who never at all feels any bashfulness. As the ?Witch of Greed?, I’m pleased with that part of you. ??Natsuki Subaru]

Suited to be a contractor, the?Witch of Greed?, Echidna narrowed her eyes with a sweet smile, a smile that rose from the depths of her heart.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

[Subaru: Today’s the 14th of Kisdam…...right?]

[Echidna: You can rest assured. You fell asleep last night without any issues, and you woke up this morning without anything eventful happening. The worst case scenario didn't happen whilst you were asleep overnight. So you don’t have to worry, everything is okay.]

[Subaru: Those are foolish words. If I went to sleep thinking nothing would eventful would happen, I'd end up waking up dead. I don’t know when and where I’ll die, or when it’ll stop.]

Clicking his tongue at the optimism of the witch, Subaru recalled the desperate feeling of loss of his?Deaths?.

Without aim or direction, he had no doubt it could visit him even tomorrow?? When the fact is that he abruptly?Returns by Death?, deprived of it without any premonition. The fact is that the time he spends with people will be forgotten, the fear and despair that it had brung him would never be forgotten.

[Echidna: That’s correct. I was being rash right now. My apologies for that.]

[Subaru: ...Aren't you being terribly meek right now?]

[Echidna: I apologise if you thought of it as a bad thing. I am not that bad of a woman... even though I show myself like that.]

Seeing the discomfort in Subaru who had replied with hurt in his voice, the girl garbed in black gave him a wink as she said that. When talking to that girl, the first thing he noticed was how captivating her eyes are, and how her devilish beauty seems as if it would steal people's hearts.
It’s amazing that just two colours express this beauty.

Long, beautiful white hair like snow cascaded down to her back, and her slender limbs are garbed in a black dress, typical of one seen when mourning. Sitting on her chair, her long legs were crossed together; a somewhat degenerate feeling floated around in that. On her thin lips that were drinking from her cup, there was a strangely arousing gloss to them.

She was a perverse, demonic figure that exuded a sensation of inescapable ruin and destruction were you to provoke her?? Regardless of this, there are anecdotes of those who have tried to approach this Witch of Calamity that brings about the end.

That was the identity of the white haired girl, who was completely garbed in black, Echidna. She, who had forged a contract with Subaru.

[Subaru: Hmmmm…..]

[Echidna: …? What's the matter? You're staring at my face. Do I have something on it?]

[Subaru: Aaah, just hair, and ears, and a mouth, and a nose, and eyes…]

[Echidna: ...Hm why? Even if you're saying something completely obvious, I feel rather insulted.]

Echidna frowned, furrowing her eyebrows at Subaru's answer. Seeing that, Subaru lifted his hand up and said: [Waitwait,]

[Subaru: I didn't mean to insult you! It's just that even with your reputation as a witch, people still end up surprising you… that's what I was thinking.]

Even if up until a moment ago she had expressed all kinds of degeneracy and perversions, in reality, she did have a few bad habits, but she was still an ordinary girl who you could even go as far as calling good-natured.

Of course, this doesn't deny that there were crooked, warped parts that were witch-like.

[Echidna: Hehe, that's quite an unusual opinion huh?]

Saying that, Echidna relaxed her lips, and gave a little smile upon hearing Subaru's thoughts. Placing her cup on the table, she shifted her long legs and fiddled with her long white hair.

[Echidna: Even though I might look like this right now, I was one of the witches that left behind such stories, in various places 400 years ago. Were you to catch me, that version of me was unpardonable.]

[Subaru: You're speaking like you're a junior high student looking for special treatment.]

[Echidna: In any case, you know how I feel quite well… But, it isn't just that. I should have talked about this stuff when we first met.]

[Subaru: Ah… what was it you said…? *Certainly, if you were a person without any tolerances, you would*

have vomited the first time you saw me...]

[Echidna: When you're cutting it down to just that, I feel that my nature is greatly misunderstood]

The majestic witch's appearance completely changed. Echidna looked annoyed hearing Subaru's answer. To that reply, Subaru replied suitably with [N-now now,] to deal with the shift in topic. Nonetheless, what they had spoke was enough for the morning routine.

[Subaru: It's not like us to delve down into idle gossip. I'll be going back to reality soon.]

[Echidna: Are you leaving already? Stay here a little more, no one will mind if you do so. As you know, the time you spend here does not affect reality. You can rest all the time you want… that's what I hope]

Echidna said this so to restrain Subaru who had stretched up and stood from his chair. Subaru cracked the bones of his necks at hearing the witch's cajolery.

[Subaru: That's right. To be honest, I know you're trying to help me in offering me to stay here, but…]

Cutting off his words there, Subaru turned his head to look down towards Echidna. The black irises of the witch and Subaru met each other. However?

[Subaru: It's not my plan to depend on you all the time. You should know that it's not that kind of contract.]

[Echidna: Good grief, you really aren't being honest with yourself. Even when I am the only one in this world that can be your accomplice in helping you bear your anguish and sorrow.]

[Subaru: I don't intend to entrust my anguish and sorrow to anyone. This is something that's just for me; it's how I overcome them. That's the reason behind the contract between me and you. Isn't that so?]

With a low tone of voice, Subaru declared this firmly to the still annoyed Echidna who was shrugging her shoulders. To that reply, Echidna cast her eyes down, drinking from her cup in silence.

When she stopped talking, it was a declaration of her intention that she had lost her reason to continue conversing. Making sure of this, Subaru turned his back to the woman, and started to walk down the hillock. But first, he stopped and turned his head back to look at the witch.

[Subaru: By the way, just a moment ago, you didn't deny that you're always spying on me day and night?]

[Echidna:... Hm? I thought I'd said 'even if'?]

[Subaru :...Even if that's true, I think it's in my capacity to recognise the context in that implicit way of speaking!]

[Echidna: ….]

[Subaru: …..]

Being hounded by Subaru, Echidna let out a small sigh. And then she put her cup to her mouth again. It was a declaration that there was no meaning in continuing their conversation??

[Subaru: I guess you thought I'd just leave it if you kept doing that, right? Are you going to ever stop doing such an unethical thing? Hmph, so are you?]

[Echidna: Is it not normal? I am not so vulgar to spy on you when you're taking a bath or using the bathroom. It's just that unless you're convinced that nothing will happen in these vulnerable situations, I think that it's impossible for me as your contractor to avert my eyes. In the end, it's my obligation as the?Witch of Greed?to faithfully uphold the contract??]

[Subaru: From now on, I'm removing the pendant when I go to the bathroom or wash myself.]

Saying this to the witches rapid-fire excuses, Subaru went down the hill, all the whilst biting down his embarrassment. At the bottom of the hillock, in the place in which Subaru first entered the grassy plain, a door materialised without warning. A single door free of any support. It was the only door that allowed him to go in and out to the outside world.

[Subaru: ……]

Arriving in front of the door, Subaru placed his hand on the doorknob, turning himself so he couldn't see anything. Echidna was looking at Subaru's back, her hair fluttering in the wind all the way on the hillock.

When seeing Subaru looking down away from her, with only a slight bit of hesitation, she gave him a small wave. And without giving anything back, Subaru went through the door, leaving behind just a sigh.

??And straight after, his consciousness that had been captured by the dream world was released and returned back to reality.

[Subaru: …….]

When his consciousness came back to reality, Subaru was still standing in the middle of his own room, holding the black crystal. Breathing out a long sigh, he looked towards the Magic Hour Crystal on top of the door. There was no change in its green hue. That was proof that the time he spent in the dream world was only a few seconds.

[Subaru: Still, I'll never get used to it…]

It was routine every morning to go to the dream world to spend some time at Echidna's tea party. But from there, when he'd come back to reality, he still hadn't become familiar with the discomfort that was produced from the gap of these two worlds. It was a feeling that differed from?Return by Death?. Subaru sighed, and

“Echidna: What would you say to changing your mind and getting used to not getting used to it? Even if it’s no more than for your peace of mind, maybe it’ll make you feel a bit more at ease?”

As if it was a whisper in his ear, the voice of the witch he had said goodbye to a moment ago rung out. Well, in fact it wasn’t whispered into his ear. That voice came from his contractor; the thoughts of the witch flowed via the crystal stone which hung from his neck.

Both of their paths were entwined by the contract even when he wasn’t in the dream world. That made it possible for the witch to talk directly to Subaru from the dream world.

However??

[Subaru: I thought I told you not to speak to me without thinking when there’s nothing important.]

“Echidna: There’s no one around. I don’t think anyone is going to care you if you’re directing your attention to me when you’re alone in the room.”

[Subaru: What would you do, if you did the same thing in public without thinking, and people saw me speaking to someone who isn't there and thought I was a weirdo?]

“Echidna: I feel like that’s a new evaluation. But, besides, it’s not unusual for spirits to converse their thoughts with their spirit-user. That isn’t really suspicious.”

[Subaru: With spirit-users, both use their thoughts to communicate. In my case, it’s just you and I’m stuck speaking aloud to myself. If you look at it from that way, it’s pretty annoying]

“Echidna: Yeah yeah, I get it. As you wish, I’ll be silent except for when necessary. You managed to make a witch obey… you’re a master at this.”

[Subaru: SHUT THE HELL UP]

“Echidna: My my. Please don’t hesitate to call me if you need me, contractor-dono.”

With both anger and mockery in her voice, Echidna slinked back leaving behind those theatrical words of farewell. Even so, the witch should still be peeping into this world via the pendant, however, for the moment, Subaru pushed the notion away from his head and he breathed out a long sigh. From now on, he would definitely shove the pendant into his back-pocket when taking a bath or going to the toilet…

[???: … Subaru-sama, are you awake?]

There was a knock on the door from outside, which informed him of his usual wake up time. Subaru cleared his throat as he heard the gentle voice that had asked him that. Then, clapping his hands to his face, and making sure he was smiling using the mirror, he gave a very dispirited reply of: [Coome in],

Hearing that, the door slowly opened, and a young girl entered the room.

[???: Good morning, Subaru-sama. Today is once again a splendid morning y'know.]

Saying that while smiling, was the little girl in her maid uniform?? Petra Leyte, Subaru's personal maid.

When he had met her, she had still been a young bud yet to flower. But now she was entering the growing season, and was in the process of blooming beautifully. Her height, and arms, and legs had grown a lot compared to before, and she was increasingly becoming more and more suited to her pretty maid dress too.

That behaviour and conduction was not lost against her cute dress. From the start, she was a good girl who was well-taught and quick-to-learn. And now, as a maid, Petra had reached top notch levels.

A 14 year old flower… Seeing Petra's matured smile, Subaru replied with a smile.

[Subaru: A good morning to you too, Petra. I agree, it's indeed a splendid morning. Today too, I was able to see Petra's cute face in the morning. I'm pretty satisfied too.]

[Petra: Subaru's still saying such things. … Ah, but there are clouds hanging over the sky beyond the forest, it seems that the weather may get worse this afternoon. I have plans to go shopping this afternoon, I hope it'll stay sunnyyyyyy.]

Inclining her head towards Subaru's greeting, Petra turned her eyes towards the window and muttered that out. In those words, there was a trace of her childish immaturity in them, and Subaru gave a small chuckle.

[Petra: Ah! No, Subaru-sama.]

[Subaru: Nono, just now, the beautiful shell of a Maid was broken just a little. How very like you, Petra.]

[Petra: Jeez, please stop treating me like a kid like that. I'm totally grown up. I've been a maid already for two years… cuz of that I've become an adult!]

Shaking her auburn hair, Petra's cheeks blushed and her lips tapered in embarrassment. In front of the figure of his cute little sister, Subaru stroked the smiling girl's head. Petra narrowed her eyes in happiness and let out a reluctant sigh as Subaru stroked her head.

[Petra: So, what will you be doing this morning? It's still early for breakfast, but…]

[Subaru: Ahh, for the time being I'll just finish my usual routine and then if it goes well, we can have breakfast with everyone. If it doesn't go well… then, the usual.]

[Petra: …Okay]

Casting her eyes down slightly at Subaru's reply, Petra's face turned quite serious. Shedding silent tears at making such a young sweet girl make such a face, Subaru stroked the cute girl's head as she made this face,

[Subaru: Anyhow, thank you for today as well. Especially for coming to wake me up.]

[Petra: …]

[Subaru: Petra?]

[Petra: Subaru-sama really is clumsy.]

Saying that to Subaru, who was trying to awkwardly change topic, Petra gave an exasperated sigh. And then the girl shook her head, putting on a smile like a bloomed flower.

[Petra: No, even this is my job. Besides, it's far better because Subaru-sama won't sleep too much….. Even if he shouldn't be so careless.]

[Subaru: Huh?]

[Petra: It's nothing. Well then, I'll see you later. Excuse me.]

Every morning, after acting as Subaru's alarm clock Petra would give him a curtsy with her skirt. And then, after seeing off Subaru, she'd leave the room. The door would close, and Subaru would nod his head in satisfaction seeing Petra's growth. .

[Subaru: Petra has become splendid as well. As a big brother, I am proud.]

"Echidna: But from her side, she doesn't seem to think of you as a big brother."

[Subaru: Didn't I tell you to be silent except for when I need you? Witch-sama sure is quick to break promises.]

In her monologue, Subaru was struck by the witch's persistence and weakness to not be able to tolerate the silence. But, leaving behind a resigned sigh, he turned around to look at the door Petra had disappeared through.

[Subaru: I'm that girl's big brother, you know? So, Petra's my cute little sister. That's why I will make that girl happy. ??That much I will absolutely do.]

"Echidna: You'll absolutely make her happy you say…? Those words might unexpectedly become terrible words."

Hearing Subaru's firm tone, Echidna said that without poking any fun at him. Ignoring the words of the witch, Subaru left the room, lightly stretching himself. The mansion's corridor had become quite cold as a sign that it was early morning . Shivering, Subaru walked out.

?? His everyday?routine?was about to start.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Since a few months ago, mornings in the Roswaal mansion had began with an intense?Slaughter.?Though, calling it?Slaughter?may have been quite surprising when it came to the people concerned.

Still, as far as Subaru was concerned, who witnessed it, the exchanges were violent enough to be called?Slaughter.? In fact, there was no doubt that one of the two who clashed together was challenging the other to the death. But unfortunately, the other person who was challenging them evaded that ferocious fighting spirit with ease.

The disparity of power between the two of them was completely evident in the eyes of anyone who cared to look. Of course, there was no doubt that they'd keep up this dangerous routine every morning because of this,

[???: RHHHHHAAAAARRRGH!!]

A fierce howl of rage, accompanied by an explosion at the feet that blew away the lawn on the courtyard. Digging his foot in deeply, with that tempestuous propulsion the golden silhouette charged forward, his beastly claws driving straight toward the figure of his opponent.

It was a blow that could rend thick steel plate, a blow which could turn a human body into mince meat?? The claws of the beast delivered a myriad of violent attacks, assailing its prey in an attempt to forbid it from escaping. However,

???: [I am sorry, but the gap is too great.]

???: [GHHA? !?]

The other silhouette easily avoided the downpour of fatal attacks coming from the claws of the beast. And immediately after, the long legs which were jumping up gave out a loud yell, and the body of the beast was pierced from below.

The beast raised a cry in anguish at receiving that blow, and the side that was stuck arced upwards?

???: [GHHAGHK? !?]

??Or rather, that was what should have happened, but it didn't happen like so.

The body that was launched skywards was intercepted by the opponent's heel which swung downwards like he had waited in ambush, and sent him down crashing into the ground. The impact produced a circular crater upon the lawn's surface, leaving the beast perfectly silent, spread-eagled on the floor unmoving.

???: [Do you want to continue?]

???: [Aurgh]

The victor asked him whether he wanted to continue as the loser let out a groan. There was neither sarcasm or cynicism when asking that; they were words spoken only towards the battle. That's why those words deeply wounded the loser's spirit. Thus,

[Subaru: You probably don't even realise it, but words like that are demeaning you know. Stop with the damn Samurai's pity.]

Entering the scene in which victory and defeat had already been decided, Subaru said this as he scratched his head. Hearing those words, the young man who had been overlooking his spread-eagled opponent turned to look back at him with a smile appearing on his face.

The young man with hair of red flame raised his hand towards Subaru.

[???: 'ello, good morning, Subaru. You're up early this morning, huh?]

[Subaru: Not as early as the two of you. Even so, don't you get bored or have enough of doing this everyday…… You don't have to always act so frank, Reinhardt.]

[Reinhardt: There's nothing wrong with his ambition burning strong. Besides, it's also true that he's getting stronger and stronger each day. Before long, won't there come a time where he will catch up with me?]

[Subaru: Is that so? I'm having a bit of a hard time picturing that.]

The red-haired youth?? Reinhardt's words didn't give off the feeling that they were either a joke or an act of humility. Closing one of his eyes at this estimation, Subaru looked down at the figure that was still lying down on the ground.

A boy with short golden hair was rolling in pain there. Wheezing in anguish, he was still not at a level in which he could wage battle, but still, the fighting spirit dwelling in his green eyes had not wavered at all.

Though his body could not obey his intentions, all he could do was grit his teeth in frustration. Grasping the feelings of bitterness he was feeling, Subaru extended his hand to that boy.

[Subaru: Hey, can you get up, Garfiel. Don't give up just yet. You're…]

[Garfiel: ...Don't touch me so casually. ' don't need t' stand by yer fuckin' hand y'know.]

Not taking Subaru's outstretched hand, the blonde haired boy, Garfiel, bared his fangs at him. However, it was obvious in anyone's eyes that it was just a bravado. Pain was etched on his face, and his breathing was rough. Nevertheless, Subaru was not so childish as to point this out.

Slightly shaking the arm that had been brushed aside, Subaru sighed at the Garfiel who climbed to his feet.

[Subaru: Well, if you say so, do as you like. But, go take a bath before breakfast, and try to clean yourself

of the sweat and mud. Otherwise, Ram will come to dislike you.]

[Garfiel: ... ut yer trap. ‘ know wi’out you needin’ to tell me.]

Shaking his head at Subaru’s suggestion, Garfiel knitted his eyebrows into an angry scowl and stood up. His knees were still trembling, but it wasn’t to the extent where he couldn’t walk. Having recovered with his amazing resilience, Garfiel glared at Reinhardt who was standing there as unperturbed as ever.

[Garfiel: Nex’ time, ’m gonna fuckin’ beat ya.]

[Reinhardt: I will be looking forward to it.]

Garfiel snorted at Reinhardt’s reply which had no traces of a lie in it. And after that, the boy started to trudge away, and as he passed by Subaru, he gave a fleeting glance his way.

[Garfiel: ??Hmph.]

Smacking his lips in irritation, he continued to trudge away from the courtyard to the mansion. With a wry smile on his face, Subaru watched him walk away like that; he shook his head.

He must be feeling quite hurt with his pride wounded. Still, his sour feelings should go away along with his sweat when he washed himself before breakfast. Really, he was at a troublesome age.

[Subaru: That guy, sorry for leaving him all to you. You must be tired too, feel free to go wash up… Speaking of which, running in to him in the bath would be troublesome.]

[Reinhardt: That’s right, it’d be tough for him. Fortunately, I didn’t move enough to break out into a sweat, so I’ll refrain from doing that. It would be a shame to put Garfiel caked in mud in front of Ram-san.]

Having seen Garfiel walk off, Reinhardt smiled at Subaru who had raised those words. Just as he had thought, the effects of the morning sparring couldn’t be seen on the?Sword Saint?. He was dealing with a child, Garfiel, who challenged him in ‘anger’; he was perfectly capable of killing him if he so desired. And to make matters worse, he was making a nonchalant face whilst pushing down his feet on the part of the lawn in which Garfiel had been knocked down on. And, by some way, the grass returned back to how it had been in its original, clean state.

Was this also one of the countless Divine Protections he possessed? ??More and more, the thought of him as an enemy brought chills.

Therefore doing as much as having made him leave his own camp was probably Subaru’s greatest achievement.

The?Sword Saint?Reinhardt Van Astrea.

Where he now belonged, was the camp supporting Emilia as king candidate, backed by Roswaal. Shortly

after the Royal Selection had started, the?Sword Saint?had become Felt's knight. He had been the greatest adversary he would've had to contend with, and because of his distinguished prominence in the kingdom, he'd have been their greatest threat… but??

[Subaru: ??All that said, but, if Felt were to return, we'd once against stand as friends who are enemies, the thought of it brings shudders.]

[Reinhardt: …]

[Subaru: What's the matter?]

[Reinhardt: No, nothing, I understand your concern, but I dare say I would be unable to go back to being Felt-Sama's knight. That lady judged me as unworthy. Were it not so, she wouldn't have tossed me aside to vanish to whereabouts unknown.]

Reinhardt shook his head, turning away from Subaru's words. Closing his eyes to that reply, Subaru concealed his innermost thoughts and let out a long sigh.

??Already, nearly a year had passed since Reinhardt's master, one of the Royal Election Candidates, Felt, had disappeared from her knight.

The feline girl left the Astrea House, taking with her only the old man she regarded as family, and ran away from the Royal Selection. Thus, she cast aside the?Sword Saint?who had pledged himself to her.

Those were the rumours circulating around the country, and was almost identical to the truth.

In fact, Reinhardt had heard nothing from Felt, before being driven from the Royal Election. The fact that the master he'd sworn his loyalty to had vanished without word, brought an immeasurable sense of helplessness to the?Sword Saint?.

Subaru had extended his arm out to this, and had dragged him over to this new camp. With his conscience sullied, and him feeling a great sense of responsibility, Reinhardt had taken Subaru's desperate plea, and offered his sword to Emilia as his new king.

And since, the?Sword Saint?had become the sword of the Emilia camp. He was playing a big part in the Royal Selection. As the descendant of the?Sword Saint?who had sealed?The Witch of Envy?up, he joined to support the much despised Emilia, the Half-Witch. The implications of that was greater than he imagined.

Besides, Reinhardt being around helped a lot in more things than just the Royal Selection. By belonging to the same camp, Reinhardt helped out with the rebellious Garfiel.

[Subaru: I can't raise my head to you and Ram. I can't imagine how many times Garfiel would have crushed me by now.]

[Reinhardt: There's hardly any such thing. Indeed, on the surface Garfiel is harsh, which is in fact an

indication that he recognizes your strength. But, your strength is not one he can understand, and this, no matter what, he cannot find himself able to accept.]

[Subaru: Well, no one would particularly enjoy being confused by so many cheap conjurer's tricks. Though, there was no other way, so it's not like I've dwelled upon or regretted it.]

Shrugging at Reinhardt's defence, Subaru recalled the events that had transpired in the ?Sanctuary?. Back at the?Sanctuary?, the residents' escape had been impossible due to the barrier connected to the graveyard. Then, there was the threat of the?Sizeable Hare?Witchbeast swarming there?? to break through those issues, Subaru had used a lot of tricks.

It could be said that the one who feared?Sanctuary's?liberation the most was Garfiel, and that he was the one who did his utmost to stop Subaru. Whereas, Emilia and the others were the ones who picked up the fruits of his?Return by Death?with all his soul.

That was precisely what originated the contract between Subaru and Echidna. Subaru had chosen to take the witch's hand, and repeated his 'Return by Death' an unimaginable number of times, and went through all possible trial and error back at the?Sanctuary?.

And the result of that was Subaru had been able to take control of the actions of everyone staying in?Sanctuary?and by placing Garfiel outside the mosquito net *(TL Note: isolating/setting him against from the other villagers)* he prevented him from interfering with the events.

He overcame the Graveyard's?Trials?and broke the barrier. Meanwhile, Roswaal made the necessary preparations concerning Lewes, and led the evacuation. The inhabitants were set free before the threat of the Sizeable Hare had assailed the?Sanctuary?. Meanwhile, Garfiel struggled to keep the time of release at bay, but his struggles were in vain.

After all, it was after everything had ended that Garfiel understood everything that happened. Even when he knew that it was too late to help, after the evacuation of the inhabitants of the?Sanctuary?had ended, Garfiel had still tried to resist leaving the?Sanctuary?.

However, the?Sanctuary?was attacked by The Sizeable Hare and the young man would have been driven to the verge of death if he hadn't been saved by the hands of Subaru and Roswaal.

Lacking strength and making misjudgments, the problems that had weighed stubbornly on his young heart for more than a decade had been solved by outsiders, excluding him entirely. Garfiel's willpower was greatly wounded.

After that, his feelings of depression became rage, and it was only natural that he come to bear hatred for Subaru. Without the persuasions of Ram and his big sister, Frederica, Garfiel may not have made the choice to join the Emilia camp. The newcomer Reinhardt became an outlet of anger for Garfiel.

In the end, it was probably his own lack of strength which Garfiel couldn't forgive the most. By understanding the strength of the?Sword Saint?as his objective, little by little, signs of change were born in Garfiel, who continuously worked to become stronger.

Through this way, perhaps he would arrive at the answer that he couldn't acquire back at the?Sanctuary?.

[Subaru: Well, I'd be quite happy if he were a little more open with me.]

[Reinhardt: One day he'll understand your feelings. There's no need to be impatient.]

Reinhardt shook his head in a gesture that looked like consolation at Subaru's half-hearted conclusion. And then, the red-haired knight turned his eyes towards the mansion.

[Reinhardt: I want you to leave Garfiel to me for just a little while longer. ...That's if you still have any expectations from me, I, who was not even able to acquire Felt-sama's trust.]

[Subaru: Don't be so pitiful. I don't think there's anyone who doesn't believe in you. Yeah, I have expectations of you.]

[Reinhardt: Understood. Then, you too should do what is expected of you… That is the duty of a best knight.]

It was only in those last words, in which Reinhardt had shown some kind of emotion in.

The?Best Knight?, that term was permitted only in master-servant relationships which were tied together by the strongest of bonds. Reinhardt had not been able to become that for Felt.

He didn't wish to become so to Subaru, that's what he felt.

[Reinhardt: Well, I'll see you later.]

Without even revealing a bit of those emotions on his facial expression, Reinhardt gave Subaru a clap on his shoulder and left the garden. As he walked, there were no signs of the fight which had taken place a few moments ago, on the lawn underneath his feet which should have been dented.

Whilst standing on lawn that had gone back to normal, Subaru made sure that Reinhardt had completely left the garden and let out a long sigh.

[Subaru: I left Garfiel to… you, huh.]

"Echidna: My, what skilled acting. Your skin grows thicker by the day."

[Subaru: …]

Once again, he heard the voice of the witch who kept breaking her promise. But, Subaru didn't say anything back. Taking his silence as an acknowledgement, Echidna transmitted her thought-waves from her crystal stone,

"Echidna: Pitying Garfiel is your prerogative. But let's discuss the solution of?*Sanctuary*?*. Repeating attempt after attempt, you found the optimum solution. Keeping anyone from hurting, from dying… and*

finally saving everyone's life. Isn't that so?"

[Subaru: I know. That's why I didn't say anything.]

"Echidna: Reinhardt as well, absolve yourself from guilt. Originally, that girl—— Felt wasn't interested in the election in the slightest. So, you pointed out an escape path for her, so she would need not trouble herself. And now, she's living peacefully with that old giant in Kararagi."

[Subaru: …]

Echidna carefully affirmed Natsuki Subaru's choices, as if caressing old wounds.

Garfiel's stagnation, Reinhardt's anguish?? all of these were as a result of Subaru's choices. Garfiel's situation had been okay. It had been the necessary process for resolving the problems in the?Sanctuary?without having to sacrifice anyone. But, Reinhardt's situation was different.

It was a plot of Natsuki Subaru to completely separate him from his master. He wouldn't be able to avoid blame and disdain if they knew the facts. It was that kind of a plan. But even so??

"Echidna: In order to drive away the malicious Witch Cult targeting Emilia, you need real power. Just charm isn't enough. So in the end, you made the right choice."

[Subaru: Enough!]

"Echidna: Successfully saving Pristella, was allowed only because of that choice. Dealing with the disaster that swept the Watergate City, how would your odds have been without Reinhardt?"

[Subaru: ….]

"Echidna: Of course, if you'd concentrated your fighting power there, you may found a way to repel them by some other means. However, to be able to defeat Sin Archbishops in the plural with no victims, was precisely because you had Reinhardt available to you."

Repeated and relentless were Echidna's words, and yet that attempt to console was met with the opposite effect. An attempt to justify his deeds, falling hundreds upon thousands of times was that blade known as words. Using this method to cut his heart into jagged pieces was not her goal, but it certainly felt so. Using a blade of language, she condemned the deeds and deceits of Natsuki Subaru.

No matter how many times, no matter how many dozen times, no matter how much she repeated it, it was never enough.

His strength was overwhelmingly insufficient. And that power never compensated for the experiences of Subaru, who kept repeating?Return by Death?several times.

Memories and experiences of the future, in this world there was despair that could not be overcome with that alone. Still, maybe the difficulties could have been overcome if he had committed himself. But

Subaru regretted that he could not be neither strong enough or weak enough to allow sacrifices.

It'd be meaningless if he closed his eyes to people falling victim, it'd be meaningless if he accepted condolences, it'd be meaningless if he allowed compromises. If he stopped putting his life on the line, he'd lose meaning in having taken the witch's hand.

Therefore, he did everything he could to get the necessary power and the necessary fighting strength. As a result, he had caught the strongest sword, Reinhardt van Astrea and made him into an ally.

When it came to Felt's withdrawal from the Royal Selection?? It was not possible to describe all of his tries, and all of his errors that he had repeated so that this would have been realised.

Under Reinhardt's enmity, under that sword, falling even ten or twenty times was insufficient. Still, finally he had accomplished it quite peacefully without sacrificing anyone. Only that outcome was salvation for Natsuki Subaru.

It didn't matter how many times his heart would be wounded, as long as he could save their lives??

[Subaru: There's life, if there's life, there's a future, if there's a future, there's hope, if there's hope, then there are possibilities. If there are possibilities, then??]

"Echidna: Then people will be saved. You're in the right. You aren't wrong. I promise so."

[Subaru: I don't particularly need your guarantees, you know…]

Subaru spoke out his innermost thoughts to both cheer himself up, and to caution himself. The witch affirmed, understood, shared and admired that.

While responding aggressively to his words, it was a fact that the witch's words helped him.

Life, was life.
If he was alive, he could start over. He had possibilities. It yielded hope.

Sacrifices were things that were different to Subaru's life. It was worth continuing to keep using?Returning by Death?all the time if it protected everyone except Subaru's own life, which was no longer included in his calculations.

??*Even if those who I want to save weep, I still want to save them.*

That was the salvation that Subaru had decided to receive by taking the witch's hand.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Having received the witch's cruel comfort, Subaru left the courtyard. Witnessing the morning exercises of Reinhardt and Garfiel, had in fact nothing to do with Subaru's daily routine. He just happened to pass by the scene, and he had no choice but to call out to them. Subaru's proper daily routine started in the

mansion’s library.

[Subaru: ??Heya, Beatrice. Sorry to intrude.]

Deep within the easternmost part of the mansion, stood a neat library. When you pushed open one of the heavy double-doors, the first thing that leaped out from the inside was the overwhelming scent of paper. In the dim light of a magic crystal, the narrow shelves were completely filled, drowned under thick stacks of heavy books

The amount of books could be said to be no inferior to what once existed in the?Forbidden Library.?

So, in that case.

Even while knowing that this place wasn’t the?Forbidden Library?that she should be guarding, the little girl remained here, able to see the fragments of her old home within the debris.

[Beatrice: ….]

In the depths of the dark room, in a corner of the library rested the figure of a young girl who hugged her knees to her chest. As soon as he entered the room, he saw her sat on a wooden stepladder. This still vivid memory of her squatting posture, that sense of violation would not vanish, continuing to burn and erode through Subaru’s heart.

Beatrice had pressed her forehead into her knees, still wearing her same dress. Scrunched up like this, the little girl didn’t stir, react or even say anything to Subaru as he entered her room.

But she was not asleep, that much was clear from the fingers of her little body, which were clenched with so much force that they were whitened.

Back then, she had greeted Subaru with poor temperament, but at least when she had greeted him then, it had been with the dignity of a librarian. There were no traces remaining of that frigid expression which had been sustained by the pride of her responsibility.

Scrunching up his eyes at seeing the girl in such a sorry state, Subaru rapidly blinked his eyes to get rid of the emotions that had flitted there for just a moment. Then after putting on a ridiculously animated smile, he threw open the curtains of the library.

Unlike the forbidden library, the room had a physical existence. Naturally, since there was a window, the door couldn’t act as a barrier to prevent trespass. Therefore??

[Subaru: Heyy, Beako. Today’s a splendid morning. There’s a pleasant wind blowing by. You should stop hiding in this musty old room; don’t you feel like playing outside?]

[Beatrice: ….]

[Subaru: If you don’t want to muddy your dress up by playing outside, then at the very least let’s eat

together with everyone. Come to the dining hall like before. It’s not too much to ask, right?]

[Beatrice: ……]

The curtains of the library were torn wide open, and sunlight streamed into the room. Just like the streaming sunlight, Beatrice kept her silence, tilting down her head to Subaru’s requests, who was still smiling quite openly. It felt to Subaru that her arms that were still clutching her knees were as if she was punishing herself.

[Subaru: Hey, Beako….]

[Beatrice: … just shut the hell up, in fact.]

[Subaru: …....]

Unable to bear looking at him, Beatrice spoke this out quite loudly as Subaru tried to approach her.

Her voice sank heavily, as it grew hoarse. But, after hearing her voice, Subaru felt relieved. Because recently, just hearing her voice was a rare occurrence.

When she was depressed, the days were quite many in which he couldn’t exchange even a single word with her. Even words of rejection and denial pleased him.

Casting aside what Subaru was thinking, Beatrice continued without lifting up her face.

[Beatrice: Betty is tired. I’ve already given up, I suppose. I went against mother’s instructions… I broke the contract… and despite that, I’m still alive… why?]

[Subaru: Beatrice…]

[Beatrice : If only you just ditched me back then... Why did you come to help me? Clearly, you're not… you’re not?They!?]

It’s a resentment that will never disappear, a resentment that can never fade, a penitence that she could never forgive??

In her four hundred years, Beatrice had bore those feelings alone, her heroic consciousness that had refused to relinquish such thoughts had been trampled upon, naturally bringing hatred.

Within the Forbidden Library, was a spirit who had given up her life for her mission, with no room in her heart for hope.

Her eternal life had stripped hope from her, and all she had been given was time to live a life devoid of meaning.

When the Forbidden Library burned down along with the mansion, the place in which she had been

indicated to stay was lost forever.

But even so, Beatrice had never once forgotten her responsibility, the one that been abandoned. Her heart which had bore such a relentless sense of responsibility, had been scarred by permanent wounds, steeped in misery.

That is why ever since the night when the Forbidden Library had burnt to ashes, all she could do was crouch in a corner of the library, endlessly sobbing in helplessness.

But still??

[Beatrice: ??hk! Go away! Let go of me, I suppose! Don't you touch Betty… ?tch!]

Unable to see her small figure, Subaru had wrapped her small body into a hug. Shouting at him when she felt his arm hugging her, Beatrice made no attempt to hide her disgust and rage, scoring Subaru's neck with her nails. Caught in her merciless attack, drops of blood oozed out of his wound. But still, he didn't let go.

He hugged her in an attempt to comfort her shivering body. But maybe it was actually Subaru who was looking for comfort by doing that.

[Beatrice: Why did you come to see me, I suppose…! You're so….you're so...!]

[Subaru: I'll be like this no matter how many times you vent your anger at me, it's fine. Even if the flames of regret don't seem like they're vanishing right now, if you keep pouring them out maybe they'll vanish someday.]

[Beatrice: They're not… supposed to vanish...! Betty is!]

[Subaru: I'm so glad that you're alive. So, I'll always look forward to the day where you'll once again get sulky in front of me. ??Because that hope still lives in me.]

[Beatrice: ??hk]

Quietly, after those sincere words were exhausted, Beatrice's resistance subsided. Making a surprised face, Beatrice started to sob, there in body but not in spirit. It was a sign that he couldn't continue this conversation anymore.

??Once every two weeks, Subaru and Beatrice would exchange anger and stillness like so.

After letting go of her, Beatrice once again buried her forehead into her knees. And after that Subaru couldn't say anything more to the girl who had retreated into her own shell. Subaru's words still weren't able to manage to open the door to her stubborn heart.

Nevertheless, if he beat relentlessly against those doors, maybe one day, they would open. ??The mere possibility of this hope, was hope itself.

[Subaru:... Back then, I wonder if I should have told her I was?They?even if it was a lie.]

Exiting the library and leaving Beatrice behind, whilst keeping his back to the door, Subaru recollected this.

Beatrice had been broken clinging to the hope that Subaru was the?They?in question back during the attack on the mansion. She had been prepared for the end of her long, long mission, but both her fragile hopes and her sorrowful acceptance were smashed to pieces.

Would Subaru have been able to lie to her who had longed for the visit of?They?for 400 years about being?They?just because he could? And in that case, could her heart have been protected without burning it along with the burning Forbidden Library?

“Echidna: The fact that the Forbidden Archive was lost can't be undone. Accepting the irretrievable loss of all the knowledge without inheritance is quite painful for me, but it couldn't be helped. Though for you, compared to that knowledge, that Beatrice's life was saved is what matters most.”

[Subaru: It's inappropriate that you'd say so. It should be that you alone, have no right to say this.]

Echidna, who was still in the dream world, protested to Subaru who had mentioned his regrets in passing.

But, hadn’t it been Echidna who had entrusted the Forbidden Library to Beatrice, and let her have such a lonely existence for 400 years?

As a result of Echidna setting this duty out to her, Beatrice’s heart had gradually crumbled to pieces. And despite that??

[Subaru: If you hadn’t told her to wait for?They?...!]

“Echidna: Wait a second. No matter how you look at it, isn't that sidestepping logic? I had my own reasons, and there was a need for it to be done. Of course, responsibility for Beatrice's long solitude does have to do with me. But, my intent was certainly not one of forcing misfortune upon that child. I do hope you understand.”

[Subaru: Ghg…]

Receiving Echidna’s objections, Subaru hesitated in bursting out in anger. The witch’s words were correct. In the end, when he blamed Echidna, he was just shifting the responsibility from what he couldn’t do himself.

[Subaru: ...In the end, who was?They??]

“Echidna: Regretfully, I can't let that slip from my mouth. Since the Forbidden Archive is lost, discussing it would be meaningless. Even if?They?were to be found, she wouldn't know it was him.”

[Subaru: Him… so it’s a man?]

“Echidna: ??Did my mouth slip? But, every way of finding him is gone now. In the first place, say you found them, what would you do? Let Beatrice see them? Or do you intend to impose a sanction on them? In that case, what crime would it be under. The party in concern would certainly be unaware of it, a crime that doesn't exist can't be sanctioned. Moreover, it's not like you have the leisure.”

Irrefutable were Echidna's conversational tactics, leading Subaru to click his tongue.

As a matter of fact, everything spoken from the Witch were probably correct. He couldn’t find any errors. He couldn’t judge them. Subaru didn’t have the time to do such a thing.

“Echidna: Beatrice truly did spend that time in pity. But, that isn't to say the future would remain so, and there's no indication we should think thus. How unexpected, it's just as you said.”

[Subaru: …]

“Echidna: Even if devastated by regret right now, there will come a day where that child will be freed. At the time, someone will come to accept that child. Perhaps someone that is you, perhaps someone that isn't. That is the possibility that living offers.”

It was sophistry.
It was merely a front of benevolence.

But, that doubtlessly was also hope.

It seemed like cajolery from Echidna, but if there was that possibility, Subaru had no choice but to believe them.

Thus, the witch he was contracted with, no matter how clearly he could see that she cajoled him, he could not deny what she was saying. He could only cling to her, rely on her. As his only accomplice, keeping Subaru from forgetting his sins, was her constant presence.

[Subaru: Just like parallel lines]

[Echidna: Ah, like parallel lines indeed]

In the end, finishing their conversation thus, were Subaru and Echidna's manner of confronting their sins. They entrusted hope to the future, believing in the paths to possibility, awaiting the arrival of the ideal day.

It didn’t matter how many chances he had, Subaru would always find himself back in this place. He had dragged out the despairing Beatrice as she tried to stay in the burning mansion, even if she'd lost her Forbidden Library, even if her every day were to be met with relentless tears; he still had wanted her to live.

Even with repeated trial and error in many thousands repetitions of this world, Subaru hadn’t found a way of rescuing Beatrice without letting anyone to die.

Thus, clinging onto hope, he kept walking forward through thick and thin, through thick and thin.

I saved them, I saved them.

Today as well, he made these words his motivation for the future; he wanted hope to flourish.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

[???: Oh myyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy! But if it isn't Subaru-samaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa! Did you come from visiting Beatrice?]

[Subaru: ……]

Suddenly, he heard a voice from behind him as he walked through the corridor. Subaru reflexively stopped in his tracks. He immediately realised who it belonged to from the tone of his voice. It was because of that he regretted stopping, but he couldn't ignore it because he had already stopped walking. Reluctantly turning around, the other figure stood leisurely, directly behind Subaru.

[Subaru: Is that you, Roswaal?]

[Roswaal: Mhhm. That's me of course. Good morning. How was Beatrice today?]

[Subaru: ...It had been a while since she's treated me so haughtily. Well, anticipate some progress from now on.]

[Roswaal: I see. … Looks like you took quiiiiiite the beating, though?]

Roswaal narrowed his differently coloured eyes as he received Subaru's dispirited reply. He was looking at Subaru's face and neck. On them, were the painful scratches Beatrice had given him with her nails a short while ago.

[Roswaal: Unfortunately, I've never been skilled at treating injuries, and I won't be able to treat those wounds. The ones who can use Healing Magic are just… Beatrice, Garfiel and Emilia-sama.]

[Subaru: It'd be a little difficult to ask it from the first two. I could ask Emilia… well I'll think about it.]

[Roswaal: If you ask her, I am sure she'll definitely heal you up. Or perhaps, could it be that maybe your aching wounds give you some comfort right now?]

[Subaru: ….]

In place of the reticent Subaru, each of Roswaal's discursive words were as painfully sharp as a razor. It was especially so when Roswaal spoke his last words; Subaru narrowed his eyes to it, and Roswaal shrugged his shoulders up in a clown-like gesture.

The clown's makeup and exotic attire, Roswaal's appearance and attitude had in no way changed, but he

was also decisively different.

Behind the way he addressed Subaru and his attitude towards him there was a certain respect. That served as Roswaal's, toward the unpredictable existence of Natsuki Subaru, proof that he recognized his utility.

[Roswaal: But, please don't worry about it. If you make use of your time, I am sure you'll find a solution; no matter what the method, you will dedicate yourself in finding the optimal way. If your desire is to save Beatrice's heart, such a method will one day fall within your grasp. There's no need at all to feeeeeeel anxious.]

[Subaru: It's hardly as easy done as said. There isn't anything so convenient.]

[Roswaal: You're too modest. ??Besides, I don't think that it's easy, yes? But, that mere fact doesn't cloud all of your achievements so far, that's all I was saying.]

Respectfully giving a bow, Roswaal gave thorough praise for Subaru's achievements.

As a matter of fact, only Echidna who was contracted with Subaru knew about his ability of ?Return by Death.?But, Roswaal had an understanding of his ability to be similar to?Redoing.? Roswaal evaluated that fact and his achievements together.

As Echidna didn't have any realistic power in the real world, it it was no exaggeration to say that Roswaal that valued Subaru the most in the truest sense.

[Roswaal: At the Royal Capital, at my mansion, and once again at the Royal Capital. And then, at?Sanctuary?, at Pristella. ??You survived those without fail, without loss. Indisputable, are the feats of your achievement. There will come a day, when you will fulfill my long-cherished wish, and for that I will do my utmost to support you. Please make use of it.]

[Subaru: You sure are optimistic. ...Don't be so sure that you can grasp me in the palm of your hands.]

[Roswaal: But, you need the blood of the dragon. Without it, that girl?? Rem will never awaken. Having reached that conclusion, you need Emilia-sama to become king. Isn't that right?]

Subaru returned the stare with a sharp, cold look to Roswaal's searching expression,.

It's a relationship of mutual cooperation established on choppy waters, in which both of them knew each other's critical points.

Roswaal would accomplish his goal by utilising Subaru's?Return by Death?as he put Subaru in situations whereby he could achieve this. And though Subaru knew of those intentions, he didn't have any choice but to advance by them for the sake of saving Rem, who was still sleeping.

[Roswaal: In no way is it a bad deal. You do you, I do me, and in any case we'll both have our desires become reality. That's why we make use of each other to that end. That's all.]

[Subaru: ….]

[Roswaal: My strength should be useful. I devoted about 400 years awaiting this time. And to me, your power is the same... isn’t that so?]

Subaru couldn’t give any objections to Roswaal’s conviction. That was the answer that came out from when he found out about Roswaal’s treachery way back at the?Sanctuary?. Whether for the sake of the Royal Election, or as a means of blocking against coming hindrances, being without Roswaal’s presence, was absolutely unallowable.

Even if he was just planning on using Subaru to make his own wishes come true.

[Subaru: If you were honest about your true intentions, and you told me what you wanted, I wouldn’t be so stubborn, I would maybe even be willing to help.]

[Roswaal: What a shame, I’m afraid that’s impossible. You’ve already lost that choice.]

Slightly easing the sense of urgency, to the approaching Subaru, Roswaal gave him his rejection. Roswaal gave a ostentatious smile towards the Subaru who heard that with widened eyes.

[Roswaal: Being conscious of it would be a disaster, you must always exalt your sole priority. Any obstructions, reasons for stumbling, everything will be judged, and no matter what can be discarded without second thought. And if done, that would be the end. This was all already decided, hence why you’ve become my trump card.]

[Subaru: ….]

[Roswaal: Isn’t this wonderful? I’ll take care of my side, you’ll take care of yours, freely fulfilling our wishes. If it’s impossible even like this, that merely indicates the desire to reach the wish was insufficient.]

[Subaru: …Ah, is that so?]

Crazed dedication, was why Roswaal supported his, that much had already been clear. Then, where the root of it came from, his refusal to speak honestly about it was also thus. With this in mind, Subaru ended the conversation with Roswaal and finally started to walk away. With a posture that showed just how much Roswaal was detached from his heart, Roswaal stopped walking,

[Roswaal: Ahhh, yes. Right about now, Ram will be in Rem’s room. I’m letting you know, just in case.]

[Subaru: …..]

Unable to respond, Subaru turned the corner and escaped from his gaze.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

[Ram: Thank you very much for taking the trouble to visit my lonely sister, Natsuki Subaru-sama]

Ever since the agreement in?Sanctuary?, or perhaps, it might be more accurate to say ever since Natsuki Subaru decided to do things this way.

Ever since that, it was inevitable that numerous changes had occured in the mansion, and on the outside, but amongst them, the biggest change was perhaps hers.

The one who had greeted Subaru as he entered the room was a pink-haired maid who had given him a most profound bow. The one who had spoke this greeting was most certainly Ram.

Though she had been a girl with that had been the very picture of arrogance, after he had overcome the events of?Sanctuary?, she had a sudden shift in her attitude towards Subaru.

[Subaru: No matter how much time passes, I never get used to your attitude.]

[Ram : Again, I am really sorry for how rude I was in the past. Ram's ignorance and discourtesies caused great inconveniences to Natsuki Subaru-sama. But since Roswaal-sama and Emilia-sama have ordered me to show Natsuki-sama the highest of respect, it won't happen again; please rest assured]

Without changing her expression, Ram replied to Subaru in a manner dignified as any maid would be. There were no traces of familiarity or a sense of closeness which could be interpreted as friendliness in her behaviour, as there had been once before. There was a wall?? No, if there was a wall he'd be able to climb over it. Here, there was no way of overcoming it; more precisely, it was a distance between worlds than a wall.

Ram held Roswaal in high esteem and adored him. When Roswaal had changed the way he acted towards Subaru, Subaru's value also greatly changed for Ram. The result was that she now regarded Subaru as someone she showed respect to.

Turning his attention away from that Ram, Subaru walked towards the middle of the room?? the reason why he had came to this room was the blue-haired girl who was sleeping in the bed.

She was lying on her back, her figure unchanged after 2 years?? that girl, was Rem. He had vowed to wake her up, and now he still hadn't reached the conviction that he'd fulfill that vow. Just time was cruelly leaving the girl behind.

[Subaru: Are there any changes in Rem?]

[Ram: No I'm afraid. She still continues to sleep… There are a lot of problems on your mind, Ram doesn't have the time to give any attention to her little sister.]

[Subaru: Don't say such things. There's absolutely… there's absolutely no futility in thinking about Rem. Never say that again.]

[Ram: ??Understood sir.]

Ram responded curtly to Subaru's firm order. Neither dissatisfaction or complaints were there, and neither was relief or gratitude. In regards to her younger sister called Rem, Ram had no actual feelings or appreciation for her. She recognised formally that Rem was her sister, but in the depths of her heart she probably had no room for Rem.

Her heart was completely based on loyalty to Roswaal. Having involved her in Roswaal's plans, having decided to curb the wishes Ram clung onto, the effects of Subaru's actions were strong indeed.

Even if Rem were to awaken, would her heart once again have room for her little sister? Would those sisters go back to being the much loved big sister, and her cute little sister.

[Subaru: ??Ukh. Ram, sorry, but let me be alone with Rem.]

[Ram: ...as you wish. Please call me if you need anything.]

Grinding his teeth at the shuddering thought, Subaru felt terrified at being in the same room as Ram. Miraculously, before his trembling voice was let out, she had left the room. Fortunately, Ram had left gracefully, leaving him behind only an elegant curtsy without giving any objections to Subaru's words. And so, only the two of Subaru and Rem were left in the room.

[Subaru: ….Rem.]

[??]

Lying on the bed, the girl simply breathed over and over again in a manner which could not be mere sleep; she doesn't reply. The fact that her chest was gently rising and falling, and that the blood in her body was warm were the only signs of life within Rem.

All that Subaru could do for Rem when visiting this place was to take her hand and check her weak pulse. And that's all Subaru can find comfort in, in this moment.

[Subaru: ...Echidna.]

"Echidna: For you to call me, is truly a rarity."

Echidna replied to his call as he sat down by Rem's bedside, gently holding her hand. The witch who seemed to know all too well about how she would speak without necessarily being called, silently waited for Subaru's words to be submerged in the warm water of his emotions. The silence would end after ten or so minutes.

[Subaru: What were the ways you said before that could help Rem wake up?]

"Echidna: Hmmm. You could question the Sin Archbishop of?Gluttony?that put her in this sleep. But, I have to say, the likelihood of that is quite low. Finding those guys is next to impossible, and even if you do catch them, finding a way to beat their secrets out of them… Even if you were to just able to find a way to talk to them, maybe it would be easy to find a way to make them open their mouth, if you had the power…"

[Subaru: Ah, that's right. That's right of course. If I manage to find them, and catch them, and beat their secrets out of them to reawaken Rem, I can challenge them ten thousands of times. Even so…]

They were nowhere to be found. The Sin Archbishop of Gluttony, those despicable blasphemers never showed up anywhere. Even when the Sin Archbishops?Wrath?, ?Lust?and ?Greed? gathered in the Watergate City of Pristella, the Sin Archbishop of?Gluttony?did not show up.

Why, why, why, why, why, why, why??

[Subaru: If tracking down?Gluttony?is hopeless, what about the Sage's tower? If the?Sage?Shaula knows everything, then…]

"Echidna: As a witch, I will say this. Even if you do go to the Pleiades Watchtower, you'll just be going on a fool's errand. The?Sage?will not correspond to your expectations. On the contrary, there's even the possibility that the?Sage?will not allow your presence. Even you should not wish to drop in there to die in vain, right?"

He was denied once. He was denied twice. He was stuck. Getting help from the?Sage?was a no go. The Archbishops of?Gluttony?were nowhere to be found. Subaru's wishes were denied politely by the?Witch of Greed?. Then, what on earth should he do??

"Echidna: So, you have no choice but to get the blood of the dragon"

[Subaru: If I get the blood of the dragon, I can wake up Rem.]

"Echidna: I refer to the Divine Dragon's. Using its omnipotent power kept in its blood, I think you should be able to release the girl's soul from her sleep."

Echidna's words were no more than a conjecture. But it was a convincing conjecture. Though she had said them with an air of avoiding them as being fact, the witch's words were fairly encouraging. Thus for now, Subaru believed that this was the way to save Rem.

The blood of the dragon was considered one of the treasures which the?Divine Dragon?Volcanica granted to the Kingdom of Lugnica. It brought plentiful harvest to the lands, and kept away every disease, and had the possibility to grant miracles.

It could only be used by people with the highest pedigrees of social status in the kingdom. In other words it was those who??

[Subaru: Those who ascend the throne.]

"Echidna: Of course. That's why you have to make her.. You absolutely must make Emilia king."

[Subaru: …….]

"Echidna: Back Emilia, back her and make her king whilst you help the people you wish to save. And

when you get ahold of the dragon's blood, you will be able to save Rem."

Echidna's words pour into Subaru's mind like poison. He has to make Emilia king in order to save Rem. Making Emilia king was one of Subaru's aims that he wanted to meet to fulfill Emilia's wishes.

It was of utmost importance. Supporting Emilia would lead to saving Rem.

To make Emilia king, to save Rem. As a result, Rem would be saved thanks to Subaru wanting to make Emilia king. Therefore??

"Echidna: Therefore…"

[Subaru: Stop, you idiot. … Don't try and swing my determination like that every time you can. Why are you trying to place Emilia under me?]

"Echidna: But that wasn't my intention?"

[Subaru: You have no persuasive power. We've repeated this conversation many times, tens of times, hundreds of times.]

The witch often times poured poison into his mind similar as if she was brainwashing him. In a way to change Subaru's aims, and lessen the value of Emilia. But that was something that Subaru could not let go. It they differed in this, Natsuki Subaru would lose his qualification to step on his own corpses that have been slaughtered so far.

[Subaru: You won't enclose my heart. No matter what you harbour against Emilia.]

"Echidna: That's simply a misunderstanding. Well, it doesn't matter how much I say, you won't believe it… just like parallel lines."

[Subaru: It's better to say that we never agree with each other, like parallel lines, even if it's a conversation that we repeat a lot.]

There were things which could not be relinquished in his cooperative relationship with Echidna. The witch claimed to be Subaru's accomplice, and by lending Subaru her wisdom as a contribution, she planned to use not only Subaru's ?Return by Death?, but also his way of life. Although, thanks to her ingenuous side, those poisonous fangs did not reach him, and thus they were in a state of stalemate.

[Subaru: I'll get my hands on the dragon's blood. I'll make Emilia king. ??But, it wasn't originally just about saving Rem. Even though making Emilia king was directly linked with saving Rem, my original intentions haven't changed. I am sure of that.]

"Echidna: Mymy. I wouldn't complain at all if I were allowed a little freedom of movement from time to time. I have to show my flawed side, otherwise I can't save face as a witch."

[Subaru: The way you execute your endgame is soft. Or rather, perhaps, when it comes to you, I'd say

you’re soft at the core. You’re not suited to be a complete villain. That’s how I am saved.]

“Echidna: I see. I will try to keep that in mind.”

Echidna admitted her defeat with no great objection. Even if she could made use of this lesson next time, she probably wouldn’t be able to. To ask why, the answer would be that. Because it’s not something that can be changed.

Natsuki Subaru was Natsuki Subaru no matter what befell him.
The?Witch of Greed?Echidna could only be the?Witch of Greed?Echidna.

Using the nature that they could never be capable of changing as weapons.
Because in life, victory or defeat could only be found in the cards they were dealt.

[Subaru: ??Wait for me, Rem. For sure, I will wake you up. That’s why…]

??No matter how many times he dies.

His resolve was no exaggeration, the stakes he presented were quite trivial. Regardless of how many times he threw it away, he would continue giving his inextinguishable life away. If that eventually led to her waking up, he would feel no regrets.

Just that much, just that much, just that would be good enough.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??After returning from visiting Beatrice’s library, and Rem’s bedroom, he had now reached the end of his daily routine.

Subaru knocked on the room’s door with a rap-rap-rap. Then there was a knock from the inside that returned the knock. Without replying, they knocked. Replying to it, Subaru once again gave another knock. And that was met by the other person immediately knocking back. Knock knock knock knock knock??

???: [??Jeez, how long are you going to do that for! It’s making me reaaaaally anxious]

The one who who had lost their patience just a few moments ago was the one in the room. The door opened from the inside, and the face of a beautiful girl with amethyst eyes and silver hair could be seen?? she was the embodiment of supreme beauty that forever continued to encaptivate everything.

Art Source

If she showed her face whilst puffing her rosy cheeks, she would give an impression of tenderness rather than of beauty. Suddenly, Subaru started to laugh.

[Emilia: Ah, what are you laughing for? Ugh, Subaru’s such a twit.]

[Subaru: Twit… no one says that word anymore these days. It was Emilia-tan that started to return the knocks just before. I just went with the flow.]

[Emilia: You say it like that. Hmph, whatever. Then if it's like that, I just won't let Subaru into my room.]

Emilia tried to close the door, her face etched with annoyance when she heard Subaru speaking through his laughter. Seeing that, Subaru became anxious and put his hand in between the door??

[Subaru: OWWW]

[Emilia: Ah! Subaru, are you okay!?]

Emilia jumped at Subaru's over-exaggerated shriek of pain after having had his fingers jammed in the door. Quickly jumping out of the room, she hurriedly grabbed Subaru's aching right hand, and,

[Emilia: *Nom nom nom*]

[Subaru: Ehh, Emilia-tan!? Isn't that a little bold!?]

[Emilia: Mmphphnn, mmhmhhmhpphhnomnomnomnomnom]

Whatever he was saying was muffled by Emilia's angered reaction, and by her sharp amethyst eyes. Emilia's soft lips wrapped themselves around the sore fingers of Subaru's right hand. In between her soft lips, he realised that Emilia's warm tongue was gently tracing the numb pain which racked Subaru's fingers.

A sensual shiver traveled up Subaru's spine.

[Emilia: Mhm….that should be fine I think. Subaru, it must've hurt.... Hey, why is your face bright red?]

[Subaru: I can't help acting like a young teen, or how should I put it... it was such an unexpected development… uhh, well, I'm okay. Thank you very much. This should be good enough for me.]

[Emilia: ??? I'm not sure if I understood that, but I should start using my healing magic, right?]

Emilia's face broke out in confusion as Subaru bowed down his head, sticking up his fingers which had been licked. However, she immediately changed her awareness, and began to heal Subaru's fingers with a light blue surge of magic. She completely cured the pain that had been softened by Emilia's tongue.

After that…all that remained for Subaru was how he would clean up his fingers which were drenched in saliva.

[Subaru: I'll wipe them on my clothes… Wait no, that would be gross. Having said that, I'm not advanced enough to lick them so majestically...!? But, if I let this chance escape…]

[Emilia: Ah, sorry. I got them covered in my drool. Yep, all clean now.]

[Subaru: Damnit??!? It was a choice with a time restriction??!?]

Not even taking note of the astonished Subaru, Emilia wiped Subaru's fingers with her handkerchief with great delight. And after that, she suddenly looked at Subaru's neck; her eyes blinked rapidly.

Beatrice's scratchmarks had been left there without curing them. Emilia had noticed them with her sharp eyes, she gently placed her white fingers on those wounds,

[Emilia: Subaru, that looks painful. What happened here?]

[Subaru: Ah, Aaaah, This? I just got my neck caught on something on the way here…]

[Emilia: Liar.]

She interrupted Subaru's words as he had been trying to smooth over the situation; Emilia spoke just that one word. She opened her eyes wide open and stroked Subaru's wounds with her fingers over and over again. And then, she muttered just one thing.

[Emilia: It was Beatrice, wasn't it?]

Suddenly saying that, Emilia's voice was frozen of all emotion.

In an instant, a large quantity of pure white strength surged from Emilia's body. It swept down the mansion's hallway in one fell swoop and Subaru's skin was caressed by a great burning cold.

The air froze, the chill caused the air to crackle, and Subaru said in a panic:

[Subaru: Emilia! Emilia, calm down! Everything is okay, everything is okay!]

[Emilia: …..]

[Subaru: Emilia! Look at me!]

[Emilia ??Ah]

He forcibly stretched his arms out and hugged the girl's trembling body as he called out to her. He called out Emilia's name many many times to her ear. He was pressed up right next to her as he shouted with his own reflection visible in her amethyst eyes.

To his voice, Emilia's eyes shifted out of focus and a small whimper leaked out of her voice.

In an instant, the cold air that was spreading out all around the mansion's top floor vanished. And even the overwhelming pressure surrounding everything vanished. Things went back to as they were before.

[Subaru: Th? That was dangerous. A little more of that, and Reinhardt would have come rushing in…]

[Emilia I… I… n-now... eh...?]

[Subaru: It’s okay, it’s okay. Emilia-tan is a good girl, a good girl, everything is okay.]

Rolling his eyes, Subaru sat down to face Emilia who had sat down on the floor. As she clutched her head, unable to digest what had happened, Subaru patted her on the back many times in an attempt to calm her down.

Gradually, Emilia’s breathing regained its composure, and then she looked at Subaru’s face timidly and said:

[Emilia: S-sorry? I.. acted weird again…]

[Subaru: It’s alright. Because any troubles hoisted by Emilia-tan aren’t troubles at all. That’s the role I want to take. Don’t worry.]

[Emilia: Y-yeah.]

Emilia nodded happily at Subaru’s words. Subaru would not let go of her body until her heart truly settled down.

??Emilia’s emotional instability was influenced by the fact that she couldn’t surmount the?Trials?of the?Sanctuary?.

In the end, he didn’t know what she saw in the First?Trial?which showed glimpses of one’s past. Nevertheless, whatever memories she saw broke Emilia’s heart into pieces and crushed her strength to stand up strong. And as she couldn’t overcome the trials, Subaru completed them himself.

Therefore, Emilia’s progress was probably still trapped in the graveyard even now.

But, no matter for how long she rejects everything, and no matter how long she mourns, time kept going on. And neither the world, nor her surroundings, nor anyone would let her off with her stagnation. That’s why Subaru continued to take Emilia by the hand, even when she’d halted to a stop.

[Emilia: Sorry, Subaru. I’m still causing Subaru trouble…]

[Subaru: It’s okay, it’s no problemo, no problem at all. Rather, it makes me feel welcome.]

[Emilia: ...hehe, aww, Subaru. Mhm, thank you. I’m okay, I’ve calmed down.]

With a brief hug, Emilia lifted her face from Subaru’s chest. The girl’s warmth left his chest, and Subaru stiffened his lips with a regretful look.

[Subaru: Damnit. I wanted to enjoy Emilia-tan’s softness just a little while more.]

[Emilia: Huuh, would that be better? If Subaru says so, I will do so.]

[Subaru: Nononono, it's fine. You see, this is a trick I use quite often to cope with dissatisfaction. Gorging yourself until full is for cattle. I think rather than a pig in its sty, I'm more like a wolf who is chasing after its prey.]

[Emilia: That may be so. I also think Subaru is closer to a dog than a pig.]

[Subaru: But, isn't it a whole different story when it comes to dogs and pigs!?]

Subaru calmed down Emilia with this absurd exchange. She now had a smile back on her face. Luckily, it seemed like she had forgotten the anger she had shown just a few moments ago at his wounds.

"Echidna: I can't bear to look at this."

[Subaru: Shut up.]

[Emilia: ??Huh?]

[Subaru: Ah, I wasn't saying that to Emilia-tan. Sorry, I was talking to myself.]

Subaru instinctively replied to Echidna's sudden thought waves, surprising Emilia. Naturally, the thoughts through the crystal stone reached only Subaru. Echidna's contempt and disdain, who openly expressed her dislike for the state Emilia was in, also only reached Subaru.

[Emilia: W? would it be better for me to shut up? If that's what Subaru wants, I will do my best to stay quiet…]

[Subaru: It's not like that! It's fine, so let's talk a lot, okay? It's okay if you talk.]

[Emilia: ...Really?]

Emilia's amethyst eyes started to swell with tears. And when Subaru nodded, Emilia let out a sigh of relief, once again taking Subaru's hand.

[Emilia: Well then, tell me Subaru. ??What should I do today?]

[Subaru: …….]

[Emilia: Yesterday, I finished studying in my room as you told me to do. If it's something Subaru says, there's no doubt I will do it. So, can you tell me what should I do today?]

??She does what Subaru says, if it's Subaru she will make no mistakes, she believed in Subaru.

Subaru struggled to keep his fake smile from disappearing from his face when he heard those words slip out of Emilia's mouth. The efficacy of his smile which he had practised in front of the mirror was shown

here. Thanks to that, Emilia didn’t harbour any distrust or suspicion; she was just waiting with her eyes shining brightly for Subaru’s response.

Emilia, who had been setback by the?Trials?of the Graveyard was trying to protect her heart by completely relying on Subaru.

It was quite natural.

By using the power of?Return by Death?, Subaru had completely eliminated all the obstacles that stood before Emilia. He had understood that Emilia had not contradicted how she had gained his trust?? he had gotten this far doing that. Emilia’s heart clung to Subaru, and having recognised that she was in such a terribly unstable state he had tried to ?Return by Death?, but no matter how much he tried, he couldn’t return back to the?Sanctuary?.

But still, Subaru didn’t think this situation was the worst.

[Subaru: Well then, I’ll please ask this of Emilia-tan. Today, just like yesterday, keep up your studies! If I do something important again, I’ll let you know beforehand.]

[Emilia: Like in Pristella?]

[Subaru: Yeah, like in Pristella. Until then, you need to keep learning. Preparing for an emergency, and boosting your own morale, those are assuredly the most important things Emilia-tan can do now.]

[Emilia: Mhm, yup, understood Subaru-sensei. I will do as ordered. So could you??]

Emilia enthusiastically agreed with Subaru, who had put on this dramatic spiel. Emilia had accepted his command with something resembling a salute trailed off her words at the end...

[Emilia: So could you stroke my head, if I do that?]

[Subaru: ……]

Emilia said this with embarrassment and a trace of anxiety in her eyes which were peeking at Subaru. Subaru gulped seeing her figure, and just for a moment he stood stock still. If that moment continued for any longer, it’d be easy to imagine the despair creeping into her eyes.

But, luckily Subaru had put on a smile before that could happen.

[Subaru: Of course? But what if I ask for permission to touch Emilia-tan's silver hair?]

[Emilia: ??? If Subaru wants to touch it, he can touch it any time he wants…]

[Subaru: S?i?n?c?e! Since it mustn’t come as a reward. When good things happen, then I can promise to.

I will stroke Emilia-tan. Okay?]

[Emilia: Mhm, oookay]

Emilia awkwardly nodded to Subaru's confirmation as he gave her a thumbs up and smiled showing his brilliant teeth. And then, still holding Subaru's hand without wanting to let go??

[Emilia: Alright, I'll go back to my room.]

[Subaru: Aaah, since Petra will bring the food up, let's eat together.]

[Emilia: Yeah, I'll be waiting. Well, I'll see you later!]

Moving her hand away, Emilia went back into her room. ??Seeing her silver hair which had now been cut short which moved as one, Subaru resisted the urge to let out a long sigh. When the door shut behind her, Subaru and Emilia's connection was physically cut away.

"Echidna: Good grief, there are bounds even for ugliness."

[Subaru: ……]

As soon as Emilia's figure disappeared, Echidna started her abuse. Subaru does not deign to reply to her words smeared in revulsion. He had learnt to never say anything about it from the time he had entered this relationship with Echidna, it was a way to cope with how Echidna treat her.

Don't talk back, and she won't talk back to you.
By maintaining that stubborn attitude, the witch would perceive it as a waste to open her mouth and would stay silent.

Only when it came to Emilia could Echidna absolutely not be counted on. And when it came to the relationship between Subaru and Echidna, though it didn't seem as if it had changed from before, it was still different, and right now he didn't have time to fix it.

"Echidna: It would be more convenient for you if she was a doll who would just do what you said, isn't that right?"

[Subaru: ??hgh]

His throat clogged up at her cruel observation, Subaru regretted that he had shown a reaction to it. They were words he shouldn't give any reaction to, however, they were words that he wasn't able to deny.

Protecting their lives, protecting the future, protecting hope, and protecting the possibility.

That's why he was sacrificing Emilia's heart of?now.?Because Subaru was aware that he would not stop at just Emilia.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

He declined to join breakfast at the dining hall with the Emilia camp, Petra who had been on meal duty looked disappointed but, she carried the meals up to the room for Emilia and Subaru.

While they eat, Subaru followed up what the mentally unstable Emilia had been doing and when finally dinner came to an end, Emilia obediently headed to her desk as instructed by Subaru.

[Emilia: I need to do what Subaru says to become a good king.]

Saying that, Emilia psyched herself up, and Subaru left her room. Having delegated some of Roswaal's Official Work to her, Emilia's knowledge for the Royal Selection was a lot better than the first time he had met her. The fruits of her effort were proven day by day.
However??

"Echidna: For anything that happens, in the end she'll always come to seek your approval. An awfully interesting way to raise a king."

[Subaru: Shut up]

"Echidna: You're harbouring unease for it, allowing her to sit on the throne in that state, you know it'll always be turbulent. However, you have no other choice but to do so."

Having left Emilia's room, Echidna's words dripped poison into Subaru's ears as he walked down the mansion's corridors. It was true that Emilia's soul had become unstable, and the willpower she had at the start of the Royal Selection had been greatly shook. But still, she would definitely sit upon The Kingdom of Lugnica's throne.

And Natsuki Subaru will make sure he does that.

Repeatedly?Returning by Death?and removing every hardship that crop up in front of her, he will be able to dismiss any kind of impediments in her way and make it so that Emilia's ambitions are fulfilled.

And doing so is not just related to Emilia's desires, but also to saving Rem. Supporting Emilia, saving Rem, keeping the people close to him away from pain. ??Wasn't this exactly the very future Natsuki Subaru wanted when he made the contract with the witch?

??*I'm sorry, Natsuki-san. This is farewell.*

[Subaru …..]

Suddenly, a voice rang out, not within his eardrums, but within his mind. Subaru stopped in his tracks. Turning his head back, he saw no one in his surroundings. He thought it may have been the bad tastes of the witch, but that couldn't have been her thought waves. It was something far different, it was a call

from his own memories.

The voice continued to speak.

??I uhm, Natsuki-san. Even though things are like this, I thought of you as my benefactor. I thought of you as a person I owed a great debt to which I wanted to pay as soon as possible.

The voice continued to speak.

??But, I saw your decision and I understand it. You don't want anyone's help, and on the contrary, you do just about everything alone, and you can do it.

The voice continued to speak.

??Therefore, this is my way of returning the favour. Since you probably will try to protect everyone who you are close to, I will take my leave.

The voice continued to speak.

??Well then, goodbye, Natsuki-san. Take care of yourself.

The voice continued to speak.

??I thought of you as my friend.

The voice continued to speak.

??You wouldn't have thought that though.

[Subaru: ??HK!]

Just as the last of his words resounded in his mind, Subaru punched the wall next to him with all his might. A dull clunking sound resounded throughout the corridor, and Subaru's hand cracked pitifully. As blood spread down his fist, Subaru breathed out a ragged sigh and put his other hand to his head.

Those were the words that Otto Suwen left behind that he would never forget. Subaru made it through the?Sanctuary?, chased away the Sizeable Hare Witchbeast, took Beatrice out of the burning mansion and overcame all of these events. And then Otto said that to him and left the mansion.

And even if more than a year had passed since then, his back in the moment he left never disappeared from Subaru's mind. It seemed as if he'd condemned Subaru for choosing to save everyone.

"Echidna: But, you didn't stop him. The fact that there were fewer people to protect would have been a blessing for you."

[Subaru: No. Such a motive spurn from just calculation wasn't the reason why I didn't stop him. It was

just because I respected the guy's intention. From the start, he was a guy who had no reason to stay here.]

He was trying to repay him for purchasing his cargo and saving him from the Witch Cult. But, he had already repaid Subaru by having driven the Dragon Carriage to where Emilia was about to be blown up.

And when it came to the cargo, even when they had exchanged the right amount of money, it hadn't been a loan.

Otto Suwen had no reason to cooperate with the Emilia camp. If he had stayed here without reason, he wouldn't leave the place anymore, and would continue being a merchant only for himself here.

Therefore, he did not stop him when he decided to leave. Besides, even though Otto's?Divine Protection of Soul Language?was useful, it was not indispensable to win the Royal Selection.

In the first place, if he continued to be associated with the Emilia Camp, he'd still be in the danger from both the?Witch Cult?and the?Royal Selection.?It was better for Otto to have left here. After that, he didn't ever hear of him again. They had talked to each other only for two weeks, so it wasn't that that big of a deal.

Natsuki Subaru had others he had to protect by throwing away his life.

[Subaru: ……]

Stepping on the blood that was dripping down his shoes, Subaru shook his head and started to walk. Recently, a number of thoughts had been perturbing his thoughts. It was frustrating. It was irritating. More than anything, Echidna was taking advantage of it.

There were countless things to think about. He had no time to remain shut within his own mind.

He must choose the best, the very best, the ideal, the optimum choice.

And despite that he??

[Subaru: …..]

He came out of the corridor at a brisk pace, and found himself back at his own room. He couldn't let anyone see his face right now. Natsuki Subaru was calm, Natsuki Subaru was rational, Natsuki Subaru was optimistic, there was nothing different about him than usual. As things are, everyone in the mansion must believe these things. Otherwise, he wouldn't be able to protect those he wanted to protect??

[???: Oh my, it seems like you came back in a hurry.]

He went into the room, and closed the door behind him. Subaru lifted his head up towards the voice that was coming from within the room. Gazing at Subaru, the?Dark-haired Woman?was sitting on his bed smiling sweetly. She gently brushed her hand across her long, braided black hair.

[*Dark-haired Woman*: I should have been back on time, seeing you here, it seems I'm in quite the pickle.]

[Subaru: ??Elsa.]

[Elsa: Yeah, that's right. The?Bowel Hunter?, Elsa Granhiert; I immediately came running, as Master ordered. ??I wonder, is there trouble?]

Saying that, the beautiful woman clad in a rather revealing black garment that exposed her feminine body alluringly tilted her head towards him?? It was Elsa, the alluring assassin whose figure emitted a poisonous aura.

Subaru easily accepted the woman who had entered the room without giving off any sounds or traces; he was not at all surprised. And that's because it was…

It was natural. She was not an enemy. Even though she wasn't an ally he could relax his guard around, she was still an ally.

In any case??

[Subaru: I helped you out of the burning mansion. I give you work because of that.]

[Elsa: I understand. I don't have any issues with you now that you're my employer. I request only that you chose things that don't go as far as being against my hobbies …but for now, I have no complaints.]

Pulling out her Kukri Knife holstered at her waist, Elsa burst out laughing, emitting a rather dark radiance. She was currently collaborating to provide information for the camp by working behind the scenes.

Emilia who stood as the head of the camp, an incorruptible symbol.
Reinhardt who was the?Sword Saint?, subject to unwavering public opinion.
And, Natsuki Subaru, who had surmounted and stopped many difficult situations with zero damage.

Unlike those three, who couldn't act freely lest they tarnish their reputation, Elsa had many opportunities to get her dirty hands dirty. Of course, although you could call it dirty work, the work she did wasn't necessarily evil??

[Subaru: So, how did it go?]

[Elsa: I'm sorry to report, but, it seems like?Gluttony?was nowhere to be seen at the place you sent me to. There was nothing but rabbles of ordinary Witch Cultists there… although, I did set them all free.]

[Subaru: Aah. You can do as you like. ...But… In the end, it was a dud?]

Subaru frowned, and sighed at Elsa's report who had delivered it whilst licking her red lips. Again, he hadn't been able to reach the limit. Even if he was trying to capture the Sin Archbishop of?Gluttony?, he

couldn’t reach them no matter how much he tried.

[Subaru: In the end, only?Greed?has been killed.]

[Elsa: That, and?Wrath?was captured. I think that was a success, but I guess it might not be for you.]

[Subaru: ...Anyway, I understood your report. For now, stay on standby until I need you again. I will get in touch with you from here once more when I want to request something of you again.]

[Elsa: Okay. ??Well, I suppose I’ll have to wait.]

Without further replying to Elsa’s words, Subaru quickly gave her his instructions. Receiving his instructions, she stood up without any particular care to them, and walked towards the window.

Since Subaru’s room was on the third floor of the mansion, she had probably came in through the window. Subaru felt no surprise at her acrobatics??

[Subaru: Ah, wait, Elsa. There’s one more thing I want you to tell me.]

[Elsa: ??? What may that be, I don’t really know anything of much importance.]

[Subaru: This isn’t anything too important. If you came from outside… how was the weather beyond the forest? Was it raining or was it clear?]

[Elsa: The weather? Eeh, there was no particular issue with it. Although there are clouds out, there’s no need to worry about it getting worse. Is that all?]

[Subaru: No…]

Cocking his head to the side, Subaru gazed at the Magic Hour Crystal in his room. Right now, it was already the time of fire?? It had already gone past 7 O’clock Solartime and was now way past noon.

To make sure of this, Subaru walked towards where Elsa was, her feet placed on the windowsill.

[Subaru: I want to ask you to do something. ??Please lop off my head with that knife.]

[Elsa: ??Your head… I wonder… have you lost it already?]

[Subaru: Are you calling me insane? I’m just asking you to do something that has to be done.]

Elsa curiously widened her eyes at Subaru’s remarks, and then let out a ferocious presence. But, Subaru’s attitude remained unflinching as the sun’s rays bathed him. Seeing that, Elsa shrugged her shoulders.

[Elsa: As a rule of thumb, people who have their heads lopped off typically die you know.]

[Subaru: I suppose I also apply to that rule. I don't know about you though.]

[Elsa: I think I would also die if my head were to come off. ...Are you sure about this?]

[Subaru: I should have said this when I helped you. ??I will ask for a single unrelated thing, so listen to what I have to say then. Right now's the time.]

All of a sudden, Elsa narrowed her eyes at Subaru repeating himself. And then, picking up her arme de guerre, she started to twirl the sharp blade of her Kukri Knife around the palm of her hand,

[Elsa: Any last words?]

[Subaru: Make it painless.]

[Elsa: …..]

[Subaru: Ah, also, after I die you can do whatever you want with my guts, but don't lay a finger on anyone in the mansion. Well in any case, that's why I have Reinhardt arou?]

Before he could finish his words, Elsa's arm cut through the wind. For a moment, Subaru's field of vision was toppled over. As the view around the room spun around, he saw blood splashing in the familiar room, and

??*Aah, cleaning the room is going to be hard on Petra.*

As he thought that, Subaru's life blinked out.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??When he woke up from his empty dream, Subaru always experienced a suffocating sensation.

However, his release from there was too early. Perhaps, it was because Natsuki Subaru was reconstructed in a different way when waking from his sleep.

[Subaru: ……]

Subaru jerked up violently, placing his hand against his forehead which was drenched in sweat. It was colder than the sweat you get when sleeping, closer to the cold sweat he'd get when losing his life.

In any case, Subaru's body was on top of the sofa in his own room, and the sunshine was streaming in from the window.

[Subaru: Is it… morning?]

Touching his neck which should have been cut, Subaru rose slowly. Cocking his head, he checked to make sure that his head wasn't lolling about somewhere on the floor, he checked the time using the

Magical Hour Crystal which was above his door.

The crystal was glowing a light green, showing that the time was was early morning. Then the question that remained was?Which?morning was it?

[Subaru: ……..]

To find that out, Subaru touched the pendant he was wearing. The black crystal was fastened by a chain which connected Subaru's reality with the Dream Castle.

A warm sensation and a pulse streamed through the crystal which he held in the palm of his hand. When Subaru's pulse coincided with it, and when the white light appeared, it was proof that the world had completely changed.

[Subaru: …….]

When he opened his eyes, Subaru once again was standing in the middle of the vast grassy plain. When he turned his head back, the hillock was there. Right besides the flower garden, underneath the parasol, on the other side of the white table, he could see the witch garbed in black clothes facing towards the white table sipping from her cup.

Going up the hill, he headed down towards where the witch was.

[Subaru: Hey, what day…]

[Echidna: …….]

Placing his hands on the table, he snarled this at the witch who was gracefully continuing her tea-time. However, she didn't say anything back, she simply silently pointed at the seat across from her. That chair was empty, and a cup of tea had been prepared for the visitor. That was the minimum condition for participating in her tea party presented to Subaru??

[Subaru: Damn it, I'll drink it, I'll drink it!]

Grabbing the cup whilst smacking his lips, Subaru gulped down all of his tea in one swig. And just when he opened his eyes wide open from the warmth of the freshly prepared tea,

[Subaru: Ghhhuaa??!?]

[Echidna: Whoaa?!? Just a second, just a second. You do know that you didn't really have to do that?]

[Subaru: Shut up! Playing the part of a witch that's difficult to please, this only happened because you insist on such problematic processes…. ??Ghha, ghhk gh]

Subaru was choking on his tea which had gone down his windpipe, even Echidna stood up from her seat in a rush. Then she put her hand on Subaru's back and continued rubbing his back until his cough

subsided. Whilst spluttering, Subaru said,

[Subaru: Eh, what about the tea?]

[Echidna: Hh, it's fine this time. Also, the tea I worked so hard to brew, was puked out by you, I really can't put anything past you. And the table too, letting it stay dirtied like this is a pity.]

Echidna shook her head at Subaru trying to correct his transgression whilst he wiped his mouth. The witch looked at the table that had been stained by the tea Subaru spat out and lightly clicked her fingers. And then, the table started to come apart as if it was melting, until it vanished into dust.

[Echidna: Come now, you even dirtied the chair a bit. A man who'd dare to make me stand while talking is rare indeed... truly, you're a sinful man.]

[Subaru: Choking and spitting out the tea is no big deal! ??Compared to that, we have more important things to discuss.]

Casting aside his banter with Echidna who teased him, Subaru pointed his finger up. What he had to confirm was just one thing.

[Subaru: What day is it today? It must be.. The 14th of Kisdam, right?]

[Echidna: ….]

[Subaru: Echidna?]

[Echidna: I just wanted to make you a bit anxious. If you are too impatient, things will escape from you.]

[Subaru: ??Echidna]

He had no time for the witch’s games. Echidna responded to Subaru with a shrug of her shoulders and said,

[Echidna: That’s correct. Don’t worry. Your?Death?brought you back to the morning of this day. It looks like your latest starting point was affixed to the morning of this day. Were you sure of that?]

Answering Subaru’s question, Echidna counterattacked it from her own side. On the other hand, Subaru was relieved that he had confirmed it was the same morning that he had?Returned by Death?to. And with that peace of mind, he shook his head at Echidna’s question.

[Subaru: No, I wasn’t particularly sure. At the worst, I thought I’d gone back to the previous save point.]

[Echidna: Your previous one was set at two months ago. You did so many good things using your powers.]

[Subaru: Maybe. Even Elsa is surprised every time, what an unfathomable feeling.]

Nonetheless, even the assassin Elsa questioned the sanity of her employer, when he asked her to kill him. Even so, she immediately put aside her indecision and obeyed; she was an excellent means of using?Return by Death?in an emergency.

[Subaru: It’s just that my?Return by Death?led back to this morning.]

[Echidna: That’s right. So it seems… If that’s the case, it looks like problems may soon spring forth again.]

Closing her eyes, Echidna agreed with the frowning Subaru’s remarks. The starting point of his ?Return by Death?, and the shift of his new save point. That was the harbinger of hardships ahead which couldn't be overcome without having?Return by Death?

In other words, that meant??

[Subaru: I’ll still have to borrow your strength, right?]

[Echidna: It’s nothing, that’s our contract. Besides, to date, lending you my strength hasn't done much. ??At best, I can try and meddle for you from here with all of my might.]

[Subaru: With all your might… it’d be nice if you could help me with just that]

[Echidna: …A witch wouldn't fall under someone's palm. If I simply do as instructed, it'll set a poor example for the other witches.]

Averting her gaze, Echidna let out her words in with something like embarrassment as she streamed her fingers through her long white hair. Although Subaru didn’t remember perceiving in her figure something like the ringing of her chest, he felt as if he had seen something nice before the eves of battle.

[Subaru: Anyhow, I will count on you,?Witch of Greed.?]

[Echidna: I am sure you will. I will wait here for you to affront the impending turmoil. If you are able to, being more cooperative in satisfying my endless curiosity would make me happy indeed...]

[Subaru: I refuse to do that. If I went along with satisfying your endless curiosity, it'd be just a matter of time until the human parts of me wither and die. Who would try to satisfy you in trying out infinite choices?]

[Echidna: Truly a pity.]

It seemed that, with Echidna's light-hearted gesture, the tea break before the upcoming battle had ended. The point of?Return by Death?had changed unexpectedly, but in a sense, this meant he had gotten a chance to give the first strike.

[Subaru: If I use?Return by Death?to make the first strike, could I make a surprise attack?]

Musing about this, Subaru went down the hill and moved towards the door that would take him back to reality. Echidna softly raised her voice to him, behind his back.

[Echidna: Come to think of it…]

[Subaru: Yeah?]

[Echidna: If you hadn't grasped that the point of?Return by Death?changed, why did you expressly use?Return by Death??]

[Subaru: Aah, that was because??]

Because??

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Going through the dream world's door, Natsuki Subaru consciousness spiraled back towards reality.

[Subaru: ……]

Looking up at above the door, the time shown by the Magical Hour Crystal hadn't changed since before. As always, Subaru headed towards the bathroom. He washed his face, brushed his teeth, took the trouble to put on his fake smile, and finally quickly changed his clothes. And, just as he finished…

[???: … Subaru-sama, are you awake?]

The sound of a knock from outside his room reached him, and Subaru got up from the sofa on-time. Then, putting his hand on the door, he opened the door.

[???: I?]

[Subaru: Hey, good morning, Petra. You look cute this morning too.]

The door opened abruptly and Petra stood on the other side, her eyes wide open. But, after realising that Subaru was just teasing her, she laughed.

[Petra: Jeez, please don't surprise me like that.]

[Subaru: I'm sorry I'm sorry. Well, Petra. Aren't you going to greet me?]

[Petra: Really, you can't regret it even a little? Hmph… okay, good morning, Subaru-sama. Today is once again a splendid morning you know.]

Without mentioning Subaru's frivolous attitude, Petra continued to give him her lovely smile. Her words were exactly the same as the morning before?Returning by Death?. That being so, the next things she would say be exactly the same.

[Subaru: I agree, it’s a splendid morning. Today too, Petra looks cute, I don’t even need to say it.]

[Petra: Subaru’s still saying such things.… Ah, but there are clouds hanging over the sky beyond the forest, it seems that the weather may get worse this afternoon. I have plans to go shopping this afternoon, I hope it’ll stay sunnyyyyyy]

He listened to the girl talk about what she wanted to do, speaking in a manner which befitted her age. Subaru started to laugh. Seeing that, Petra puffed out her cheeks, but Subaru hastily replied with a, [I'm sorry, I'm sorry] and continued to speak,

[Subaru: But, rest assured Petra. Today will stay sunny. The clouds give off a false impression and won’t be a problem. I can say that for definite.]

[Petra: Huh? Really? That’s super helpful. ... But, how do you know?]

[Subaru: Well, that’s because…]

Petra inclined her head in doubt and widened her eyes at Subaru’s assertion. Giving her a full-toothed smile, Subaru answered the girl’s query.

[Subaru: ??Because I just returned for this, risking life and death.]

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

A meadow of green, a garden’s fragrance drifting through the hillock, a white parasol and white table in fixed position, a black dress as if in mourning, a girl with white hair elegantly tilting her teacup.

As she relished the warm taste of the tea, the witch allowed an insouciant sigh to escape.

[Echidna: Using one’s own life, to save them, to protect them, to keep someone from them, contributing it thus. How virtuous, how noble, surely deserving of everyone’s exaltation. Furthermore, not just the once, but challenging an endless cycle of hardships, is the impression it can’t help but give.]

Pressing her hands to her chest, the witch considered the boy with whom she’d had a contract.

Desperately seeking his ideal, pressing onward despite being struck endlessly by reality. Possessing the most wretched power of?Return by Death?as his own, all in order to love someone.

[Echidna: ??However, dedicating life to?Return by Death?, to protect one’s surroundings, is a double-edged sword. Too disdainful of one’s own life, too stubborn about the value of other lives. Because the value of one’s own life can no longer be seen, the lives of those precious others become too desperately consequential. This time, anything that isn’t the lives of those precious others?aside?, is unseeable. That is, downright…]

No matter when, no matter where, that singular attitude of clinging to what could absolutely not be scoured, was downright foolish.

[Echidna: ——You truly are, someone who can satisfy me.]

Cheeks reddened as if a maiden in the throes of infatuation, the witch longed for the absent boy.

Through the crystal gemstone, he crossed the gate, bringing absolutely everything of the world into her palm. And when the afflictions and hardship shattered him, every time, he unconsciously came to rely on the witch.

To keep his spirit afloat, enduring the temptation of a witch, even if he became a marionette.

In order merely to check the weather, adapting a mentality which was unhesitating to use?Return by Death?, even that had gone unnoticed.

[Echidna: But, I want you to rest assured. The lives of those who you prize, I will also wholeheartedly gamble my very wisdom on protecting them. So, for this you too—?]

?*To satisfy this inexhaustible curiosity of a witch, I want to continue as your accomplice.*

Suffering and unreasonable fate, from now forth would equally descend endlessly upon the boy.

Though the hardships be arduous, though the heights be insurmountable, the boy with the witch's aid, lending one another strength and wisdom, found themselves able to cross.

Presented by the?Witch of Greed?was that *love* of scorching flame.

[Echidna: Ah, even so??]

The boy crossed the grand gate, the boy sprinted to offer protection, the boy's guardianship bore fruit; feeling many scarred hearts resulting from the boy's protection, the witch sighed.

A proposition that would remain sempiternally unsolved, and yet an enigma that would eternally enthrall her, even were she to die.

Ah, even so??

[Echidna: ??Why does love, always fade?]

Art Source

Oboreru IF - Re: Drowning Life in Another World From Zero

by admin - Thursday, August 23, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/08/23/rezero-if-oboreru/

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Translated by :

- Fr, /Fr81

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ALL RIGHTS BELONG TO **TAPPEI NAGATSUKI**, THE **ORIGINAL AUTHOR** OF RE:ZERO STARTING A LIFE IN A DIFFERENT WORLD FROM ZERO, THIS IS A TRANSLATION OF THE **FREE** JAPANESE WEB NOVEL INTO ENGLISH

JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Prologue

? ? I heard a voice full of hate.

? A sound which would not leave my ears.

? ? Words imbued with hatred followed me.

? ? It was frightening, so frightening and I could not bear it.

? ? I was being crushed by the pressure of this noise which did not obscure its malice.

? It gripped onto my soul and would not let go.

?? The more you depend on your life, the more certain it becomes that you will hurt someone else.

? ? It was because, first and foremost, I was apologetic and I felt sorry that we were sinking still into the depths.

Chapter 1

?? My neck,

I found myself held down by a light body as if mounted like a horse.

Small knees pressed sharply into my shoulders as I floundered underneath. A dainty white arm covered in cuts loomed in my vision, choking down on my neck. Those gashes reminded me of crimson flowers, I thought, before feeling irritated at myself. That was really failing to read the mood.

?? Breathtaking, breathtaking, it is breathtaking when your neck is being throttled.

"????"

Right in front of his eyes were a pair of pupils glowing with passion.

Endless fury and hollow despair stretched deep, deep in those large round eyes.

“I might fall into those bottomless eyes..”, Subaru though blankly.

"Ah, it is …"

?? *Badum-badum, badum-badum, badum-badum*, those were the sounds I made as I flailed around wildly.

It was not that I was struggling so much in an effort to get away.

Thoughts of escape had already disappeared by evening. So my struggles were not an expression of my will to live, but merely a tantrum born of sheer suffering. My body cried out uselessly on its own.

The brain was lacking oxygen, the mind had lost its will to live, but the body was still writhing in protest.

There are differences in everything, just seeking balance is bad, I hate that way of thinking.

Can’t I just die quietly? I want to just die quietly.

As peacefully as possible, like I was simply going to sleep, that was the most enjoyable way to die for me.

But such a wish was not to be. Far from being granted, my fate was really to be the complete opposite of that.

"Kuh, ku, ku-hu"

With wide-open eyes bulging from their sockets, biting down hard and foaming at the mouth, with a body grown emancipated after only a few short days, it was in this state that I twisted and groaned like a wounded beast.

It’s my last chance to act along, should I do it?

It’s my last chance to say what’s most fitting, should I try it?

Hey, why and how was it that I came to be in this kind of situation?

"?? What’s, so funny?"

Suddenly, he heard a voice.

Unlike these animal groans, this was a cold but clear sound.

The owner of those eyes laden with fury, her lips pressed thin as she squeezed his throat, looked up at the sound of the voice.

"????"

What’s wrong, even if you ask me that, I can’t find the answer.

There is nothing funny here in the first place. There isn’t, so what are you even asking?

The question was confusing. Some rude kind of nonsense, a riddle.

Even if someone forced me to reply, I wouldn’t have any answers. But the time I spent waiting in silence still felt like lying on a bed of thorns, he thought.

Absurd. Flung around like this by the force of some divine providence, just how many times has it been already?

"?? What’s, so funny?"

There’s nothing weird like that.

"Huu, heh, hee-hee"

Then, is it the person asking that has something wrong with them?

Or, is it that this person just failed to read the mood, and so they are having fun at the moment?

Are they enjoying the sight of this woman mounting me like she’s on horseback, strangling away at my neck? If you say that, then any sense of liking them gets flipped on its head, he thought.

"?? What’s, so funny?"

There is nothing wrong here. Even though there is nothing, this question keeps getting thrown out there again and again.

Throwing, not even. She’s not that far away. That’s not even it.

Close enough to feel each other’s breath, gazing up at the beautiful face of the girl opposite him, he was surrounded by her voice. Blanketed in it.

She had, without words, without hurtful abuse, shown clear hate in her voice.

"?? What’s, s-?"

Do it.

This question that repeatedly sought an answer suddenly faded away like mist.

"?? Euh"

Tilt, the face of the girl in front of me suddenly tilted to the left.

Her angled neck does not rise. Still slumped to the side, that girl’s body crumples onto the white snow. Of course, as the thin arm formerly wrapped around his neck had also come loose, Subaru’s path to suffocation had ended halfway through.

Coughing, the bitter taste of blood rose up from my neck.

Collapsing lungs inflated before receding again, sending much-needed oxygen through my body in turn. That is also a reflex, survival instinct. If someone just refused to breathe and died, then they wouldn’t be working properly.

Questions like whether that would be a normal thing for a person to do or not, I don’t want to discuss that right now.

"????"

The feelings in Subaru’s heart that had, up to this moment, accepted death, now faded away. It was replaced with a desire to live in the name of more oxygen, an obsessive desire that could not be let go. Desperate, striving, he coveted more to the point of looking pathetic.

While like that, ceaselessly filling his lungs with cold air on every breath, he came to realize.

"????"

In the center of that fluffy white snow that was piling up around, before him lay a girl collapsed on her side.

Her face and lips had grown pale with poor circulation, raising her unrealistic beauty to even greater heights. Those exceptionally glittering white eyes were empty and spread wide, a telltale sign that a life was ending.

Looking carefully, it was a sight that did not seem well-fitted for the snow.

That maid uniform revealing bare shoulders and thighs, this cloth material that should ward off the cold isn’t nearly thick enough to do so. The nape, the ears, and other areas easily chilled were being hit by the wind.

The state of that bared form??Moreover, aside from her, this side was in the same condition as well.

"????"

?? Shiver-shiver, shiver-shiver, shiver-shiver, like that this out-of-place Subaru was trembling.

Whether it was the cold, or the strong melancholy of his heart that was the culprit, he did not know.

In this situation, rather than worrying about the state of his body, instead he could not take his eyes off of the girl in front of him.

"??M"

Even fallen over in the snow, with half her face buried in it, she still looked beautiful.

That unquenchable hate and fury was inflaming that slender body and keeping it alive, he could only think that. Covered in wounds to that extent, it was a strange situation that this girl was still alive.

"????"

Pure-white snow, and around him and the girl, countless corpses were lying around.

Those beasts that consumed life, indulged in it, and destroyed the soul, all before the wind of this girl had turned to corpses. So, in this place, the survivors, were only two. Himself and the girl, but two.

That, too, in a moment, could immediately become one, become zero.

"????"

What is going on, next to the girl mumbling that he slowly stood.

The emancipated fingers on both his hands were discolored. In those fingers whose temperatures had dropped significantly, there was no feeling remaining. Weak itching was the only evidence that these fingers were still attached to the body.

Shaking about those fingers that couldn’t be be relied on, he lifted up a head-sized stone.

Without any reason or purpose, it was just a stone that happened to be there.

The fact that he lifted it secretly brought him much relief.

Comparing the stone in his hand with the collapsed girl.

For a moment, to him, that held stone seemed to be making a similar face to the one who had fallen.

He did not know if he was laughing. But the burning image this finally brought to his mind was heated. An oni, just flesh, and shoving it into an enemy, just that.

As if having pulled it up by the roots, in both hands he lifted the rock skyward.

That action, looking up at it, the owner of those pink pupils spoke with a faint voice, but with an unquestionably clear voice,

"??Definitely, I will kill you."

? ? The sound of something hitting something hard, in the snow-blanketed forest slowly, slowly echoed.

It echoed.

Chapter 2

?? That day, Roswaal L. Mathers’ broken mansion quietly collapsed.

The first to notice the collapse was, the woman more than anyone else who desperately struggled to maintain it, because of that her manner could have been said to be vicious.

"????"

The master of the house, Roswaal, she had received from him a great benefit.

So hearing that the maid sisters who had taken care of the mansion no longer held their positions, knowing then that the owner had nobody to take care of him, she immediately rushed to his side.

The sight of that master who had become pale drove a great deal of pain in her chest.

Even those two suspiciously glinting, brimming with confidence, differently-colored pupils.

Which if said nicely could be called quirky but really were more weird. That perfectly sinister clown makeup, even that strange aesthetic which seemed like nails scratching to the senses of others, in all that having lost his light, that was Roswaal.

After receiving such a reunion with him - ? ? Frederica tightly grasped her hand into a fist.

“It cannot end like this. Even for the sake of those children, I-”

If she did not protect her position, if she chose that, then it would become even more desperate, was her thought. Not thinking of if something could be done, but rather focusing on hope and wanting to do something, for that reason she had started to act.

To raise the mansion once again, she moved, and even if she did not know how, with a hand seeking cooperation she would drag the master by the arm every day, busily running around.

There was in Frederica no thought to stop and fret.

Even sometimes feeling pain that might have slowed her feet, she always desperately lifted up her head and continued on.

If in this place I collapse, then I am – not worthy to gaze upon the faces of those precious to me.

Since some point, she had forgotten to laugh. Since some point, she had forgotten to spend the night resting correctly.

Even then, desperately, Frederica sought to protect the person she loved, to not let go of the bubbles spreading away on the water and to grasp them in her hands.

Even with that,

"? ? Ah"

When Frederica finally realized, it was already too late for everything in the mansion.

In that frozen white hallway, her world flipped upside-down as her shoes were frozen, she did not recognize where she was.

The sight of the once-familiar mansion had become distinctly different from what she knew.

The carefully-cleaned corridor, the kitchen where she had cooked, and where she had worked with her hands for those that needed her care, in front of her eyes had now become a clouded white world.

And as for who had done all this??,

"Great Spirit-sama ..."

“Sorry, Frederica, you are not to blame. It is just that, if I would like to protect my most precious thing, then this is the best decision to make.”

Saying this, showing its face and floating in the air, was a small cat with gray fur.

So tiny as to ride on the palm of a hand if desired, but in that small body holding definitive power, it was

a portrait of that kind of being.

She did not want to believe. But now there was no reason to doubt.

There was the one who had changed the mansion to this white end.

"Why, do this ..."

"I said it already, all my actions are for Lia. Lia leaving the forest, that act is what she wanted to do. For that girl’s safety, I thought.. But there is no worth here anymore. It must have fallen to somewhere else.”

"????"

“Roswaal was my mistake. That man is a pitiful criminal.”

Shaking their head, Puck shot at her with voice devoid of any emotion.

At those words, Frederica stopped breathing. And with that their sharp fangs firmly closed shut.

"? ? The master of this house, insulting them to me, as a maid, it cannot be forgiven."

“You, too, are a pitiful child. It is just you that is desperate to protect this fallen place.”

“Please stop talking as if you are referring to the past, it is not over yet.”

She called sharply. Without having a chance, towards the great spirit.

Gazing in front of him at that Frederica and what she said, this kitten narrowed their round eyes and

gazed with pity on their face. That movement and expression in an existence, which to some extent smelled like humanity, Frederica leaned forward and lowered her body at it.

"Emilia will be sad."

That one brief hesitation from the small great spirit might give her the win, this was what Frederica was hoping.

But,

"Unfortunately, since I am weak to Lia. I cannot move on from my child, you know. Because of that."

Even a moment’s hesitation, some small opening, from that great spirit did not appear.

As the world of difference between her and Puck reflected in her eyes, she firmly grit her teeth.

Whether it was the beginnings of regret or grief, it was too late to to be felt.

Just a simple white breeze blew, and from that the woman named Frederica stood there frozen.

The collapse of Roswaal’s mansion was beginning.

Chapter 3

When he noticed signs of collapse, it was all already too late.

"????"

With ghostly footsteps Roswaal in his own house walked.

The frozen mass of air underfoot broke with a clatter, and a chill breeze tickled his nape.

His neck drew away from the sudden chill, a physiological reaction that could be felt strangely.

Nowadays choosing clothes, applying makeup to his face had both been left to Frederica.

That diligent and enthusiastic girl was, no matter how, trying to pay back the grace she had received from this place, but it was too late. His heart that shouldn’t have felt anything hurt a little.

? ? Roswell's secret path at some point quietly lay cut off.

"Ram, Rem ....."

Maybe it was the loss of the oni sisters.

The existence of those two were necessary to his secret plan, so if they were gone then a key part was not possible. When he realized it had all upended, Roswaal had already been left alone.

Four hundred years later, when Roswaal had realized his long prayed-for path had been broken, he could no longer stand on his own.

"? ? Ram"

A short mumbled name, it is the name that conveys the biggest regret.

Originally, the possibility that it would become like this, he had already considered it.

Actually, the likelihood that it would end badly like this, that possibility was much higher. It was because of this that Roswaal had taken insurance on his own existence.

When his end finally came for him, he wanted someone there that could receive it happily.

Her, dying before him, had ruined the last remaining cogwheel in his plans.

"????"

So then, the sight of Roswaal walking in this mansion was strange.

He had lost his reason to stand already, and his reason for walking was already gone from him.

“Master, please return yourself to how you were before. So the two of them -?? “

Many times Frederica had so appealed to Roswaal.

With Roswaal falling into despair, the task of taking care of her dispirited master had fallen to her. Who put in much effort in trying to persuade him to recover, with tenacity and devotion.

So remained in him the power to walk in this now-frozen mansion.

In the middle of the hallway, wandering without aimlessly, his sight now turned to the scenery beyond the window.

So he saw the frozen world, and the form of the girl with blonde hair who was trying to resist it.

"????"

That to not protect her here would not acceptable, he perhaps thought.

Or it could simply be acting on reflex, he didn’t know.

Reflexively, or if not done then this will not do, enough remained of his mind in the body for that much.

So now, Roswaal slowly spread his arms wide, readying himself to spend a vast amount of mana -

"? ? Euh!"

At that moment, Roswaal barely avoided the bright light of the slash that targeted his neck.

"??Ah, to be able to dodge this is outside of my expectations. Perhaps this is not just the court magician but someone that holds some level of skill in martial arts as well?"

From behind Roswaal's back is calls out a light voice.

In this frozen corridor with speed as if slipping, or the speed of something burning, it took him that long to look that way and stare at the sound of blue-haired young man's voice.

"That movement just now, only a bit would not do it. Honestly, I marveled at it."

[Picture Source]

Clad in a blue kimono, and beneath it feet that show a sure grasp of stance, on that waist with two clasped swords, one of which was tapping his shoulder with a dun-dun sound.

An appearance that is clean-cut and seems to fits well with a smile. Giving an impression like a young child, playful shining eyes and that long tied hair somehow offered him an androgynous look.

But from his eyes, despite that sense clearly emanates ?? just by receiving that gaze, the thought of being killed, visions of death also comes to mind alongside that previous good sentiment.

"If you are a person confident in more than just magic, my heart is relieved of a burden, it really is a great help. Anyway, a task too normal is not fitting with my aesthetic. No, if told to do so then I do but if possible, I want to avoid getting the villain treatment."

"Like in the rumors, aren't you pretty noisy?"

"Oh, is that my rumor? I can not help it. To be a celebrity even in such a place? Hehehe, I wish it was not such a strange rumor though."

The young man flatteringly spoke as he scratched his head with a shy smile.

While looking at this scene, helping Roswaal to solve the situation that happened to him, his sluggish thoughts were burned with a fire that shook him awake.

That scorching heat existing in his left arm was that burning sensation.

"????"

"But that arm, if action is not quickly taken then all your blood will be drained, no?”

"Your advice, I am grateful for it.”

In the young man's view, Roswaal curved his lips in an arc like drawing a painted gash.

That Roswaal’s left arm was missing near the shoulder, and what had used to be attached there, like a fallen doll, was almost unrealistically rolling on the floor.

I had my arm cut off when I avoided the first attack on my neck.

After hearing this advice to act, Roswaal grasped his wound, and an instant burst of fire directly stopped the bleeding. Those horrible pangs of pain tearing through his brain with rigid cheeks he bore it.

This extreme emergency treatment, the young man just gazed lightly at.

“I thought magicians were timid, but this side is not.. I mean, but the reference for that was actually someone I know?”

"You said you knew, Cecilus Segmunt."

"????"

"The Vollachia Empire's strongest Nine God Generals? As its top-ranked ?Blue Lightning?, news of that is even famous throughout Lugnica."

"Oh, that is an honor."

At Roswaal’s low voice, the young man??Cecilus Segmunt responded with elegant manners.

There was no reason to hide his identity. There was no reason to hide his name in the first place, so he may as well act coolly dignified and confident.

Watching those mannerly ways with their dramatic productions, Roswaal sighed.

"But that aside, what is happening now, I wonder? ~Aah, it couldn’t be, at this time when the Luginica Kingdom’s new ruler is being decided, if it came out that Vollachia Empire is moving in violation of the treaty?”

"Oh, that's a misunderstanding. Right now I could say I am on vacation and on break, or I could say I am unemployed. Anyway, this business has nothing to do with the Empire." he said.

"????"

"This is not some strange attempt at humor. My actions, the Empire is not involved in it at all. Of course

loyalty to His Excellency still lies in my heart … But to me, my own origin is something I have."

With a grand gesture, Cecilus emphasizes that he and the Empire are not working together. It is hard to believe it unconditionally. But these actions of his, if he really was acting as an agent of the Empire, is simply not sensible.

For this reason, Roswaal narrows pupils colored with twin hues and asks Cecilus.

"Then it is even more curious. That you have even abandoned your position at the Empire and have come here. What exactly was it that could move you all the way over, I wooooonder."

"It's easy to understand ??the way of the heavenly sword, to that step that was promised."

"The way of the heavenly sword?"

At that reply Roswaal frowned his handsome brows.

Cecilus, who saw this, nodded deeply in reply. "Yes.", he murmured. The expression was just as if he was laughing, but a crucial difference lay in the emotion of the pupils.

In addition to joy and pleasure and happiness, there was also the ?Blue Lightning?, something that drew a person to their eyes.

"It is a secret that I have never spoken of to any living person. With this, to accept help with resolving this when that is done, it is inevitable to accept that opportunity."

"How unexpected, you do not seem to be type to be a puppet of another person."

"Being controlled by others, or merely accepting the stage that fate has provided, is there not just a subjective difference between the two? I accept this world's starring role, and that script for it all, too. Keeping that then, the scene should be unfolding as if there is an actor even without following a script, perhaps."

Regarding the shrugging Cecilus with his colorful eyes, Roswaal simply nodded.

Indeed, at the strength of his argument, he gave up fighting against it. That forceful conviction and philosophy that Cecilus had built over many victories.

To make that idea bend, it was impossible for the Roswaal who had lived four hundred years for an obsession of his own.

To that Roswaal with a fondness for consistency, that philosophy seemed attractive to him, too.

"Likely I do not really hate you, I rather quite like you. But because this is also my role … The Lugnica Kingdom's court magician, Roswaal L. Mathers, I will be taking that neck of yours with me."

Seemingly acting in his own way of politeness, Cecilus returned the katana he once held into its sheath. And with a slash of another weapon drawn, a wondrous sight was revealed to the world.

The beauty of the sword was just as is said, a slashing of the blade imbued with unbelievable power.

"?? Once again, now with the dream sword, Masayume."

"Is it a slash of a sword that eats at the holder's soul, then? ? Cecilus, may I ask one thing?"

With the overflowing sight in front of him, Roswaal easily raised a finger.

In front of that bloodied and frozen atmosphere. In that situation, as if he had failed to read the mood, he asks for Cecilus a single question.

“My weak points are that I don’t listen to people and I don’t really have the composure of someone over 20 years old. In the empire I have gotten in trouble for that several times.”

"Your employer's name is?"

Cecilus who was asked such, his eyebrow lightly raised.

Lowering the blade away while drawing his feet back. Slowly, leaning forward with his upper body,

"Gossiping about other people is a bad thing, but, because of that, I had heard some backwards talk about ?Purge King?... But to you, because I have been asked to reveal the correct name to you..”

Having given that introduction, Cecilus wet his lips with his tongue.

After a few minutes or so of delay, he said,

"????"

As the same moment as that name reaches the ears, a blur jumped from the floor of the mansion, and Cecilus disappeared.

That he had gone from the very world, it was fast enough to mistake for that.

?Blue Lightning?, fitting that name, the fastest arcing bolt, and that moment drew ever closer.

Crossing the distance like that, it was instantaneous.

But at that same instant, Roswaal was muttering with a smile on his lips.

"So it was you, after all."

Even before than the sound of those words appearing in the world, the second katana, its trajectory swung even faster.

Just before everything went dark, Roswaal pondered in his mind.

About the girls that had been at the mansion.

Those girls who had been embroiled in his own secret path, and in the end had been left no happiness at all.

??You have neither right nor time to apologize, and with those last words everything faded away.

Chapter 4

?Door Crossing?functioned by connecting the Forbidden Library’s entrance to another doorway, it was merely just that.

Due to its simple effect, the versatility of?Door Crossing?was quite high, and she was proud of this outstanding magic. But, just like for any other magic, it was also the case that?Door Crossing?was not wholly flawless.

If its structure was to be exploited, that useful nature could turn into weakness. Because of this, the existence of the Forbidden Library and the effect of?Door Crossing?must not be revealed to outsiders.

So it was, to others, something that would not do to be revealed.

???Because of that. Such a situation was inevitable, she thought.

“What was that, you're trying to be funny, I suppose?”

At the moment the Forbidden Library’s door had opened, Beatrice herself already understood that she was being called on.

That spacious mansion with its many possible choices of doors existed, and yet, Beatrice had forcibly been guided to a single one.

That method was simple. ????In a situation where the other doors could not open, then it could be done.

The means to seal?Door Crossing?was to remove any choice of doors to connect to.

That task with diligence had been carried out, and in the mansion ‘doors that could open’ had now been limited to one.

And who had helped in putting this to use, that it must have been her precious nee-chan she understood well.

Being put off-balance by this realization was inevitable. That was because, it made her sense of existence unclear.

But even with that, so, begrudging her nee-chan was not fitting for her. Because of this, Beatrice, without holding any sort of resentment for her brother, instead simply seeking to confront him directly pulled wide open those doors.

“??Yo, Beatrice.”

Drawing through the opened door without hesitation, calling for Beatrice, he was there waving his hand.

That voice and attitude, she remembered it. Because of this, Beatrice’s body shivered with fear.

The face from her memories, and the face now seen in front of her, not every detail seemed to match up.

While the general parts from memory agreed normally, that they were already almost like another person was the situation.

“You. Why are you giving me that look, I suppose?”

That dark, dark glint in his eyes beheld in front of her, Beatrice shook her head.

Far from improving, it had coldly changed in a way that drew even more revulsion.

A rarity, those black hair and black eyes remained, and in those eyes that had lost their shine darkened emotions were dimly revealed.

Surrounding those eyes reminiscent of gloom were deep dark circles, thin and frail cheeks lay underneath, and what could be seen of the fingers displayed a corpse-like pallor.

With long dark clothes wrapping his body, his skin exposure minimized?? Among that united uniform of black, what stuck out was a bright red scarf. Just that, and that alone was quite strongly betraying his gloomy impression.

After that, for a while time passed.

But, even if you say that, this change is too much. Can it be that this human had become so different?

“You, your mood has seriously changed, I suppose.”

“Saying that, you have not changed at all, then. Is your growth spurt over? Normally, after 2 years pass you become a little more mature.”

In a blank voice, to Beatrice’s words he replies with a joke.

Two years, was it. If he says that, then that must be how much time had passed.

Just two years, from Beatrice’s perspective, was like in the blink of an eye, it was that short of a feeling. To humans, especially to the one standing now in her sight, how meaningful were those years, she wondered.

??For that boy who seemed about to die at any moment, to return for revenge like this, was it that meaningful a stretch of time?

“I wonder if you remember, Beatrice, we ate together here.”

“???. That memory does not exist, I suppose. Eating together with you never happened.”

At that person’s words, Beatrice crinkled her brows.

Those two people facing each other were, in the mansion’s first floor kitchen. White cloth draped the table, and in the center seat was that person asking Beatrice a mysterious question.

“…...Ah, ah. That is, you wouldn’t know that, that just now, I was mean, always, mean, it’s always, me.”

“There was something…..No, that, hearing it now at this point, it can’t be helped.”

For a single moment, in Beatrice’s heart hesitation brushed past.

But, that girl in the blink of an eye killed those unnecessary distractions and sealed them away. And then. Towards that suspicious person, she pointed her small palm.

There, as the protector and librarian of the Forbidden Library, her pride???Or, to offer her body up to hold an unwanted post, a fleeting sense of duty permeated her.

“Getting your revenge on me, that might be what I deserve, I suppose. Even so, Betty has as Betty a role to fill, in fact. For that…..”

"????"

With strength, Beatrice in her own role rose to block any violence from that person, she sharply focused on it.

Seeing this, his expression dimly set. Something there, as if he was trying to enduring some difficult

feeling could be seen, and at that moment Beatrice set down her foot.

“To take care of me, Beatrice.???Of me, didn’t you contract to protect me?”

???At that moment, Beatrice came to a sudden stop.

“…..Ah.”

Contract, at that sound Beatrice’s whole body was pierced with shock, and she grew stiff.

And that rigidness, as Beatrice’s mind continued to think, it had not gone away.

Something of her mind was not the culprit. Physically, her movement were blocked. That was???

“Forgive me, but with this you will not be able to move, it’s that.”

At Beatrice’s side, having risen from the shadows, one person was revealed there.

There, wearing a disheveled black kimono and biting on a gold-colored kiseru pipe with sharp teeth, stood a tall, shabby-looking Wolf Human.

Gazing at her with with moving narrowed eyes, he was looking down at the Beatrice that only came up to his waist. Finding no emotion in those small pupils, Beatrice’s neck lightly shivered.

“That, is…..”

“Binding the shadows, outwardly it is like the wondrous technique of a ninja, it could be said. Think of it as an art. Even so, you will not be wondering about it it for long…...You are, my sweetheart after all.”

Frozen, her body’s freedom taken away from her, Beatrice could do nothing to that voice but listen.

As those words were heard, speaking without trembling, as if in their shared memories there was no mistake. Slowly rising from his seat, and drawing nearer to her side, that person's eyes were dark, but any signs of discomfort could not be found in them.

To get revenge, was that person's reason for finding this place, Beatrice had concluded. But the glint in that human's eyes, revenge, no matter how she thought it seemed far from the truth.

In those dark eyes filled with dim light, some feeling that was ripping at his chest could be found.

"Back then, you let me run away and, now I am still here. That, definitely, I wanted to tell you I've been thinking about that."

"That, this is your method for that…..You are really a nuisance of a man, I suppose…..Definitely, annoying."

"I am sorry about that. But, you had figured it out, Beatrice."

Interrupting Beatrice's words as she ground her teeth, he slowly shook his head.

Those lips, drawing in the shape of a smile, silently looked down at Beatrice.

If she thought about it, had she ever seen this person smile like this? Back then, when she had let him spend many hours staying in the Forbidden Library, during that time.

At that recalling Beatrice, he put out his hand, and said.

"???That you and I, we were the same kind, that is."

"????"

The corners of his eyes sagged, and now, his eyes became like they were again, really like how the boy was at first they returned.

Back to, during those few days at the mansion, back before becoming strange, he returned to that.

“At that time, I could only be resolved to die, but you could not give up on me, you rescued me. Even now how many times, how many times thoughts of that red-glowing sunrise comes to my thoughts.”

“You are…..”

“I am still thankful for that, Beatrice….. Why, back then, did you not kill me?”

“??Euh”

That was perhaps, thanks, or if not then words of resentment.

Regardless, watching that face mixed with both joy and sorrow saying those words, Beatrice was just surprised.

So this, was the work of her influence, their heart’s all-consuming despair, she takes in.

As if naturally, that rigid hold on her body which made her uneasy came undone, and her outstretched arm dropped down. But, in this newfound freedom, her strength to resist was already gone.

Why, it had been returned, it was very easy to understand.

“Beatrice, I’m thankful for you. I think I probably did like you. Within that time, only you truly drew close to me, those are my thoughts.”

“…..That is, the lowest confession.”

“I agree.”

At his words, Beatrice replied with empty feelings.

And then, in that thinly smiling boy’s black eyes, Beatrice saw the truth. ??It was, those dark emotions within were so familiar to her, that was how she realized.

There was, in his chest having settled, that which after a while would consume all hope, such that it was essential to avoid it ever happening.

???A disease called despair, within him, within herself, had laid quietly nesting.

“Halibel, a sword.”

At that request, the wolf-man waiting by Beatrice raised his eyebrows.

Silently, looking on at those two’s questions and answers, it was that Wolf Human who now shook his kiseru up and down.

“…..Is that alright?”

“A sword.”

Repeatedly ordered, that wolf-man swung his left arm high.

Then, landing on the kitchen floor with a thud, a black lump of steel simply stuck there.

Letting off a dull gleam, this dark-colored metal. It had a simple form for cutting down life.

“The contract, that you remembered it, I was so happy.”

But even though you just wanted to use it, it was not that such a thought didn’t occur to her.

But. That this was truly, to him, a distant joy that could not simply be overlooked, he spoke with that kind of voice. To blame him somehow, that feeling did not really appear in her.

“You are, with those colors that fit you well, very pretty you know.”

"????"

At that moment, Beatrice’s eyes opened wide, and filled with heavy tears.

In her blurry sight, that person gently overlooking her was there. As she blinked, tears began to flow down cheeks. Shedding tears like that, to gaze at his appearance to the end was what she wished.

That guy, that she was the same type as himself, he had said that.

Then, there was definitely a reason, there was a reason he was here for her.

Back then, what she had done, that it had greatly affected his life she had not known.

That it had turned and turned and, had returned to her like this,

That they, for this Beatrice, was doing this, to free her??

“Are you, they?”

"????"

With a numbly stiff tongue, shivering and shaking, Beatrice spoke those words.

Those words that came out like a sigh, when heard by the boy standing right in front of her eyes, for that his movements slightly stopped.

I'm giving you the time. For bitter words, or whatever it may be, I would accept everything, that kind of resolve could be seen.

To that determination, Beatrice??

"??You are, Betty's, *they*, I suppose?"

That question's meaning, he would definitely not understand.

That there would be an answer, Beatrice wasn't even hoping for that much.

It was just, if her final end, if it was that which had come looking for her, she must try to hear it still.

"Aah."

???So, at that smiling, agreeing appearance, at that Beatrice's mind was crushed and broken.

In that dear smile, in those kindly-spoken words, in that raised blade lay within a blessing.

"I, am your *they*."

Once more, big drops of tears, flowing over that girl's reddened cheeks, ran down and fell.

Chapter 5

“A drowning man will even clutch at straws, there’s a proverb like that where I used to live~”

Facing down over a floor covered in red carpet, a man was listening to the voice.

That carpet, his face was very close to it.

And gazing down like that, his breathing was fast. The beat of his heart rang in in his ears, and his body felt like he had just finished sprinting over distant fields.

He looked to be reaching sixty, an old man.

Having sired sons, likely even grandsons, he showed the marks of having lived a long and fitting life.

His position was such that, many people had to talk with him, and sometimes necessary to fight with some of them.

Having had a long and brilliant career, this man had been entrusted with much by those around him.

That he was special, he did not have any thoughts of bragging like that. But born with a wit beyond the norm, he had resolved to live a life of abundance.

And that was why, in this situation, he could not help but wonder whether he was in a dream or an illusion. He could not believe it.

??He was, down on his knees, in front of an opponent no older than his own grandchildren.

“Straw, do you know what that is? Probably there’s straw like I am thinking of here….. Like wheat, or something like that.

The one in the water is so desperate, that even knowing how useless it is, they will grab at nothing with all their might.. It’s that kind of feeling.”

“????”

“To put it plainly, dying humans will desperately try to survive no matter what, that is the meaning of the proverb. From their view, things may look different. They are still thinking of turning the tables on us, but to us it just looks like useless struggling.”

Smoothly, the voice above his head fluently speaks.

Of what is being said, most of it seems pointless, but not one word, not one phrase can be missed for fear of somehow raising his ire. Not when gruesome rumors about him are piled up like mountains.

That boy, who having emerged just two years ago, had been spoken of in cruel and horrific spreading rumors ever since.

All that opposed him, his family, and those important to him were pushed aside by any means necessary. With irresistible force he had kept expanding?Pleiades?resolutely as its head.

With terrifying success, he determined with vicious skill those that would not respect his power, and those people like this he called forth.

???Purge King?, this boy was called.

“????”

The old man was kneeling in a place where, hidden in the shadow of the four great nations, started for the purpose of controlling their underworld society, this organization’s headquarters lay.

Luxuriously drawn portraits, extravagantly decorated things were gathered in this room to the point of overflowing. It was that organization's reception hall.

The king was, on the room’s throne?? What could rightly be called treasure, on that supreme throne seated upon and looking down on his guest.

It was a dazzling and luxurious setup, and the amount of gold used was enough to make one’s head spin.

The piled earnings from one man’s life repeated a thousand, no, ten thousand times, would not touch the glare of wealth that assaulted one’s gaze here and naturally caused it to fall, it was that kind of feeling.

That this was due to the organization’s???No, the power of the king even idiots could understand with a glance. And even if someone incapable of getting had come here. That person, having entered this very room, would never be seeing the light of day again.

Simple displays of power, mere shows of wealth were not worth anything in comparison.

Lining the walls were dozens of men, all with names famous for being that of a top mercenary or soldier. All of this, it was possible to make them follow with money, but to actually have carried that out, just how much did cost?

Even if they only numbered a few dozen, to maintain this army, a vast amount of gold would be needed.

Then, among that crowd where only the best had been readied, that was not all. But that pair at the peak standing to the left and right of the throne, for the kneeling old man were more than enough to give him a strong sense of what kind of person was seated there.

???With presence beyond imagination, were?Admirer?Halibel, and?Blue Lightning?Cecilus Segmunt.

Of the Kararagi City States, and of the Holy Vollachia Empire.

In those two countries, each respectively holding the name of the strongest, those two were kept side by side. Abruptly appearing in this group, how that young boss’ violent hold had gone uncontested, there was no better evidence than this.

“Sigrum-san?”

“????”

At that moment, his state of mind having gone dim, his name was called, that man??Sigrum’s heart

became frozen.

Looking on, resting his chin on his arm, the king, smile gone from his face, was gazing at Sigrum with dark eyes.

As if his heart was directly squeezed, Sigrum struggled.

Something, if excuses were not made soon, his oxygen-deprived lips shivered. However, at that Sigrum's fragile response, the Purge King's shoulders shrank.

"Ah?? for making you bored, I apologize. Having my stories get off-topic is a bad habit of mine, since long ago, and if I talk in this roundabout way we might never get to the point."

"I, I am fine…..that, is"

"I am talking."

"????"

With the right hand's finger held to his lips, the king's left hand was pointed at him.

A quiet point for him to make excuses suddenly blocked, his back became slick with cold sweat. In that silence which felt freezing to his body, ten long seconds passed,

"…..Sorry. I didn't mean to threaten you. It's just that, these two people here. And these others present are all hired by me and follow me, but you're not like that are you? So then, how should I say it….. I acted in a manner I was used to, sorry."

"????"

In honest terms, the speaker's tone was quiet. That magnitude was odd and stuck out at him.

The Purge King was polite, and to that opposing side conveyed respect, and yet just like that without hesitation he would also carry out violence on them.

The king's tone in treating others with words, showed none of his hidden intentions to a listener. Embarrassed eyes lacking confidence, actually pierced through to peer at inner thoughts with narrowed gaze, with strong attention to the other's nerve in every move he was observing.

Those darkened black pupil asked only one question.

??Are you, my friend, or my enemy, I wonder.

"????"

Of course, that he was not an enemy, that he must assert.

However, Sigrum's words were sealed, having just been forbidden from talking back.

Making a sound, or responding with his eyes, showing with his attitude, would it wear on that guy's patience?

With such a fear capturing the elder's heart, the longest few seconds of his life felt like an eternity.

Something like this, exaggeratedly just laughing it off, not a single person had survived trying that.

The organization's stance was merciless, and in the center of those four nations' underworld, that group which in his hands had been steadily growing, already had become an irremovable sore.

To survive, was to avoid being entangled it that diseased portion in the first place, as overcoming that illness after the fact was impossible.

And so, the sole method of surviving. Offering complete submission in the name of coexistence, it was only that.

An incurable illness he had tried to avoid at all costs. But ultimately, unable to escape it, the old man had come to this place.

With all his answers already prepared beforehand, with determination having chosen to submit, it was for that he had come.

But, even that thought had been carelessly made, Sigrum had come to understand here.

Hands and feet tied, and tossed in the water while unable to move. Like that, he was out of breath, and his oxygen-deprived lips were struggling. On land, in this room, he was drowning in that gaze.

“????”

Not a disease. But a curse.

The Purge King, this never-ending curse was what he was ruling over.

Fear to the point of making him sick blurred his eyes, and unending doubt gnawed away at his heart.

He was, that human was fearing. His opponent was fearing, was doubting, was hating.

That king himself had the strongest fear buried within him, and that with this same curse he was eating away at others, desperately all others that came across it were infected with the same.

Like drowning, the king had said first. It was just as he had said.

Now, if it seemed like a chance, Sigrum would try to grab at straws or at anything.

“So, umu….. So, the straw story. To live desperately will….. Umu, like that we know, Sigrum-san with us like this had this talk, because of an idea that was not well thought-out, you wanted to forcibly push that onto us with a desire for results.

“????”

Saying so that, the Purge King spread his left hand in their direction. And like yielding the turn to speak, an offering gesture of the hand was made.

“Ah”

At that moment, as if the stiffness had come unraveled, breath leaked out from Sigrum’s lips.

At that single moment, grabbed by fear to avoid annoying the king’s senses, in front of the eyes of that young man he did not react. That patient silence, he had directed Sigrum to, it was due to that.

“Sigrum-san?”

“Ah, no….. My apologies. As for my side’s thoughts, it is stated in my sent letter. With all members of your organization, from now on and for a long time, we humbly wish for good relations.”

With words chosen carefully, taking care to avoid showing excess humility, Sigrum expressed his position on the matter.

Hearing that, the Purge King narrowing his eyes, but after mulling it over for a while he smiled.

“????”

That smiling face, seeing it abruptly matching the age of its owner, Sigrum was surprised.

With that startled Sigrum, the king was strongly agreeing.

"Let us have a nice partnership, Sigram-san. The details will be discussed with the person in charge later on.. This was the best and wisest choice for you."

“Ah…..”

“From now on, regarding this association, I will be in your care.”

His hand raised, while smiling the Purge King concluded the meeting.

At those words, Sigrum slowly lifted his body. His body had grown stiff from kneeling, and his body posture briefly faltered, but while enduring it with difficulty he let out a long breath.

“Thank you very much. From now on, this side will be in your care as well.”

“Umu.”

Somehow, holding his tongue, his final words concluded the talk.

And so, nodding like this was over, the noble bowed his head and stepped back away.

“????”

In his heart that was bouncing and shifting, a strong sense of relief and achievement was blowing like a storm.

His body that up to a few seconds ago had felt heavily weighted down, felt suddenly like floating. And with naturally lightened footsteps, the faces of his family members waiting for him to return home rose in his head one by one.

Having braved this violent wave, somehow his wish had been granted.

“????”

It was at that time.

From the rear, a very faint sound was heard.

A sound familiar to the ear, the sound of a coin, it was that.

Something similar to, a single coin slipping from the hand, and hitting the floor..

“Tails.”

One short word, a voice was heard saying.

What that was, Sigrum’s mind wondered, racing crazily fast???,

“????”

The elder’s view tilted, becoming even with the floor.

Even more so than when he was kneeling, this carpet had grown suddenly closer.??When he felt that, it was the end.

Chapter 6

“????”

At that fallen man’s throat-slit corpse, Halibel was gazing with narrowed eyes.

Praiseworthy skill.

That old man’s corpse lacked stiffness in hands and feet, and the head that had fallen on the carpet had failed to read the mood. The corpse was like a corpse that had lost only its life, only that, and it was because of this that it could be called an artfully made corpse.

But the corpse was nothing but a corpse, and to see it as amazing, to judge it that way, was not a hobby he

indulged in himself.

"Oh, Ouueh .....Eh."

Watching the sight of the bleeding corpse, the boy on the throne held his mouth firmly closed.

Already, he had seen the moment where a person becomes a corpse many times, but as his temperament was sensitive, he showed no sign of really getting used to it.

“After having ordered it, acting like that towards the dead, isn’t that definitely insulting? To become used to corpses, I wouldn’t ask for that, but maybe you should at least to aspire to avoid creating them, how about that?”

“I too, am not killing for enjoyment ….. This. Not even being able to look straight at it, but being at such a scene anyway, but more than that..”

"That’s being deceitful."

At his employer holding a handkerchief in front of his mouth, fighting off nausea, his colleague's words to him held no absolution.

Of course, the side that was in the right was?? The side of Cecilus. That his employer did not show fury at this was evidence he knew his actions had the marks of deception.

While looking at the young boy whose face had grown as pale as the corpse’s, Cecilus, with an offhand “Anyhow”, continues to speak. His gaze was still watching the corpse, that poor fallen old man.

“That contradiction of yours does seem weird to me,” he said, “such a calm conversation ending with a sudden order to kill, you surprised me, boss. I would expect you to feel some remorse.”

While speaking as such, Cecilus with dissatisfaction puffed up his cheeks. It was not quite appropriate behavior for a man in his twenties, but his mind and appearance went together well, so it fit him.

His human sort of beauty, as usual was what allowing this conduct to occur.

Anyway, as Cecilus pointed it out, the boy also contorted his cheek,

"And so, didn’t I tell you, I did not want to have him killed. Like I said to him, I wanted to believe it. A lying face or something like that, I didn't see it, either.”

"Then, why?"

“Even if does not seem like they’re lying, liars will lie after all.”

At that Cecilus gazing at him with surprise on his face, the boy that knelt on the throne bit his lip.

In that terribly skinny life, an unshakably strong will could be seen.

Halibel and Cecilus, what had happened in his past they did not know.

But, in that guy’s past, they both believed that situation must have happened.

Smiling, and acting friendly, someone must have stacked doubt and hurt in his chest, with fingers that treated kindly, with lips they must have had spit out hatred and malice, that kind of experience.

Such a past, must have taught this boy.

“First cut the buds, then break apart the branches. I will never be fooled twice.”

Tightly, the boy grabbed his own shoulder and pressed his fingernails over his collar. Those nails could be seen ruthlessly entering, skin was being torn, that blood is oozing was certain. That was, to him, a necessary ritual to maintain himself, those subordinates that had been with him long knew, and so nobody

could stop it.

As if soon satisfied with the pain, the boy slowly rose from the throne,

“The corpse, make it neat and bury it. And, an envoy is to be sent to their shop. Everything is to be confiscated, but if they follow along do not treat them poorly. If they refuse, then purge the family and burn the store. When the takeover ends, have them greet the next one in charge and follow their plan. With that, it will be decided whether to destroy them or not.”

With a calm tone, the boy ordered so those in the room could hear him.

For anyone, and not only that, but also to anyone, this is a bold order to make.

These requests that did not worry about the process, but rather only with the result, made the group work nicely. By focusing on the accomplishments of the group, not that of any one person, the perfect strength of the organization could be maintained.

And so, if someone taking a chance brought about failure, the risk of everything being lost was lowered, and with everyone’s power the work was carried out. ??It was the ideal workplace environment.

??As an example family, a lover, wealth, life, many other things.

Holding onto the safety of those things as insurance was the work of the boy.

And so the “Purge King”, as he was called and feared as, this was that timid boy’s way of fighting.

"Boss, you forgot your coat."

"Ah, thank you."

Standing, behind that boy heading to the doorway, Halibel gently draped a black coat over his shoulders.

Just slightly draping that on his shoulders, he also added a word of reminder??Immediately after that Halibel’s whiskers grew numb with detected killing intent. At its intensity, Halibel lowered his eyes.

The source of that intent, he did not have to check, it was the boy in front of his sight.

Probably, it was because he had stood behind him.

“…..Halibel-san, I do not want to kill you.”

“Hahaha, then you can just not kill me. Instead just use me well.”

“But, being unable to control a tool and destroying yourself with it, is that not the worst-case…..”

Mumbling to himself, pondering on methods to kill the aide in front of him, the boy put on his jacket.

Those grumbling words were quickly brushed off, but the boy’s words were not a joke.

He would, if it was possible, try to kill Halibel.

It was simply that, the effort it took to kill, the insufficiency of his preparation to kill, and the trouble brought about after the killing, it was merely that which had inclined him towards not killing, that was all.

“Boss, boss. These offerings that person brought, where should they be moved to?”

“Offered goods….. The contents, what were they?”

“Contents were…..Ah, there’s a magic stone. From where did they learn of boss’s tastes, they had come having paid that much regard, truly, I feel even more sorry for them.”

“Cutting off his head was Cecilus’s idea so…..”

At the room's entrance, the boy who was called out twists his cheeks. And at that breezy attitude of Cecilus, he sighed.

"The magic stone, I'll ask you to send it my room. Other that that do with them as all of you like."

"Yes, yes, definitely understood. And, boss."

"…..What is it."

That boss who was making unhappy sounds, at that boy Cecilus touches a finger to his eye.

"Those dark circles, are quite severe. Maybe, you should sleep softly next to the princess for a while?"

At Cecilus' words, the boy's tongue let loose with annoyed sounds. That Cecilus just laughed off, but around him those other men froze with tension in their bodies. It was possible that, because of that annoyance, Cecilus's slaying could be ordered to be carried out.

Of course, in that situation killing Cecilus would not be enough. Using every power available in the building, somehow they would have to try to force a draw with Halibel as well.

"??I will think about it."

Fortunately, the boy did not hastily order this, but with just those word turned away.

With that, relief spread throughout the room, and the men watched the back of the departing boss. That waving Cecilus' inability to read the mood, was recently one of Halibel's biggest concerns.

"I too, taking on this kind of group is not really something I have confidence in it….."

Shaking the kiseru held in his mouth up and down, Halibel gazed at that boy's departing figure.

Firstly, as the most senior associate, guarding and similar duties were handled by Halibel. However, whether inside or outside the mansion, threats meaning to cause him harm were few.

Some were stopped by fear, and many others were simply unaware of his existence.

"????"

Carefully, Halibel watched over that boy who evaluated everything with narrowed eyes.

In that building, it was not just the reception room which was decorated with various works of arts and paintings. To maintain that glaring wealth, his whole body was being used to defend it.

By showing the authority of this wealth, and showing it off, creating unnecessary enemies could be avoided, that was the intended plan.

I win without fighting, the boy had said, but it could definitely be called strange.

Of course, as it is, an overpowering wealth and power was subject to the jealousy and envy of others. Ultimately, whatever you do enemies would appear. The boy's method then was simply to reduce the number of them.

And, if that quantity was reduced, it would only be necessary to deal with the rest using force later.

"Halibel-san…..Appropriately, please watch over Cecilus to keep him from exploding."

"Understood, leave it to me, boss should go see the princess."

"Alright."

That he had accepted Cecilus' suggestion perhaps annoying him, the boy replied with distended cheeks.

And then, those two pairs of legs headed deeper within??In the deepest part of the building named?Pandemonium?, they arrived at the door to the most strictly guarded room.

???On that door, there were so many locks that a person that is seeing it for the first time might shudder, there were with that many keys and a lot of locks were locked.

The amount of keyholes neared fifty, clearly showing the importance of what lay on the other side of this door, as well as the meticulous, tenacious, and obsessed nature of the person that had prepared it.

But, above all, what made the caretaker's obsession most obvious was the fact that, the keys to fit in those keyholes and open the door, not one of them existed in this world.

That is, this door, by any normal method could never have been opened.

To open it, then??,

"???Puck."

"I am called, and so I'm appeari-*nyanyanyan.*"

Receiving the boy's call, with an exhausting voice and excessive flashes of light, a grey-furred kitten suddenly appeared in the air.

Outwardly with a silly attitude and cute appearance, but within holding absolute power, that great spirit???The existence known as Puck, floated down and landed on the boy's shoulder.

"Yo, you're here again after quite a while, is Lia the reason you came?"

"The door, open it."

“Mmh, what is that, that tone is, if you spoil the father’s mood he might not let you see his daughter you know, the feelings of a father having a daughter at such a ripe age, if you could understand that more it would make me happy..”

“Puck.”

On top of his shoulder, Puck was stroking his whiskers.. The boy called to him.

Seeing that boy’s face marked with deep dark circles, Puck said something like “Ara-ara”, and like that he let out a sigh.

“You endured it until you're left anxiously shaking like this again, so it can’t be helped. That effort of yours is commendable, so I’ll let it slide just this once.”

Saying that, with a satisfied air Puck gathered his short arms together and pointed towards the door. And, through those keyholes that lacked any keys, a faint light poured forth.

Click-

Soon after, the faint lights turned into keys made of ice, and fitting inside the door played an opening song.

The method to open a door that would not open?? The secret was to create a key that did not exist.

“Well poking at that blind spot, the idea that if there is a keyhole, then one must find a key that matches it, is usually the way. But if someone else tries to imitate this, it would become a difficult matter for them.”

“There’s also a magic spell there, so if someone other than me tried something similar, immediately that news would get to you and me both, and then I would definitely be there with Lia.”

“That’s right.”

At Puck’s words, Halibel came to understand and agreed.

Without even paying attention to that answer, the boy placed his hand on the opened door and paused. At his back, with a face feigning innocence stood Halibel. He gazed up at that face.

“Halibel-san, you can go now.”

“Is that so? But, I too should greet the princess sometimes, don’t you think…..?”

“You can go now.”

Those words said without much thought, were flatly rejected.

Halibel certainly accepted that it was a definite refusal. This wasn’t something worth biting down and refusing to budge on, so Halibel chewed on his kiseru and backed off.

“If anything happens, it is ok to call on me.”

“????”

That boy was giving him a warning look with his hand still on the door. Halibel turned his back on him.

Until he turned the corner, and could no longer be seen, that boy’s sight was piercing into his back.

Always with such vigilance, rather than full of caution he was more fearful as a person. That was his boss.

“Ah, if I said it like that, he will definitely not call out for me then.”

With such listless mumbling, Halibel spewed smoke from his pipe while looking overhead.

Smoke hit the ceiling, and with nowhere to go, scattered.

???That it was somehow, a portent of their future, was the thought that came to his mind.

As if he had died, that boy's sleeping face was quiet.

"????"

Entrusting his head to her knees, sleeping as if on the brink of death, it was that boy who Emilia gazed at.

Around his brows, there were dark circles that looked as if painted on with soot. Caused by and revealing the boy's serious level of sleep deprivation, it could only be this kind of situation.

"Oh, it looks like he hasn't been sleeping again."

"It can't be helped, in his position he has no room to feel relaxed, most likely. Except for when every now and then, he can come see Lia and act like a baby."

She stroked his forehead, and organized his lashes with her fingertips. Watching that sleeping face made free by Emilia, the floating Puck wrapped his long tail around his stomach and sighed. Just like that he spun around her and examined her private room.

It was a white room.

White walls, white floors, a white ceiling, a white bed, white furniture and white curtains, everything in the room was united with whiteness.

Lying in the middle of that, Emilia was draped in thin sleepwear that was also white, so it was almost pathological.

This room, was the extent of Emilia's given freedom??Locked in, to call it being locked in a cage, whether to put it like that, Emilia was still unsure

"Even now, Lia still isn't angry at this child?"

"…..That, I wonder."

At Puck's question, Emilia hesitated in answering.

It was not that it was hard to say it. She was just not sure about her own feelings.

Well, at first she had definitely been angry, but even now they had not yet made up.

To apologize to each other, they did not even have time for that. Without solving that problem, time had simply passed, and daily life had merely continued on..

"But, I am feeling upset, at Puck. While keeping it a secret from me, to plan for leaving by yourself."

"Sorry. But it could not be helped. There was no way to entrust you to a Roswaal in that state, right? It was a dangerous situation and place, and when dragging you away was possible, it would be irresponsible if I didn't do that. If it is for Lia's safety, here we'll *Pica*-go."

"????"

"To avoid letting Lia stay in danger, that boy and I were of the same mind."

So Puck, in the plan to lead Emilia out of Roswaal's mansion, had not hesitated in supporting that organization.

And with only Emilia unaware of anything, when she had finally realized she found herself in this white room, a bird caught in a cage???.

But, that she had no right to criticize Puck's judgment, Emilia also understood.

"Because, in the end, I couldn't do anything….."

Luginica Kingdom's struggle to choose its next ruler??In that fight, no matter how you look at it, Emilia had suffered a beyond-miserable defeat.

The biggest cause was, her refusing to attend the meeting of succession candidates. As a result, her participation in the selection had not been recognized. That meant that Emilia's sponsor Roswaal L. Mathers and her both fell in position.

In short, Emilia hadn't even appeared at the candidacy meeting and, her sponsor Roswaal had lost that ability as a result. The Emilia camp had broken at its first obstacle.

And so, Emilia who had stepped onto the first rung of the ladder, had been a failure who couldn't do anything.

"…..My, wish."

Was to create a world without discrimination.

Whether half-elf or otherwise, a place where birth would not be the judge of a person's life, creating a place like that was clumsy Emilia's wish.

However, without even being given the chance to be spoken aloud, that wish had disappeared like a dream's fantasy.

And the end of that wish, the freeing of Emilia's hometown?? The work of rescuing Elior Forest's still-asleep residents frozen in ice, that too she been unable to do.

"Like that, living in an unprotected building, it would be better to return to the forest, but Lia was in a situation where you couldn't even do that. Ah, so when the first envoy came I was definitely surprised."

“…..Realllly, surprised. I will say that.”

The boy she had come here and met, Emilia had believed was dead.

The succession meeting’s no-show, her fate had been decided, by that mansion boy’s death.

In the witchfiends’ attack the first casualty had been a girl. In that girl’s death he had been suspected, the boy who had briefly been working at the mansion.

That suspicion, the boy could not endure and ran away. After him that Rem’s older sister Ram had chased??and had not returned.

The collapse, probably started from there.

The cause of Rem’s death was discovered to be the curse of a shaman afterwards, and the damage to the nearby village growing had already combined into an unrecoverable situation.

Having accepted the result of the attack, Roswaal failed to take the opportunity to recover and met his downfall. Emilia failed to secure her participation in the selection, and brought from that failure undeniable humiliation. The mansion had fallen into a bad state, a bad state that nobody would have wished for, it had continued to decline in that direction.

It was then.

Swept away by the helplessness of being unable to do anything, Emilia was spending her days listlessly. But one day, a definitely disappeared boy had come to get her.

“????”

Puck had quickly responded to that. But Emilia was feeling angry at that boy.

Without caring about her feelings, without any explanation, not when first disappearing, not even when he returned, not saying anything, suddenly taking her away like this.

The world surrounding Emilia starting to collapse, he might even have been the cause.

Still???

“Like that…..”

To the reunited Emilia, the boy with a frail face exhausted from fear had, latched on even worse than now, cried, and begged her for help.

And at that boy bawling like a baby, Emilia had forgotten to be angry.

Maybe she was weak. Maybe she was easy.

And, even then, that boy who seemed like a child, who had fallen asleep with a baby-like face. To be able to scold him, Emilia did not think her position was enough.

So, the boy had found Emilia, to find himself salvation.

He came looking for her. Not saying a single word about what he was doing outside her room’s door, just sobbing sadly and talking about his own feelings, on Emilia’s knees he entrusted to her his life.

Whether it was receiving strong trust, or truthfully being looked down upon and being humiliated, that depended on what Emilia thought. And Emilia was not able to give any answer to that.

“Obviously, this is reaalllly not healthy…..”

That this was, not a normal state to be in, even the immature Emilia realized that.

But, Emilia, while accepting that clinging boy’s tears, looking on the form of the boy for a moment letting himself rest, in her own inner thoughts she was unsure.

“????”

Speaking of the intervals in which the boy sought Emilia, it was about once every ten days.

Other than then, even cutting back on sleep-time, he was desperately struggling.

Really, we do not speak together much.

But, at that boy who secretly came searching for her once every ten days, Emilia,

“…..Subaru, you baka.”

???That perhaps, she longed for those visits, Emilia had grown aware of that.

Chapter 8

???If a tossed gold coin landed on tails, with just that anyone was killed.

At that strange master’s way, Frederica could not hide her disgust.

Cleaning a headless corpse from the reception, Frederica changed out dirty rugs, and prepared food for?Pandemonium?’s mercenaries.

“The fates of others, quite literally left to luck…… Do you feel like you’ve became a god?”

Lifting the whole body of a corpse, Frederica, knowing all too well the reason for her helplessness, she bit down hard with sharp fangs, and trembling with anger held her feelings inside.

Frederica Baumann was employed and working there in the organization because, that organization head ?Purge King?’s princess???Emilia had strongly begged on her behalf.

That day, as the mansion filled with chilled air and frost, she felt convinced she was going to lose her life to the great spirit that had betrayed her, but for some reason she had woken up here.

And so, with a collar clasped around her neck, she now offered up her body and worked as a maid for that detestable person.

Just how, how clumsily had she worked that she was afflicted with this kind of unreasonable job?

“??Master, pardon me, please.”

Her owner’s own meals, it was the rule that Frederica would carry it to his room directly.

Other than Frederica, he did not entrust this task to anyone else, and food cooked by any other than her, he would not put in his mouth. That this was some honorable thing, she had no feeling like that whatsoever.

Firstly, it was not because of taste or trust that Frederica had been entrusted with the task. Merely that Frederica would not try stupid things, that kind of conviction she would not hold.

“Come.”

With the sound of many locks coming undone, a rude order allowed her entry.

Following her orders, with the food cart in tow, Frederica stepped foot into the room of her master.

Her master’s room, unlike the luxurious decor and interior of the building, was big, but quite simple and a dull secret room lacking in humanity.

The room’s four corners held many books that were not distinguished by subject. Messily piled up books were stacked everywhere, and it was a place the orderly Frederica could not bear. But, having his room cleaned, that person deeply hated it.

Perhaps he was, being wary of something being installed in the room

Knowing that was impossible, but still being on the lookout for it, was not being cautious but rather cowardly??Definitely, it was contemptible behavior.

“Master, should something be done about these fallen documents?”

“…..Umu. Ah, please do. Find some guy that looks like he would know, you can just show them.”

That being said, what was being waved away by her uninterested master, littering the floor, were a few sentences written down in messy handwriting.

At first glance, they simply seemed to be discarded, messed-up drafts, but in fact they were the source of the organization’s wealth??And the Purge King’s creations of mysterious opportunities.

“That much, might not be very helpful…..Engines or things like that, I don’t get the structure at all. As expected, different kinds of food are the easiest to figure out…..”

Mumbling complaints, looking somewhere other than here was her owner.

What he was talking about. Were, never before seen, nor discovered knowledge, culture, leads for those, or possibilities.

Meeting lots of people, that black-haired boy had repeatedly made great decisions???Like he was marked by fate, he had many unique ideas, and as a pioneer of culture had been granted cleverness.

Those many pieces of knowledge he spoke of, with those wise men asleep in their fields of study had been lit with a new flame.

Possibilities which normal people could not understand, in one breath appeared in that boy’s joking words, and the wise ones uncompromisingly tested and debated and finally established them into theories.

And so, with that producing enormous profits, the boy who had nothing had been nurtured into a great villain.

“Having come this far, calling it a template made of future knowledge isn’t even funny.”

Before, those achievements had been praised, but he had mumbled such strange words in reply, Frederica knew. When she had mentioned it, he had not laughed at all.

And so, on one hand causing many people to suffer, on the other giving rise to much happiness, it was one part of her dark-haired master that was not cruel.

Even as a problematic existence that humanity should remedy, in his brain there was definite value.

This, unreachable being. Was definitely one-of-a kind in this world, there was no doubt??Maybe in that sense, he might have had something in common with Roswaal.

“????”

“Frederica, the food. First, have a bite.”

Even while preoccupied in her thoughts, Frederica was steadily readying the meal to be served.

This boy was, only skin and bones, skeletal in appearance. It was not that his portions were lacking, the issue was largely mental.

Having given and taken many wounds, while living comfortably he was comparably quite skinny in appearance. As the manager of his meals, it did not make her feel great, but he probably wasn’t vomiting because he wanted to.

“Master, with this.”

Why had meals been prepared for two?

All menus were for two, placed on large plates, and on the table were set. And from every plate's meal Frederica ate a single bite. To even check for the presence of poison was one of her roles.

She had never added any. But "I want to", she had thought that before.

It was just, for Frederica, the work of a maid had taken up much of her life, and it was precious to her. The people that taught her, and those involved with her, when thinking of them she did not want to commit acts of violence.

"Then, I will be outside, if there is anything please call for me."

"Umu."

During meals, her master did not enjoy being seen.

Because of that, having finished with readying the meal, Frederica felt it was time to leave, and was withdrawing from the room.

Spread out over the desk were, a written list with the organization's members. Next to that list, a gold coin left there could be seen.

At that moment, having realized the meaning of that, Frederica could not hide the fear running down her back.

"Master??"

"Frederica."

Looking back, at that Frederica who had called her master, empty black eyes were gazing at her.

In that empty darkness, Frederica swallowed. In front of her, her master slowly approached the desk and covered that unfolded list.

And then, flipping the gold coin just next to it with a thumb,

“??Heads.”

With a carefree noise, that tossed coin fell into the boy’s left hand. Catching it, and having checked the side which was facing up, that boy smiled at Frederica.

“It was heads, Frederica.??Your little brother and grandmother are safe.”

“??Ah”

“Get out, and don’t come back until I say you may enter.”

At her owner’s words, Frederica nodded like a doll without speaking.

And so, unable to hide her eyes welling up, wetting her cheeks with hot tears she left the room. Soon after, Frederica while covering her face began to run.

“Wa, waaa…..*waah!*”

She could not tell, not anyone, not anything. Sharing would not be forgiven.

How, had it become like this?

Why, did this happen to her?

Those days at the mansion, with those not cute at all kouhais, those cute kouhais, that troublesome master having spent long ago???Where had those times gone?

Chapter 9

???Having received word from a courier, Cecilus closed one eye and looked up at the moon.

“Hmmm, hmhmm, hmhmm-hhmm”

There twisting his neck, bending at the waist, low enough that the tips of his long hair might brush the ground, he tilted his form.

By nature, he was not confident in his thinking ability. Cecilus had not received formal education, and had lived with no intention of learning things in the first place. In years, his life numbered around twenty, but he had spent it all on one thing only.

Only, with pride in his swordsmanship, on years of swinging a sword.

Since it was a life of only that, in his heart of hearts he hated difficult matters.

“Then, how should I do this, if it’s me..”

Straightening his bent body, Cecilus shook the dust from his hair that had been touching the floor. And at his waist’s katana he placed a hand on and looked back as if dancing.

“Hey, Halibel-san, what do you think?”

“???Your stupidity, if you’re so proud of it, that me who kept silent becomes embarrassed.”

The castle???Pandemonium's balcony, underneath the light of the moon with the sky overhead, from a few shadows a beast-like ninja appeared.

Having been detected, Halibel scratched his head, and at that undaunted Cecilus' face approached.

Pulling his pipe from his pocket, biting down on it, lighting it and puffing in smoke, he exhaled.

"Back then, who was it that used it?"

"This???I used to be one of the?Nine God Generals?…..Well, if I was caught by the strongest ninja Halibel, it can't be helped."

"Ceci-san, for things like secret missions, you're not a fitting person at all. Isn't it Ceci-san that has just revealed to me that he never broke off ties with the Vollachia Empire?"

"But that, Halibel-san, weren't you already aware?"

"????"

Halibel with an awkward grin, at Cecilus' comment smiled even deeper.

That this was not a negative sign, Cecilus was frankly aware of it.

"Originally, working with the boss was His Excellency's order. Of course, that I fell for the boss's invitation and came to this side isn't a lie."

“With the Empire’s collar around your neck…..Well, Ceci-san’s movements, if used well, it would be easier to change things to the Empire’s profit. That knowledge from somewhere unknown, rather than Luginica and Gusteko, it would be more easily adapted in Karagagi and Vollachia.”

“That’s right, yes.”

Drawing his hand into his kimono sleeves, Cecilus acknowledged that he was a spy.

Cecilus’ reason for working under the plan of the organization was, as he said, following the orders of Vollachia’s Emperor.

Even saying that, the Emperor, knowing Cecilus’ temperament, had not given specific instructions. Not that he could have remembered them.

It was just, the role of Cecilus as commanded????,

“Other than His Excellency, all I have to do is kill who the boss orders be killed, too. So it’s just the usual.”

“Ce-san, aren’t you even more like an assassin than myself who is a ninja?”

“No, no, definitely I can’t do that much, I mean, stuff like lurking in the water, or hiding poison on my person, or rising from the shadows is impossible for me.”

Shaking his head and hands, Cecilus humbly responded by acknowledging the difference between their respective areas. As a ninja, as an assassin, he was far behind Halibel. But, if fighting head-on, Halibel could not reach his ability.

“Well then, having just been caught at the scene meeting with a courier, what are you thinking of doing? Here, with me, are you planning on fighting with your life on the line?”

“That, depends on what the missive says inside.”

“Hmm, you mean its contents.”

“If that, its contents would kill Su-san, to stop that I guess I’ll have to fight.

Holding his kiseru between his fingers, letting out a cloud of smoke, Halibel’s fur fluttered in the cold night air.

Vaguely, hearing he was ready to fight to the death for his master, Cecilus with an “Indeed.” nodded his head.

“I was wondering from the start, but why is Halibel-san acting for the boss? It’s not out of sincerely loyalty to His Excellency like me.”

“To repay the grace I received.”

“????. From that person, in what situation was it that Halibel-san received kindness?”

With his words rushing out, Cecilus asked with sincere surprise. Depending on the person, this was brazen enough to be considered rude, but Halibel did not say anything in particular.

Instead, Halibel gazed up at the moon hanging in the night sky???,

“About when I first met Su-san, in a corner of Kararagi there was a bit of an incident. That was just, a situation tangled up with the Four Great Spirits…..Su-san calmed that down for me.”

“Heeh, the Four Great Spirits! They I did already know about, but my words didn’t really get through to them, ara. To calm that situation down….. Ara, boss is stronger than I thought…..”

“That is wrong, it wasn’t such an aggressive situation like that. I don’t know if it was by some decisive measure. But rather…..Like how sometimes Su-san shows us some strange predictions, it was like that.”

His blade turned, Cecilus with one eye closed listened to Halibel’s explanation.

Subtly left to ponder whether it was possible or whether it was impossible, this atmosphere was because in some ways Cecilus was occupied with evaluating his boss.

Halibel had called it a strange prediction, but Cecilus did not look at it like that.

That was, to prepare for anything was the weapon of a coward, he thought. And, Cecilus thought it was desirable to respect the strong.

That was, no matter what method of fighting, one who would greedily use anything to win he acknowledged as a warrior.

“Well, as a strong one among swordsmen, if possible, sticking with a sword fits me the best.”

“Ce-san, Ce-san, my story, did you get it?”

“Yes, that is enough. Anyway, it wasn’t that I thought of suspecting Halibel-san or anything like that. Unlike empires, city-states at the head are all knotted up together…..More than moving around at everyone’s intent like that, it’s a lot more reliable.”

That said, Halibel seemed worn out and disappointed. At that Cecilus tilted his head, and with a “Ah,” as if forgetting something, clapped his hands together.

“Right, right, I was forgetting. The contact that came from the courier a while ago.”

“That, is it okay to tell me?”

“If I don’t tell you, I think that would cause a lot of difficulties.”

There, with a smile Cecilus told Halibel.

“???The Margrave’s murder has surfaced, so the kingdom is sincerely rushing to destroy the organization.”

Chapter 10

???This calmly, at the last moment visiting.

“Being able to meet you today, it is surely a great honor.”

Saying this, welcomed as a guest to the reception area. this youth confronted the?Purge King?.

“????”

Slaying much, erasing many lives, trying to grasp many weaknesses was this person.

Meeting that, to maintain calm, to bluff with a pretend performance, there were many situations like that.

“???Somehow, your confidence is remarkable, though you do not seem much different from me in age.”

“???. So suddenly, are those words of praise sent.”

His head bowed, wearing a black suit and tie was a thinly built young man.

There was a mild look on his face, but in his eyes somehow a wicked darkness could be seen.

That smile he was making was likely fake, and that it would be seen through he was definitely aware.

Not irresponsible, but full of courage.???Was this young man with a mixed-up demeanor.

“Saying that, you definitely …..”

“In truth, not far off from now, we intend to do much large-scale business here. Because of that, we had been looking for a chance to first meet the head of the organization and present gifts.”

“Though, whatever happens with that doesn’t matter to me.”

Unhesitantly, that posture of advancing along his role left a good impression.

Receiving that sort of attitude, the boy also calmly began with the work.

“The royal offerings from our side??? The head, we have heard desired this.”

“Hoh.”

The young man’s readied offering, as its carrier presented and opened up its lid, gazes would be pulled towards it. There lay a massive stone???Containing within a magic crystal, and as if affirming its purity, the mana which filled the room grew even a step thicker.

That offering, the king was watching, the Purge King was muttering.

”What color is it?”

“????”

“Crimson and azure shades seem to abound, but on the inside gold and vermilion are comparatively in abundance …..As expected, my perception is keen.”

At that question with unknown meaning, the young man showed hesitation for the first time.

Instead of that boy, it was Cecilus who had replied, standing next to the king. After having received that Cecilus’ report, the king was magnificently nodding.

“That is so, with thanks I will be receiving your consideration, and…..”

“Russell Fellow’s gesture.”

“Umu, understood. Russell Fellow, is it, if any difficult situations crop up…..”

At that, the Purge King cut off his words.

The reason was that lion-like young man, to stop him from speaking had spread out his hand.

In that instant, the atmosphere of the room came to buzz. Having interrupted the king’s speech, what response will the Purge King give to that action, the guards wondered energetically.

However, in the center of that Halibel and Cecilus, and only that young man coldly,

“Please wait. In truth, the offerings, just this is not all of it.”

“???Hooh, then I am even more, delighted.”

After listing to that man’s words, the king responded as such, and the guards’ tensions relaxed slightly.

There, in that atmosphere which was starting to relax, that young man was nodding his head.

And so???,

“???From the Luginica Kingdom, regarding the Purge King’s atrocities, it could be called the response.”

Immediately, an onslaught of white light swallowed up the whole room, and shattered.

An incredibly bright kind of light, in that luxurious reception of the magic base?Pandemonium?, as if purifying it, into a white line it was changing.

In that total confusion, perishing from that were eighteen???Each confident in their abilities, with names known throughout, but this was a different sort of case.

Even if, to those vanquished men, the truth of what happened could somehow be told, there were none among them who would have believed it.

???The blow which has vaporized them all, was with a single slash been brought about.

Breaking apart, the organization’s base.

The place where important things gathered were blown away by that reigning brilliant existence.

In much evil acts having dyed his hands, and now finally having been acknowledged as the enemy of the world,?Purge King?.

To subjugate that existence, the Dragon Kingdom having sent, was none other than???,

“???Of the line of Sword Saints, Reinhard van Astrea.”

One who made every effort against them useless, that absurdly godlike weapon, had appeared here.

Chapter 11

In that destroyed parlor, a leisurely man was standing.

Fiery crimson hair, blue eyes that mimic the sky, that white knight uniform leaving not a single stain, a knight among knights, that forceful kind of presence was standing.

In that knight's hand, the sword which was held shattered into innumerable pieces.

With just one blow, that weapon crafted by a swordsmith who had left his name upon the world simply turned to dust. To compensate for that, having repeatedly carried out a myriad of wonders, he was now cracking down on ???,

"???You're not a cute opponent at all, you know that, right?

"????"

Like a peal of thunder breaking through the smoke, that sword strike closed in on Reinhard.

And so, with an impact like thunder indeed ringing out, the one called ?Blue Lightning? was thrown back. But that blow was not received by the body.???That katana, the knight had blocked with his sheathe.

Not with hands, but by twisting his body to take the strike with the sheathe, with that acrobatic maneuver having also blown back that young man. ???At that Cecilus let out a whistle.

"Seriously, that really isn't human at all….. This makes me so happy, Reinhard-san!"

"But for me, I don't think I will feel very pleased about our reunion, Cecilus-kun."

Kicking up from a floor billowing with dust, his drawn katana Murasame draped on his shoulder was Cecilus. At that single blow in lieu of greeting, Reinhard furrowed his brow.

Then, from within that smoke-fading room,

“…..Didn’t reach, huh.”

“Ah, that did not seem to have reached the boss. Well, where Halibel and I are guarding, that’s a hard place to get to. But. to be honest, I didn’t particularly move while thinking of protecting the boss, so Halibel-san’s achievement is a 10.”

Saying that, in the inner room where Cecilus was innocently pointing with his chin???At the throne shrouded in smoke leaning was the?Purge King?, and from behind wrapping around, Halibel’s appearance was there.

That Halibel, puffing smoke from the kiseru held in his mouth???

“Ce-san, you are not quite correct. This is not merely my achievement.”

“Eh! Surely not, my hidden power…..”

“Even that isn’t it. This is, Su-san’s work…..This throne, definitely with some strange great power is being protected. Though, we haven’t ever heard of it.”

At that Cecilus who was gazing down at his hand while trembling, Halibel shook his head.

Then, at the rear of that Halibel, the?Purge King?who had been seated on the throne rose. And, grabbing at the scarlet scarf that he wore around his neck,

“???I saw your strike before at the loot house, having prepared for that is only natural.”

Twisting his cheeks, he gave a very grim smile.

This was none other than,?Purge King???? No, this was Natsuki Subaru and Reinhard meeting once again.

“Subaru…..!”

“You really drew a poor lot, Reinhard. If you hadn’t helped me back at the loot house, it would not have become like this now??? But in that case, you would never have been able to meet your precious mistress, you’d say something like that, wouldn’t you?”

“?Euh.”

Peeping out from Halibel’s side, Subaru stuck his tongue out at Reinhard.

At that wicked form, Reinhard’s cheeks stiffened as if he was in pain. Swaying sadly, those blue eyes gazed ahead at the Subaru making that devilish and hateful face.

But suddenly, that expression disappeared.

“??What is that, you’re definitely black and white too?

“??? Black and white? Is that…..”

“Shut up, you lying bastard.???Then, there’s no way I can just die for you.”

With emotionless words, Subaru turned away his eyes that had lost interest from Reinhard. And like that, whacking Halibel on the shoulder, gazing on at Cecilus as he continued to confront Reinhard,

“Cecilus, you can do what you want. I’ve already lost interest.”

“???. I don’t understand much about that, it seems the boss and I are looking at different things. But I will just receive your words with thanks.”

“What we’re seeing is different….. Ha ha, that’s obvious. Even at the end you make me laugh.”

As if something about Cecilus’ words were funny, Subaru slapped his knee with amusement. Then, his smile disappearing immediately,

“It was enjoyable in its own way. Cecilus, since you had no weaknesses, I struggled.”

“For me it’s only that.???Mayonnaise is scary.”

“Ku-hah!”

At that cheekily asserting Cecilus, Subaru laughed as if he was pleased.

That Subaru’s appearance, held in Halibel’s arms, into a shadow sank. And like that Subaru and Halibel, those two from their predicament departed.

“Wait! Our talk isn’t yet…..”

“???That was the end,?Sword Saint?. If you don’t want it to stop there, then please catch up and start over. But before then, this?Purge King?’s faithful subordinate will be blocking your way.”

“Ku…..Euh.”

Trying to chase after that vanished Subaru, Reinhard felt something brushing by beneath his feet.

Sundering the floor in a straight line, that blow, without a moment visible of that katana being drawn, an overwhelming sword creating a single strike, that was one only wielded by who had reached the peak of the way of the sword.

“Regrettably, it’s still too early for me to be judged like that. I am still in the middle of climbing. Walking forward, if I can overcome I think I can reach it.”

“Reach, where?”

“Of course, the heavenly sword.”

At that moment, with a sound like the air freezing, like it was being cut and dying could be heard.

Truly having reached the peak of the sword???No, that fog-spouting clear katana, that was already a Demon Sword having brought about, events outside of common sense were happening.

This drawn sword’s incarnation was that, just by touching that blade, even invisible things would die.

“I was waiting for this.???A chance to cross swords with you.”

“…..Cecilus-kun, I have already fought with you before. That match was, to me, of great significance. Why is it you..”

“Definitely, my body with its sword.???In a life-or-death match, someone to meet face-to-face.”

My first katana, ?Saint Sword?Murasame with gleaming light drawn.

My second katana, ?Demon Sword?Masayume desires to cut, the beauty within it reveals.

Residing in the world,?Saint Sword?,?Demon Sword?,?Dragon Sword?, ten are, and of those, two pieces???No

“????Dragon Sword?Reid.”

Always besides the?Sword Saint?, but only against opponents suitable for it ever drawn, that white glowing sword revealed itself.

The feeling of that drawn sword's sound, that it was the Dragon Sword weapon there was no mistake.

"You must already know, Reinhard-san. In front of us lies a wall."

Each other, Saint Sword, Demon Sword, Dragon Sword held in hand, these extraordinary existences faced. Standing apart, as the distance narrowed, the world feared its collision, and the atmosphere distorted.

"For those who arrive at a certain spot, the way in front of them is blocked with a wall. No matter what, they are unable to overcome it. There are some who will sacrifice something to conquer it. Something like that is impossible for me. But if I do not cross that wall, I can't just stay like that myself."

"????"

"There was, an invitation from the boss. A way to break through that wall…..But in the end, to cross swords with you, to genuinely struggle for life against you was????Well, just as he said it, to clutch at straws, it was that feeling."

"Straw…..?"

"A drowning man, is what I mean."

As a drowning man, Cecilus Segmunt had, at this place, came to this one solution.

Or perhaps, when as a swordsman he had learned of his wind, was this inevitable?

At that wide-eyed?Sword Saint?, Cecilus curved his lips.

And, laughed. With a laughing face cutting down others, that?Blue Lightning?, knew.

“We’re drowning, Reinhard van Astrea. Saying it like my employer would, we are, what we desire most all plunging into it. Not once having seen that bastard called ?Oboreru?at that, but we are all falling into it.”

“????”

Swallowing his breath, Reinhard.

At that, lowering his body, by the handles wielding two swords,

“???Swordsman, Cecilus Segmunt.”

Not Vollakia Empire, not?Blue Lighting????those other titles were unnecessary.

This body, as just one swordsman, looked ahead at the way of the heavenly sword.

???Lightning, claps of thunder, tore through Pandemonium.

A whirlwind of blood, raged.

Chapter 12

???The battle inside Pandemonium continued.

The aftershocks from the fight, felt as vigorous shocks and tremors, even echoed through Emilia's inner room.

The light hanging from the ceiling was strongly shaking. Watching the dust tossed up from it while lying in bed, Emilia was being forced to make a choice.

"????"

I'm staying here, was what she was saying.

Or that was, "Please stay", a desperate plea like that.

Whether to believe that and wait, or to ignore that and run away.

About her circumstances, her inner thoughts were lost, and she was putting off her choice.

But

"Lia, the end has come."

"Eeh….."

While that fierce battle's shaking continued, at the Emilia lying in bed Puck spoke.

With shaking fierce eyes gazing at the ceiling, with short arms crossed Puck was tilting up their nose.

Hearing that it was the end, Emilia swallowed.

Yet again, I couldn't do anything.

Pushing off her choices, the consequences of not choosing as a result were received.

That’s a cowardly act, she was aware inside, and moreover she??

She had, pushed her position onto Subaru???,

“???Reinhard is here. It’s Subaru’s loss.

“????”

Emilia’s thoughts, at Puck’s continued words froze.

“Eeh”

Thoughts she had not firmly grasped it, and unable to speak but making sounds, Emilia opened her eyes wide.

Hearing that it was the end, Emilia had been certain of Subaru’s victory. That she never for a moment doubted it, Emilia had only realized at that moment.

Natsuki Subaru does not lose.

No matter what opponent comes, with his selfish excuses and tenacity and abusing human distrust he always grasped victory. Anything he could think of any subordinate he could find commanding them, by any means necessary he destroyed his enemy.

And, when tired of thinking, and needing a moment of peace he came to find Emilia.

Definitely, Subaru was going to be coming to her room, Emilia had been believing that.

“Until today, I’ve never rushed Lia’s choices, but this time it can’t be helped. That you must make a decision, it’s come to that.”

“To make, a choice…..”

“Whether to stay here, or to leave here, yes.”

To what extent he knew, in that calm Puck’s voice was certainty.

At Emilia tightly twisting up her sheets, Puck gazed down at. In that expression, their usual relaxed appearance was completely gone, and compassion for their beloved child was strong instead.

At that lost, lovely child, her uncertainty viewing, was a parent’s eyes.

“It looks like Subaru has been restricting information well all this time. The organization’s activities, there isn’t any sign of Lia being involved in them. Well, Lia really wasn’t involved at all. But comparatively having been with them for so long.. There would definitely be those that were suspicious. This was a necessary precaution.”

“Wasn’t involved at all, then, what kind of position was I in?”

“From Roswaal’s mansion you were kidnapped, and locked away, it’s a common story. Then this, those people breaking Pandemonium apart, to you would seem like rescuers.”

At this unexpected explanation, Emilia just stiffly stood.

That Emilia had been brought out of Roswaal’s mansion against her will was true. And that she had been angered by it, and had disliked Subaru for it was also truth.

However, at that clinging, pleading Subaru she had not refused, and that to protect his time with Emilia he had been desperate, those were also truths.

Having accepted it, was Emilia really unrelated to his methods, could that be said?

Isn’t arguing just that, the height of shamelessness?

“Lia, if you just wait here nicely, as a poor princess your rescuers will aid you, but…..”

While speaking as if he was whispering, Puck landed on Emilia’s thin shoulder. And then, nearing her cheek, that cat’s unspoken next words Emilia understood to the point of feeling sick.

If she waited here, she would be rescued as a victim.

However, if Emilia left by her own power, then she would be a perpetrator that had been acting of her own free will.

Facing that truth, there wasn’t even a moment of hesitation.

“????”

Rising, Emilia put her hand on that white room’s only door.

To open from the outside, a complicated authentication procedure was needed, so Subaru, and Frederica who was entrusted, with her care were the only two who could cross through.

“Subaru, you baka…..”

Touching the shattered door’s remains with the palm of her hand, Emilia murmured in a weak voice. Originally, this structure had been created to break easily for her and her alone. In other words, Subaru had made it so one day Emilia could escape.

That bird cage’s door was always, from a single resolution of that bird inside, had been designed to break.

That this was because, Emilia could never try to escape, whether Subaru had been looking down on her like that.

Or maybe, that it was out of Subaru’s kindness. That he had wanted to respect Emilia’s desires to run away if she chose, she didn’t know.

That answer, she wanted to hear it straight from Subaru’s lips, she thought.

???At the end of her time during which she couldn’t choose anything, it was the answer Emilia had decided.

Chapter 13

Coming out of the reception room, with Halibel running through the castle.?Purge King?, that young boss, his master,???Natsuki Subaru was smiling.

“Taking Felt as a hostage, I wonder if that might have been a good idea…..”

Then, could Reinhard’s movement be tied up?

???No, rather than that, gaining Reinhard’s wrath, and having to fight the?Sword Saint?powered up with emotion seemed more likely.

Just like that, was the flow of the simulation.

Somehow, while Pandemonium was collapsing, that it would become like this, he was thinking.

“At the boss’s feelings, might be having some fun…..”

Looking back. The path towards here

Just how much, suffering had he caused, taking many people’s weaknesses, receiving hate, ruling over his opponents lives, on a whim taking them??.

???No, a whim, it was never there.

If he was thought of as playing around, that was a very big misunderstanding.

To solve that, having worked hard, there being no meaning to put in effort, he had never thought that.

???Subaru was afraid of people. Terribly so.

Outwardly approaching with a smile, in truth within himself was hiding cunning slyness. With that kind of heart, he hid the truth. People moving about with myriad intentions, he feared.

Those people with him together, whether to believe them or not, to worry about that was idiotic.

And so Subaru had decided on a way to simplify managing human relationships.

All human beings told lies.

So, even if all humans hated Subaru, there was still no problem in that kind of world being built.

There was a weakness no matter who the person. A family, a lover, wealth, dreams, hope.

Because of that???

“If the weaknesses of every human being in the world, could be caught.”

Then, only Subaru, would not have to doubt anyone.

In a black and white world, in a world lacking any hues which could not be trusted, feeding on loathing, he could live comfortably.

“????”

Following Subaru, aiding in his escape was Halibel.

That Halibel’s figure, to Subaru did not look to be their true form.???His appearance looked black and white. White and black, with only those two colors he appeared to him.

“????”

Appearing in monochrome like that, Halibel was not the only one.

Now, the world as it appeared to Subaru, had without exception lost its colors and grown to have but two.

People, objects, paintings, tools, jewelry, magic stones, fresh blood, water, all were black and white.

Blood and water seemed no different, and from each other soup and poison also were not distinguishable.

Everything in monochrome. It was black and white.

In such a world, that which looked colorful to Subaru, were only a few.

That only those were real, Subaru was believing in that.

Everything else is fake, Subaru was believing like that.

Beatrice was.

Emilia was.

And, only??, and.

Anyway, all others, Subaru could not believe in them.

Everything else other than them, it truly looked faded.

Not becoming lies, only the real

Natsuki Subaru’s saving, killing, deciding, really only

“…..From Reinhard, I had been expecting a little.”

Perhaps, before that day –If they were really a relation from before the colors had gone away, that their hues would not have faded away, he had kept hoping.

However, he had appeared to Subaru just as black and white as someone he had just met for the first time. That expectation failing him, that formerly vivid Reinhard looked now to Subaru like a blob of white. It looked dirty.

In the end, Reinhard was also the child of man.

There was no doubt that he, too, continued to live on while lying. It was only that.

“Master???!”

Within the castle, running towards Subaru, next to him a loud voice called.

What could be seen, from the other side of the corridor running towards them, was the long-haired maid Frederica. Though hard to classify, that face's strong impression was easy enough to remember.

Subaru had, secretly found Frederica to his liking. And so??,

"Resolve yourself???!"

Setting down her foot, sincerely looking to take his life, he thought that shouting side of her was cute as well.

Of course, that Frederica's actions, by Kararagi's strongest would not be tolerated.

"Ah, eug!"

The dagger in her hand being taken away, Frederica with her arm broken had been pushed up against the wall. At the Halibel who had done this, Frederica could only stare with her head tilted to the side.

"Why, are you, Halibel-sama? In this situation, if things have fallen into disarray, that person…..!"

"You could kill him. That you're thinking that, I too know well. Children caught by their weakness, by killing Su-san would desire to be freed, even I know that well."

There, Halibel gazed at Frederica with narrowed eyes. In that light seen closely, from Frederica's thin throat a quiet sound rang.

"Unfortunately, I don't follow boss because of my weaknesses. To pay back Su-san's kindness, that's why I serve him."

"A kindness!? From this man, kindness? Stop playing around……!"

Held tight against the wall, with bloodshot eyes Frederica glared at Subaru. Those already sharp fangs grew, and those thin feminine fingers, began transforming into a thick, strong and beast-like state.

“No matter what…..!”

“Su-san?”

Next to that hard-working, struggling Frederica, he had at some point come to stand.

Frederica widened her eyes, and called out to Halibel, but Subaru did not pause. That Frederica desperately lifted her arm, and slashed Subaru’s neck.

At that moment, the scarf wrapped around his throat came undone and fluttered away away???.

“???Hu.”

Frederica, seeing this, from deep in her throat made a sound.

Halibel, too, seeing that for the first time in front of him, revealed a faint surprise.

??On Natsuki Subaru’s neck, clearly left, were marks shaped like fingers.

“It won’t do, Frederica. I can’t die for that black-and-white you.”

“????”

At that frozen Frederica, Subaru drew his face close and asserted with certainty.

Perhaps, if it was Frederica, then he hoped that she may have had some color. But, even at this crucial moment, Frederica remained without.

“Halibel-san,…..Take Frederica, and run.”

“…..Su-san, probably, the traitor that dragged in that?Sword Saint?was-”

“I know.”

Gazing at that Frederica unable to move an inch, Subaru cut off Halibel’s words.

Even without saying it, you could tell. It was understandable that Frederica had secretly done such things, if it would bring about the end of her current treatment.

??No, it was not limited to just Frederica. If not her, that someone else would have. That it had been just her was a miscalculation.

“You don’t have to come back, Halibel-san. I will, in my own way, go settle things.”

“????”

“If you want to return my kindness, this is enough. In the first place, you had no reason to feel gratitude…..I was, just being cunning after all.”

Shaking his head, Subaru smiled lightly at Halibel.

Halibel had, perhaps, regarding Subaru had seriously been caring for him. Nevertheless, from Halibel he could not see any color either.

Perhaps, once the color was lost, it would never really return again.

The right to believe in something, it was because Subaru had lost that.

So now, not one would the world color for him, it may be that.

If so, from now on, to cling onto there was only??.

“With Su-san, I had wanted to be proper friends.”

“…..If I had not run away, that might have been.”

Accepting Subaru’s intentions, Halibel, with those short words, simply said goodbye.

Subaru, too, felt that exchanging more between them would be inappropriate.

But in the end, at that person who could have become a friend, he wanted to look cool.

“Frederica.”

“????”

At that call, Frederica slowly turned towards him.

At his maid who had already lost her morale, Subaru was hesitant about how to convey it, but.

To pass it along to her, because he had heard that,

“The food, was always delicious, she wanted to tell you that.”

???Perhaps, that strange expression, Frederica did not understand the meaning of it.

To the end, in her eyes, Natsuki Subaru must have appeared as a monster.

That is fine. Even if it is like that, it does not matter. Thinking that he had acted.

The result he had wanted to see, he did not get that, but.

“Then, where should I go, I wonder.”

Halibel took Frederica and, fading into the shadows, disappeared.

Left behind, Natsuki Subaru was alone in the collapse of his dreams.

Pandemonium shook constantly, evidence that somewhere Reinhard and Cecilus’ battle was continuing, but he could hear voices from afar calling for revenge barging in, showing that not only Reinhard, but opponents who had seized the opportunity could now be found here.

Foe, foe, foe. Only foes.

Having lived that way it could not be helped.

“????”

Subaru had reached a fork, in his path he hesitated, just for a moment in deciding where to go.

Going right, to the room of Emilia who had supported his weak self.

Going left, what his weak self had taken as a kind of support, that???.

“???Umu.”

Where to go, when faced with the option, it was at that moment.

Someone running up with a sharp knife stabbed it into his side.

Chapter 14

In a strange castle within a strange landscape, the barefoot Emilia was running.

Though having spent a year inside Pandemonium, what Emilia knew of the castle was only white. Outside of her room, and past the inside of the building, was completely unexplored for Emilia.

And that still did not change. Emilia's interest was not focused on this world.

Now, Emilia's concern was, only for the boy that had kept called for her, it was only that one person.

"??Emilia-sama!"

Called by her name, with a surprised expression Emilia stopped in her steps.

Here and then broken and having lost its shape, in that white corridor of Pandemonium. Near a cracked window, having called Emilia and stopped, was that fiery haired blue-eyed young man.

"Reinhard….."

"Have you been well, Emilia-sama? I am glad to be able to meet you again."

Even in this place, adhering to a knight's courtesy and posture, he was too brave and elegant.

Having run to that discovered Emilia's side and bowing his head was that young man, Reinhard van

Astrea. But at his appearance, Emilia was shaking with bewildered wide eyes.

“Reinhard, that’s a serious wound. Are you alright?”

“There is no need to worry. That it is a light wound, cannot quite be said, but.”

Saying that, at Emilia’s words Reinhard relaxed his lips.

But that Reinhard’s appearance, to him, was a state which was unimaginable.

Covering his body were innumerable wounds, and even now without stopping, were dripping red droplets of blood in the white corridor. On that noble and fearless cheeks were scattered about sticking strands of crimson hair, and in his breath which never seemed never was now a definite trace of fatigue in its rhythm, and on his face.

And that white knight’s uniform was dirtied and covered in blood, and what was shocking above all??,

“Your, sword.”

“Here, that this is a time for the?Dragon Sword?to be drawn, the sword has judged it to be that.”

That never-drawn, never needed sword, passed down through the Astreas,?Dragon Sword?Reid with white light shone.

That blade, in this castle, against whom had he wielded it? Against whom would he wield it in the future?

“Anyway, that Emilia-sama is safe is fortunate…..With me, let us depart from here. There is a dragon carriage waiting outside the castle. With it, to Lugnica-”

“To Luginica…..Where, is this?”

“Here is, at the edge of a Kararagi City-State on a vibrant red hill….Finding the organization took great effort, but through the efforts of a competent intelligence officer and a spy.”

While answering Emilia’s questions, Reinhard was regarding his surroundings warily.

That even now the shaking continued meant that somewhere in this castle battle was continuing to take place. Reinhard also would want to head to cover his allies.

However covered in wounds he was, he was still the Kingdom’s strongest??No, the world’s strongest man.

If caught by him, then to even break down Pandemonium was only a matter of time.

Without him??.

“Emilia-sama, and now this place??”

Let us depart from it hastily, Reinhard might have been trying to say.

But, those words, by the Emilia who had her back turned, was suddenly interrupted.

“????”

It was but an instant.

From the back, hitting Reinhard’s abdomen, a sword of ice pierced clean through. That chill of ice invaded his bloodstream, destroying his insides with invading cold. The?Sword Saint?, at that never-before felt shock coughed up blood.

“Emilia, now-”

“Ah”

Reinhard, still unable to understand what had happened, fell onto his knees. Watching that appearance, Emilia blankly stared at her own white fingers.

What she had done, she was realizing that it was really an unexpected act.

???If this had been a betrayal from Emilia’s true heart, Reinhard could have blocked.

But if it was not an attack which held hostility and intent to kill, Reinhard’s intuitive reaction could not be used to avoid it. Of, if his Divine Blessings had been working properly, definitely Reinhard’s defense would not have been able to be penetrated either.

But, this place was Pandemonium, and that Emilia herself could not make up her own mind???That had, in Reinhard, left a fatal gap.

“I, can’t…..Not that. Subaru, no. Reinhard, not that. Subaru, I will not let be hurt. Subaru, I, need…..”

As if saying she did not want it, shaking her head, Emilia with her real intentions now supported her actions.

That sudden act, the reason for unconsciously attacking Reinhard, that was that his existence had shattered Pandemonium and was targeting Natsuki Subaru, she had realized that.

And, knowing that, it was instinctively all right not to stop herself, it was because she had thought that.

Emilia, in unconsciously protecting Subaru, had no choice but to kill Reinhard.

“Subaru is, my…..”

That matter, arriving at this, Emilia understood her own feelings.

Again and again, Subaru had come looking for her, and she watched on as he earned his rest. During that time, Emilia had also been saved.

???Just as Subaru needed Emilia, Emilia had also needed Subaru.

“I will, keep him. If I, don’t protect Subaru, then…..”

“Emilia-sama, that is…..”

“??Puck! Please!”

Cold wind blowing, that silver fur in the white corridor beautifully fluttered.

Suddenly, at his flesh freezing as it was subjected to severe wind, Reinhard drawing a line of blood in the air strongly flew back. And, coughing mixed with blood he lifted his sword.

Those sky-blue eyes regarded in his gaze the?Witch of Glaciation?and the?Beast of the End?, lined up.

“Sorry, Reinhard. Lia’s wishes are my hopes. If you’re that weakened, even I might win. You can think of it as catlike cruelty.”

“Please, Reinhard. Return like this. Leave me and Subaru alone.”

“??That, is not possible.”

Even having caused this situation, still trying to find a satisfactory solution. At that Emilia, Reinhard shook his head.

Already negotiations had broken down. When the other party had poured energy into a surprise attack from the rear???No, perhaps Reinhard himself, even considering his wound, may have accepted the offer of reconciliation if the situation allowed. But Reinhard's belief, however, was that this was already a situation which did not allow for that.

"As the head of?Pleiades?,?Purge King?Natsuki Subaru has already, starting with the murder of Roswaal L. Mathers, of the people of the Vollachia Empire, Kararagi City-States, and the Holy Kingdom of Gusteko, in total has had 126,700 people killed."

"Only in damage directly done is that number counted. When considering the indirect damage he caused to increase the number of casualties, that number rises up another level of magnitude. No matter what, it is not an evil that can be left ignored."

Reinhard's words had a serious resonance and held a plea.

By listening to his words and learning of Natsuki Subaru's evil deeds, that he was hoping for a change of heart from Emilia, there was a feeling like that.

In truth, Emilia had received a shock. Stuck in her room, having been left only to the role of watching over Subaru's sleeping face, she had not known of any of his wrongdoing. That by killing Roswaal, she had been pulled out of that mansion, she had vaguely guessed, but.

Struck by that shock, Emilia bowed her head.

Shock, there was definitely a shock. But Emilia's deeply-felt shock, was not from disappointment about the weight and number of Subaru's sins??,

"??Sorry, Reinhard. Still, to me, Subaru is precious."

Even having learned about those evil acts, her obsession with Natsuki Subaru had not wavered at all, learning that was the source of her shock. Emilia's feelings, even knowing the truth, had not changed.

“??Euh.”

Towards Emilia that had spoken so, Reinhard bit his lip. And soon raising his face and directing his drawn Dragon Sword,

“??Of the?Sword Saint?bloodline, Reinhard van Astrea.”

“I’m Emilia. Just, Emilia.”

Having each named themselves, at that next moment, a white shock destroyed the uppermost floor of Pandemonium.

Chapter 15

“Damn, it…..Fucking….That, damn...Bastard…!”

Inside that collapsing castle, Subaru while swearing was falteringly running.

Beneath those swaying feet, drip-drip drops of blood fell??At his left armpit, where the assassin had attacked, the knife was still stuck, and his brain was endlessly warning him about it.

“That black and white kid…..If there is a next time, I’ll definitely kill you…..!”

Cold sweat dripping, leaning on the corridor wall, that Subaru was still moving.

“More than this is beyond the scope of my work. Natsuki-san. Then, be careful.”

From the enemy saving the boss, and coolly running away, with a single courageous word.???Praising something like that, Subaru did not have such hobbies.

To be precise, work he did not wish to have to do, was what that man had been doing. That pure humiliation of passing over the enemy in his haste had his disappointment turn to fury.

However, even releasing that anger, in this situation achieving that seemed impossible.

“The last chance to act along, that last moment to say what’s most fitting, huh…..”

Prick-prick, touching that left armpit that hurt as if burned, Subaru murmured gloomily.

When he thought about what he had done, that someday he would receive his just deserts he had known for sure. Even then, to postpone that moment of meeting retribution all the way to hell was the plan, but in the end a criminal’s petty tricks?? Since having started he had gone not three years before having found his limit, it was pitiful.

The dictator’s final words were that.

His distrust at the end which had been excessive, there was no doubt it had spurred on this destruction.

However, he had no regrets.

If he had done this, if they had done that, those kinds of obvious mistakes did not come to mind. Simply, searching for a path in this world that had gone wrong, Subaru had just been struggling.

As much as if he were drowning. As if he had falling in, he was only desperate for breath.

Just from that??,

“Subaru.”

“????”

Leaving a trail of blood, crawling through that hallway, someone called out to that Subaru.

At that moment, not knowing the identity of that voice, Subaru furrowed his brows.??That there were no straws to grasp was not it. It was just that, that voice, he did not know why he was hearing it here.

Because her room was on the opposite side of this place, and if intending to escape, there was no reason to be here.

And so??

“Euh?oh!

“I’m relieved, Subaru…..It turned out I can meet you properly.”

“Emilia…..?”

Having been run into by that coming Emilia, being pushed about in the corridor, now seeing that beautiful face close, with that Subaru could accept it was really happening.

In that monochrome world silver, lavender, and soft pink lips were colored.

Emilia only, as if uniquely taught to the world, was being painted with vibrant hues..

“??But then, why?”

The world was coloring in Emilia’s appearance, but Subaru could not understand the situation.

Definite warmth, and hugging to the point of being painful, Subaru was receiving from Emilia.

Since always, calling for her had been one-sided from Subaru, so why had she in this situation, to him??,

“…..Emilia, you’re hurt.”

“It’s ok, really. Truly, nothing happened, it’s all-peaceful.”

That clinging Emilia was looking at him again, while smiling and pretending to be strong she was covered in wounds.

That wonderful silver hair was disheveled, and portions had been cut. That white thin pajama was torn and bloodied. On her bare feet there were also some torn-open wounds.

To prevent this from happening, on her in truth a number of defenses should have been left.

There, for her to suffer this would not forgive was a great spirit, who would have been with her together.

“What has Puck been doing…..”

“Puck is…..Mm-hmm, that story is, now, anyhow is well, anyhow it’s all right…..”

“???”

For a moment, in Emilia’s eyes hesitation brushed past, but it was hidden beneath quickly shutting eyelids.

That reaction, Subaru was suspicious of, but when Emilia opened them again, that slightly seen hesitation

was nowhere to be found.

“Subaru, let’s run away together. If it’s now, nobody will be chasing after us.”

“??Run away, with, me?

“Yes. There is someone outside. I am not saying something strange, you know.”

After letting out a little anger, Emilia poked Subaru’s nose with a finger. At that bizarre act, above Subaru a question mark floated up.

Originally, Emilia would have been harboring hatred for Subaru.

“But still, since you’re nice, I had just been pampered…..”

“??Is it, I wonder? I was, something like that I have been thinking.”

“Emilia?”

His hand on his chest, as if Emilia had coldly spoke, as if feeling meaningless from those words, he lowered the corners of his eyes.

That hesitation brushing past her heart, was it that Subaru had abducted her, was it that she had spent so much time here? How many times had she gazed at that hated opponent’s sleeping face?

In that time Subaru had received salvation, but to Emilia it would have been filled with humiliation.??.

“Ah, that I was angry at Subaru, I did think that. But, it was reaaally only at the beginning….. From then, that Subaru’s help I was definitely receiving, I thought that.”

“From me, receiving help…..?”

“Because it was me that, Subaru had been needing. Nobody would ever need me, that was how I had felt. And Subaru had freed me of that, so…..”

Codependency, such words surfaced inside Subaru’s mind.

Just as Subaru needed Emilia’s presence for peace of mind, Emilia had, definitely, at that time, inevitably within her needed relationships, this he had concluded. And so the pair, each in turn relying on the other, had fallen into a codependent relationship.

“I want to be with Subaru. So, let’s run away?”

“…..Like that, you saying it, makes me happy, but.”

Responding while stuttering, Subaru could not accept Emilia’s confession yet.

He had received a big shock. Inside his heart he had feelings, but his thinking drew out more realistic views in reply.

What Emilia had said, running away with her was not possible.

Reinhard was coming. Even saying that Cecilus would blocking him, outside the castle, to conquer the ?Purge King? there would be gathered a massive crowd of enemies.

Now outside the castle Subaru did not have a single ally. His numerous tricks to catch potential enemies in this situation would not work. Those potential enemies had now become sure ones.

Taking Emilia and running away, it was not realistic at all.

Natsuki Subaru was to meet his end here. Here, would be his last??,

“??Then, I’ll die together with you.”

“????”

At that moment, Subaru, more than when he was stabbed or when Reinhard first appeared, or when he realized it was his end became stunned.

That smiling Emilia gazed on at Subaru, and with words containing love and definite affection said.

If Natsuki Subaru was finished, Emilia also, here???,

“I’ll finish it together for you. You, in a place where you won’t need me, I don’t want to stay somewhere like that.”

“??Ah.”

“Please, Subaru. I, need you. I wish you would come with me.”

Against his chest, Emilia stuck closer. Hot droplets and sighs brushed against him, and Subaru felt strongly that the exact opposite of what he needed was intensely perceptible.

Just as he had clung onto Emilia, Emilia was now clinging onto him.

All along, Subaru had been needing Emilia. From her, he had been receiving salvation.

And now, that Emilia needed Subaru, and was now asking for salvation.

Emilia was needing Subaru and was calling for saving of her own, now.

Now, that a moment like this would come, that thought had not even???.

“Subaru…..?”

Grabbing Emilia’s clinging shoulders, Subaru shoved her away.

And without moving stared into her eyes. Rising slowly, Subaru moved back.

Emilia was, looking up at Subaru.

To that Emilia, Subaru with shaking lips spoke.

“Ly, lying…..”

Violently reeling back his head, Subaru was watching Emilia??With fearful eyes, was watching.

“Suba,…..”

“No, please stop, stop it. Why, me, now come on, why! Stop it! Stop it stop it stop it! Please stop!”

Fear, it’s fear.

There was fear. There was but fear. There was only fear. Only fear.

Fear, fear, fear, fear, fear fear fear

“That was, do you think I would know of thaaaa??a!!”

Screaming loud enough to vomit blood, Subaru towards the back, backwards crawled away.

Emilia stood, and asked what was going on. He could not hear it.

Sweetly, sweet, kind words, Subaru expected. It could not be heard.

Her words, voices, were not being heard. He did not want to hear it.

Do not act kindly. Gently treat me not.

Why now are you trying to lean on me?

That was impossible.

Just how many of my repeated evil deeds were you thinking about?

Emilia would not forgive that.

She would not have.

Had he been the one that changed that?

That Subaru leaning, his pathetic nose running, on that pajama-wearing Emilia’s nights having relied on to overcome, had Natsuki Subaru’s foolishness been what had changed Emilia?

Emilia too, had become different?

“I! If you hated me I would be happy! I, if you thought to avoid me I would have been glad!”

“????”

Emilia, was fading to gray.

Emilia’s colors faded, and into that monochrome world was washed away.

It’s a lie it was a lie. That deception faded away Subaru’s world.

That silver, and her gleaming eyes’ colored amethyst, those wonderful colors Emilia that Subaru believed in fell away, and her, only deceitful black-and-white stained, remained.

That reality he could not accept. Emilia was noble and would not ever change it was that.

Even a hated opponent, a clinging opponent she could not push away.

That kindness of mind was because, he had believed, that she was not forgiving Subaru, believing in that, Subaru had been able to fall into Emilia.

But if he understood that Emilia too also changes???.

“Don’t, act kindly towards me…..!”

“Anyway, something about me, you will come to hate, won’t you? You will suspect me, won’t you? Since I’m an obstacle, you will want to kill me, hate me, curse me, and will betray me!”

“Then, please stay like you hate me from the start! Without changing, if you had just stayed like that I would have been happy! Hateful, just that, hateful, just that…..!”

Suddenly rising up, was anger.

No matter what, at this terrible world he fell into furor.

Trying to save that drowning self, he had reflexively struggled, had kept on breathing. But having come here finally, even Emilia, had betrayed Subaru.

???Things that changed, would always betray someday, so right now, was no different than having been betrayed already.

“When you’ll just betray me one day, pretending to be in love with me, please *don’t you do that!!*”

“??Euh.”

Shakily, at Subaru reaching out, that black and white Emilia he shoved aside.

Pushed back with force, lacking support Emilia fell over in the hallway. For a moment, hesitation brushed against his chest, but Subaru without leaving any gaps painted over it with fear.

Even Emilia was not still calm.

That this might come to be someday, as the very last possibility he had considered had come to pass. ?? That he would be needing this much, he had not been thinking.

??Emilia might, someday forgive Subaru.

That such a day would never come would be good he had been hoping, but it had definitely come to pass. And so for Subaru, left in this world of only black and white, only had his last resort left to rely on.

“??!!”

That fallen Emilia, was shouting something.

Leaving it behind his back, Subaru began to run.

The pain in his side could not be felt. He no longer cared about things like that.

As if everything was ending. In Subaru's world of water everything was disappearing.

What remained was, just that.

On that last straw which drowning Natsuki Subaru was hanging on, was just that??.

??With hatred that never changes, that existence which would not forgive Subaru.

"??!!"

That half-mad Emilia's voice to that half-mad Subaru did not reach.

The collapse of Pandemonium, like the breakdown of his mind, accelerated its decline.

In that shattering world where color was disappearing, Subaru arrived.

"????"

Not having collapsed, this was Natsuki Subaru's office.

A defense like what had been used for Emilia's room surrounded it in protection??? That was because, in this room, like Emilia, there was something which should never be broken there.

Not wanting to harm her, he had kept Emilia far away, but this was the opposite.

That which at his closest place having left, that was what Subaru opened.

On the other side of the door, the metal sound of chains linked to the wall rang.

And, while playing that sound of chains, those?Pink?colored eyes gazed at Subaru and spoke.

“??Finally, did you come wanting to die, Barusu?”

??Because of hate alone desiring to kill him, that girl smiling had a blood red color.

Privacy Policy

by admin - Sunday, January 13, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/?page_id=3

Who we are

Our website address is: https://witchculttranslation.com.

What personal data we collect and why we collect it

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When visitors leave comments on the site we collect the data shown in the comments form, and also the visitor’s IP address and browser user agent string to help spam detection.

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Industry regulatory disclosure requirements

Resolution of the DMCA Issue

by admin - Tuesday, November 27, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/2018/11/27/resolution-of-the-dmca-issue/

We at Witch Cult Translations are happy to say that subject to our counter-notice most of our content has now been reinstated, we are working on fixing the content right now so the site returns to how it was before the notice.

Though, we may have to remove a couple of Side Stories, just to make sure, as we work on determining if any of our material actually infringes on any licenses based off our research.

Thanks all for your patience, and I hope you continue to follow our releases!

Side Content

by Gracedharperd - Furuta - Sunday, February 03, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/side-content/

Re: Side Content

Re:Zero Kara Hajimeru Isekai Seikatsu exists out of both the Web Novel and the Light Novel. In addition to the former, the author keeps releasing side content with the story. Some of the side content may be more plot important than the others, but most of the Side Content which is released is canon.
Due to DMCA strikes in the past, we've decided to keep all Light Novel related content and short/side stories, away from our site.
However, all our translations can be found

[HERE]

Re: IF

Every year on April Fools/Natsuki Subaru's birthday, the author releases a "What IF" Story.
These are stories that look into the decisions of Subaru, and what would have happened if he did something else in a loop.

- Sloth - Natsuki Rem (Fully Translated by Remonwater)
- Lust - Butterfly's Dream
- Greed - Kasaneru
- Pride - Ayamatsu
- Wrath - Oboreru

Re: Story Exclusive

With every Light Novel release, the author, Tappei Nagatsuki, releases three Short Stories.
They're released in different book stores, like Gamers.

- Emilia's Capital Tourbook
- Emilia's Starry Sky Classroom
- Emilia's First Date
- Ram's Flirting Refusal
- Ram and The Night Study Group
- Ram's Sister is Complicated
- Rem Meets Subaru
- Rem's Latte Art
- The Best Date of Rem's Life
- Rem's Maiden Heart is Super Complex

- Felt-chan's Job
- Felt-chan's Imprisonment Life
- Felt-chan Saw!
- Felt-chan Rises to the Center Stage
- Felt-chan Gathers Thugs
- Felt-chan Forms a Hooligan Squad
- A Lone Wolf of the Slums, Felt-chan's Noisy Days
- Priscilla's Cheers for Me, Entertainment Part
- Priscilla's Cheers for Me, Drunk Father Part
- Anastasia's Prosperity Record
- Anastasia's Moving Picture Scroll
- Anastasia Rising in Life Memorial Day
- Anastasia's Most Important Travelogue
- Stories of the Great Crusch-sama Opening
- Stories of the Great Crusch-sama Prologue: Oath Chapter
- Stories of the Great Crusch-sama Prologue: Ferris' Sudden Emergence
- Stories of the Great Crusch-sama Prologue: Blue's Studies
- Stories of the Great Crusch-sama Extra: Days Without her Follower
- Librarian Beatrice's Business Diary: Resumption
- Librarian Beatrice's Business Diary: Second Chapter
- Librarian Beatrice's Business Diary: Third Chapter
- Puck SS
- Puck SS 2
- Puck SS 3
- Emilia and Ram's Very Bumpy Master-Servant Relationship
- Emilia and Ram's Very Very Bumpy Master-Servant Relationship
- Beatrice and Rem's Serious Cleaning
- Beatrice and Rem's Serious Service
- Frederica and Petra Maid-san Days
- Frederica and Petra Maid-san Days II
- Frederica and Petra Maid-san Days III
- Frederica and Petra Maid-san Days IV
- Garfiel and Ram's Twisted Twisted Love Circumstances
- Elsa and Meili, Assassin Sister's Journal
- Elsa and Meili, Assassin Sister's Journal KILL 2
- Elsa and Meili, Assassin Sister's Journal KILL 3
- Elsa and Meili, Assassin Sister's Journal KILL 4
- Elior Forest Team, Waiting for the Season of Melting
- Kremaldy Forest Team, Days That Will Never Return
- Emilia Camp Great Evaluation Meeting
- Witch's After Tea Party
- The Loving World Petra Saw
- Mimi Pearlbaton's Bite of Love and Passion
- Petra's Emilia Camp Struggle/Page1
- Petra's Emilia Camp Struggle/Page2
- Petra’s Emilia Camp Struggle/Page3

- Sword Demon Love Story: The Bride's Father
- Sword Demon Love Story: Earth Dragon Capital Flanders
- Sword Demon Love Story: The Other side of The Honeymoon
- Joshua Juukulius' Careful Encyclopedia
- Joshua Juukulius' Careful Encyclopedia Second Verse
- Otto Suwen's Internal Affairs Struggle
- Otto Suwen's Internal Affairs Struggle Second Verse

Re: Gekkan Comic Alive

The author keeps releasing a Side Story in the magazine known as "Monthly Gekkan Comic Alive".
All of these side stories are canon, and are drafts before they will be adapted into the Tanpenshuu of the EX Novels.
Some of these Side Stories exist out of multiple parts.

- Liberian Beatrice's Reluctant promise
- My Fair Bad Lady
- The World Petra Saw
- Heroic Tale from Zero
- The Day that Gave Up the Star
- Emilia in Wonderland
- Some Like It Cold
- Red Snowfall on Orcos Territory
- Rem's Very Ordinary Happy Day
- Operation Kokkuri
- The Hidden Village Oni Sisters Ex Blessing Day
- Blessing Day EX: Rem-rin's Day
- Blessing Day EX: Rem's Birthday Party
- Kararagi Girl Meets Cats
- Sunlight on The Water
- A Love Song for EMT
- The Head Maid's Unrestful Day Off
- Ram is Order
- Alcohol Panic
- Otto's Peddling Record of Joy and Sorrow
- Felt-chan's Royal Election Life From Zero
- Royal Election Life From Zero: The Golden Lion and The Sword Saint
- Royal Election Prequel: Successor of Blue
- Royal Election Prequel: Imperial Diplomacy of Bloodshed
- Royal Election Prequel: Reinhard vs Cecilus
- Sword Demon Love Story: Wedding Day
- Sword Demon Love Story: Their Later Tale
- Sword Demon Love Story: Duel of Picoutatte
- Sword Demon's Battle Ballad
- Three Idiots are Leading! Earth Spider Hunting

- The Golden Lion and Sword Saint, Riot in Flanders
- Pride and Prejudice and Zombies

Re: Limited Edition

During the airing of the anime, the production team of Re:Zero released Blue-Ray and DVD boxes, which some of them contained limited edition light novels. These light novels are all prequels of what happened to certain characters before the start of the story.
The first Limited Edition Light Novel, "Bond of Ice" will have an OVA adaptation.

- Re:Zero Prequel: Bond of Ice
- Re:Zero Prequel: The Oni Sisters of The Hidden Village
- Re:Zero Prequel: Camp Formation Stories

Side Content

by admin - Wednesday, August 22, 2018

http://127.0.0.1/rezero-side-and-short-stories/

What IF: Stories

- Re:IF Pride - Ayamatsu
- Re:IF Lust - Harem
- Re:IF Sloth - Rem (**Fully Translated by Remonwater**)
    - Prologue: The Beginning
    - Chapter 1: 2 Months
    - Chapter 2: 3 Months
    - Chapter 3: 3 Months
    - Chapter 4: 6 Months
    - Chapter 5: 10 Months
    - Interlude: Death Anniversary
    - Chapter 6: The Last Month of Pregnancy
    - Epilogue: Anniversary
    - Ex: Fortune Fish-Head Tree
    - Ex: Setsubun Hollow
- Re:IF Wrath - Oboreru
- Re:IF Greed - Kasaneru

Gekkan Comic Alive Side Stories

- Liberian Beatrice's Reluctant promise
- My Fair Bad Lady
- The World Petra Saw
- Heroic Tale from Zero
- The Day that Gave Up the Star - [Prologue]
- Emilia in Wonderland
- Some Like It Cold
- Orcos Territory's Red Snow - [Prologue] - [P.1] - [P.2]
- Rem's Very Ordinary Happy Day
- Operation Kokkuri
- The Hidden Village Oni Sisters Ex Blessing Day [Part 1] [Part 2]
- Blessing Day EX: Rem-rin's Day
- Blessing Day EX: Rem's Birthday Party
- Kararagi Girl Meets Cats
- Sunlight on The Water
- A Love Song for EMT
- The Head Maid's Unrestful Day Off

- Ram is Order
- Alcohol Panic
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by admin - Tuesday, August 21, 2018

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by admin - Tuesday, August 21, 2018

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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Arc 3 - Kingdom of The Future

Credit for these translations belongs to the Summary Anon, whose only known identity is his email address, ankaa.burner@gmail.com, as well as his Mega Archive. (This site is not affiliated with Summary Anon).

The anime adaptation left off at the end of Arc 3, without having adapted the interludes bridging Arc 3 and Arc 4; if you've just finished the anime, you'll want to start with those, then proceed to Arc 4.

- Interlude I - "The Dragon Carriage"
- Interlude II - "Let's Eat"
- Interlude III - "To Each Their Oath"

Arc 4 - Eternal Contract

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Tsugihagu IF – Re: Patching Together a Life in Another World From Zero

by admin - Friday, April 05, 2019

http://127.0.0.1/2019/04/05/tsugihagu-if-re-patching-together-a-life-in-another-world-from-zero/

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Translated by :

- Ice

Proofread by :

- Jaerek
- Nobi
- Nana
- Graced

Fan Art Source :

- Twitter

And with huge gratitude to Erifuru's Help, check out his Spanish Translations here

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JAPANESE WEB NOVEL SOURCE

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Part 1

Patching together, patching together, continuing to form its shape.

Patching together, patching together, continuing to mould its shape.

Patching together, patching together, continuing to fill in the colours.

Patching together, patching together, patching together, and continuing towards bringing himself closer to

completion.

Patching together, patching together.

Patching together, patching together, patching together, and even now, as he patched himself together, he was still incomplete??

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

???: [??Hey, do you know my name?]

The little girl, Amue Sears, held her breath at that question.

It was quite an ordinary question, without any real coherence to it. It should have been a dull question that wouldn't have required much time or preparation to answer. If you know it, you know. If you don't know it, you don't. That's all it was.

Amue:??????

But, Amue's voice did not come out at that question, even if it were to be seen at face value.

Life was a series of choices. This was the reality which even Amue, who had just turned 14 years of age, was well aware of from her experiences in her short life.

When it comes to life, decisions have to be made in just about everything. It begins from small, ordinary things, or, perhaps it was a variety of the big decisions that affect life. But, setting aside whether they were big or small, life was made up entirely of decisions.

And now, a question which held the greatest weight of her 14 years alive was raised at Amue Sears. Or perhaps, it was the greatest decision of her life. That dull, insignificant question, with nothing special about it, that had been raised just before, was that very thing.

???: [??Hey, do you know my name?]

The repeated question kept tightening Amue's throat. Nevertheless, the one who had raised the question didn't seem to have wanted to cause that. It was even a kindness to repeat the question once again; such a consideration felt like quite an imbalance.

If it was the one questioning that was tormenting Amue, then it was also the one questioning that held the most anxiety for Amue. In truth, she understood that he was just seeking an answer to the question. That's why Amue would have to grope for the right solution amongst the options, without any hints other than what was available from pondering it over within her head.

??What would really be the correct answer?

Know it, or don't know it: which was the one that the questioner was looking for? Or perhaps it would be better to answer that she knew it, even if she didn't? Or, would it be better to answer that she didn't know it, even if she did? ??Amue's heart shrieked at the two anguishing choices.

???: [??Hey. Do. You. Know. My. Name?]

Each part of the question that was once again repeated was punctuated in impatience. Even if they didn't understand each other, would that make him anxious? That fear plucked at Amue's chest. To be honest, she could be convinced that if she didn't answer with either a "Yes" or "No" that it'd be unconditionally impossible to meet the questioner's expectations.

She couldn't end it still without saying anything, still without giving a response, and still without making a decision. She would not be set free. ??Only in that, there was no doubt.

Amue:??????

Still her voice didn't come out. She returned the gaze of those black eyes which were right in front of her. Amue pondered. Within those vacant black eyes, the terrible visage of the haggard Amue herself could be seen within them. She really didn't want to say it out loud, but in her own appearance, she was self-conscious of the way she could be seen; she had become a mere shadow of her former self.

Being absolutely terrified of the dominance of the questioner right in front of her eyes, she cowered.

Amue's face was drawn out, exhausted, as if she had aged dozens of years all at once. If things continued this way, she'd end up dying by the mere pressure of the question itself; fragilely she??

???: [??Hey, do you know my name?]

The strong feeling of pressure that gave her the impression of death suddenly, quite on the contrary, inspired hope within Amue. Whilst Amue experienced the suffocating sensation that felt like her chest was about to cave in, a premonition that she'd answer the question and then be set free encompassed her. Just as she thought that, she realised that the dismal sensation that been dominating her entire body had started to fade.

A sense of suffocation had come from the strong pressure of her doubts concerning what she should answer. Since she wanted to be set free from this, she would need to bite down her anxiety at the initial question. Perhaps it was a kind of self-defence instinct, but for Amue in this moment, this appeared like a divine revelation. Therefore, with her lips trembling, she once again stared back into those black eyes.

???: [??Hey, do you know my name?]

She would be set free from her current suffocation by answering the question. With all her willpower, Amue finally moved her trembling tongue, and formed some words.

Amue: [N… no……]

In accordance with her heart, Amue replied that she didn't know. She released her thoughts from the choices which had been up until then endlessly spinning around in her mind.

She answered the question with utmost lucidity. In fact, she didn't know neither the name or face of the questioner that stood in front of her.

When it came to her, who lived in a place that ought to be called the borderlands, the so to speak remote countryside, events from the Kingdom, even serious ones, were like rumours from a faraway land.

That's why, no matter how much of a big shot he was, to her, he was a stranger that she didn't know??

???: [??Is that so?]

It was a short reply. She couldn't tell whether deep emotion or dejection had been put into that reply. But Amue's decision had been formed. What came after was the questioner's problem.

If life was a series of choices and decisions, then that was the same for anyone. Since Amue had chosen, the questioner would also have to chose.

Amue:??????

The 14 year old little girl waited for the questioner's choice silently.

??She waited for his answer all alone in the middle of a village where no one had been left except for her.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

???: ?Hey, Subaru. Isn't it time for lunch soon??

Stopping in his tracks at hearing that call, Natsuki Subaru rubbed his stomach. The time had already passed noon, and now that it had been mentioned, he was indeed feeling hungry. The reason behind why he hadn't noticed it until now was because he had been concentrating on walking about without heed. The main road continued endlessly on and on to the extent that he had to concentrate entirely on walking. If he were to think about where he was headed to, it'd get to the extent that he'd feel depressed; such was how absurdly long the journey was.

Subaru:?Though, a break is important don't you think? My bad, Emilia-tan. Did you get tired??

Emilia:?Not at all, I'm doing fine. But, it was just on my mind that I was worried for Subaru, who's been walking all this time. If you're alright, it's fine, but….?

Subaru:?Nono, that's right, my stomach was rumbling as well. I'm absolutely starving, almost to the point where my stomach was dangerously close to sticking to my back. Heh, how dangerous how dangerous.?

Emilia:?Is that so? That would be a reaaaaaally dangerous place for them to be, right….?

Having heard Subaru's answer, who had exaggeratedly placed his hands on his stomach, the silver haired girl?? Emilia placed her hand against her mouth and giggled. Her features looked the prettiest in this world, and the sound of her voice was rather like that of a silver bell. As that smiling face drew nearer, Subaru scratched his head and also let his lips split into a smile. And, from beside those two??

???:?Don't tease Emilia too much, I suppose. No matter how rumbly your stomach is, it's impossible for your stomach and back to stick together, in fact.?

Subaru:?Oopsy?

When he turned his head to look at the direction of the voice, Beatrice was there, a composed expression resting on her face and her arms folded. Subaru suddenly narrowed his eyes at the point made by the little girl who was wearing a pretty dress. Seeing that, Beatrice furrowed her well-kept eyebrows and said?What, I suppose??

Beatrice:?Subaru's face is a little unsettling, in fact. What's the matter, I suppose??

Subaru:?It was so cute when you said *rumbly*. Say it again!?

Beatrice:?Grrrrr, in fact! Don't get caught up in such strange things, I suppose!?

With her face flushed, Beatrice snapped back at Subaru's frivolous words. Subaru and Emilia both exchanged glances and laughed seeing how Beatrice had reacted. She had puffed out her cheeks even more. Seeing her like that was really cute. ??There was no mistake about it. If he were to tell her this directly, he would probably dampen her mood. After confirming that, Subaru rolled up one of his sleeves with an?Alright!?

Subaru:?Well then, how about we take advantage of Emilia-tan's concern and start lunchtime? For the time being, let me show off my talent. Any requests??

Emilia:?Ah, well then, I want you to use mayonnaise. Hey, look, I imagine Ram just made some mayonnaise again, right??

Subaru:?Of course, of course, it's my pleeeeasure if that's Emilia-tan's order! Luckily, there's plenty thanks to Ram's stockpiles. She finally recognised the appeal mayonnaise has…?

Ram:???Stop saying such idiotic things.?

Subaru:?Uwaaa!??

After he placed down the baggages that he had been carrying, Subaru started to make a campsite just off of the main road. Seeing some slender legs standing roughly beside him, pale pink eyes were staring down at the surprised Subaru. The figure stood embracing her own arms, an air of majesticness about her. The girl held a look that showed nary a trace of hospitality as a stark contrast to the maid outfit she

donned??

Subaru:?That was quite the abrupt greeting, eh, Ram. At least let me finish what I'm saying!?

Ram:?Hah! Stop making me laugh. I only help out in making mayonnaise because it's a professional order. Would Ram trust in such a flavouring that's just sour and white? Disgusting.?

Subaru:?Saying it's disgusting is such an overstatement! To begin with, you shouldn't be able to deny the explosive power of using mayonnaise on steamed potatoes! I won't let you say that the taste is a lie!?

A flavour coated in plenty of mayonnaise on the steamed potatoes that came fresh from the oven which were full of salt. The sweetness of the forbidden flavours which overwhelmed one's tongue was an Eden that should be savoured by any mayonnaise lover at least once??Potatoes and mayonnaise indisputably held the highest compatibility with each other that could never lose its lustre.

Subaru's mouth watered as he recalled that splendid harmony of taste. Were the ones next to Subaru imagining the same taste? He could see Emilia and Beatrice's eyes shimmering.

Subaru:?Look at that, the reactions of two cute gourmands! Seeing that, can you still slander mayonnaise with your heresy!??

Ram:?……Ah well. It's as Barusu says. The magnificence of steamed potatoes is such that even strange seasonings like mayonnaise can add value to them.?

Subaru:?It's not that way, it's the opposite! No, even me saying the opposite isn't right, it's more like you're being stubborn. Isn't that right, nee-sama!?

In the end, Ram would never yield to saying that the contribution of mayonnaise was greater than that of steamed potatoes. Even though Subaru shook his fist at that obstinate attitude, Emilia broke into strained laughter, speaking out a "Now now, settle down" to the two of them.

Emilia:?*Subaru,* calm down. I like both mayonnaise and steamed potatoes, as well as mayonnaise placed on steamed potatoes. Besides, it's rather just down to the fact that Ram can't bring herself to be honest.?

Ram:?……Emilia-sama, please stop concerning yourself with speaking out Ram's thoughts as you please. Ram's target age is going to lower with Emilia-sama speaking like that.?

Emilia:?S-sorry. But, what do you mean by target age……..??

Emilia was perplexed by Ram's unreasonable and unintelligible reaction. However, the feelings which had been expressed in the two's conversation weren't ones of moodiness, but rather they were feelings of unconcealable deep affection and faith. On the contrary, Emilia and Ram had built up quite an ideal relationship with each other. Calling it a master-servant relationship was quite a delicate issue as from Ram's perspective she didn't think of herself as a subordinate, however there were more bonds between

the two of them. And only Subaru understood those well. In any case??

Subaru:?I feel bad for Nee-sama, but Emilia-tan's word of God takes complete priority. That's the style of this party. Anywho, today's lunch will have a whole bunch of mayonnaise!?

Emilia:?Yaaay, yippee!?

Emilia clapped in delight, and Ram gave an exasperated sigh. Even so, that was enough for Ram to not cling onto it more than that. Emilia herself understood its deliciousness. Of course, since Subaru was a true, unbridled mayo-lover, he would be the biased judge for this menu.

Subaru:?Of course, Beako loves mayonnaise a lot just like me. It makes you happy, right??

Beatrice:?I can't deny it, in fact. But, the oh so omniscient manner you speak about it in is irritating, I suppose. Betty's anger isn't easy to dispel, in fact. I want a delicious meal for that, I suppose.?

Subaru:?Hehe, as you wish.?

Puffing out her slender chest, Beatrice made her cute special request. Subaru gave a bow at the request. After seeing that dramatic gesture, and making sure that Emilia and the others were satisfied, they began preparing the meal. Even so, they couldn't make such an elaborate meal in the open air. Of course, if they used the power of magic they could use fire and water like that, but,

Emilia:?I'm sorry, Subaru. I can't really help you out much.?

Subaru:?You needn't say sorry. Now is my time to shine, don't you think? On the contrary, it's fine if you fall in love with me again when I show off my unexpected creative skills.?

Emilia:?Jeez, you're such an idiot.?

Returning a smile at Emilia who still had a faint smile on her face, Subaru set about on coming up with something to prepare the meal with the ingredients that were at his disposal now. Food was what provided their energy each day; he didn't want to be shoddy with it. Checking the contents of his baggages, Subaru did everything he could to prepare a meal which could meet everyone's needs. Everyone that accompanied him would be given tasty food to eat.

He hadn't thought about it up until now, but it would be delightful for everyone to receive his tasty cooking that he had made to eat. That too served as a motivation for him as he made the food. If he was able to do such a simple thing so well, then that ought to have delighted his mother quite a lot.

Emilia:?Mhmhmhmhm……?

Whilst confining those emotions to a corner of his mind, Subaru peered out nearby at those who were busying themselves cooking and his cheeks relaxed at seeing the cheerful figures of Emilia and the others. He could even hear some humming. It was out of tune.

???:?Oho, the one on meal duty today is onii-sa~n. That's quite worryi~ng.?

Meili had appeared as they were making the preparations for the meal. She turned towards Subaru, giving him a look that was not suiting to her age as she twiddled her fingers through her deep blue braided hair. Subaru returned her gaze with a suspicious look in his eyes on seeing her sweetly smiling figure.

Subaru:?Worrying, huh? What worries. I ain't going to let a girl who says such impertinent things eat!?

Meili:?Wow, that's abu~se. Besides, isn't it Onii-san that tries to soak everything in may~onnaise? I don't really like it at all.?

Subaru:?Wh- what!? You as well don't know the charm of mayonnaise……!??

Meili:?Don't make a face like the world's about to e~nd.?

Meili gave a sigh at seeing Subaru making such an astonished face. But, the shock that Subaru had received on hearing her reply was immeasurable. Even if it wasn't tantamount to it being the end of the world, the shock he had received was like as if he had realised it was the end of this year.

???:?Even so, I think you're taking it a little too seriously. Miss Meili was just saying that she was not on the same wavelength as you, who tries to mix mayonnaise into just about any ingredient.?

Subaru:?Ugh……?

It was Julius who had followed up Meili's words, as she showed her objections to mayonnaise. He was a handsome man, who embodied gracefulness even in his gait. Julius, who had made his way over to him, grinned at Subaru all of a sudden.

Julius:?If I may add something, I too share the same opinion as Miss Meili. Thought mayonnaise itself isn't that bad, its first impression diminishes when you put it on everything. You have to be careful with it, you know.?

Subaru:?You're such a prickly, noisy guy. What was happening now was an issue between me and Meili. It would have been nice if you didn't come butting in.?

Julius:?I guess in my role as one of the members here, it's my duty to preserve the healthy environment of the group. Ignoring the seed of disagreement would result in it budding and on it blossoming, you will repent and lament it all too much. It's my duty to give you advice before it becomes that. And with all that, you're reacting like that??

Subaru:?You're a guy who always has a comeback for everything I say, aren't you!?

Expressing himself in such a roundabout way, Julius poked at each of Subaru's indiscretions. Feeling like he'd been cornered by his words, Subaru's voice became rougher.

And, having heard their exchange, Emilia burst into laughter with a "Hehe"

Subaru:?Emilia-tan??

Emilia:?As always, Julius and Subaru are reaaaallly good friends?

Subaru dejectedly dropped his shoulders seeing Emilia's gaze which looked as if she was looking at something pleasant. Also in the same standpoint, Julius closed one of his eyes whilst brushing his hand through his fringe.

Just this time did Subaru and Julius's opinions seem like they saw eye to eye. But, it seemed like there was quite the difference between the way Emilia received that opinion. Since her jewel-like amethyst eyes seemed to view the exchange between Julius and Subaru just now as if it had been an act between two close friends.

Subaru:?Umm, Emilia-tan. I'm always saying this, but that's a….?

Emilia:?That's a??

That was always a big misunderstanding, no matter what the circumstances may be. Subaru tried to explain that to Emilia who had inclined her head in doubt???

Subaru:?That's a……?

Emilia:??????

The words he had tried to continue as his explanation, the start of them halted, and Subaru's lip stiffened.

Just now, Emilia's movement, who had inclined her head and had been smiling in front of his eyes, came to a standstill. ??No, it wasn't just Emilia who came to a standstill.

Around Subaru's surroundings where everyone had been in the midst of cooking up until now, everyone who had been speaking stopped in their tracks. Everyone became completely stiff. ??It was as if the world's time had entirely come to a stop awaiting Subaru's next move.

But, the sound of the wind, the scent of the greenery and the boiling water indicated that it wasn't so. The world hadn't come to a stop. ??Only Emilia and the others had. It's as if Subaru was awaiting for the images to catch up with him, to try and make them reappear.

But, just Emilia and the others had come to a stop??

??????Master~! *Badump*, I went to check ahead~!?

Subaru:??????

Suddenly, an extraneous presence thrust itself into the silent world which had been at a standstill. It moved in front of Subaru's eyes, who had been kindling the fire sat atop of a boulder. The figure jumped nimbly, diving towards him with great vigour.

???:?Here’s to the quick return of Shaula! Master, please praise me and hug me and love me!?

A tall, beautiful woman, with a smile adorning her features, turned towards Subaru and said that. She was someone who exposed her clear white skin, and had long, tied-up brown hair. She showed off her sexy feminine body without any shame?? The woman, Shaula, let a carefree smile float across her face.

Subaru:??????

However, Subaru’s reaction to Shaula’s appearance was quite poor. That too should have been expected. She had came barging in just as Emilia was smiling.

Her exuberantly lively leap had scattered Emilia, and she had also erased all the others that had stood still. Subaru frowned at that fact.

Shaula:?Wh-What? Wha-What’s wrong, master? Did I maybe mess up again??

Subaru:?……No, it’s fine. Don’t worry about it. You didn’t do anything wrong.?

Shaula:?Is that so? Well then, I won’t worry! Ah, besides that, Master I’m glad you’re preparing the meal! I’m staaaarving~?

For a moment, Shaula’s face had clouded over at seeing Subaru’s facial expression, but as soon as she heard Subaru’s backtracking, she went to over to embrace Subaru, her face with nary a trace of her earlier anxiety.

Even though he felt Shaula’s body pressing against his arms, and her hellish softness against his elbow and shoulder, Subaru shook her off with a blunt:?Hey, get off of me.?

Shaula:?Ah! Master’s so mean…..But I won’t be discouraged. *Bambambam*, by attacking you in this way, I will snipe right for Master’s heart, soul and male instincts.?

Subaru:?Like, it’s as if you’re aiming right in the middle….. Also, don’t go grabbing the arms of people in the middle of cooking. What would you do if I ended up burning my hand??

Shaula:?If that were to happen, I’d gently lick the affected part! I would lick it and lick it day and night without letting go!?

Subaru:?That wouldn’t stop it from swelling…..?

Shaula insisted, raising both of her arms vigorously. Subaru shrugged his shoulders seeing that attitude from Shaula and gave a feeble laugh. Seeing that, Shaula raised her eyebrows with a:?So, so!?

Shaula:?Did Master laugh just now? Did something amusing happen??

Subaru:?What's amusing is you, just you.?

Shaula:?Ehh, is that… a marriage proposal…..??

Subaru:?How did you come to that conclusion!??

He didn't know how the conversation had jumped to that, but Subaru poked Shaula on her forehead (whose cheeks were squirming, dyed in red), putting into his feelings of denial and his objections to it. Receiving that, Shaula groaned,?Oww~?

Shaula:?Wellwell, doesn't saying "You're an amusing woman" act like a legal right for a man and woman to fall in love with each other! After saying that, shouldn't you just be continuing it with "Be my woman"!??

Subaru:?Really, where did you hear such one-sided information? That pattern seems to have grown old even from where I am from already; you hardly see it anymore……. ?

Maybe it wasn't seldom whereby male protagonists would handle these first-met events in games targeted towards women, or in Shoujo manga. But, Subaru didn't know whether that was still in use now.

In any case, referring to Shaula as amusing was not so he could seduce her. But, as far as Subaru was concerned, Shaula's reaction was??

Subaru:???The thing you said was unexpected, it was new.?

Shaula:??????

Subaru:?That's why talking with you isn't… so bad. I have no doubts about that.?

He wouldn't specifically say that talking to people other than Shaula was painful. But, when Subaru conversed with other people, naturally, it would be often that he would be made aware of his own incompleteness. And that was painful. It didn't mean that someone was at fault. ??The one at fault was always himself.

Subaru:?The one who's at fault… is always me. That's why….?

Shaula:?In other words, *this time*, it's a marriage proposal!??

Subaru:?What the hell, no!?

The mood that came with that earnest speech lasted only for a second. Shaula let her discontentment rain at the shouting Subaru. She wiggled her hands and feet and said?Eeh~?

Shaula:?Butbut, in the place where I spent my time in idle grey, it was you that blew a new wind into me. It's like that. Doesn't that make it still a legal right within a legal right~??

Subaru:?Absolutely not. So, where on earth does your biased source of knowledge come from….??

He had intended to have a relatively serious conversation, but Shaula had completely broken that, and so Subaru abandoned the idea. Absentmindedly slackening his cheeks, Subaru went back to concentrating on his cooking.

Next to Subaru who was cooking by the side of the road, a meal was prepared for the two of them. For the two of Subaru and Shaula?? not for those whom should have been enjoying the conversation, i.e. Emilia, Beatrice, Ram, Meili and Julius amongst others.

??Realising that truth once again, Subaru's chest ached in cruel, forlorn anguish.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Patching together, patching together, continuing to form its shape.

Patching together, patching together, continuing to mould its shape.

Patching together, patching together, continuing to fill in the colours.

Patching together, patching together, patching together, and continuing towards bringing himself closer to completion.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Part 2

It was often that he was made aware that he was an imperfect being. And that really frayed at his nerves. It was quite evident that it wasn't a healthy mentality by no stretch of the imagination, but if you were to really be put into that situation, then you'd be able to experience the sensations of his worn soul.

Frankly speaking, there was no doubt that the current Natsuki Subaru's frame of mind was in such a state.

Shaula:???Master, master, where are we off to next??

Subaru:?Ah, that's right…...?

Shaula was walking right next to Subaru, humming as she went along, in high spirits. Looking up at hearing her question, Subaru pondered about it as he looked up ahead of the main road.

Ram:?For now I think we should head towards the west, right? Are you perhaps looking for civilisation? If you want to get away from civilisation then turn to the right and you can plunge right into the Great Waterfall, or so I'd hope.?

Subaru:?Don't make such a scary suggestion, Nee-sama….. That'll be the only feeling I'll end up getting

from it you know.?

Her point wasn't just candid advice, but rather it was said in typical Ram-like fashion, the kind that was like she was exchanging poison. Whilst keeping that in his chest, Subaru decided to head westwards in accordance with her advice.

Subaru:?I am going to keep on heading to the west……. But, what will you do??

Shaula:?Eh? Well, I'll be following Master without ever letting go, right? Since the time we were separated from each other was sooo long, it's gotten hard for me to be away from Master for even one second. Please take care of Shaula, who's always watching over you from good morning to good morning.?

Subaru:?From good morning to good morning, you say…… How Scary! Wouldn't that be all throughout the day!?

Shaula:?Every day and night too.?

Shuddering at her rather grand stalkerish advance notice, Subaru cast his face down, a troubled expression adorning it. In all honesty, it felt strange that he had ended up walking along with Shaula.

There was Subaru who held shameful feelings of guilt and misery. And then there was Shaula who acted openly without any inhibitions. Though maybe with them as a combo, the balance of tension between plus and minus was kept at an equilibrium. But, in any case, even though Subaru certainly felt like he was helped out a lot by Shaula's behaviour, he couldn't think of what merits there lay from Shaula's perspective in accompanying him.

Shaula:?Master is Master; that's the number one thing for me, y'know?

Subaru:?……Honestly, I don't really get you. Are you seriously going to keep following me around??

Shaula:?Of courssse! Haven't you heard of something called "Until Death does us Part"! I can't let the love that built up during the time we didn't meet go dry y'know~ **.** I won't leave Master's side anymore no matter what happens. I will even give birth to so many children, as many as in a baseball team!?

Subaru:?Don't you go throwing such horrifying fastballs around…..?

Stretching out her ample breasts, Shaula looked over at him with shimmering bright eyes. He covered his eyes with his palm. The depths of his heart were complex and hard to comprehend.

He wasn't really sure whether he should call Shaula's rather direct behaviour flirting, but in itself, as a man, Subaru wasn't necessarily unhappy. If he placed her eccentricity to the side, Shaula was a beautiful woman and quite attractive.

Subaru:??????

However, Natsuki Subaru's heart couldn't be shook by Shaula's temptations. Because such human-like emotions were things which could only be permitted in decent human beings. In brief, it was because they were absolutely unattainable capabilities for the current him.

Emilia:?I think it'd be better for Subaru to be a little more kind to Shaula. She keeps giving it her all like that, and even for all of that, isn't it pitiful??

Suddenly, a chiming voice like a silver bell cut into Subaru's hesitation. Turning his gaze to his side, Emilia could be seen peering at Subaru's face. Subaru closed one of his eyes at her adorable pouting expression.

Subaru:?……Even though it's Emilia-tan saying that, don't you think that was really harsh? And here was me thinking that I knew how I thought about Emilia-tan.?

Emilia:?Uhm….. I guess. Maybe. Sorry. Of course, I'm lonely too; but I think it's pointless if you're always moping about it. After all...?

Subaru:?After all??

Emilia:?After all, I'm already???

As she narrowed her amethyst eyes, Emilia tried to continue her words from before. He'd want to immediately interrupt if there was something he didn't want to hear, but that was difficult. Not lending his ears to this Emilia's words was more difficult than cutting off the words of God.

However??,

Subaru:?Whoops?

Even if it was impossible to spontaneously interrupt her, he could still interrupt her due to external factors. Suddenly hearing a noise drawing closer from behind him, Subaru shifted his attention away from Emilia and made his way to the side of the main road. The sound of wheels drawing closer informed him that a dragon carriage was approaching.

At once, he pulled Shaula's arm and the two of them escaped from the path of the dragon carriage.

Shaula:?Yhaa, Master sure is aggressive….?

Subaru:?Get off?

Subaru boisterously avoided Shaula's hug who had been taking advantage of him having pulled her arm. Having been shook off, Shaula crashed against some trees along the main road, and she let out a shriek,?GYAAAA?

Giving a quick glance back at Shaula whose nose had turned red, still crashing against trees, Subaru waited for the dragon carriage to pass by and out of his sight, before going back onto the main road once

again??

???:?Hmm??

Ahead of him, the dragon carriage that had passed by Subaru and Shaula let out a sound and came to a halt. It didn't seem like it was due to any troubles with the carriage body. With that, he couldn't think of any reason for it coming to a stop other than because of Subaru and Shaula.

It was still the peak time of the day, but the road was deserted. Subaru increased his vigilance for a split second as if he'd come across bandits or the likes.

???:???You wouldn't happen to be Natsuki Subaru-san by any chance??

However, that vigilance quickly vanished too due to the call from the individual who had descended from the dragon carriage's driver seat. After calling out his name, the tall youth who should have been sat at the driver's seat of the dragon carriage walked over to Subaru, who had now let go of his vigilance.

It was an individual whose age was around about Subaru's, with grey hair that was tied up into a ponytail. Though his gentle features didn't give off any striking impressions, quite unexpectedly, his build was quite robust. He didn't give off the vibes that he performed manual labour, but it did look like his work involved some at least.

Regardless of such a first impression, what mattered the most for Subaru was that this youth recognised him, and that he had called out his name.

???:?Ahh, it's as I thought, it's Natsuki-san isn't it? It's been a long time.?

Subaru:?Aaah, well…...?

He was a youth that greeted out to him with the familiarity of no doubt an acquaintance, even though there was a bit of a distance. As he hesitated on deciding how he would respond to him, Subaru looked around to his surroundings.

Receiving that look, Emilia, Beatrice and the others shook their heads. They had indicated that they had no clue who he was to Subaru. Emilia and the others, and Subaru as well, had thrown their hands up at that, but he hesitated in starting a conversation whilst pretending to know him.

That was Subaru's signature move, but he didn't want to do it right now due to various reasons. Seeing Subaru embroiled in confusion within his current mental state, the youth furrowed his well-shaped eyebrows and said,

???:?Oh, perhaps you've forgotten? It's me, Regin Suwen……My older brother, Otto Suwen, helps you out. We met once before at the village.?

Subaru:?Regin you say….. Ah, that Otto's!?

Regin:?When you say it like *that Otto*, it's almost like you're saying it like it's someone else's business, no??

Showing a forced smile at that unnatural expression, Subaru clapped his hands together in comprehension in front of the youth?? Regin. Unfortunately, he couldn't remember Regin's figure, but he did know Otto's.

Now that it was mentioned, Regin and Otto's features did have many similarities with each other. There wasn't any doubts that they were brothers, and also acquaintances of Subaru.

Subaru:?It was my bad, it was my bad. Like you just caught me now at a time where various things are going on inside my head. That's why your name didn't come to me right away, or something like that.?

Regin:?Nono, I guess it couldn't be helped since you're in such a busy position. The royal selection has reached even my ears living in the remote countryside….. Nii-san isn't causing you any nuisances, right??

Emilia:?Otto-kun causing you nuisances… what a preposterous thing to say, eh? Everyone of us has been helped out in various ways thanks to Otto-kun.?

Subaru:?Yeah. Otto's become a great help to all of us in the camp…... something like that. If that guy wasn't there, it'd seem like things would be far more all over the place.?

Regin:?Is that… so? I guess that's good then…...?

Though Regin expressed a vague sense of gratitude as he said that, it seemed that he was quite relieved to be told about the current state of his older brother. And after that, he flitted between looking at Subaru and Shaula who were standing a short distance away from each other.

Regin:?Even so, Natsuki-san, what are you doing in a place like this? I would think it'd be quite arduous walking on the main road without even riding on a dragon carriage….?

Subaru:?Aah, you're quite right there, or rather, how should I put it... I'd love to make use of a dragon carriage, or the likes if possible, but due a number of reasons doing that would be difficult. And, regarding what you said before about what I'm doing….?

Cutting his words off there, Subaru thought for a second. And then, he found the right words.

Subaru:?The current me is in the middle of reconsidering my own self…. you could say?A Journey of Self-Discovery??

Regin:?A Journey of Self-Discovery…??

Subaru?Mhhhm, that's right. A Journey of Self-Discovery…… Gh-hahahaha!?

His own words were amusing; Subaru laughed involuntarily. Although "Self-Discovery" was a word which was common with young people, were there any other relevant words which fit this well with the

current Subaru? If he thought about it, it wasn't so amusing.

Regin seemed to have vaguely felt that something was out of place at the state Subaru was in, and he said?Are you all right??with a manner of concern for Subaru.

Regin:?Is something in your body not quite well? For a second, I was certain that this was the reason behind Natsuki-san recognising me so late, but since I've been mistaken for others often before…..?

Subaru:?My body isn't unwell, really. If you're talking about how I feel emotionally, then I'm on the confines of the worst I guess. But, it's thanks to you, Regin, that I'll hang in there. I was relieved to meet you here you know.?

Interrupting Regin's words, Subaru deeply bowed his head and expressed his gratitude. Seeing Subaru's attitude, Regin continued to get more and more bewildered. However, it seemed like he had furthered his conviction that Subaru's attitude before his eyes was quite abnormal. Regin made a resolute facial expression, and called out to Subaru with a?Natsuki-san?

Regin:?I don't really get the situation well, but for the time being, please come to the village with me. Let's talk about it in detail at my clinic. You need to rest.?

Subaru:?Are you speaking like a doctor??

Regin:?Though my patients are earth dragons, livestock and the likes, I am a doctor. Have you forgotten that too??

Subaru:???Forgotten. Aaah, that's right. I've… forgotten??

Regin:?Natsuki-san??

If only he had forgotten, then for Natsuki Subaru, things likely would have ended up without him tasting the feelings of isolation that he had felt up until now. However, those feelings that tormented Natsuki Subaru were not easy things to forget.

Subaru:?Your village is further ahead, right? Have I ever stopped by??

Regin:?Y-yeah, of course. In the past, when there was a bit of an issue, you, my older brother and that other guy came together……?

Subaru:???I see. Thank you.?

He had been able to roughly hear what he wanted. He turned to face Regin, who had been daunted by Subaru's words, and continued.

Subaru:?The way you… and your older brother talk are very similar.?

Regin:?Huh??

Subaru:?You are quite the good guy. Your brother seems to be a good guy too.?

That's why from hereafter, their?First Reunion?would also be terrible. By no means was it something that he'd derive pleasure from or look forward to.

Subaru:???Shaula.?

Shaula:?Present; what's up Master??

Subaru:?Don't hurt him.?

It was a short, nondescript call. But, by simply guessing his intentions, Shaula nodded with a?Arahorasass??

(TL Note: this is a reference to Yatterman (A Japanese anime, which also got a film), where from some research the trio from the animated film says ?????????in one of their songs. I'm going to leave this untranslated. But it's something like Hey, hey, hey.)

And??,

Subaru:?I'm sorry.?

Subaru apologised to Regin who was in front of him with a single phrase. The true meaning of his apology this time was far more clear than the vagueness of the one from some time before. However, Regin never understood the real meaning.

??That was because before Regin could understand, his head had been engulfed by light and had evaporated.

Subaru:??????

Regin's headless body collapsed onto the main road without him even letting out a cry of pain. An intense heat burned the wound, and even blood couldn't flow from the cross section of his neck.

Although it was ethically a mistake to praise how the murder had been carried out so skillfully, it was a blow that was so refined that he wanted to reflexively appraise it.

Subaru:?It's a thing of splendour no matter how many times I see it.?

Shaula:?It's the technique that I perfected sniping the Witch Beasts from the top of the tower that approached day in and day out, without having anything else to do for 400 years. Now that I think back on it, those are grey days unfitting for a maiden of age, right??

Subaru:?You've lived for 400 years and you call yourself a maiden of age….??

Without any emotion at the tragedy before his eyes, Subaru tilted his head at Shaula's words. And then,

dragging Regin's headless corpse along, he approached his dragon carriage, that had lost its owner.

However, when the earth dragon noticed the approaching Subaru and the others, it immediately started to run away, trying to leave Subaru and others behind on the main road.

In an instant, a white light shot past Subaru's side and pierced through the dragon carriage's wagon. The attack penetrated into the earth dragon's flesh as it still pulled the dragon carriage along, burning its insides, piercing through its head and finally snatching away its life.

Though it was a rather skillful blow, it was an unwanted one.

Subaru:?……HEEEY?

Shaula:?Th-there weren't any hard feelings! It was legitimate self-defence! It's the result of having braced my legs trying to stop it in my own way! It's just that my killing machine habits don't go away so easily!?

Subaru:?I'm not angry. I'm not angry, but we may not be able to get ahold of a dragon carriage again now. When are we going to upgrade from travelling on foot..……?

He had no luck at all with earth dragons when he brought Shaula along like this. Thanks to her accompanying him, it'd already been determined that Subaru would be forced to keep walking on foot forevermore.

Shaula:?S?o, isn't it as I always say? Even if it's not an emergency, when it's Master, I will always carry you on my back~ And when I do, I won't even mind if you carelessly fondle anything strange! How's that!??

Subaru:?It sounds like you're gonna ask for money after or something.?

Evading Shaula's temptation with his blunt words, Subaru pulled Regin's corpse into the forcibly stopped dragon carriage. The large body of the earth dragon had also fallen onto the main road having received the same fate as its owner, all the way to the point of having lost its head. Of course, the earth dragon couldn't be taken away with Subaru's strength. But.

Subaru:?For now, go drag the earth dragon along with the dragon carriage to the forest's vicinity. I will try go to the village that Regin spoke of. ??Do you get where I'll be??

Shaula:?It's a piece of cake. I should try to make it so they aren't found, right??

Subaru:?If they can't be found for a short while, that's fine. It's enough if they can be left hidden for 2 or 3 days.?

Getting off from the dragon carriage, he instructed Shaula to conceal the tragedy that had happened. Raising her hand in a salute of acceptance, Shaula grabbed ahold of the huge body of the earth dragon and easily lifted up its corpse in her slender arms. The dragon carriage also began to be pulled.

Whilst she went to hide the dragon carriage in the forest, Subaru turned to look towards where the village was.

Subaru:?Now then.?

Subaru started to walk, not without purpose, but with a set goal in mind. He walked straight towards the village Regin should have returned to.

How many people knew?Natsuki Subaru? in that village?

Either too few or too many, whichever it was, it made him feel heavy in heart. But, although it was true that it was a matter of unpleasantness, were he to avoid it then he wouldn't be able to pick the right path.

It was a heartless choice, but it was one he had no choice but to do.

If. ??If I can at least get back?*Natsuki Subaru*?, *everything will be alright.*

Subaru:?Will getting him back even be effective??

It's for that reason that Subaru made the choices?Natsuki Subaru?couldn't take.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Part 3

Subaru:???hk, hhaa?

Subaru let the book that he had grasped in both hands drop the instant his consciousness spiralled back to reality.

His knees trembled, and his breaths had become ragged. An unbearable sense of dizziness, like the sort you'd get from standing up too fast, overwhelmed him despite him sitting on the ground.

??It felt like he'd never get used to it no matter how many times he experienced it.

Subaru:?Hhaa, hhaa……?

Brusquely wiping away the cold sweat dripping down his forehead with his sleeve, Subaru kept taking deep breaths and calmed his heartbeat down. Was the cause of his irregular heartbeat the chaos that came from the dissonance between his soul and body?

Each time he tackled a book, one after the other, he'd find that within the book, the thing he called ?himself?had become hazier.

A sane human being probably wouldn't be able to know the boundaries between themselves and others if this kept being repeated, and they'd melt together. Or rather, they'd probably lose sight of their very

self.

Shaula:?Master, are you alright??

Subaru:?……Yeah, I'm okay, I'm fine. More importantly, have you found the next book??

Shaula:?Lemme see…I'm still looking. It's like matching pictures, they're difficult to find~. I'm really not cut out for this kind of menial work…..?

Voicing out her concerns for the roughly breathing Subaru, Shaula crossed her fingers at her own disappointing lack of progress. However, Subaru had no intentions of blaming such a fragile girl.

That was because he was making her help with something unsuited for her, just like she herself was aware of. On top of that, there were bounds even to his inhumanity in going as far to rebuke the girl who'd been doing his bidding without getting anything in return.

What she did, was more than enough. There was a line that should be drawn even for Subaru, who kept running on the path of inhumanity.

Subaru:?I know that you're not cut out for this, but I'm counting on you Shaula. There's no one else who can lend me their strength besides you.?

Shaula:?It'd be nice Master, if you could say it as….. just me.?

Subaru:?……Right now, the one I'm counting on, is just you.?

Shaula:?Hehe, now that makes me satisfied.?

Puffing out her cheeks, Shaula once again dove back into the sea of books with a satisfied expression on her face. Although presumably she wouldn't hold onto that good mood for very long, her eyes were indispensable for finding the books.

Her presence was a matter of life or death for Subaru, even insofar to the meaning of her being simple manpower.

Subaru:??????

Subaru picked up the book that had dropped to his feet that he had been reading before, and ran his finger across the title written on its spine.

The title of the black book was plain and simple;?Regin Suwen?was written there.

That youth, who had happened to meet?Natsuki Subaru?in the past, had unluckily lost his life by meeting the current Natsuki Subaru?? Subaru had experienced his life in the book as if he was him.

The memories of his chance meeting with?Natsuki Subaru?had also certainly been there within that

vicarious experience. But.

Subaru:?……They weren't that well acquainted. From Regin's perspective,?Natsuki Subaru?was a guy that came along with his older brother and it seems he didn't know him well.?

Perusing the memories that had become part of himself, Subaru sighed, feeling as if he had wasted effort. In all honesty, he did think that the one who most wanted to sigh was Regin who'd ended up as the victim in this. However his disappointment amidst his feelings of wasted effort were also something that he couldn't avoid.

Regin:?Hey, no matter how much you look at it, things aren't like that, wouldn't you think so, Natsuki-san??

Subaru:?……Sorry. Even though I've snatched away all of your memories, the relationship is still far too thin, and reproducing it has become lower. It doesn't seem like there are going to be many chances where I am going to pay attention to you.?

Staring reproachfully at the book with his own name written on it, between the bookshelves, Regin gave Subaru a rather profound look. Although it was to be expected, a hint of blame lay thick within his eyes.

After all, just about anyone would be in an awful mood if their death was lambasted as having been useless after being killed.

Being aware of that, Subaru gave him an honest apology and said "Sorry." However??

Regin:?Either way, I've got no choice but to accept that I've died. Besides, if your objectives are fulfilled, Natsuki-san, then everything will go back to how it was, right? Let's hope for that.?

Subaru:?Ooh, you have the tolerance of a saint. I'm sorry to be taking advantage of your generosity, but I'm depending on it. I will pay back this debt when I put things back exactly to how they were.?

Regin:?Then let's not hope for it, instead, let's await it.?

Shrugging his shoulders, Regin waved and then started to fade from Subaru's sight like mist. After he watched him disappear, Subaru put Regin's?Book of the Dead?back on its shelf. And then, he picked up a paper that was nearby and crossed something out with his quill. ??The paper was a register which had a lot of names written on it. And just now, he had drawn a horizontal line where Regin's name was.

Subaru:?……And that makes 23.?

As he counted the numbers he had squiggled out, Subaru cracked the bones in his neck, knowing he had a long way to go.

The library which had the?Books of the Dead?on show???Taygeta's?hostility was still going strong. And no matter how many times he'd visited it, it wouldn't give Subaru a in-library search feature or the like.

Since he used it so frequently, he thought it wouldn’t really hurt if the service improved even a little bit. But, it sure was really annoying.

Beatrice:?Betty’s forbidden library was quite big too, but it’s not at all comparable to this one, I suppose. No one ought to complain about that again, in fact, Subaru.?

Julius?I agree. It looks nearly impossible to find a specific book in such an enormous library. You have to sit yourself down and deliberately apply yourself to the task. You’ll just keep exhausting yourself if you keep on going in blindly.?

Just as the complaints had crossed through his mind, Beatrice and Julius had given him their suggestions as they looked around the library. Their words were kind to Subaru, but that was why he stubbornly shook his head.

Of course, if he chose to devote time to it as had been suggested to him, then perhaps his feelings of wasted effort and anxiety would be eased just a little, but??

Subaru:?Trying to ease them would be a luxury in the first place. I don’t have any free time to sit around doing nothing. I have to reach a solution as soon as I can…..?

Ram:?What if you don't reach it? Will something change if Barusu hurries up a little??

Subaru:?It’ll change! ??Everything will change!?

Ram glared at Subaru as he declared that with clenched fists, with her cold, pale crimson eyes. Turning away from her gaze, Subaru stared down at the list of names he held within his hand.

The list had all of the names of each person from the same village as Regin written down. Judging from what he consulted from Regin's memories, the likelihood that they’d be helpful in getting anything conclusive was quite low. Low, but not zero.

Then, if that was the case??

Emilia:?Will what Subaru wants to do come true if you read the books of those people??

Subaru:?Emilia-tan……?

Subaru hesitated for a split second at Emilia’s question, worry adorning her eyes. But, Subaru nodded at Emilia like he was saying it to himself above anything else.

Subaru:?Of course it will. Ever since…. Ever since I forgot everything, I’ve just been causing everyone unimaginable trouble. This is the only way I can get everything back.?

Emilia:?I didn’t even consider that…..?

Subaru:???That’s not good enough!?

Emilia’s expression grew gloomier as if she were unable to bear to look at the angered Subaru. Subaru had raised his voice at her without meaning to.

And as he stared straight at the shocked Emilia’s eyes, Subaru continued to speak.

Subaru:?For crying out loud, please don’t say that. No matter what it takes… I will try and get?Natsuki Subaru?back. And after that……?

Emilia:?……And after that??

Subaru:?And after that I’ll meet you all once again…… I’ll meet you all and start anew.?

It was after losing everything, that he realised everything was important, far too late. Why didn't people realise that what they had in their hands was irreplaceable until the load they carried on their back got lighter?

Unless losing everything and recovering didn’t go hand in hand, then why??

Emilia:??????

Emilia stared at Subaru with somewhat feeble eyes, as Subaru forced those words out into a mutter. Complex emotions filled those amethyst eyes which even Subaru couldn’t read.

He should have been able to clearly see everything about her. And yet, his anxiety would be cruelly stirred up in the instances where he didn’t understand what lay in her heart.

What did Emilia think? What did Emilia feel? And how did she receive the current Subaru?

Those answer were??

Shaula:???Master! I found the next book! Praise me Praise me!?

Subaru:?Ah, aaah, well done. You did great, Shaula.?

Shaula:?Huhehehehehe~?

Shaula, who had come jumping in, had forced his dialogue with Emilia to come to an end. Subaru gave Shaula a head-pat; as a result, her face relaxed and she gratefully accepted it.

The book she held in her hand definitely matched the name written on his list.

Subaru:?……How long has?Natsuki Subaru?been sleeping inside you??

Receiving the book from Shaula, Subaru posed this question at the book that couldn’t answer him back.

Even though it was to be expected, the books didn’t concisely answer Subaru’s questions. However,

answers did indeed lie within the books. All of his barbaric acts were necessary sacrifices for this purpose.

Subaru:?Fragmented, objective information is good enough. I'll scrape it all up, and bring it closer to its completed form.....?

Evaluation was something that was assessed and decided by the measure of others.

If that was the case, then if he was able to check everyone's assessment and if the individual that was being assessed could be checked by the measure of everyone, then he should be able to reconstruct that person.

??And recover?Natsuki Subaru?

That was Natsuki Subaru's highest priority; his entire journey had been for this purpose.

Of course, all of the sacrifices that had been made, along with all the sacrifices which would be made in the future, were all necessary actions so that Natsuki Subaru could get?Natsuki Subaru?back.

If he could get?Natsuki Subaru?back. If he at least came back.

Subaru:?……If it's you, I know you would take care of everything possible.?

The memories of Emilia, Beatrice, Ram, Meili, Julius, individuals other than them and in general, all the individuals who had some relation to him. He desired memories like those.

Because, that strength should be in?Natsuki Subaru.?

Because, with that strength??

Subaru:???Save me?

I'm counting on you,?Natsuki Subaru.?If you're a hero, then save me.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Patching together, patching together, continuing to form its shape.

Patching together, patching together, continuing to mould its shape.

Patching together, patching together, continuing to fill in the colours.

Patching together, patching together, patching together, and continuing towards bringing himself closer to completion.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

???Murder becomes a habit.?

That was one of the phrases the famous detective, Hercule Poirot, left the world with.

The meaning of this phrase didn't refer to a person who had killed a human being and then suddenly woke up with a preference for murdering people, who then kept repeating the crime to satisfy their cravings.

It referred to someone who once solved their problems by murder, and for them, whenever another problem arose, they would think about trying to break through the problem through murder again.

???Murder becomes a habit.?

But, if killing really was linked to the solution of the problem, could it even be said that it was the result of murder becoming a habit?

Couldn't it be said that it wasn't that murder became a habit, but rather that unavoidable circumstances sprang forth.

The situation wasn't that of adding murder as an option because it had become a habit, but rather such that there was no option other than to murder. Perhaps saying things like murder had become a habit wasn't possible anymore.

???Murder becomes.?

To hell with Hercule Poirot. Fictional detectives needn't talk so pretentiously.

How could he have said it as if he saw through everything!? The reasons behind every situation, behind everything, are tangled together in various complications, with multiple layers of complexity to them.

Don't disregard those things and make light of them by trying to apply those words to everything.

???Murder.?

This was the only way when there was no other. It was the most logical when there was no other way to reach the correct answer.

That's why it wasn't murder becomes a habit, but rather...

???Only murder becomes the answer.?

Yeah, that's right. Of course it was. Only that was the answer. Only that was the correct answer. Only that would cut through the hopelessness of this dead-end; it was a last resort.

Emilia:?Subaru is always helping me out; you'll end up finding a solution no matter what… My esteemed knight.?

Beatrice:?If Subaru hadn’t been there, Betty would still be completely alone in the forbidden library, I suppose.?

Ram:?Ah well… Barusu is a man with good timing. Even Ram will admit that much.?

Meili:?If Onii-san wasn’t so anno~ying, then I’m sure he wouldn’t have messed up his wo~rk.?

Julius:?Subaru, though perhaps you aren’t aware of it, but I was also saved by you. Your being was a path of hope for me as well.?

Subaru:?I know.?

I know that you all love?Natsuki Subaru?a lot.

I know that you all really care about?Natsuki Subaru.?

I know that the?Natsuki Subaru?that saved you all is a Superman.

I’m aware that everything that the?Natsuki Subaru?that saved you all did has been ruined.

That’s why I have to get him back.

If I can at least get him, if I can at least get?Natsuki Subaru?back.

If I can at least do that, everything will turn out well. It’ll all turn out well.

I have to keep going.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

???:???Natsuki Subaru has gone mad, and has killed Emilia, Julius and everyone else who accompanied him. I barely escaped with my life and somehow managed to run away and make it here.?

Everyone gathered frowned as they received the report Anastasia had brought back. The meaning behind what was shown on their faces was quite clear.

“Anastasia”:?It’s natural that all of you would judge this as hard to believe. I also deeply regret that I had to bring back this report. But, if we take into account the danger he poses, we cannot afford to look away from reality.?

???:?Anastasia-sama, even if you’re saying that, I don’t thi……?

Echidna:???I am Echidna. Ana is still sleeping inside this body even now. Though, perhaps staying like this may be a blessing for her.?

???:?……It sounds like such a far-fetched story.?

The one who had cast his eyes down and then replied as he stood in front of Anastasia?? No, Echidna, was a red-haired knight; it was Reinhardt van Astrea.

They were in the Watergate City Pristella?? Those that had gathered there were those who were involved in the Royal Selection. The battle for the city had ended quite some time ago, and each one present was awaiting the report regarding the return of Subaru and the others who had headed to the east.

Emilia and the others had headed to the east to borrow the?Sage's?wisdom to find a means of restoring the calamitous damage the Witch Cult had caused as a result of the Sin Archbishops having appeared in Pristella.

They were embroiled in anxiety. But, they were awaiting good news.

The grounds to make them believe that lay in one of the members that headed to the east. Those grounds were in none other than Natsuki Subaru himself. ??That would show how he had gone mad, amongst other things.

Reinhardt:?If I completely understood everything you said, then I can't just nod my head at this story.?

Anastasia:?Even if you can't believe it, it's the truth. He is not the same person you all knew. Natsuki Subaru has lost his memories, and is obsessed with getting them back. He has chosen the worst way to get them back.?

Reinhardt:?What would the worst way be……?

Anastasia:?The?Books of the Dead?that are in the Pleiades Watchtower….. Within them are the impressions and memories of those who have died. The books can be read and understood. Unfortunately, since I haven't read any of them, I don't really understand the full extent of their power.?

Further confusion ensued after they received Echidna's reply informing them of the strange power that the books held.

Of course, the threat that memories could be lost had been shown more than enough already. That too was one of the effects that Subaru and the others had gone to try and do something about.

But, who would have been able to predict that their journey to find a solution to that had ended up causing something of the same ilk.

???:???I didn't think Natsuki-san could do it alone. If his aim is reading the?Books of the Dead?, then how is he going about it??

Reinhardt:?Otto, do you believe this??

Reinhardt widened his eyes and turned to look at Otto who had let loose this coldly resounding question.

With a glance at the?Sword Saint's?blue eyes, Otto nodded with an?Indeed?

Otto:?Anastasia-sama….. or was it Echidna-san now? There's no reason for her to lie to us like this. It's too abnormal, and it doesn't make sense. In fact, I can only think that something unexpected must've happened for her to have came back alone like this.?

Reinhardt:?That's……But?

Otto:?I don't want to believe it either. I don't want to believe such a thing.?

Clenching his fist, Otto said this with a trembling voice to the persistent Reinhardt. Anyone who heard that trembling voice would grasp just how much emotion was overwhelming the pit of Otto's stomach.

Seeing the regret etched on the one he viewed as a big brother's face, Garfiel, who was standing next to him, anxiously said:?Brotto……?

Echidna:?……Otto-kun's guess is correct. Even if in losing his memories, Natsuki Subaru's behaviour pattern changed…. If he was alone, Emilia and Julius and so on should have been able to restrain him with ease. What got in the way of that plan was the one who was helping him... Shaula.?

Garfiel:?Shaula……? Isn' that th' name of th'?Sage?who oughta be in th' watchtower? Did that guy do somethin' to captain.....No, this's confusin'. It's what they cal'?Osmund's Hesitation?.....?

Echidna:?Sorry, but I can't afford to wait until your confusion has calmed down. As you guessed, Shaula is the name of the watcher in the watchtower. Borrowing what she said, she kept saying that the?Sage?was her Master all the time. She ended up not being the?Sage?though...?

Reinhardt:?There are various things I want to ask, but…. just to make sure, is this Shaula collaborating with Subaru??

Reinhardt posed this question to make sure, and Echidna nodded. The place went into an uproar at her confirmation.

It was an unexpected betrayal from the hero who had tried to save the Watergate City from the Sin Archbishops. And the one that accompanied him in his transformation was the?Sage?, one of the three great heroes of yore.

Who wouldn't try and lament the world in this cruel situation which was like a nightmare within a nightmare.

Echidna:?……It isn't because I want vengeance that I brought the truth back here.?

Suddenly, Echidna, with her face pointed down, muttered those words amidst the confusion that was unfolding at her report.

Catching her reply, Reinhardt raised his eyebrows and said:?Echidna??As the gazes of several individuals

collected on them, Echidna let out a short sigh.

Echidna:?Given Ana’s feelings, and the time I myself spent with Julius, I guess it would be justifiable to embroil myself in anger at Natsuki Subaru who killed him …… But, I’m exhausted.?

Reinhardt:?You’re exhausted??

Echidna:?It may be true that I detested him, and that he detested me. But, even if he’s just a desperate child who's approaching me shaking his fist, I’m exhausted.?

Shaking her head feebly, Echidna slowly stood up.

She had Anastasia’s face and spoke with Anastasia’s voice, but if she had really been her, then such a frail look would have never floated across her face.

Echidna:?I will leave this stage. The cruelty of ever bringing Anastasia back to this stage is unbearable. We have made undoable mistakes.?

Reinhardt:?Doing that would……?

Echidna:?I know you have no bad intentions. But sometimes, giving up is the best thing you can do. Persuading me not to give up will only lead to anguish. I am… quitting here.?

Following that, not a single person had any words that would stop the completely heartbroken girl. Echidna of course knew that no one here had anything which would stop her.

Since she knew that, she faced away from those who had gathered, and left the place. ??And just as she had stated before, she left the stage of the Royal Selection itself.

Echidna:?I’m praying for your good fight, all of you. ??Please, I want you all to be careful.?

That was the final report that the only member that had returned back safely from the expedition to the Pleiades Watchtower left behind. All it did was stir up a heavy anxiety.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

???:?……What’re ya gonna do from here??

Ricardo, who was walking next to her, asked her that question as they walked on the way back. To that, Echidna closed her eyes.

The wound where Ricardo had lost his arm was serious; the part which he had lost that had once been a thick and burly arm was not attached there anymore. Instead, what had been attached there was something like a hook-hand. It could be said that the attitude of not giving up the fight even as he was now was rather like him, but??

Echidna:?It's as I said. I give up. It's wise. From this point on, I don't think I will try and pretend to be Ana in her body…...Though, at the very least, I will fulfill the minimum responsibilities towards the Hoshin Company.?

Ricardo:?What're ya sayin' the minimum responsibilities arrrrr….??

Echidna:?The breakup of the company, and I have to try and help out the Employees with their next job. The company itself will probably do fine if it's left to Vice-President Chuden.?

Ricardo:??????

Echidna:?I get that you're dissatisfied. But, it's something that can't be helped.?

Though her true colours hadn't been revealed then, Echidna and Ricardo had been together for a long time. Though it had been a one sided acquaintanceship, she did have an appreciation for the strong emotions that Ricardo directed at Anastasia.

And that was because they were the exact same emotions that Echidna held for Anastasia.

If Ricardo held emotions like of a father's for Anastasia, then Echidna was the same as well; she probably held emotions like of a mother's for Anastasia.

That's why??

Echidna:?I think that I will part with the?Iron Fang?as well. From now on Ricardo, you are free to do as you like.?

Ricardo:?If I'm free ta do as I like, then I'm gonna search for a way ta wake up Miss.?

Echidna:?……If you still have your eyes set on that in this situation where our best chance was cut off, then I can't say anything against that. It'll be best if the young ones of the?Iron Fang?accompany you, right??

Echidna couldn't fling away Ricardo's attitude as stubbornness like that. He too was serious about protecting the ones he wanted to protect, and not giving up on the ones he couldn't give up on. There was nothing more cruel than judging his plight as meaningless before he started anything.

There was no need for Ricardo to give up just because Echidna had.

Nevertheless??

Echidna:?Even I don't know whether Ana would be delighted by your attitude.?

Ricardo:?……If she scolds me, then ah well. And what's more, how can I give up without first makin' sure!? I'm doin' this because…. I'm Ana-bo's actin' foster father.?

Echidna:??????

Ricardo:?Can a father who abandons his daughter really be called a father? No matta' what anyone says, I will... NEVER give up.?

There wasn't a single hint of sarcasm towards Echidna in the resolute Ricardo's declaration. However, being well aware of her own weaknesses, it stabbed deeply into Echidna's chest. As a result, Echidna let a dry smile float across her face in admiration of Ricardo's strength.

And then??

Echidna:???Ricardo, you are really?

Echidna was about to continue her words by saying, "strong, huh."

Or, if she had the time for it, she may have wanted to ask whether it was possible for her to get that kind of strength as well.

??But, there was no time for that.

Echidna:??????

A feeling like a tremor shook underneath their feet, and in an instant, Echidna saw Ricardo stretching out his arm. His thick, hook-handed arm grabbed Echidna by the scruff of her neck and her feet were lifted up into the air.

With Ricardo having hooked her up, she was able to see what was going on, and that was the last thing she did.

The very next instant, a torrent of water rushed towards them with tremendous force, engulfing Echidna, Ricardo and the city, and then continuing on to wash away absolutely everything.

??The flood which the Witch Cult had botched up, now once again assailed the Watergate City which had previously escaped disaster.

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Part 4

Subaru let out a short sigh as he gazed down at the city that was being swallowed up by the flood.

The city's design was built in the shape of a mortar so that if water was poured into it, there would be no way out. It definitely was extremely effective, like pouring water into an ant nest.

Subaru:?As expected of the city used for the decisive battle against the Witchbeasts.... the effectiveness of the trap was incredible.?

According to knowledge, the city had originally been erected to bring down a Witch, Witchbeasts, and

the like; in accordance with that, the efficacy of opening the watergates was immense.

The water's violence dragged the city to the bottom of its surface in an instant, and engulfed its inhabitants before they had any time to escape.

???:?I see, it's a thing of splendour doooooooon't you think? With this, many of the people that know you were dealt with all at once…….I guess I'm okay to think that your self-discovery is progressing fooooward, right??

Subaru:?……Shut up?

Behind Subaru, who was overlooking the devastation, the tall clownish figure let his unscrupulous thoughts spill out. His facial expression didn't express delight, though it did seem that he had gotten a suitable response in the results in front of his eyes. As the plan had been put into effect using his knowledge and advice, it's wasn't that he didn't understand his thoughts, but.

???:?Master sure has poor taste…. ?

The young figure of a maid was looking at the clownish figure with an expression of disdain. The young girl, who adorably gave off a seemingly intelligent impression, snuggled closer to Subaru and sneakily took hold of his hand.

Squeezing her hand back, Subaru gave her a fleeting nod.

Subaru:?Petra, how are things looking??

Petra:?Ummmm, well, it seems like Shaula-san did everything right. Since all four control towers were used I don't think anyone's managed to get away…….Maybe in the shelters as well.?

Subaru:?……I see. I'm sorry to make you deliver such a painful report.?

Petra put on a brave smile even when she was asked for her objective opinion.

The girl which Subaru knew was certainly stout of heart, but she was nevertheless an ordinary child with nothing special about her. Of course, that didn't mean he didn't feel guilt for dragging her into this, but??

???:?If you're going to get so emotional, I would have preferred if you didn't start this in the first place. Subaru-sama is still such a half-baked individual, isn't he.?

Subaru:?Ack, I don't even have anything I can say back when you put it like that.?

The anger of the blonde haired maid, Frederica, who had brought her condemnations to him, didn't clear up so easily.

She gave more weight to the tragedy that had happened to the people around her rather than the tragedy

which she had witnessed. In that sense, it seemed like she'd never forgive Subaru's actions.

This wasn't the only reason why; it was also an emotional matter. Were he to look at this from a logical perspective, and were he to be unexpectedly honest with his feelings, he would be made to feel the kinship by blood she had with Garfiel.

Subaru:?Either way, I only know about Garfiel from others as well.?

Muttering it out with a sigh, Subaru gently brushed his fingers into his fringe. Brusquely scratching his head, he heaved out a strong sigh and shifted his attention to focus on the fight.

Clownish Figure:?Well then? What are you going to do neeeeeeeeext, Subaru-kun.?

Leaning forward, he gave a *tch* at Roswaal who was looking at him from the side. And then, Subaru declared?It's as decided?as if he was spitting out a curse.

Subaru:?It'll go according to plan. ??It's best to attack the most troublesome guy to start things off with.?

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Patching together, patching together, continuing to form its shape.

Patching together, patching together, continuing to mould its shape.

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Patching together, patching together, patching together, and continuing towards bringing himself closer to completion.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Otto:?*Cough, Ghack*……!?

Garfiel:?Brotto, are y' okay!? Cough the water up! Cough 't all out!?

With tears streaming down his face, Otto violently coughed so that he could force out the water that had filled up his lungs. Seeing how dangerous his condition was, Garfiel helped him cough the water out; but, as expected, having his body shaken up and down, dangling upside down by his feet racked Otto's mind and body in pain.

Though thanks to that, he managed to cough out all the water that had gotten into his lungs.

Garfiel:?Shit! What th' fuck happen'd…..!??

Otto:?……The city's watergates have been opened, I think. As a result, the streets have been swallowed up

by water. Even though we desperately fought to hold the Witch Cult back, everything has come to nought.?

Otto muttered this to Garfiel, whose fangs were trembling, as they gazed at their surroundings at the spectacle of the submerged city. After hearing that, he took a look at his friend's green eyes, his friend whom he regarded as a younger brother, and noticed that they were warped by grief. Otto cast his gaze down.

The current state of the city that had plunged into an all-despairing situation could be seen everywhere, even if one were to take just a glimpse. Luckily, Otto had been picked up by Garfiel and hoisted over his shoulder, with them fleeing to a height where the water barely reached. However, how many people in the city would have managed to do the same?

Garfiel:?Everythin's at the bottom of the water…..?

Rooted to the spot and wide-eyed, Garfiel was stricken by the enormity of the flood that had assailed the city. Although he hadn't heard the story in detail, Otto got the feeling that Garfiel had experienced quite an impactful encounter in Pristella. The existence of such a desirable opponent would have been something quite important for him.

??This flood had even ruthlessly washed away the people Garfiel held emotional bonds with.

Otto:?……No, not just that.?

Though he was worried for Garfiel's state of mind as well, what Otto must have been concerned about was the others who had gotten caught up in this.

Starting with Anastasia?? Echidna, who had brought back the unexpected report, and everyone else, including the Royal Selection candidates that had gathered to hear her report would have fallen victim to the disaster.

They had been gathered to warn them about what had happened, but it seemed like it had ended up backfiring.

Otto:?I'm going to say something harsh. Garfiel, please stand up. We have to deal with this situation just like we did the Witch Cult last time.?

Garfiel:?B-But…. Brotto……Y'see…..?

Otto:?WHAT WOULD BECOME OF US NOW IF WE SIT HERE LIKE SIMPLETONS DOING NOTHING!? NEITHER NATSUKI-SAN OR EMILIA-SAMA ARE HERE! PLEASE STAND UP, GARFIEL! IT'S JUST US LEFT!?

Garfiel:??????

Grabbing him by the collar, Otto shouted at his friend whom he regarded as a younger brother whose face

had a look of feebleness etched on it. He knew it had been overly harsh of him to explode like that, but with him being so slow to grasp how things were in this moment, he had chewed him out.

In having had his withered heart be the object of his scolding, a fire was kindled within Garfiel that made him stand up.

If he could achieve that, then he did not care about being deemed as insensitive. ??Even if he was hated by Garfiel later, it would be far better than if he wasn't able to fulfill his duty.

Otto:?We need to search for survivors, and then meet back up with the Royal Selection candidates, the Knights or anyone else who might be left. If the attack on the city is from a hostile individual, then we need to reassemble our forces and fight against them…..?

Garfiel:???Tch! BROTTO!?

Otto:???!??

By instructing Garfiel about his compassionless decision, Otto drove that in as a persuasion for Garfiel. Pushing out his chest, Garfiel roared.

And immediately afterwards, a flash of light pierced through straight in front of Otto, who had fallen onto his backside on the rooftop, at tremendous speed, faster than the eye could see.

Otto:?GHAAAAAAAAAAA!?

For a moment, Otto's entire body was engulfed by burning pain from the light which had slightly grazed his chest. There wasn't any bleeding. But, there was a scorch mark on his shirt, and his skin underneath it had been charred.

The true form of the white light of now was pure, intense heat. And, that white light was??

Garfiel:?RRRRRRRRRAAAAAAAAAAA??!!?

Giving a howl of rage, Garfiel forcibly parried away each one of those white light rays, those white rays of death, that hurtled towards them at lightning fast speed.

Wielding the silver shields fitted on his arms, Garfiel challenged that overwhelming force of incredible speed head on. A hyper-dimensional battle which Otto could not keep up with had commenced.

Nevertheless, he did have a decent idea about what was happening.

Otto:?Where did it come from……?

Whilst he endured his pain, Otto looked around his surroundings and concentrated on finding where the flashes of white had been fired from. It was likely that the culprit who had fired those attacks at Otto and Garfiel was also the culprit who had opened the floodgates.

Of course, the enemy that came to his mind was them being a Witch Cultist??

Otto:???*hk*, from all the way over there!??

Far, far away, at the edge of his sight, one of the floodgate's control towers came into view?? A flash of light could be seen from where Otto and Garfiel were, coming from the top of the tower which stood almost on the opposite side of the city.

Immediately after he thought he'd seen that flicker, the light instantly came surging to where they were. Somehow, Garfiel was still fending them off right now, but??

Garfiel:?THINGS ARE GONNA KEEP GETTIN' WORSE! BROTTO, FIND A PLACE TO HIDE! MY AMAZIN' SELF'S GONNA BEAT THE SHIT OUTTA THIS BASTARD!?

Otto:?GARFIEL! WILL YOU BE OKAY IF YOU GET CLOSER!??

Though Garfiel roared that out, by no means was what he was saying a good idea in this situation.

The speed at which the approaching rays of white light moved at was completely out of the ordinary; the distance which separated them from their opponent was such that Garfiel was only barely able to mount a defence against them.

If he got closer, the time he would have to deal with the rays of light would decrease respectively. Even the difference of an augenblick would be fatal in a hyper-dimensional battle.

Garfiel:?EITHER WAY, THERE'S NO OTHER WAY! IT'S JUS' US TWO! ISN' THAT RIGHT!??

Otto:???. You're right. GARFIEL!?

Garfiel:?HYYYAAAAH!!?

Repeating what Otto had said before, Garfiel took a mighty step forward and leapt up. Making use of a building which could barely be classed as a foothold in the city still submerged by the flood, Garfiel zealously drove forward, and determinedly made his way towards the city's control tower where the white flashes of light had been coming from.

Garfiel:?GRRRRRrrrrrrrrrrrrraaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa??!!?

One shot after another, Garfiel braced himself and somehow managed to keep ahold of his footing whilst the shock of each impact racked his body as if paralysing him to the bone.

The opponent was formidable.

In addition to their attacks' pinpoint accuracy from so far away, the sheer amount of mana that they put into these potent attacks without missing a beat, was far from normal.

If he considered his position where he had kept his distance from the start, it was a terribly favourable situation for his opponent.

Otto:?Even so……?

His grasp of how skilled his opponent wasn't sufficient enough that he could give this up. And beyond that, what his opponent had done was seriously, completely, completely unforgivable.

It was likely that an unimaginable amount of people had become victims with the Watergate City Pristella sinking to the depths. One after another other, tragedy had engulfed the city which still hadn't completely recovered from the after-effects of the Witch Cult's last attack. ??Caught up in the midst of that as well, was the family which Garfiel was tied together with by blood.

Garfiel:???*Tch*!?

So to not let his mind dwell on that, Garfiel gritted his teeth, and frantically shook his head.

But, in the end, try as he might, nothing about what was on his mind would change. Sorrow and anger wasn't what mingled together in the depths of Garfiel's chest; rather, his heart was engulfed by a dark fury, as he continued to grow more enraged.

If he put that dark fury into his fangs and claws and struck down the enemy with it, then ??

???:???Garfiel?

Suddenly, a voice reached through to his skull amidst his tempestuous fury. The voice had just called out his name. If it had been just that, Garfiel wouldn't even have taken any notice of it.

However??

Garfiel:???Captain??

It was a completely different story if that voice belonged to the person he had long awaited to return. Letting his green eyes spin around, Garfiel looked around in the middle of the hyperspeed battle for the figure which had spoken.

??From the start, Garfiel hadn't believed a word of the report which Echidna had brought back.

To begin with, Echidna was a name which Garfiel couldn't put any trust in. Of course, he had warned Subaru about the dangers of the being that called herself that name, and on top of that, she had forced him to head to the Pleiades Watchtower.

Even so, on seeing Echidna return taking the form of Anastasia, Garfiel had regretted his thoughts as having been shallow, naive and immature.

He had considered following her so to find Subaru, Emilia and the others as soon as possible.

It was just after he had proposed setting up that discussion to Otto that the flood had come rushing into the city. It seemed like Otto was thinking as he usually did, but Garfiel sunk his strength into his fangs and adamantly refused to admit that his thoughts had been wrong.

For Garfiel, it didn't seem like Subaru was the sort who'd screw up.

That's why Garfiel found hope in having heard Natsuki Subaru's voice here. He would turn the tables around in this situation where absolutely everything had come to a dead-end.

He looked around for his figure so that he could cling onto such a convenient illusion??

Subaru:?Your heart can't grasp the most important thing about yourself. ??Still, your family's eyes are sharp.?

The moment that he came into view, Garfiel furrowed his brows in bewilderment. Not because the mutter had reached his ears. His mutter had been inaudible. What had caused the change in Garfiel's facial expression was purely his surprise at what was in front of his eyes.

Garfiel:??????

Beneath his eyes, there was a figure looking up at Garfiel, who was leaping towards the white light. His appearance certainly seemed to be the same as the one he knew, but.

Garfiel:???Who th' fuck are you.?

When he shifted his attention to his nose, a familiar smell slipped into his nostrils. However, it was his instinct, not his five senses, that tried to deny the familiar figure below him.

A lapse that lasted not even a fraction of a second was born in his thoughts.

Nevertheless, it was a fatal lapse.

Moving towards there was??

???:???Gotcha! Tah-dah!?

Garfiel:?Ngh?

From in front of him, a black haired woman came plunging forward, and threw out a kick with a semi-enthusiastic cry. Catching her kick immediately with both of his shields, Garfiel absorbed the attack which felt like he had been rammed by a dragon carriage.

Even so, she was not an opponent with whom he could deal with in this situation. He couldn't afford to direct his attention in two different directions, both in front of him and beneath him.

Black-Haired Woman:?Not so bad, but myyyy love for Master is a 100 times better than that .?

With a smile of satisfaction adorning her face, her palm rose towards the front of Garfiel's face. In an instant, with all of his hair standing on end, Garfiel tensed his body and quickly moved his face backwards??

?**Squelch***?

The blow pierced straight through Garfiel's abdomen and his organs spilled out from his back.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

??Otto's thoughts spun rapidly as he looked at the petals of blood blooming in mid-air.

Otto:???*hk*?

Clenching his teeth, Otto cursed the cold-hearted part within himself. It was quite the odious thing to him that under these circumstances he was trying to calmly get a grasp of the situation. His friend whom he regarded as a younger brother had been blown away right in front of his eyes. And even then, he still couldn't get emotional at all.

Even in this overwhelmingly unfavourable situation, Otto's attention was focused on his surroundings in an attempt to find a means of escape.

If he used his?Divine Protection of Anima Whispering?then a faint glimmer of hope would emerge, no matter what the situation was. By putting faith in that mantra, he'd overcome every single hardship he'd come across up until now.

That's why??

???:?It's regrettable, but even rats end up drowning when they're soaked in this much water. Seems that the guy you were talking with is nowhere to be seen.?

Otto:??????

A voice, accompanied by the sound of footsteps, quietly struck Otto's eardrums.

The sound of footsteps slowly approached within the world which seemed to have fallen dreadfully still. Swivelling his head around to look at where the footsteps were coming from, Otto held his breath for a moment.

And then, he let out a short gasp.

Otto:?……You truly are beyond recognition, Natsuki-san.?

Subaru:?Is that so? If you're talking about me, then I don't really understand myself well, but….?

Otto:? I think you'll clearly see what I mean if you look at a mirror. Ahh, that's right. Didn't Echidna-

san’s story say you lost your memories. Is it because of that that you don’t understand yourself??

Subaru:?*Hahah*, maybe so. More clearly, if I could be different in every single aspect, then well, I’d definitely give this up, but…..?

Whilst scratching his cheek, the opponent laughed at Otto’s jabs. What should he call his opponent; what name should he call out? Composure and impulsiveness cried out in unison within Otto’s head. Hesitating on the right choice of what to call *that*, hesitating on there being no other way to call out to *that*, he shouted.

Otto:?You’re……?

Subaru:?Even if you don’t say it, I know. My name is… Natsuki Subaru. I’m broke beyond compare.?

Otto:??????

Subaru:?I’ve heard a lot about you as well. You have quite the reputation. Finally we’ve met, Otto.?

Saying that, that individual?? who took the appearance of Natsuki Subaru, but looked completely different to the one Otto knew, laughed.

His lightless left eye had clouded over, and his hair had gone completely white for god knows what reason. As he smiled from ear to ear like he was somewhat off his rocker, Natsuki Subaru kept laughing.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

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Part 5

Otto:??????

Whilst gazing at the vigilant Otto before him, Subaru let out a long sigh.

Telling him he had changed a lot would be precisely describing what was detestable about him. Of course, even were someone to say he hadn’t changed, in his current mental state, Subaru would just receive that as irony; however, were someone to directly say?You’re a different person?then that would

be quite hard for him to accept.

Up until now, this blunt manner of speaking hadn't even been heard from the people who had come across him that had then been added to the patchwork, or even from the people that had been inside the tower.

Subaru:?Honestly, I'm having quite a hard time handling this.?

Otto:?……What do you mean??

Subaru:?Didn't you hear about what I'm doing from Echidna? My memories have vanished into thin air, I've been running amok with my head all loopy…….That's the gist of it anyways.?

Otto:?Of course I did. I even heard that you're obsessed with trying to get your memories back.?

Subaru:?I don't remember saying as much, but…. well, it's a reasonable guess. After all, every single one of you are quite competent. The only incompetent, no-good human being is me.?

Gently running his hand down his left eye, Subaru muttered this as if he was mocking himself. As he looked on at that gesture, Otto gulped.

Otto:?May I even ask what happened to that eye? ?

Subaru:?Eye….Aah, my left eye? It does look a little bit hazy, but it's no big deal. Though, it does seem like I hit my head a little bit too much when these shocking things started. For how my hair got this way, well, I didn't do anything in particular… it just ended up like this on its own. How laughable. ?

Otto:?Hahahaha, how laughable indeed. Are you satisfied??

Subaru:?Far from it. There's still a long way to go until I am satisfied. I'm so far away from it to the point that it's depressing.?

Seeing Otto giving him a dry smile, Subaru also responded by showing him a dry smile.

Originally, it seemed like Otto and Subaru had been good friends, and, indeed he could see that. He got this feeling not only from the eyes of Emilia and Beatrice, or from everyone else in the camp, but it felt like something genuine.

Emilia:?Subaru and Otto-kun always got along so well, they were suuuuuuper heartwarming.?

Beatrice:?Well, in essence, Subaru always used to tease Otto, in fact. I get the feeling that nothing much has changed, I suppose.?

On Otto's left and right, Emilia and Beatrice each voiced their explanations. As he nodded his head at those explanations, Subaru licked his lips and said?Well then?

Subaru:?I've been looking forward to having my?First Reunion?with you for a very long time. Though, I know that you're one of those bastards that become more dangerous the more time I give you. Sorry, but let's bring this to an end now.?

Otto:??First Reunion?is quite the peculiar way of putting it, but putting that aside, if I think about your goal.....wasn't it a failure??

Subaru:?Huh??

Leaning forwards, Subaru frowned. And after that, Otto continued his words with a?How should I put it,?

Otto:?Practically, it was quite the effective move. You found the right moment where everyone gathered in one building and killed them all in one go with a completely unescapable attack... I take my hat off at that. If your opponents get caught up in a natural disaster, they can't strike back at you, regardless of whether they're master swordsmen or a mercenary band.?

Subaru:??????

Otto:?At this rate, wasn't it part of your strategy to have let only Echidna-san escape from the Watchtower? You let her escape, so that she'd gather people who knew you through the report she gave. Following that hypothesis, the likelihood of Pristella being at the centre of where everyone would gather was high. There are watergates here.?

Subaru:?……I'm honoured to be praised by you.?

Whilst showing an attitude that he accepted the praise, Subaru rolled his tongue back back into his mouth. Rather, it ought to be Otto who should be praised.

Otto, who had almost hit the nail on the head, had guessed the truth quite well, including that Subaru had allowed Echidna to escape.

Although,

Subaru:?Well, to tell the truth, at first it was by chance that Echidna escaped, but then I realised that she'd be useful after she'd escaped. It was because of that I didn't chase after her.?

Otto:?I see. I'd have been surprised if you saw that far ahead. It wouldn't be any leap of the imagination to say that those who lose their memories become quite shrewd. ??But?

Cutting off his words there, Otto glared at Subaru. Recognising the strength of the resolve within his eyes, Subaru put strength into the depths of his own.

And, putting himself on guard, Otto continued his words.

Otto:?In the end, you've completely screwed up your endgame.?

Subaru:?I've screwed it up? Me? What's the meaning of that??

Otto:?……It's an expression I still don't understand well, but there isn't any meaning to it. You don't get chances like these where you can strike with such an upperhand often. If you'd been earnest about it, then you should have carried out what you set out to do.?

Subaru:?What I set out to do……?

Otto:?You should have aimed straight for Reinhardt-san without getting too greedy.?

Thrusting his finger out at him, Otto firmly declared that to Subaru. Subaru's eyes flew wide open when he heard that declaration, and taking no note of his astonished face, Otto pressed Subaru for an answer.

Otto:?Weren't you using the?Books of the Dead?where the memories of others can be read in? If you're planning to use them to try and get yourself back, Reinhardt-san will become your greatest threat. And if you're aiming at him, then it'll be impossible unless you catch him by surprise. From here on out, you'll have to be on your guard. You'll never get a second chance.?

Subaru:?So, the moment I clamped my fangs around my prey, I shouldn't have let go. Is that what you're saying? ?

Otto:?Indeed, that's exactly what I am saying. So you sh….?

Subaru:?*Kh*?

Otto:?????

Otto raised his eyebrows at the rather abrupt, strange sound that could be heard coming from Subaru's throat. His reaction showed surprise, bewilderment and confusion.

Subaru wasn't play-acting or a trick; his reaction was because of Otto. Such a reaction even may have been quite natural in some respects.

Despite having read between the lines of a lot of what had happened, in the very end, he had mistook what his endgame was.

Subaru:?It's you, Otto, it's you who's misunderstanding.?

Otto:?That's……?

Subaru:?The one I was aiming for wasn't Reinhardt. Of course, a lot of hassle would have been saved if he ended up dying amongst the chaos of this flood, but I won't make any pretenses in relying on such a happy accident.?

Reinhardt's out of the norm characteristics were generally speaking fully known by everyone. He was the?Sword Saint?that you always heard about in rumour; the act of killing him would be a herculean

one?? In any case, it'd be necessary to keep building and building and building a plan to take care of him.

Dying to a casual, lucky hit wasn't the sort of death that you could expected from a hero.

Subaru:?That's why I need to try and look for a way to do that if I am kill that guy. I may weaken him, I may surprise attack him, I may set a trap for him, I may even take a hostage. Of course, if I need to kill him, I will do so…… But, he's low priority.?

Otto:?Then, was the flood simply to get rid of the people who knew you all at once? For certain, the number of people who know you in this city due to what happened the other day has…..?

Otto had tried to continue by saying *skyrocketed*. But before he could say it, Subaru had held out his palm.

Even Subaru knew what he was trying to tell him. The violence of the Witch Cult that had took place in the Watergate City Pristella had been scrutinised from every angle. Certainly, in that sense, that had been one of the ideas behind having used this city as well. However, that was a trivial factor compared to the biggest reason why.

Subaru's objective behind causing the flood using the Watergate City as his stage was just one thing.

His main objective was??

Subaru:???It's you, Otto.?

Otto:?……Ah??

Subaru:?This was a way I devised to make sure I could kill you. Anyone else who dies... Well, I guess they're just bonuses.?

Otto:??????

Otto tensed up as if he didn't understand the meaning behind the objective that Subaru had pointed out.

And then, closing his right eye at the astonished Otto, Subaru spun his head around in a circle, looking around at the scene on the rooftop, reflecting the world around him in his hazy left eye.

Otto:?……Why… me??

Subaru:?Why did I make such a big deal just for you? It was the embodiment of the utmost caution I have for you. Even having Garfiel beside you was added to the plan as a safety measure.?

Otto:??????

Subaru:?Just so you know, this ain't something I thought by myself, since I don't trust my thoughts at

all. I've only just realised I've been racking useless wisdom out of my useless head.?

Indeed, Subaru's cunning did not amount to much.

No satisfactory thoughts arose in Subaru's mind, with him being naive to the understanding of the rules of the world, disconnected from the secrets of the world, and unfamiliar with the laws of the world.

That's why??

Subaru:?I made sure to consult with them.?

Otto:??????

Those who surrounded the taciturn, stricken Otto were all of his colleagues that were only visible to Subaru's left eye, and remained forevermore unreflected in Otto's eyes.

Emilia, Beatrice, Ram, Roswaal, Petra, Frederica; all of his colleagues that made up the Emilia camp surrounded Otto.

Looking at each of their faces one by one, Subaru shrugged his shoulders and said?Isn't that right??

Subaru:?Who is... the most troublesome guy from those who know me??

?Otto-kun?

Emilia replied.

Subaru:?Who is... the most troublesome guy from those who know me??

?Otto, I suppose?

Beatrice replied.

Subaru:?Who is... the most troublesome guy from those who know me??

?That would be Otto, wouldn't it. How bothersome.?

Ram replied.

Subaru:?Who is... the most troublesome guy from those who know me??

?It would be Ottooooooooo-kun?

Roswaal replied.

Subaru:?Who is... the most troublesome guy from those who know me??

?Otto-san?

Petra replied.

Subaru:?Who is... the most troublesome guy from those who know me??

?It’s Otto-sama?

Frederica replied.

Subaru:???It’s unanimous. Even if Garfiel joined in with them, he’d probably say the same thing.?

Otto:?Who on earth are you talking to……?

Subaru:?Even if you’re trying to buy time, I should mention that it’s pointless. The reason I flooded the city was to kill you. ??Even you won’t find a way to escape from this place, where there ain’t even a single damn rat left.?

This was the reason why Subaru had opened the floodgates and submerged the city in water.

Whether it be water dragon, rat or worm, none of them could get near Otto Suwen. By having been parted from terra firma, he was unable to use the witchcraft he specialised in.

Subaru had orchestrated everything to this point making full use of everyone’s knowledge.

This, and that, and everything was??

Subaru:???I will not underestimate you. I will not underestimate anyone other than me. You’re all skilled guys. That’s why I will kill you without cutting any corners.?

Otto:?You are……?

???:???Master?

After receiving Subaru’s powerful declaration of war, a voice interrupted Otto who had tried to continue what he was saying. The one who landed adroitly onto the rooftop was Shaula, half of her body was soaked in bright red blood.

And as she brushed the area around her chest that had become completely stained in blood, she said,

Shaula:?Finally I’m done! Kyaa~ He was so so stubborn. I legit thought he was immortal with how much I knocked about the stuff inside of his stomach and sent him flying!?

Subaru:?You really did take your time…… Did you make sure to finish him off properly??

Shaula:?I even crushed his head, maybe. Except for Master, human beings die if their heads get crushed,

right??

Subaru:?I don’t get why you’re excluding me. Even I’ll die if I get my head crushed!?

Shaula:?You’re full of surprises~?

Frivolously laughing, Shaula pushed her shoulders up in disbelief. From Subaru’s perspective, the way she thought was quite incomprehensible, but it would be uncouth to meddle into Shaula’s sense of values.

Above all else, she fulfilled the duties that were assigned to her. That was good enough for now.

Subaru:?Thanks for the hard work, Shaula. And now……?

Shaula:?I just need to kill Mr. First-Choice-san, riiight? Butbut, was he really an opponent yahaddago to these lengths for? To me, it really seems that……?

Subaru:?If you’re going to speak of stuff just as a matter of raw strength or weakness, then even I’d be able to finish you off with one hand.?

Otto’s strength was contained in a part within him which was hard to gauge by Shaula’s estimation. That was the conclusion he had come to after having pieced the details together from the stories that he’d heard from Emilia and the others.

Hearing Subaru’s response, Shaula replied with a?Mhm~ Of courssse?in agreement.

And on the other side, Otto, with hatred throbbing through the depths of his heart, was looking on at their exchange.

Otto:?No way, being assessed as the most valued in life and having it backfire like this… this feels the absolute worst.?

Subaru:?Valued in life? You’re misunderstanding it.?

There wasn’t a trace of sarcasm in what Subaru had replied to Otto’s words with; he had spoken from his heart.

This was the truth Subaru had seen from reading everyone from the Emilia Camp’s books. There was no mistaking it.

Subaru:?You were always the most valued from everyone in the camp, Otto!?

Otto:???Eat shit, you phony.?

To Subaru, who had flashed his teeth and grinned, Otto also flashed his teeth and twisted his face into a terrible grin.

Though those words pierced into Subaru’s chest quite a bit??

??????

??In the very next moment, a white flash of light pierced through Otto’s body, and their conversation was forcibly brought to a close.

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Patching together, patching together, patching together, and continuing towards bringing himself closer to completion.

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???:???This is as far as you’ll go.?

Natsuki Subaru slowly opened his closed eyelids right as those words came into earshot.

Below his eyes, at his feet, Otto’s corpse whose top half had been blown away had fallen there. Garfiel, who had died in battle, should be floating away somewhere in the water’s surface nearby.

What Subaru was doing under these circumstances, as terribly hypocritical as it was, was giving them a silent prayer. Subaru held no grudges against Otto or Garfiel.

There wasn’t any reason for Subaru to hold anything like a grudge against those that he had killed thus far. ??No, he believed that the original Subaru should indeed keep his grudge against Roswaal, who had been behind considerable crimes; but the current Subaru didn’t know the real intentions of Roswaal at that time.

Other than these subtle matters of unease, Subaru didn’t hold any resentment towards anyone else. The one he always bore hatred for, was himself. He bore hatred for himself, who was not?Natsuki Subaru.?

This?phony?version of himself was of no use to anyone.

It was just the ridiculous Natsuki Subaru that tried to collect the bits and pieces of?Natsuki Subaru.?It was just the ridiculous Natsuki Subaru that tried to assemble the patchwork. It was just the ridiculous Natsuki Subaru that tried to form himself from patching himself together in one way or another.

That’s why??

Subaru:?I'd like to apologise, even to you.?

???:?……Subaru?

Turning his head to look back behind him, Subaru gazed ahead of him at Reinhardt, who was standing at the edge of the rooftop.

Though he had seen his figure in the memories of a lot of people, there wasn't a single trace of cloudiness in his orderly figure. As a matter of fact, he had even managed to not get any of his clothes wet; how on earth had he achieved that?

Subaru:?I see, you're out of the norm.?

Reinhardt:?Subaru, did you do all of this? …..Otto, Garfiel, and....?

Subaru:?I ordered them killed - if that's what you mean then yes. And not just those two. A whole ton of people in the city became victims in the flood…... And all by my doing.?

Reinhardt:?Why… why did you do this!? You went to save the people in this city….?

Subaru:?To the watchtower, right? I know. I know all too well. As always, my experiences of it are rather lacking, but I do have some vague gist of it like as if I'd read a manga summary.?

Whilst soaking in Reinhardt's blame, Subaru spread out both of his arms towards the city.

The city was encroached in the turmoil of having been inundated by the water, but he knew that it had gone through a tough time even before this flood. The scars that had been left due to the violence of the Witch Cult and such were more warped rather than deep.

They had snatched away people's memories, they had changed people into inhuman forms, they had used overwhelming strength to forcibly subdue those who wouldn't follow their will, and they had forced their warped thoughts onto others to make them sympathise with them.

It was needless to say the things they did were of the worst nature in the sense that they trampled upon the quintessence of humanity.

But, at the same time, it gave him a certain sort of impression.

Subaru:???Their plans are full of holes. I'm guessing they go in thinking they can't lose, and that's why they go rushing in with such dumbass plans.?

The Sin Archbishops who possessed supernatural-like strength were all sitting still on their abilities. Hadn't anyone taught those guys? No matter what sort of strength you hold, if you use it the wrong way, then you will be defeated no matter who you are.

Whether it be wisdom, numbers or great talent, you will always be defeated.

Subaru:?I'm not going to challenge you being only partly prepared. Finding a way of making sure I win will only work with the right timing. That's why I will consult them.?

Reinhardt:?Consult……Is the one deceiving you the girl beside you??

Shaula:?Huh, meeeee??

Suddenly piping up, Shaula, who was beside Subaru, widened her eyes in surprise. She stared at Reinhardt as she pointed at herself.

Shaula:?Me deceiving Master… If I could pull such a temptress' move, I'd have done it looong ago! Master's soo sexy like this since he doesn't get caught up in my temptations….. at all! Though, you're too sexy for your own good!?

Subaru:?Though her position is that of a collaborator, she ain't got the head to be able to deceive. It's not really that I'm being deceived by anyone…. No, if I'm forced to say it, I guess it would be a voice from within me.?

Reinhardt:?A voice… from within you……??

Subaru:?The sleeping lion inside of me is seeking the time of its release and is rampaging.?

After intently listening to Subaru's response, Reinhardt quickly realised that what he was saying was nonsense. Whilst gazing at Reinhardt's eyes which were clearly dyed in despair, Shaula nudged her elbow at Subaru's side, speaking out a?Mastermaster?

Shaula:?Hey, um, that one's presence is remarkably Reidish. Isn't that scary??

Subaru:?Indeed it is. Remarkably scary indeed. It's because that guy's Reid's descendant.?

Shaula:?De-descendant.?

Subaru:?His children's children, and their children's children and so on. That's the nuance of it.?

Shaula:?Uurgh! He can't seriously be related to Reid, right!? I wasn't told about this!?

Shaula complained about her disadvantage to Subaru, her facing looking like she'd been ensnared in a Kaizo Trap. In actuality, the memories of being pummeled by Reid were quite clear for Subaru and the others.

(TL Note: To learn more about the provenance of the term Kaizo Trap, refer to this link.)

It was natural that he wouldn't be able to beat Reinhardt, Reid's blood relative, in a fair and open battle as well.

Reinhardt:???I'm sorry, but let's put an end to your acts of barbarity here. Me being able to do that, is

proof of my friendship towards you.?

Subaru:?You say such sad things in spite of us having a relationship where we gatecrashed a wedding ceremony together! Well, though it's me who made you say it, you know, apparently Emilia-tan was delighted…..?

Reinhardt:?Subaru, stop already. ??Just, stop.?

Subaru:??????

Subaru kept his mouth shut at the mournful echo of Reinhardt's entreaty. Reinhardt's expression was warped into something quite pitiful. From it, Subaru received a sharp pang as if his chest had been torn open.

It was the same as Otto and Garfiel, where he had no grudge against them.

Subaru didn't hold any grudges even against Reinhardt. He knew that he was someone who bore no fault. He knew that he was a benefactor that was undeserving of being blamed. He also knew that he had been a good friend.

But despite that??

Subaru:???I also need the piece inside of you to get back?Natsuki Subaru.?That's why I will come to kill you one day.?

Reinhardt:??????

Subaru:?But, not now. Not today. It's a matter for tomorrow's tomorrow.?

A trace of bewilderment clouded Reinhardt's eyes just after he heard Subaru's proclamation.

Reinhardt was trying to settle things here right now. In fact, if Reinhardt wanted to do so, Subaru was in a position where he could close the distance with a single step and cut him down in an instant. Even if Shaula made a motion to defend him, it wouldn't really change the outcome.

But despite that, Subaru could still say??

???:?Assuming Felt managed to take shelter in all of this, I think she'd be somewhere at the edge of the city.?

??And turning towards the direction pointed out by the bald-headed giant, Shaula fired a flash of white light towards there.

??????

In an instant, Reinhardt held his breath and flew backwards, following after the soaring blow of light at

the exact same speed as it. He hadn't done that to kill Subaru, who stood in front of him, but rather to rush towards the faraway building where Reinhardt's master?? Felt had hidden after having survived the flood, so he could knock down that flash of white light.

???:?If you keep something important nearby, then of course, that's the same as exposing your weak points. The same thing applies to the?Sword Saint?Reinhardt, doooooesn't it??

Roswaal, who had given this suggestion let a wicked grin form on his face, and basked in his satisfaction in having outwitted the?Sword Saint.?Giving him a look from the side, Subaru took a short breath, and said.

Subaru:?Shaula, let's pull back. ??That's enough for today.?

Shaula:?Ooookay!?

Cheerfully lifting her hand, Shaula wrapped her arm around Subaru's back. She hoisted Subaru up with unbelievable strength from her slender arms, and with a light bend of her knees, she tried to leap out of the city.

But, just before the first jump had began, Subaru turned towards Reinhardt, and said.

Subaru:???You are not as omnipotent or superhuman as you think you are.?

That's why??

Subaru:???I will absolutely kill you too, Reinhardt.?

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???:???I want you to tell me once again.What is your name??

???:?Ah, Amue. Amue Sears…...?

???:?I see, that's a fine name, Amue. ……What happened now must've been tough.?

Amue:?Hghhgh……?

The red-haired knight, who had seemingly gotten onto one knee to be on the same level as with Amue, spoke those words to her. As soon as she heard those words, the little girl's tensed emotions snapped loose.

Tears slowly trickled down Amue's face, and her body began to tremble from the belayed terror that had returned to her.

Then, as he looked on at the sobbing little girl, the knight?? Reinhardt turned his eyes to look at his surroundings and bit his lip; deep worry was brimming in his chest at the terrible spectacle he saw.

Reinhardt:??????

Two days ago, an incident had occurred at a small village in the northern parts of the Kingdom of Lugnica.

It took awhile for the incident to be known because the village was located in the remote borderlands, and due to that, it lay quite far from both the Royal Capital and the five major cities. Dispatching the knights, including Reinhardt, had ended up being delayed by several days.

In that meantime, Amue, who had become the sole survivor in the village, had just been sitting there, holding her knees in loneliness. ??She'd been there, surrounded by all of the corpses of her family and the people she knew well.

Reinhardt:?Subaru……?

Reinhardt pensively muttered his name out as he touched the pommel of his?Dragon Sword?which he had holstered by his waist

Given the issues in this kind of incident, there was a good chance that this act of barbarity had been carried out by a Witch Cultist. However, Reinhardt's intuition naturally saw through to whose hand had carried out this horrendous scene.

Reinhardt:?The ones who did this… If I'm not mistaking it, it was a man and a woman, right? Two young people.?

Amue:?Y-Yeah…. Th-that's right. Ah, but…..?

Reinhardt:?But??

As she heaved with sobs, Amue choked up her words as she replied to Reinhardt's question. Amue hesitated as Reinhardt awaited her to continue her words; his well-shaped eyebrows were furrowed into a frown.

Amue:?I don't know who the woman was, but, the man was…...?

Reinhardt:?The man was??

Amue:?I hadn’t realised it, but it was like he was talking to someone….?

Reinhardt:??????

Was there a trace of hesitation when she conveyed that vague information? Amue’s explanation lacked conviction in it. But, Reinhardt closed his eyes and breathed out a long sigh at her words.

Amue’s perception was correct. That man and woman?? No, Natsuki Subaru was definitely speaking with someone other than the woman who accompanied him, which was as Amue had seen.

Reinhardt didn’t know whether that someone was someone he knew, but??

Reinhardt:?You have my gratitude for providing me this information. The Knight Order should deal with this right away. Do you have any relatives other than your family….. ??

Amue:???*Ah*?

Amu’s fingers gently grasped at Reinhardt’s trouser cuff as he spoke to her with kindness. As if frightened of him leaving her, Amue’s face had turned to disbelief at her own action.

However, given her mental state, that too was natural.

She had lost her family and her hometown too. How much suffering awaited her from here on out?

If he could be useful in distracting her from her anxiety in the midst of this, then.

Reinhardt:?All right. I will stay with you until your safety is ensured. So, I want you to rest assured - Because no one that wishes you harm will get close to you anymore.?

Amue:?*S-sob*……S-sorry, I'm really sorry……?

Reinhardt:?You needn’t apologise. ??Since, you didn’t do anything wrong.?

Taking her hand, Reinhardt silently thought back to the guy who had caused this horrendous spectacle as he watched Amue once again starting to burst into heavy tears.

Reinhardt:?Are you…. Are you satisfied with this? Does it fulfill you? What on earth do you see reflected in your eyes? I just don’t understand. ??Subaru.?

Reinhardt muttered out the name of the person who wasn’t here and closed his eyes.

The figure which was reflected behind Reinhardt’s eyelids was a friend who would eventually come to kill him. That friend would likely go to any means for that.

He was a friend that eventually Reinhardt would have to kill by his hand.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Part 6

???:?I guess by now that child, Amue, must have been found by Reinhardt-san, right??

Subaru:?She was the only left alive in the village that burnt down, right? If a child of that age sees Reinhardt, she'll become relieved and she likely won't be able to be separated from him. ??With this, he won't have time to pursue us.?

???:?How cunning, or rather, how crafty, or…....Though, well, I'm not one to talk.?

???:?Tha's righ'. Brotto 'n Captain really do damn get on th' same wavelength at times like these.?

???:?*Ewwww*?

???:?Y' damn well fit to a T!?

Pushing his way through a thicket using the branch he held in his hand, Subaru, who was following an off-road path, scrunched up his face into a frown. Otto, who was treading through the forest beside him in the same way had a similar expression on his face. And Garfiel, who was looking on at the two of them, clapped his hands together and clacked his fangs, laughing at the situation.

???:?Hehe- But, it's great that we're all together at last, don't you think? It's all thanks to Subaru being reaaaally busy and doing his very best.?

Subaru:?When you say it like that, even I get the feeling that my efforts were worthwhile and it lets me have peace of mind. If you, Emilia-tan, feel like I've done things properly, then I want you to reward me in so many different ways, but…..?

Emilia:?You want that, but??

Subaru:?……Well, with me being an innocent boy, it means I can't let male instinct do the talking for me.?

Subaru looked at Emilia who had innocuously tilted her head forward. As he scratched his cheeks, Subaru turned his face away from her. A gaze stopped him in his tracks ahead of him; that gaze was Ram's who had turned a look of disdain towards him.

Ram:?Disgusting.?

Subaru:?Cut down in one blow! Generally speaking, I never said that! I want you to praise my feelings since I managed to not say any of my embarrassing desires!?

Ram:?Ram? Praise Barusu? I'd rather heaven and hell be flipped over than do that.?

Subaru:?I'm lower than a cataclysm!??

Shrugging her shoulders, Ram turned her back from him and began to walk away with grace. Subaru's shoulders stooped down in dejection seeing Ram's attitude. And then a two small hands gently took ahold of his own from his left and right.

???:?Jeez, I can see how glum you look from all the way over here, in fact. If of all people Betty's partner is going to get like this, then I can tell the going ahead is going to get rough, I suppose.?

???:?That's right. Ram nee-sama's always been blunt, it's not like it's something she just started doing now. That's the reason why I'm gonna go easy on Subaru-sama. Good boy, good boy.?

Subaru:?Heyhey, no way, am I in the middle of a little girl sandwich……though now that I think on it, Petra isn't *that* little anymore. Dammit, time sure is cruel… as it keeps passing by I'll only be left with Beako as a little girl…..?

Beatrice:?Little girl…what do you mean little girl, in fact!? That's impolite for a lady, I suppose!!?

Having graduated from being lolimanced, Petra puffed out her chest in delight, and Beatrice teetered between taking it as a compliment and otherwise. Nonetheless, Beatrice seemed to be a little girl by nature, thus it couldn't be helped.

Subaru:?It seems like the mothers and fathers of the world want their children to stop growing at their cutest age; you're like something out of a dream in that sense, Beako!?

Beatrice:?Hmph…By saying that are you hinting that Betty is the cutest in this world, in fact??

Subaru:?I'd like to gather candidates for the seat of cutest in this world and make them compete with each other; though, the prettiest in this world is you. I'll try give you a medal.?

Petra:?What about me? Heyhey, Subaru-sama, what about me??

Subaru:?Hmmm, Petra is the cutiest in this world.?

Petra:?Yaaaay!?

Letting out a cry of mirth, Petra took hold of one of Beatrice's hands and jumped about happily. Whilst being overwhelmed by that vigour, Beatrice also seemed like she wasn't at all in a bad mood.

Towards there??

???:?Well, well, weeeeeell, it seems like you're really in high spirits, doooooesn't it? Putting aside your physical appearance, you should be acting your actual age amongst them, but despite that, this is still raaaaaather adorable, isn't it??

Beatrice:?Ugh, I suppose…...?

Roswaal took a step forward with his long legs, an air of composure rested on his face. Beatrice made an unpleasant face at Roswaal who had made his appearance. Incidentally, Petra, who was holding Beatrice's hand also put on a look of displeasure due to the position of mischief that coated him in her Master's camp. Well, if you think about what he has been guilty of, it was natural though regrettable.

???:?Beatrice-sama, Petra, don't make such unpleasant faces.?

Roswaal:?Indeeeeeeeed, that's Frederica for you. Telling the both of you exactly h……?

Frederica:?Don't you two know that the more you make those faces, the more you're just going to cause Master to be pleased, right? Since Master's that kind of gentleman.?

Roswaal:?I take baaaaaack what I said.?

Roswaal lost his composure too on receiving Frederica's sharp blow.

On the other side, both Petra and Beatrice obediently accepted Frederica's words with an?Oookay?and an?All right, in fact.?

Subaru:?……Well, I also feel like y'all are too fussy, but I guess this fuss is a page of everyday life, right??

???:?It doesn't matter if it's a page of everyday life, but please, aren't you forgetting about me and Miss Meili??

Subaru:?Mhm……?

A little apart from the Emilia camp who were chiding each other as they walked, Julius who was walking behind them, spoke that out. Closing one of his eyes, he reflected Subaru in his yellow eye and said,

Julius:?Though, do you take pride in that my advice was helpful for you when facing Reinhardt??

Subaru:?I ain't saying it wasn't helpful, but your evaluation of Reinhardt makes him look a bit like a Dream Guy, so its credibility can be shaky. You mustn't go getting yourself too caught up in your hero syndrome.?

Julius:?That's not an answer which'll help you borrow my strength. Maybe I should change my attitude a bit from now??

???:?Heeeeyhey, sayin' it like that's no good, Julius. Should I draw up a propa' loan for Natsuki-kun instead? It should work well enough even without a contract.?

With a tit-for-tat reply said in a gentle tone, Anastasia broke her way into Subaru and Julius' exchange, which was prone to break into a full blown argument if it went on like that.

Anastasia, having completely regained her merchant-like attitude, stared at Subaru with her turquoise eyes and after causing him to blanch a little, she said:

Anastasia:?Natsuki-kun, arentcha forgetting? If we cooperate wit' each other well, then Natsuki-kun, when you get back to normal, you'll….. ?

Subaru:???Aah, I remember. If I get?Natsuki Subaru?back and go back to the time where I can restore everything properly, then?

Cutting his words there, Subaru took a deep breath and continued.

Subaru:?Then finally, I can take the time to atone to everyone whom I've killed.?

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Patching together, patching together, patching together, and continuing towards bringing himself closer to completion.

Bringing himself closer to completion, and if the patching was completed this time around.

If his patching could be patched together as he was originally, then surely.

??Then surely, there was no doubt that he could do everything over again.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

???Natsuki Subaru?had the power to redo fate.

That was Natsuki Subaru's conclusion.

He could get back the lives of Emilia, Beatrice, Ram, Julius, Meili, Petra, Frederica, Roswaal, Rom-ji, Garfiel, Otto, Anastasia, Ricardo, Hetaro, Tivey, Mimi, Kiritaka and Liliana.

It should be possible, if he was?Natsuki Subaru?

Because,?Natsuki Subaru?was??

?My esteemed knight.??Betty's partner, I suppose.??A man with only good timing.??A good friend, I'd think.??We~ll, maybe it's alright if I appreciate him a li~ttle.??It felt like I could always give my best thanks to Subaru!??I am grateful for the many times Subaru-sama has saved us.??Subaru-kun, I've been waiting eagerly for **you** for many many years….??Never for a second did I think that such a rookie could do all this.??Captain! Y'can talk to me whenever if there's 'ny problem! I'll do anythin' 'f it's somethin' I can use my strength for!??Well, I find it scary that the consequences of repaying my debt

come back to bite me, so I would like you to take things in moderation though.??Mhhhm, busyin' yourself is quite good y'know. Me, Mimi and the others should try'n loosen up a lil' bit more.??Oh, ain't that a good change Ana-bo's proposin'! Aye Aye, we 'been workin' too much! A buncha days off would hit the spot!??If Miss takes some time off, I'll start dishing out the work….??When we get Natsuki-san to help out, Miss will make sure to try get the best out of him.??Ooo, you're right! I getcha I getcha! Mimi too, Mimi too! Mimi will do her very best with Garf!??So I can pay my debt of gratitude to you for saving the city…… is something I cannot say so easily if we consider what happened to it afterwards, but...??You're kiiidding right? Could it be that Kiritaka-san you're holding this grudge a bit tooo much? Becausebecause, if Natsuki Subaru-sama goes completely back to normal, then everything will go back to how it was, wouldn't it!?

With the strength of that of raging billows, the companions that surrounded Subaru listed their expectations in?Natsuki Subaru.?

Subaru nodded as he listened to it, feeling like he was intruding on other people's affairs.

Subaru:?Aah, that's right. That's right indeed. Even though it's quite impossible for me, even though it was impossible, I will.?

???:?If it's you, Subaru, you can do it, right??

Subaru:?Surely I will….. No, I absolutely will, don't you think??

Subaru declared that with his fist clenched tight, and cheers ran out from his companions. As he basked in the din before him, suddenly, Emilia approached him. Subaru raised his eyebrows at her.

She gently beckoned Subaru, and then, she pointed her finger towards somewhere a little apart from the circle of their companions. The one who stood where her white finger had pointed to was??

Emilia:???Shaula… she looks lonely. That's dreadful, Subaru. She looks so pitiful, doesn't she??

Subaru:?She's……?

Emilia:?Don't give excuses. All of us absolutely want to try and do our best in any way we can with Subaru, but, the one who is doing their best would first of all be Subaru, and then wouldn't it be Shaula? So……?

Subaru:??????

Emilia:?So, you have to take good care of her. ??Promise.?

What Emilia spoke to Subaru, a *promise*, was something which held really really great significance between the two of them. ??No, as a matter of fact, as Subaru wasn't?Natsuki Subaru?he didn't understand how?Natsuki Subaru?regarded the weight of it.

But, even if he didn’t understand?Natsuki Subaru?, he understood the trust Emilia had when she tried to make promises with?Natsuki Subaru?all too painfully.

Subaru:?……All right. I promise.?

Emilia:?Mhm, perfect. ??Well then, I’ll see you later, Subaru.?

Saying that, Emilia waved goodbye to him as she smiled.

And immediately after Subaru recognised that, the many figures of his companions that appeared from his ever cloudening left eye’s field of view completely vanished. After that, everything went still, no one was there. A stillness that felt like it cut off everything but Subaru was left behind.

The one whom he had made the promise with wasn’t there anymore, let alone the vestiges of the promise he had shared.

Subaru:???Shaula, come here.?

Tossing aside those desiccated thoughts, Subaru called out to Shaula, who was walking in the distance. Hearing that call, Shaula’s face suddenly lit up and she leaped up and came rushing over to where Subaru was.

Shaula:?Wassssup, Master! Hm, has your fun-time where you’re off grumbling to yourself as if you’re having fun finished!??

Subaru:?Don’t you go saying it so damn straight! You don’t have to say it like you’re talking to a loony, there’s no damn need to be so hurtful!?

Shaula:?My baaad!?

Slapping the top of her forehead with her palm, Shaula took back what she said all the while sticking out her tongue. Was she apologising? It didn’t feel like an apology, but, well, it was close enough.

In any case, Shaula, who had kept accompanying Subaru all the way here from the tower of sand?? Certainly, the main contributor towards Subaru’s aims was this woman, and not just because of what Emilia had said.

He borrowed ideas, knowledge and wisdom from his many companions in drafting a course of action and plans. But, what was needed for that each time was the power to carry those things out; to put it more simply, he needed fighting strength.

Shaula’s presence was indispensable in order to make those possible. Even so, Subaru had done almost nothing to reward her.

It felt like she was just a well he could always draw water from whenever he needed it.

It was as if she was saying he could do anything no matter what it was, if it was him, who wasn't ?Natsuki Subaru?

Subaru:??????

Shaula:?Master??

Without thinking, Shaula questioningly tilted her head at Subaru, who had sunk into silence. Long black hair slowly cascaded down her pale, bare shoulders.

As he paid attention to that, Subaru gulped and set his thoughts straight,

Subaru:?Shaula. What is it that you want to do in the end??

Shaula:?Mhm~ What do you mean??

Subaru:?I don't mean anything! You must understand what my aim is, right??

Until just before, he had disregarded any thoughts that related to how he would reward Shaula. Were you to pay attention to him, you'd notice that Subaru had begun to speak in a manner that showed traces of rudeness.

To those words, Shaula frowned, and her face showed no traces that she had understood what Subaru had said. She brought her frown-adorned face closer, and as a result of that, Subaru held her back by placing his palm on her forehead.

And as he held her back,

Subaru:?I kill everyone who knows me, and I read their?Books of the Dead.?If I wipe out everyone who knows me, then the last one would be you. After that, I'll end up reading your book, and yet….?

Subaru lacked the most importants parts of himself by a mile and wasn't able to fill in that gaping hole with his own strength. Subaru had no choice but to build?Natsuki Subaru?up little by little by collecting all the scraps of?Natsuki Subaru?from every single people who knew?Natsuki Subaru?and patching them into his original form.

In its completed form, it would contain all the memories of those who were familiar with?Natsuki Subaru.?Like Emilia, Beatrice, and so on; Shaula was no exception either.

That's why he had promised Reinhardt that he'd kill him someday as well.

She kept openly smiling in front of Subaru's eyes. She kept helping Subaru in his objective without any hesitation. She kept interacting with her carefree attitude. And he had to kill her.

Subaru:?And yet, you accompany me? Shaula?

Shaula:?Are you worried about meeee? Is it because you love me??

Subaru:???. Don’t joke about. I’m asking you seriously.?

Shaula’s answer to the sincere question he had asked was in the same tone as usual. And since that had gotten on Subaru’s nerves, he repeated his question again a little more crudely.

But, after receiving his words, Shaula called back to him with a:?Master?

Shaula:?I’m really not joking about. Since being loved by Master is the meaning of my life. So, that’s what matters the moossst.?

Subaru:??????

Shaula:?If Master loves meeee, then you may make use of me as much as you like. My life is Master’s property. Being used as much as you like, Master.... that is what I desire.?

Still in her usual tone, still with her clingy attitude which had to be bluntly brushed off, still giving off a rather flippant vibe where it couldn’t be distinguished if she was being serious or joking about, Shaula ran her hands down her ample breasts.

She ran them down and then turned her dark eyes to look at Subaru before giving him a weak smile.

What was shown there in her sincerity was an attitude that she lived her life earnestly, never ever lying. Shaula always spoke seriously. ??And since she did, she had no need to lie.

Shaula:?You may use meee as much as you like until I come to a miserable end. In exchange, I want you to love meee, and I want you to cry for meeee if I die. Since I’m really, I’m really just… I’m really just satisfied with that.?

Subaru:?……Why do you devote so much of yourself to me like that? It has to because I’m?Natsuki Subaru??

Shaula:?That’s not why.?

Subaru:??????

Shaula:?Master is Master; I don’t care about anything else. I just love wanting to love so that I want to love the one that I want to love. And, if that person loves me back, well, that’d be perfect. Am I speaking weirdly??

Shaula tilted her head; it seemed like she didn’t hold a single doubt in what she’d said. Seeing that, Subaru let out a small?Hah.? And soon enough what had been just a small snort of laughter steadily caused his throat to squeeze up into laughter.

Subaru laughed.

He didn’t laugh as either?Natsuki Subaru?or the play-acted version of?Natsuki Subaru?he put on in front of Emilia and the others. This time he laughed as the hollow Natsuki Subaru that had forgotten everything about his life in another world.

Subaru:?Ahhh, god damn, don’t you guys….. don’t you people go fucking worrying about my damn self-discovery… Damn idiots.?

Shaula:?Huh!? Master, no way, did you get mad!? Did I say something weird!? Could it be that Monday, Thursday and Fridays are the days which all the burnable trash is thrown away!??

Subaru:?I ain’t angry. I’m just amazed. I’m amazed, and ah, I’m damn speechless.?

Letting out a long sigh, Subaru slightly shook his head and started to walk. Shaula, looking rather unlike her usual self, timidly watched over Subaru’s back.

Subaru gave yet another long sigh seeing the stubbornness in her gaze.

Subaru:?You can do what you want, so, get yourself over here quickly.?

Shaula:?If I can do what I want… then, maybe you won’t get angry if I cling onto your arm, right??

Subaru:?I guess so if you ain’t gonna cling on with your whole body weight.?

In an instant, Shaula’s face lit up and with a leap she wrapped Subaru’s arms around her chest. Even though usually it would have been a rough experience, only when it came to touching Subaru did Shaula tone down her strength.

It was like she was handling something fragile and important and trying not to break it.

Subaru hated that Shaula would flirt with him??No, he disliked it. Her affection made him uncomfortable.

The one which Shaula wanted to be affectionate to was?Natsuki Subaru.?And, since everybody thought that they didn’t care or hold any interest in Natsuki Subaru, other than?Natsuki Subaru?

Shaula:?Master, Master~?

Subaru:?Hm??

Shaula:?I love youuu Master. *Love is Over.*?

TL Note: Another one of Shaula’s pop culture references. References this song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NxaED86s3L0

Subaru:?I see. I don’t love you though.?

Shaula:?Guaaaaa! M-Master’s so mean….?

Subaru:?But.?

Shaula:?But??

Subaru:?……After you kill Reinhardt, I will kill you last. I, who am not?Natsuki Subaru?will kill you last. That is what I will do for you.?

Shaula:??????

Subaru:?That’s all I will promise?

Shaula:?Ah, aahah, ahahahah! Master, Master… really? I’ll be last? Am I gonna be Master’s last woman??

Subaru:?When you say it like that, it makes me want to break that promise already.?

Shaula:?Ehh~! No! It’s a promise! It was definitely, definitely a promise!?

Subaru:?I was joking.?

Shaula:?Eeeeeh!? A joke? Which part was a joke!? Master, Master~!?

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Patching together, patching together, continuing to form its shape.

Patching together, patching together, continuing to mould its shape.

Patching together, patching together, continuing to fill in the colours.

Patching together, patching together, patching together, and continuing towards bringing himself closer to completion.

Patching together, patching together, patching together, there’s too much to be patched together. Even if he kept patching it together so that the original form became unrecognisable, he could still patch together a new one.

Patching together, and continuing to live on.

Patching together, and continuing to live on.

Until the day comes where he would die, he would continue to patch it together, and live on??

?Patching Together a Life in Another World From Zero?F I N

Source: Touka131

Witch Cult Translations

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