

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 1 – Royal Summoning

"Huh?"

I was dropping by the neighborhood library for a quick read.

I, Iwatami Naofumi, am a sophomore from a local university. I'm quite self-conscious about being somewhat more of an otaku compared to other homo-sapiens.

I've embraced countless anime, games, and other aspects of otaku culture, but I do take my studies seriously so that I could lead a proper life.

Actually, my parents had swiftly given up on me and invested their hopes onto my little brother by sending him off to attend some famous cram school.

This brilliant eyesore of a brother finally snapped one day and transformed into a delinquent due to all the accumulated stress. He bleached his hair and went full yankee mode once he arrived home one fateful day, and thus marked the start of our family's dark age.

That was when I, the messiah, made his debut!

I tenderheartedly welcomed this ill-humored and tongue-clicking brother of mine and recommended him to a famous galge.

"Haha!? Would you look at this mess!"

"Wut, I was fooled, just wait until I get the hang of this and you'll see."

I knew it all. All about the cause of my delinquent brother's transformation. On one hand you have me, who grew up doing whatever the hell he wanted, while on the other hand my brother was forced to study like a mad man. Therefore, once a slacking-specialist like me baited him with a few games, he instantly became hooked like an addict.

As far as I was concerned, the world's otaku count had once again increased by one.

Afterwards, his room turned into a castle of galge goodies from the games I recommended.

However, the vexing part was that once all the steam and stress vanished from his system, he graduated from that certain famous cram school with ease and headed straight down the road to becoming one of society's top dogs.

Nonetheless, thanks to my heroic achievements, my parents pampered me to an even greater degree. I was granted a fulfilling college life with the utmost freedom included.

To sum it all up, I am the useless leech of the Iwatami household.

Now enough with the rant, I was dropping by the neighborhood library for a quick read.

My monthly war chest, funded by my parents, amounted to 10,000 yen. Such a meager amount lasted only for a moment when faced against manga-adaptions-of-light-novels, eroges, erogons, and other great products from far and wide.

Part-time jobs during the summer and winter seasons got me another 50,000 yen worth of war funds, but when one decided to partake in the local festival, this amount of money would soon disappear.

Yet when my brother desperately begged as if his life depended on it, our parents agreed to provide us with lodging within the festival's general vicinity for its entire duration, but that still wasn't enough...

Well, to maintain one's livelihood, one has no choice but to learn how to conserve one's wallet; just barely enough for tuition and basic life necessities.

Thus in order to save money, even though it pains my heart to do so, I have to read old books from second-hand bookstores and the library.

During my free time, I usually play net games that proved to be infinitely time-consuming as I tried to master each one of them.

I'm the type that likes to play around with a wide array of trivial knowledge to begin with.

Reaching max level in a game wasn't as interesting and addictive as hoarding money to me. Even right now, the character which I created was currently vending on the streets while trying to sell off rare items.

Hence, the real me with nothing to do was quite bored.

That's the reason.

The reason behind the incident that was about to occur.

I was lurking around the section that dealt with old fantasy books.

At any rate, when compared to mankind's history, the fantasy aspect seems to be quite outdated. Even the Holy Scriptures could be considered a phantasm of sorts.

"Four Heavenly Weapon's Manual?"

For some reason, only this ancient looking, retro-sounding book had fallen from the bookshelves.

Most likely, some random guy must have quickly shoved this book onto the shelf and went on his merry way.

This must have been a sign of destiny calling.

I sat down on a chair and started reading the Four Heavenly Weapon's Manual.

Flip... Flip...

The story began with the description of a parallel world.

To summarize, it prophesied the world's demise.

Sooner or later, waves of disaster will assault this world one after another until it's finally destroyed.

To escape the impending doom, they have to summon heroes from other worlds and request their aid.

... Ok. The plot's a bit overused, but since this is a retro-fantasy book, it doesn't seem to be out of place.

The four summoned Heroes all possessed their own respective, unique weapons: Sword, Spear, Bow, and Shield.

Aiya ~ to begin with, a shield can't even be considered a weapon, right? ~

I chuckled sarcastically as I continued with the story.

The heroes then ventured separately, in order to gain power in preparation against the waves of disaster.

"Fuwaaa"

Crap, I'm getting sleepy.

A regal urge to sleep swept through my body. Even though this book is ancient, there has been no cute heroine appearing at all.

Although, even if a princess were to appear, she would undoubtedly smell like an irritating slut in heat with a harem involving the four heroes.

Enough with the princess, let's take a glance at the heroes' characteristics, onto the first one.

The Sword Hero probably had overwhelming combat strength, while the Spear Hero was probably the considerate type of guy.

I wondered if the Bow Hero would be able to get rid of a horrible dictator like Robin Hood did.

Huh? The story was shifting towards the Shield Hero.

"A-re?"

As I flipped to the next page, I instinctively let out a voice.

The page concerning the Shield Hero that spread out in front of me was white.

No matter which angle or direction I looked at the page, it was pure white through and through.

"What the heck?"

Right when those words left my mouth, my consciousness drifted away.

Never in my wildest dreams would I have ever thought that I would awaken in a parallel world.

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Chapter 2 – Hero Introduction

"Oooh..."

A voice full of admiration brought me back to my senses.

As I settled down, what filled my view was a bunch of men wearing robes, looking in my direction with dumbfounded expressions.

"What?"

Following the robed men's line of sight, I found three others who also seemed to have trouble grasping the situation.

I inclined my head as I thought: What on earth happened?

A while ago I was in the neighborhood library... where was I now?

I restlessly checked my surroundings, and all that I found were brick walls in every direction.

So this place was made out of bricks? I didn't recall seeing anything like this place before. It certainly couldn't be the library.

Below me, there was an altar and various geometric patterns that were painted with fluorescent paint.

They resembled what magic circles or alchemic formulas may look like in a fantasy setting. It was that sort of vibe which they gave off.

And on top of the altar stood the four of us.

That's the gist of it... but, why do I have a shield attached to me?



The shield fit perfectly and was strangely light. Worried about why it was stuck to me, I slammed the shield against the floor with all my might, but it refused to dislodge from my arm.

"Where is this place?"

The guy with the sword gave into his anxiety and asked one of the robed men.

"Ooh, Please brave heroes! Please somehow save this world!"

""""""WHAT!?"""""""

All of us said unanimously.

"What did you mean by that?"

What was with this cliché line? I felt as though I may have read it in a web novel before.

"Many things happened, and due to our justified motive which is driven by certain circumstances, we were able to summon you brave Heroes through an ancient spell."

"Summoned."

Mhmm. That's the word. The chance of a shocking revelation for this

situation was oddly high. But for now, we'll keep listening to their story to see what it has to offer.

"This world is currently facing a global state of crisis. Brave Ones, please lend us your might."

The robed man bowed deeply to us while saying so.

"Well... This is a bit sudden--"

"What a pain."

"Is that so?"

"Can I just go back to my old world? I already heard this kind of story before."

While I was engrossed with their story, the other three interrupted me midway.

Wait?

Did they just immediately give an answer to this desperate guy who's bowing so low as if giving the ground a mooch?

They jumped the gun after only hearing the intro of this story.

The other three were all glaring intensely at me now while I was pondering in silence.

... I gave them a half smile. The tension in the room was rising to a delicate level as time passed.

Aren't you jerks actually happy?

Well isn't this a cherished, world-leaping dream come true here...

Your attitudes are pretty cliché, huh? But dudes, this is the part where you need to hear them out.

"Aren't you people guilty over summoning us without our consent?"

The guy with the sword, who looked like a high school student, pointed his sword at the robed men.

"For instance, we won't just fight for world peace and then return to our old world empty handed, right?"

The guy with the bow scowled at the robed men's direction.

"You guys don't seem to take much consideration into our own plans, do you? Depending on what you have to offer, we might end up becoming this world's enemy instead, got it?"

So that's what was up. They were demanding tribute after confirming their social standings.

These guys are quite macho, I felt like I've lost in a very meaningful department.

"Well first, I'd like you all to have an audience with the king. We can discuss your reward then."

The representative of the robed men opened the heavy looking door to guide us through.

"...Guess it can't be helped."

"Right."

"Duh, the guy we'll be meeting changes, but I bet the story's still the same."

The macho bunch arrived at their own conclusions before following. I hastily trailed behind them.

We left the dark room and passed through a corridor made out of stone.

...I wonder why? Was it due to my limited vocabulary that the atmosphere here could only be described as 'delicious'?

Our breathes were taken away as we took a peek at the scene outside of the window.

Spanning off into the horizon, a town much like one from Medieval Europe could be seen.

All too mesmerized by the townscape laid before us, we walked down the corridor and reached the audience chamber in no time flat.

"Hou, are these fellows the Ancient Heroes?"

On the throne in the audience chamber sat a prideful grandpa who began evaluating us when we arrived.

For some reason, our impression wasn't too good...

I personally despise the act of licking other person's boots.

"I am the king of this country, Aultcray. The thirty-second ruler of Melromarc. Brave ones, please raise your heads."

I wasn't even looking down! Damn, I felt like punching this bastard, but I'll refrain from doing so for now.

Speaking as if he was superior in our first meeting, I guess it couldn't be helped since he was a king and all.

"Now then, let us explain our situation. This country, and moreover, this whole world is facing its demise."

To summarize the king's story.

At the present, words of demise had once been prophesied. This world will be assaulted by waves of calamity which will one day turn everything to ruin. To save the world, these waves must be repelled before they can be dispersed.

This era marks the prophesied year, according to the words of demise.

There exists a giant, ancient hourglass which continues to drip down ceaselessly. It has the ability to forecast when the waves will arrive and began its warning one month ago. According to the legends, each wave will come in roughly one month intervals.

Initially, the residents of this country didn't show much concern over the prophecy. However, the hourglass had completed its first turn and a wave of disaster occurred just as the words of demise foretold.

A dimension crack appeared in this country, Melromarc, where hideous and brutal demons crept out in large quantities.

Other adventurers and knights barely managed to repel them. However, the next incoming wave would be even more powerful.

It seemed like the worst case scenario was about to occur.

At this rate, the disaster won't be repelled.

That was the basic outline of their situation.

By the way, it looked like our legendary armaments had the ability to translate languages for us.

"I understand your dilemma. But who gave you the right to summon us into doing manual labor for free?"

"That is one hell of a convenient story."

"... Even if that is the case, and this isn't me being selfish or anything, but if this world is going into ruin then let it be destroyed. This matter doesn't even concern us."

The person in front of me laughed loudly. Aren't you also secretly jumping for joy inside that heart of yours, dude?

Well, I guess I'll take advantage of this situation too.

"Certainly, we have no obligation to help you. In the end it'll just be fruitless labor for us. And once peace comes, you guys will just go 'sayonara'^[6] as if nothing happened. So to prevent such a sad outcome from occurring, I'd like to hear some form of insurance from you. Surely you have something to present us, right?"

"Fumu..."

The king sent his vassal a glance.

"Of course, we planned on rewarding the Brave Ones fully for their efforts."

Including me, the Heroes made a guts pose^[8] with a clenched fist.

Jackpot! First phase of negotiations complete.

"I had already made arrangements to aid your cause with money. And surely, since the Brave Heroes will be protecting our world, housing is necessary. For that purpose I have already prepared a fitting place for you Brave Ones to rest."

"Eh~ ... Those are all well and good promises then."

"Don't think that we can be tamed with only this much though. You'll have to continue giving your cooperation if you don't want us to turn rogue."

"... That's right."

"Righto~"

What was wrong with these guys? Always looking down on people.

The immediate threat right now was us becoming the kingdom's enemy.

Well, we need to stay on top of things or else all our efforts will be in vain, with nothing but empty pockets to show for it.

"Well then, Heroes. Let us hear each of your names."

Hold on a sec. Wasn't this just like the book, the "Four Heavenly Weapon's Manual," that I read a while ago?

We have the sword, spear, bow, and shield.

Coincidentally, we were also called Heroes. So doesn't that mean we got sucked inside the book's world?

The Sword Hero stepped forward and began his self-introduction.

"My name is Amaki Ren. Age 16, a high schooler."

Hero of the Sword, Amaki Ren. First impressions: a bishounen high school student would best describe him.

He seemed to have taken great care of his facial features. Although he was a bit short, only about 165cm.

If this guy cross-dressed, no one would ever doubt that he was a girl. A perfect trap. His short-cut hair was a light brown color.

Long, slated eyes and white skin, he somehow gave off a cool vibe.

He looked like a slender swordsman.

"Okay, next up will be yours truly. My name's Kitamura Motoyasu. 21 this year, a university student."

Hero of the Spear, Kitamura Motoyasu. First impressions: he looked like the carefree type yet gave off the vibe of a real man.

I've lost. His face was too refined even for a handsome guy. At least one or two girlfriends, that was his image as an experienced playboy.

He was sporting a ponytail: a hairstyle that didn't match a male, yet somehow it didn't look out of place for him.

He had a caring older brother kind of feel.

"It's my turn next. My name is Kawasumi Itsuki. 17 right now, another high school student."

Hero of the Bow, Kawasumi Itsuki. First impressions: a timid boy who enjoyed piano lessons.

He seemed to lead a fleeting life yet also possessed a reliable, tenacious strength. His aura was quite vague and mysterious.

A few curly hair strands made him look like he had a wavy perm hairstyle.

He gave off the feeling of a docile younger brother.

Everyone looked Japanese. It was quite surprising with the whole foreign setting.

Whoops, it was my turn already.

"And lastly, I'm Iwatani Naofumi. Age 20, university student."

The king casually looked past me.

A weird feeling shot through my spine.

"Fumu. Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki, huh?"

"Your liege, you forgot about me."

"Oh sorry, Naofumi-dono."

Seriously, this old man had some short-term memory issues. That was just... Somehow, I was feeling out of place here; please don't forget about me at least.

"Now then, everyone please confirm your own status. As a matter of fact, I would like you all to visually check for yourselves."

"Eh?"

Just what is this 'Status'!?

"Etto^[12], how do I go about seeing this?"

Itsuki timidly asked for the king's guidance.

Well duh, you don't just go around throwing the word 'Status' without a proper explanation!

"The hell, man. You guys didn't even notice that much after coming to this world?"

Ren was utterly shocked by his colleagues' ignorance.

How should I know! It was like, what exactly was there for me to notice, your face?

"Well whatever, do you see that icon in the corner of your vision?"

"Eh?"

When he said that, I noticed a weird, dim icon along the edge of my vision.

"Focus your mind on it and you'll see."

Pikon~ And as it light lit up silently, a browser with bigger icons similar to a PC's popped into my view.

Iwatani Naofumi

Occupation: Hero of the Shield Level 1

Equipment: Small Shield (Legendary Armament), Parallel World's Clothes

Skill: None

Magic: None

There was a bunch of other data but let's omit that part.

So this was the 'Status'.

But what the hell was this! It was strangely like a game.

"Level 1 huh... this doesn't look very reassuring."

"Right, I don't even know if it's possible to fight like this."

"That's exactly what I meant."

"Tools like these don't exist in the Brave Ones' world? This Status magic can be used by everyone in this world, helping to improve ourselves."

"Is that so?"

Your real body's prowess was represented by numerical values and could be naturally raised through these numbers. This was quite surprising.

"So then, what should we do now? Our current values seem rather troubling."

"Fumu. From now on, you Brave Heroes will need to venture forth so that you may hone and strengthen both yourselves as well as your legendary armaments."

"Strengthen? Does that mean that our starting equipment isn't strong enough?"

"Yes, the legendary weapon of each summoned Hero has their own special method of enchantment. By doing so they can become very powerful."

"Legend this, legend that. It's fine not to change weapons as long as it can function properly as a weapon, no?"

Motoyasu whirled his spear around while commenting.

That was indeed correct. But mine was a shield. It wasn't even a weapon and was something that needed to be upgraded regularly.

"That doesn't matter right now, so we can leave it for later. More importantly, what we need is to improve our own abilities, right?"

This was a moefic situation where Heroes from parallel worlds were summoned.

Like a springtime of youth where one's reckless emotions swelled up from deep inside.

The number one dream filled with exciting adventures that will never cease.

Focusing on their weapons was usually the case for everyone that was involved in such a situation.

"So are we going to form a party with the four of us?"

"Brave Heroes, please hold for a moment."

"Huh?"

Even though we were advised to set out right away.

"Each of you Brave Heroes will need to recruit your own companions and begin your adventures separately."

"And the reason for that is?"

"Yes. According to legend, it's said that the legendary armaments will reject one another should you Brave Heroes band together, interfering with the growth of both the owners and the weapons."

"I don't really get it, but if we act together, we can't increase our power?"

Huh? Wasn't it suppose to be something along the lines of: 'If we group the legendary weapons together, they will help each other?'

Everyone shared a glance with one another.

Attention. If those who possess the legendary weapons worked together on a united front, a repulsing reaction will occur. Therefore, let us move individually as much as possible.

"That really does seem to be the case..."

Just what was up with this game-ish explanation?

It seemed like I have entered a completely game-like world.

The usages of this weapon were conveniently lined up for me and were described in great detail. Though sadly, I didn't have the time to read in its entirety right now.

"Improving ourselves and recruiting comrades. Which should be done first, I wonder?"

"Please allow me the honor of preparing your comrades. At any rate, the sun is already beginning to set. Brave Ones, please take your time and rest for the day. You may depart for your journey tomorrow. During that time I shall make arrangements and scout for talented individuals who can accompany you on your destiny."

"Thank you very much."

"Thank you."

We each expressed our thanks. And the king, having decided our course for today, prepared our guest room for us to rest.

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Chapter 3 – Heroes' Discussion

Sitting on the luxurious beds inside the guest room, everyone was staring intensely at their own weapon as they went over its description.

The sun outside the window had already set before I even noticed.

That was how focused everyone was at reading the descriptions.

Etto, unlike regular weapons, the legendary weapons didn't require routine maintenance.

Based on the owner's level, the weapon will be able to absorb different raw materials; the Weapon Manual will also fill up as we defeat monsters.

At a glance, it seemed to contain a variety of branches which the weapon could change into.

I clicked on my Weapon Icon which opened up the Weapon Manual.

Tada-----!

Tons of picture icons popped up and spanned onwards, even beyond the menu window in front of me.

I didn't have the ability to change into any of these shields right now, but they were all described in detail.

Incredible...

Fumu fumu, it seemed that some arms could only be unsealed by evolving its predecessor first.

This type of setup; wasn't this similar to the skill trees utilized in online games?

Learning new skills was like evolving the weapon, as both were necessary to unlock your true potential...

Seriously, this was just like a video game.

"Yo, doesn't this all seem pretty game-like?"

Might as well request some aid from my other colleagues. However, my question was only met with silence.

"Seriously dude, isn't this an actual game? I've known some which are like this."

Motoyasu proudly boasted.

"Eh?"

"Are you saying that you don't even know about this famous online game?"

"Well no, but was there a game that even a splendid otaku such as myself didn't know of?"

"So you scrubs really don't know? This is Emerald Online, man."

"What's that? Never even heard of that one."

"Just how ignorant can you guys be? It's such a famous title too."

"Of course I know games like Odin Online and Fantasy Moon Online, aren't these pretty popular too?!"

"What are those? This is the first time I've heard of them."

"Eh?"

"Eh?"

"If I may interject, everyone. This world isn't a net game, but more like a console game!"

"That's wrong, bro. This is a VRMMO, right?"

"Hah? Well for instance, isn't this world similar to games where you click and use a controller to operate?"

Confused, Motoyasu tilted his head with a dumbfounded expression during our conversation.

"Click? Controller? What kind of retro games are you referring to? Don't people usually mean VRMMO when they say 'net game' these days?"

"VRMMO? As in Virtual Reality MMO? What kind of sci-fi world setting are you trying to create? Are you daydreaming here?"

"HUH!?"

A loud sound of disagreement was released.

Come to think of it, this Ren guy was the first to notice our "Status" magic. He gave off the impression of someone who was accustomed to this.

"Well then... gentlemen, I'd like to ask each of you to name a game from your world which bears the closest resemblance to this one."

Itsuki requested with his hand slightly raised.

"Brave Star Online."

"Emerald Online."

"None. I mean, this is simply a game-like type of world, right?"

I could understand that this place felt game-ish. But seriously dudes, you guys thought that I couldn't even tell the difference between a game and reality?

"Ah. As for myself, this world is like a console game called Dimension Wave."

A game title which no one else knew of yet again.

"Hold on for a minute, let's reorganize our information."

Motoyasu said while putting a hand on his forehead as he tried to calm us down.

"Hey. Tell me what you know about the situation with VRMMO, will you?"

"It's common where I live."

"Itsuki, Naofumi. What about you guys?"

"If I recall correctly, it only exists in Sci-fi."

"I remember reading about it in a light novel before."

"Is that so. I suppose I did get that vibe off of you. Then back to you, Ren, what's this Brave Star Online? Is it a VRMMO?"

"Yeah that's right, VRMMOs are ones like Brave Star Online. It has a world system very similar to this world's setup."

Just for reference, VRMMO involved a technology where one's brain waves were analyzed and deconstructed into data, which allows that person to dive into another world produced by a computer. That was my understanding of it more or less.

"If that's true then, does that mean the world that you two came from only has retro games like the ones you both mentioned earlier?"

He said with his head inclined.

"Reviewing what I know about gaming history, those type of computer games clearly did exist at one point. But for some reason I don't recognize any of those supposedly famous titles which you guys mentioned."

Motoyasu and I both nodded.

Without question, not knowing a popular online game was certainly strange. And while there was a chance that our preferences were simply too different, it was blatantly impossible not recognize a single renowned title between all of us.

"Let's try asking a common question. What's the name of the current Prime Minister?"

"Hai hai."

Everyone nodded.

"Let's say it together."

Gukurin...

"Yuda Masato."

"Yawahara Tsuyoshi Tarou."

"Odaka Enichi."

"Itsufuji Shigeya."

"""" ... """"

These were Prime Ministers I had never even heard of before. It's not the kind of mistake I would ever make in a history class test.

After that we asked about famous internet slang, net pages, and more online games.

And thus, we arrived at the same conclusion of not knowing anyone else's information.

"Apparently, it seems that we all came from different Japans."

"Looks that way. You guys definitely didn't come from the same Japan as me."

"This means there's another Japan for each distinctive world."

"There's a high chance that each of them belong in a separate era too, since they don't match each other at all."

This was an explicit gathering of four weird individuals.

But even so, we all came to an understanding that everyone here was an otaku. So there was no need to panic.

"Based on this pattern, I think everyone has a different reason for being here."

"Idle conversation isn't one of my hobbies, but I guess it's necessary for us to obtain information."

Ren awkwardly scratched his nose; though I was totally cool when people revealed their insecurities.

"I was walking back home from school, when I unfortunately encountered a troubling murder incident."

"Fumu fumu."

"I tried helping my childhood friend who was with me at the time, and somehow I managed to capture the killer, but that's as far as I can remember."

... Ren explained his circumstances while rubbing at his side the whole time. Saving your childhood friend; what kind of hero were you trying to make yourself out to be? I had a strong urge to play the straight man but showed some restraint for now.

Look man, capturing the perp was good and all, but if you got your sides stabbed at the end then what good does that do?

Such a false display of chivalry here; this fellow Hero needed to be placed in the untrustworthy category. Though I'll let it slide this time.

"I was already in this World before I even felt a thing."

"I see, a heroic situation^[9] where you save your childhood friend."

I coolly feigned while complimenting him with a chuckle. I've already heard enough, bro.

"Then I'll go next."

Motoyasu pointed at himself and began to speak.

"For me, it was because I had too many girlfriends^[11]."

"Yeah yeah, that totally was the case."

This guy seemed like the annoying onii-san type who gave off a booty-chasing image.

"And after doing a bit of this and that..."

"Did you get stabbed for two-timing or three-timing?"

That idiot Ren asked with a straight face.

Motoyasu's eyes blinked with surprise before he gave a small nod.

"Man... Girls are really scary, aren't they?"

"GOD DAMN IT!"

I was overcome with anger and shoved my middle finger into his face.

Die, asshole. I mean, were you summoned into this world because that's how you died?

Otto. Itsuki had a hand on his chest and was already beginning his confession.

"I guess it's my turn now. When I was crossing the street on my way home from cram school... a dump truck took a sharp corner turn. And afterwards..."

"" ... ""

In all likelihood he was run over... that was one hell of a pitiful ending.

Eh?

Wait a second, these stories didn't seem to mesh well with mine?

"Um... Do I absolutely have to recount my story on what happened before I came to this world?"

"Well duh, we already told you ours."

"I suppose so. Sorry to say, guys. But as far as I remember, all I was doing was reading a suspicious book inside the library."

"" ... ""

Everyone's gaze felt so cold.

What? We couldn't be friends just because I came into this world without a tragic ending?

The three of them began to secretly whisper amongst each other while leaving me out of the loop.

"But... that person... has the shield..."

"Right... same as our place?"

"Oh..."

Why did I feel like I was being treated like a fool?

Let's try changing the topic.

"Well guys, how would you rate this world now that we know the rules and how its system works?"

"So-so."

"It's not that bad."

"It's nice in its own way."

I see how it is... I was being treated like a total noob here!

That was mean.

"Hey, hey. Can't you guys teach me how to fight and stuff? Since my world didn't have this kind of game after all."

How can you guys be so cold-hearted? Motoyasu and Itsuki were staring at me with awfully charitable eyes.

"Alright, Motoyasu onii-san here will teach you the very basics at least."

Motoyasu raised his hands up to his putrid phony face.

"So first, according to my knowledge from Emerald Online, Shield... people who use shields as their main weapon are usually..."

"Yeah?"

"First of all, you have high defense. Secondly, even though your defense is high, if you keep on taking damage like an idiot, you'll die."

"Okay..."

"So your loser class will never be able to reach a high level."

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

I didn't want to hear that part!

What kind of death flag was this?! I was stuck with a deadbeat occupation right off the bat. OI!

"Update! Shouldn't there be a patch update?!"

There was a thing called job balancing, right?!

"Nope, it's a totally pitiful class when pitted against Bosses and even common mobs. That's why they just leave it alone. And also, there was that class-abolishing decision..."

"Aren't there job upgrades?!"

"Perhaps that only happens when you die?"

"Then how about a job change option?!"

"You can't change to another class skill tree anyways, right?"

GEH!? If all of this was true then I was stuck with this backbreaking occupation and somehow had to make do?

I glared at my shield as I thought.

Hey you, why do you have such a bleak, chocolate-colored future?

"How about with you guys?"

I look imploringly into Ren's and Itsuki's eyes.

Both of them casually averted their eyes.

"Sorry..."

"Same here..."

EK! Did this mean that I was condemned to be a failure?

The three of them were giving me side glances while they talked about each of their respective games.

"So how's the geography?"

"The names are different but hardly anything else. It's very likely that the performance and distribution of demons are the same here too."

"Our weapon hunting locations are roughly the same, but let's not hunt at the same place as each other."

"True enough, we need to take efficiency into consideration as well."

Why was it always them? Why didn't I also awaken with a hex ability? That was what I had been brooding over.

... That's right.

If I was weak, then couldn't I just find companions to rely on?

How come I hadn't thought of this sooner?

Even if I'm no good, I can still grow stronger by joining a party.

"Fufu... It's all good. This is a special parallel world. So even if I'm weak, I'll be able to manage somehow."

The three of them looked at me as if I was a pitiful existence. But fear not, I won't be defeated by you guys. To begin with, my equipment was only a type of armor so it was different from a game. I could just focus on strengthening another weapon and ignore this shield's special growth.

"YAY! I'll work hard at it!"

I shouted to invigorate myself.

"Brave Heroes, your meals have been prepared."

Oh? Apparently we'll be eating dinner now.

"Hai hai"

Everyone stepped out of the door, the guide then lead everyone to the knight's dining room.

The castle's banquet hall was like a scene from a fantasy movie.

A complete feast filled the table in a buffet-like fashion.

"Everyone, please go ahead and eat whatever you desire."

"What the? Are we eating the same stuff that your knights eat?"

A small grumble was heard, whoever said that sure was rude as hell.

"Of course not."

The guide shook his head.

Eh?

"This cuisine was specially prepared for the Brave Heroes and will be divided once you have eaten."

I looked around as he said so.

I noticed that the noisy bunch of people were actually cooks.

I see, so there was also a ranking order when it comes to meals.

Eating here was a form of initiation, meant to introduce us to the knights.

"Thank you, let's dig in."

"Umm."

"I suppose."

And thus, we thoroughly enjoyed this parallel world's cuisine.

The smell and taste was a bit odd, but there was nothing that couldn't be eaten.

Well, the food had a unique kind of twist to them, like an omelet type food which tasted like an orange.

After finishing our meal, we headed back to our room for some rest.

"Do they have baths here?"

"This place is pretty medieval-ish... So I guess the chance of it being an open air bath is fairly high."

"Personally, I don't think they have any."

"Well it's only our first day right now."

"I suppose. Time to hit the sack. We'll begin our journey tomorrow, so let's give it our best."

Everyone nodded at Motoyasu's words and went to bed.

My epic adventure will start tomorrow!

The other three and I went to bed, awaiting impatiently for the next day to arrive.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 4 – Specially Arranged Gold

Good morning.

After breakfast, we were impatiently called upon by the king.

As expected, there wasn't much noise this early in the morning; it should be around 10 AM based on the position of the sun... We received the summons just as I was thinking that.

We quickened our steps, our chests filled with excitement while we made our way towards the audience chamber.

“The honored Heroes have arrived.”

The audience chamber doors swung open, and inside were twelve people clad in various styles of adventurer outfits.

There were also those dressed in knight-like garb.

Hoh... The king's influence sure is amazing.

We bowed down to the king and listened to what he had to say.

“As promised yesterday, I have recruited companions who will accompany you on your journey. Apparently, everyone gathered has already decided which hero they wish to follow.”

Each of us should be getting three people if we divided them up evenly.

"Now then, future champions. Please set forth with the Hero to whom you shall swear your allegiance to."

Eh? We didn't get to choose?

It was a surprising development.

Oh well, if we seriously considered it, this parallel world's customs might weigh the citizens' wishes more heavily than orders from its regime.

We were lined up in a sequential order.

Our future allies then walked over and gathered in front of each of us.

Ren, 5 people

Motoyasu, 4 people

Itsuki, 3 people

Me, 0 Homo Sapiens

"Ou-sama, PLEASE WAIT A MOMENT!"

What the hell! Isn't this clearly straight up, simple harassment?

Cold sweat ran down the king's face when I voiced my complaint.

"We-well. Dear me, I would never have thought such a situation could occur."

"There's quite a difference in charisma amongst them."

The minister painted his whole face with amazement.

A robed man then began to secretly whisper into the king's ear.

"Fumu, did such a rumor spread..?"

"Did something happen?"

Motoyasu put up a sympathetic face and asked.

Like I thought, this reeked of extreme prejudice.

What the hell, this was like being the only kid left out when children were forming sport teams in elementary school.

I wanted to ignore this feeling which existed even in a parallel world too.

"Fumu. To be honest... there seems to be a rumor spreading around the castle about you Heroes, or more specifically the Shield Hero."

"Hah!?"

"According to the legends, Heroes that come to this world must meet a certain condition. It appears you alone didn't fulfill this condition, such is the rumor."

Motoyasu poked me with his elbow.

"Did someone eavesdrop on our chat yesterday?"

Is it because I didn't know about the games? Was that the reason why everyone was repulsed by me?

I mean, what's wrong with these legends?

Even though I'm unfamiliar with them, I'm still the Shield Hero, you know!

I might have a loser's weapon according to the other heroes, but that doesn't mean I'm playing around, okay!

"Hey, Ren! Give me someone since you have five people."

The female adventurers, including one man, shrank behind Ren and looked at me like frightened lambs.

For some reason, Ren was roughly scratching his head before he shook it.

"I hate being tagged along by others. Anyone who doesn't have the resolve to follow me, please leave."

And even after saying such a heartless statement, absolutely no one showed any signs of moving away from him.

"Motoyasu, my friend! Don't you think that this is too cruel?"

"Well..."

By the way, there seemed to be an oddly high ratio of women in here.

This smelled like a Harem declaration of war.

"This is such a shit load of bias."

And why were Motoyasu's companions all women? This guy seemed to be a chick magnet wherever he went.

Itsuki also wore a worried face, which revealed his reluctance of parting with any of his beloved companions.

"I guess you've got your fair share of 3 people... so it's not good to take someone by force."

Itsuki nodded his head, at a loss for words.

"So then, do I really have to depart alone?!"

It's a shield, yo! A loser's weapon according to the theories, yo!

Just watch me grow stronger even without comrades!

"Ah, Yuusha-sama, I'd like to accompany the Shield Hero instead."

One of Motoyasu's former female companions raised her hand and expressed her candidacy as my ally.

"Oh? Really?"

"Yes."

A lovely girl with semi-long crimson hair.

Her face is pretty cute, isn't it? She has youthful facial features, yet she's slightly shorter than me.

"Is there anyone else that wishes to fall under Naofumi-dono's protection?"

At this scene... no one showed any sign of moving.

The king let out a grieving sigh.

"So, there is no one else. Unfortunately Naofumi-dono, it appears you will need to scout for additional talent yourself. But fret not, for I shall be giving you a bonus on your monthly war fund which will soon be distributed."

"Ye, yes!"

A wise decision.

Since I'm the one with the least amount of allies, I'll be the one with the largest financial budget.

"Now then, here are your monthly war funds. Brave Heroes, please use this with a clear goal in mind."

Four pouches full of money were distributed to us. And a slightly larger moneybag was handed over to me.

I heard heavy chinking sounds coming from inside.

"Naofumi-dono will receive 800 silver coins, while the others will receive 600 each. Please use this money to buy equipment for yourselves."

" " " "WOAH!" " " " "

Every one of us each gave a salute, and thus the king's audience was concluded.

Afterwards, our self-introductions began.

"Errr Shield Hero, Mein Sophia is my name. Let us work together from now on."

"Yo, Yoroshiku."



Mein is such a splendid person for talking to me without a hint of bias.

But after that unsightly incident from earlier, it's kind of awkward to start a conversation. On the bright side, however, such a caring girl is now my ally.

I have to treasure this companion of mine. Therefore, I won't lose to the other heroes by upgrading my legendary weapon.

"Let's go then, Mein,-san."

"Okay~"

Mein vigorously nodded and followed behind me.

Crossing the bridge connecting the castle to the town, a splendid city laid before me.

Even though I caught a curious glimpse of it yesterday, seeing it up close made me realize the vivid charm of this parallel world.

The streets were paved with stones and there were signs hanging on the buildings.

The place was shrouded with the savory fragrance of food. I was truly moved, both deeply and emotionally.

"What should we do now?"

"First, we should go to some Item Shops, and probably a Weapon Shop in order to gear ourselves up. This will consume most of our funds."

Right, the first order of business should be me, who only has a shield, to acquire a weapon.

Without one, it'll be difficult for me to fight monsters and catch up with those guys.

After all, they have actual weapons that can evolve.

In order to get a head start, we definitely need to resolve this problem quickly.

"Alright. I know of a good shop, so allow me be your guide."

"Are you really okay with that?"

"Most certainly."

Mein was skipping about as she led me to the Weapon Shop.

After 10 minutes of walking from the castle, Mein stopped in front of a conspicuous store with an oversized sword printed on its sign.

"Here is my recommendation."

"Oh..."

Stepping through the door, one could see weapons hanging from the walls, exactly as one would imagine when mentioning a Weapon Shop.

There were also other necessities for adventuring, such as complete suits of armor.

"Welcome!"

The shop owner cheerfully greeted as I entered the shop. He was just like I had imagined, someone ultra-buff who stood behind the weapon store counter. It would have been rather revolting if the owner was a flappy fatty. This really is a parallel world.

"Heh... so this is a weapon shop..."

"Oh, a first time customer. It seems that you came in without knowing what you're looking for."

"Yeah, I was introduced to this shop by her."

I said while pointing at Mein. She raised her hand and waved back lightly.

"Thanks a lot, Meinu-chan."

"No problem~ It's simply that Oyaji's shop is famous around here."

"Oh ma'am, you're flattering me. But isn't the outfit of your boyfriend over there a bit weird?"

Right, my current clothes are: "Parallel World's Clothing."

Can't you see that this is a classy attire, weird dude?

"Oyaji thinks so too?"

"Does that mean you're a Hero!? Wow!"

Oyaji took a long, hard look at me.

"He doesn't seem to be very reliable..."

So snide.

"Just spit it out already."

I didn't know what he wanted to say, yet I already knew I was unreliable right now. That's why I wanted to become stronger.

"You need better equipment."

"I suppose..."

Hahaha... It's not the personality but the appearance.

"Are you... that misfit?"

Piki,

I felt like my cheeks were cramping.

Rumors about me seemed to be traveling unexpectedly fast.

Well whatever. Only losers would care.

"My name is Iwatani Naofumi, the Hero of the Shield. I'll be troubling you from this point onward, so please take care of me."

I gave my introduction to Oyaji just in case.

"So, Naofumi. It's good to hear that I'll have your patronage from now on. Best regards!"

Again, he sure is an energetic one.

"Well, Oyaji. Do you have any good equipment?"

Mein leered at Oyaji as she asked.

"Right... How much do you have to spend?"

"Let me see..."

Mein began appraising me.

"Around the range of 250 Silver Coins."

We had 800 Silver Coins yet we'll only be using 250... I guess she considered the value of hiring our future comrades.

"Oh? If that's what you're looking for, then how about this here?"

Oyaji left the counter, picked up some of the weapons on display, and came back.

"So lad. Which one of these do you want?"

"Nope, I have no idea which is good."

"I would suggest swords since they're good for beginners."

I looked at the swords aligned on the counter.

"These are my new recommendations since they all have blood-clean coating."

"Blood-clean?"

"It's a coating which prevents dullness due to gore."

"Heh..."

I remembered that back in the old world, I once heard that if a knife was used to butcher meat, over time its sharpness will fade.

In other words, the edges of these swords will never dull.

I guess it's like a "Sharp Sword".^[15]

"From the left we have: Iron, Magic Iron, Magic Steel, and finally Silver. Each of their performance is guaranteed to be top notched."

Does the material used affect its durability?

These weapons seem to belong in the ore based category.

“There are better weapons around here, but these are the ones which fit your budget of 250 Silver Coins.”

I see.

Console games usually don't have better equipment in the first town.

Despite that fact, this place has quite a good line-up.

This world once again resembled an online game. Usually, big countries had better stocks of weapons, this seemed to be the case for this parallel world too.

“Iron Sword, huh..?”

I slowly grasped the sword's handle.

Ah, it truly was heavy.

I hadn't thought about the weight since my shield was extremely light. But weapons seemed to be considerably heavy, huh?

So I'll be using this to defeat the monsters...

- BACHIN!*

“Ouch!”

A sudden, intense surge of electricity repelled the Iron Sword in my hand and sent it flying.

“Oh?”

Oyaji and Mein were staring alternately between me and the sword with mystified looks.

“What the..?”

I picked up the fallen sword.

No sign of that strange thing happening.

What was all that about?

My previous thoughts returned as I recalled them.

- BACHI!*

“Ouchie!”

I glared at Oyaji, thinking he was playing a trick on me. Yet he shook his head repeatedly.

It shouldn't be Mein, but I turned toward her anyways.

“Did you see how it was suddenly repelled?”

Such bullshit.

I stared at my palm while thinking about such impossibility.

Then, words began to emerge into my view.

[Violation of Legendary Weapon's Convention: you had touched another specialized weapon with the intent of possession.]

What the fuck?

I quickly located the help option to summon up the description.

Found it!

[Excluding their own Legendary Weapon, the Hero cannot equip any other weapon for combat purposes.]

What did you say!?

My benevolent self couldn't use anything else besides this shield!?

How in the world could I fight with only a shield?

"Etto. Thanks, but it seems that my shield is the possessive type."

I laughed bitterly while looking up.

"How does it function? Can I take a look?"

Seemed Oyaji had taken an interest in my shield as he held it up with his hands.

It'll never come off because such a method doesn't exist.

The Weapon Shop's Oyaji chanted something under his breath, then a small ball of light flew towards the shield.

"Fumu. Even though it looks like a Small Shield, there's something mysterious about it..."

"Ha, did you find out anything?"

I know that it's a Small Shield.

It was also called by that name in my Status window, with the (Legendary Weapon) tag attached to it.

"Probably this jewel engraved in the middle? I can sense a strong source of power from there. While I could somewhat identify it through my Appraisal magic... I couldn't fully grasp it. It seems to be a type of curse."

After finishing his appraisal, Oyaji faced me while playing with his trademark beard.

"You've shown me something interesting. Then do you want to buy some armor instead?"

"Yes please."

“You’re buying armor instead of weapons within the 250 silver coin range, then I guess this armor will do.”

Since I already possessed a shield, it doesn't seem like I have many options. Oyaji brought back several pieces of armor that were on exhibit.

“The full plate armor isn't very popular with adventurers since it’s quite chunky, a chain mail would provide better movement.”

With that said, I reached out towards the chain mail.

- Jing-a-ling...*

Looks like cloth sewed with metal chains.

This seemed fine. But I wondered if it only increases the defense of the protected areas?

Huh? An Icon opened.

[Chain Mail Defense Power Up Tolerance against enemy’s slash attack (small)]

Fumu fumu, the sword’s description didn't pop up before since I couldn't equip it.

“How much is this worth?”

Mein asked the shop owner.

"At a discount, it'll only be 120 Silver Coins."

"Should I buy it?"

"Hm? I suppose... if it's still relatively new, I guess I can resell for 100 Silver."

"What's wrong?"

"Since this is indispensable for Shield Hero-sama's growth, I just want to reconfirm the price, that's all."

That makes sense... I'm only at Lvl 1, but I'll have to upgrade my equipment as I grow stronger after all.

This seemed like low-level gear, but it was also the best I can get in my current state.

"Okay then, I'll be buying this."

"Thank you! I'll be sure to give you a bonus for next time!"

The shop owner expressed his thanks while sending me words of gratitude. 120 Silver Coins was handed over and the Chain Mail was obtained.

"Do you want to put it on now?"

"Yep."

"Then please come this way."

I was led to the changing room, and I donned the Chain Mail over my undergarments.

My old clothes were put inside a bag provided by the shop owner.

“Oh, don’t you look quite handsome now.”

“Thanks a lot.”

Keep the compliments coming.

“Then shall we go hunting now, Yuusha-sama?”

“Let’s!”

Looking like a true adventurer, I loudly exited the shop while Mein accompanied me.

We then headed over to the gate, about to leave the castle walls.

On the way, the guard knight bowed to me and I happily returned it with a nod.

The start of my exciting adventure was about to begin.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 5 – Shield's Reality

Upon exiting the gate, one could see the green meadows spreading far into the horizon.

Now, I was only one step away from leaving the stone paved streets and entering the trail which led into the boundless, uncharted grasslands.

This was like a field trip to Hokkaido.

It was the first time I had personally experienced how vast the sky and horizon truly were.

With only this much excitement, a Hero needed to stay composed.

"Now then, Yuusha-sama. Shall we engage in some mock battles against the weaker demons inhibiting this area?"

"Right. This'll be my first combat experience, so I got to fight to the best of my abilities."

"Please give it your all."

"What? You're not going to fight with me, Mein?"

"If I fight then I won't be able to gauge Yuusha-sama's potential."

"Th-that's true."

Come to think of it, Mein should have more battle experience than me; I didn't even know how much I was capable of right now.

Let's try fighting against a monster that Mein had marked as a safe choice.

I wandered the grassland for a while. Then some weirdly conspicuous, orange balloon-like creature came into my view.

“Yuusha-sama, please wait. Over there is an Orange Balloon... and although it’s one of the weakest monsters, it’s very aggressive.”

That was some crude naming sense. You called it an Orange Balloon just because it was orange and round?

“GAH!”

With an atrocious cry, a pair of hostile, villainous eyes were staring directly at me.

Originating from the meadow, the balloon-shaped thing charged at me like a beast upon spotting my presence.

“Yuusha-sama, please do your best!”

“OOOO!”

I've got to show her my good side.

With my right hand, I used the blunt side of the shield to strike the Orange Balloon.

Bash!

Boyon~!

It rebounded off my shield at the point of impact. This monster is surprisingly elastic!

Even though I thought that it would break right away...

The Orange Balloon bared its fangs and started biting me.

"Hii!"

Kang!

I heard a solid impact.

Yet it didn't hurt, it barely even itched.

The Orange Balloon was biting my arm, but it had no effect at all.

It seemed that the shield was gently emitting a protective barrier around me.

I looked wordlessly at Mein.

"Go on, Yuusha-sama!"

"ORAORAORAORA!"

... I didn't receive any damage, but I couldn't deal much of it either.

So I continuously stuck the Orange Balloon like a Kung-Fu master.

Five minutes later...

Pop!

A faint sound was heard followed by the Orange Balloon bursting.

“Hah... hah... hah... ”

The [EXP: 1] value popped up along with a “Pikon” sound.

I think I received a single experience point.

Seriously, all this work just to kill one balloon... I couldn't help but pity myself.

That was a tough fellow. My bare hands could only do so much.

Pachi Pachi Pachi.

“I’m proud of you, Yuusha-sama.”

Mein gave me her applauds, yet it somehow felt hollow.

Suta suta suta!

Then I heard footsteps.

Looking behind me, I saw Ren along with his companions jogging onward.

I thought they would be chatting amongst themselves along the way, but all of them were wearing a serious expression while moving silently.

Ah, three Orange Balloons appeared in front of them.

Zuba!

With one swing of his sword, Ren sent an Orange Balloon popping.

1-hit kill!? Hey dude... just how different could our attack powers be?

"..."

Mein awkwardly turned her head away multiple times, avoiding my eyes.

"It will be alright. Every Hero has their share of struggles after all."

"... Arigato."

It's my first fight anyways. And I suffered zero injuries since my defense is super high, even with the Orange Balloon biting me for five whole minutes. Just as I started ransacking the remnants of Orange Balloon, the Shield let out a 'Pikon' sound.

When I brought it closer, the shield glowed gently with a pale light and absorbed the remnants.

[GET: Orange Balloon Skin]

As this line popped up, the Weapon Book Icon also blinked.

I opened it to confirm, then the Small Orange Shield Icon popped up.

While I couldn't transform into my shield yet, I now knew what materials were required.

"So that's the power of the Legendary Weapons."

"Yep. Looks like it needs to absorb materials in order to transform."

"I see."

“By the way, how much could I get from selling what was dropped earlier?”

“It should be about 1 Copper Coin.”

“... And how many Coppers do I need to get 1 Silver?

“100 Copper Coins.”

Oh well, it couldn't be helped. It was a weakling monster so of course it'll drop equally poor loot.

“It's your turn next, Mein.”

“Hm, I suppose so.”

At that moment, some Orange Balloons approached us.

Mein took out her sword from her waist and swung twice.

The Orange Balloons then burst with a pop.

Uwaa... Am I that weak..?

My name is Iwatani Naofumi. A 20-year-old university student. Right now, my mouth is being covered by both of my hands.

I had been summoned to a parallel world and became its hero for 2 days now.

After 5 minutes of combat with a suitable monster, I had come to perfectly understand my role.

「Hero Aptitude Test」

Four people were given this test. The most rational result shall be swiftly delivered.

CHECK!

>>What is your hunting aptitude?

Whoopsie, looks like I lost myself for a moment there.

Anyways, I had become painfully aware that I am, or rather my shield, was super weak.

It seemed that it was more efficient to simply let Mein do the fighting.

“Okay then, Mein. Please attack while I'll be in charge of defense. Let's see how far we can go with this setup.”

“Hai.”^[13]

Mein readily gave her immediate answer.

After that, we roamed around the meadows until the sun began to set. We encountered more Orange Balloons and some Yellow Balloons, where it seemed their strength differed by their color.

“We can encounter slightly stronger monsters if we press onward, but it will soon be nightfall if we don't return to the castle.”

“Mhm. I wish we could keep on hunting a bit more though...”

I had yet to receive any damage, what with the Balloons' attacks being so easy to defend against.

"Since we're returning early, let's take another look at the Weapon Shop. Because upgrading my equipment will allow us to go even farther than today."

"... Come to think of it, that makes sense."

I was able to improved myself and gain a little exp for my starting level, so I suppose we've made good enough progress for the day.

By the way, the shield also absorbed enough to satisfy the transformation requirement; I now had a Balloon shield equipped to my arm.

In the long run... I guess I could still level up and transform my shield some more.

Oh well. As the first day of adventuring ended with many uncertainties, we began heading back to the castle town.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 6 – The Trap & Arts of Betrayal

That evening, we dropped by the Weapon Shop again after returning to the castle town.

“Hoh, well if it isn't the shield lad. The other heroes had also dropped by earlier.”

Did everyone buy from this shop?

Oyaji greeted us with a pleased expression.

“Oh right. Do you know where we can sell this?”

I presented Oyaji with an Orange Balloon skin and he pointed towards the front of his store.

“There's a shop that buys most of the monster drops if you bring them over there.”

“Thank you.”

“So, what sort of business do you have with me?”

“Haha, it's for Mein. I want to gear up my companion.”

Mein was quietly staring at the equipment inside the store when I turned toward her.

"So what's your budget?"

I had 680 silver coins remaining on hand. I wondered how much I should spend?

"Mein, how much should I use?"

"..."

Mein was comparing equipment with an extremely serious expression.

So serious that my words didn't reach her at all.

Since I didn't know the cost to rent a room at an inn, I couldn't estimate how much we would need for a month's worth of lodging.

"Your companion's equipment? Hmm... I suppose anything that looks good while providing decent stats would be fine, right?"

"Sounds good."

Since I had next to nothing in terms of firepower, it was a better idea to focus on gearing Mein up.

"You can give me a discount on expensive equipment since I've been accompanying you twice today, isn't that right?"

"Hoh, please keep those hilarious fantasies to yourself, dear brave hero of ours."

"80% discount!"

"Please don't be unreasonable! 20% discount!"

"We can go a bit higher, no? 79% discount!"

"Never in my wildest dreams would I have guessed that you were the type to haggle on products!"

"Wha-whatever! 90% discount!"

"Tsk! 21% discount!"

"At least give me a better deal! Full discount!"

"What the hell, Yuusha-sama^[1]! FINE! 50% discount."

"Too small! 92%——"

Then, as this continued for a while, Mein brought over a set of armor with a cute design and a seemingly useful metal sword.

"Yuusha-sama, I would like these."

"Oyaji, what's the total? 60% discount."

"The total is 480 silver coins including the price reduction, which is a 59% final discount."

Since I had been haggling with Oyaji before Mein made up her mind, the price was greatly reduced.

Yet as expected, being left with only 200 Silver Coins was a bit rough, no?

"Mein... can't you wait a bit longer? I'm trying to save us as much money as possible for our lodging."

"Isn't it fine, Yuusha-sama? If I get stronger, then we can defeat bigger and more dangerous monsters, which also means more income, right?"

Her eyes sparkling, Mein pressed her breasts against my arm as she pleaded with me.

"I-I suppose so..."

With 200 silver coins remaining, I wondered what Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki would do to get their hands on this amount. Their original funds could only take them as far, barely covering the initial gear for their entire team. It seemed like 200 silver coins is an amount which will let a person live comfortably for a whole month.

Recruiting companions, leveling them up, and increasing your own income doesn't sound like a bad idea.

"Alright Oyaji, please take care of this."

"Thanks for your patronage. Really, you're one hell of a hero."

"Haha, not like money has eyes to see."

I had always been a money hoarder in net games.

Buying items at the lowest price from auctions and reselling them at the highest price possible.

Nothing is as easy as haggling with another person. Money will blind their eyes after all.

"Thank you, Yuusha-sama."

Mein teasingly kissed my hand.

This meant 'Intimate UP'!

Tomorrow's adventure will be a walk in the park!

After we bought Mein her equipment, we headed over to the town's inn.
30 copper coins a night per person...

"Two rooms, please."

"Wouldn't one room do just fine?"

"Yuusha-sama..."

Mein silently pressured me.

We-well it couldn't be helped.

"Two rooms then."

"Hai hai. I owe you a favor."

The inn owner was rubbing his hands together as he led us to our rooms.

The price was standardized based on the number of people. After that we went out for dinner in the inn's tavern.

We were charged 10 extra copper coins for our meals.

"In other words..."

I spread out the region map which I purchased along the way and asked Mein.

"Today, we were hunting in this meadow over here?"

This map showed the geographic landscape of the surrounding region. If I had asked before, Motoyasu would have definitely shown me the ropes. But looking back at his attitude yesterday, that didn't appeal to me at all.

I also had no reservations in outwitting my other competitors. I wanted to get ahead of them by learning where powerful demon lairs were located first.

Therefore, I asked Mein to teach me the area of this region.

"Yes. That's correct."

"Earlier you said something about if 'we had pressed onward', were you talking about this forest that's within walking distance from the meadow?"

With this map I could get a rough understanding of this country's geography.

There's a highway that cuts across the castle meadows and leads into a forest. From there, mountains appear along the edges of the map with a river nearby.

Since this wasn't a very big map, I couldn't see any other villages that might have been further ahead.

As expected, this map doesn't provide any information beyond the forest; it would be suicidal to fight without knowing what monsters spawn in there or the safe path through the area.

"Yes. Although it isn't recorded in the map, there's a village called Raffan inside the forest. This is where we should go next."

"Fumu... interesting."

"There's also a novice dungeon outside of the village."

"Dungeon..."

The dream land! Although there was nothing to do besides killing the monsters inside when it came to net games.

"The rewards won't be too bad either. Yuusha-sama would at least gain a few levels from that place."

"I see."

"We're also well equipped, and along with Yuusha-sama's superb defense, it should be a breeze."

"Oh ho, why thank you. I'll use this as a future reference."

"Not at all. By the way, Yuusha-sama? Why haven't you touched your wine?"

I had gotten carried away with the tavern's atmosphere and ordered a glass, but I hadn't even taken a sip yet.

"Ha ha, I'm not very fond of alcohol, you see."

It's not that I couldn't drink. As a matter of fact, I could hold my liquor quite easily.

I just wasn't interested in drinking.

Back in my college fraternity when there was a party and everyone, including me, was chugging down drinks like alcoholics, only I stayed sober while the rest had gotten beastly drunk. After that certain event, they all came to hate my guts.

"Is that so... but one cup wouldn't hurt, right?"

"Sorry. But I really, truly hate to drink."

"Buuut..."

"I'm sorry."

"O-Okay."

Mein dejectedly withdrew the glass of wine.

"Well then, I'll be retiring for today. Please take care of me tomorrow as well."

"Hai, see you tomorrow."

I hastily finished my meal inside the noisy tavern and returned to my room. As expected, I had to remove my Chain Mail since it was uncomfortable to sleep with it on.

I hung it on a chair afterwards.

"..."

I then placed the bag of silver coins on the table.

So I had 200 silver coins remaining, huh... Actually, make that 199 silver coins since I paid the inn in advance.

Unable to calm down, I couldn't help but feel anxious the whole time. It must've been my beggar blood acting up since I've always been lacking in the cash department.

Like a stealthy, Japanese tourist who's on vacation, I hid 30 silver coins inside my shield.

Yep. I could finally feel secure.

Much had happened today.

So this is the feeling you get from defeating monsters.

Those balloons didn't inflict any pain though.

I was sitting on the bed, so I lied back down without a second thought.

What an unfamiliar ceiling, and it was only yesterday that I came into this world.

I needed to relax.

From now on, the curtain to my glorious daily life will open.

Although I had a late start compared to my fellow heroes, I would be walking on my own path. I didn't need to become the strongest, just doing the best to my abilities would be enough.

For some reason... I suddenly gotten so sleepy... I could hear a cheerful voice coming from the direction of the tavern.

I think I heard voices similar to both Motoyasu and Itsuki conversing in the next room. Are those guys lodging here too?

I reached out my hand to extinguish the room lamp.

It's a bit early tonight, but let's just hit the hay...

Chari Chari...

W-what in the world is that sound?

Are the tavern's drunkards making more ruckus again?

Munya...

Scratchy scratch...

It was so hot... these clothes were so sticky.

"Huh?"

It was cold...

The sun shined brightly on my face, as if announcing a new morning.

Disoriented from drowsiness, I got up and took a look outside the window.

It seemed that I had fallen asleep before I knew it. The sun had already risen quite high.

According to my biological clock, it should be around 9 AM.

"A-re?"

I was only in my underwear. Did I unconsciously take my clothes off?

Oh well, whatever.

As I eyed the scenery outside my window, I spotted crowds of people come and go as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

It was quite the spectacle seeing busy restaurants and food stalls cooking their ingredients for the day's lunch rush. There were also carriages being pulled along the street; and I unwittingly fell into a trance of sorts.

Haha, this really is a wonderful parallel world.

It seemed that the bird or horse drawn carriages were the two most popular types. The bird looked like a particular type of ostrich; I believe their official name in a certain game would be a Chocobo.

If anything, the horses seemed to be more of the luxurious type.

Once in a while, a carriage appeared to be pulled by a cattle; this medieval setting is unbelievably wonderful, isn't it?

“Now then, it's time to start breakfast and quickly depart for another adventure.”

I searched the bed for my clothes which I supposedly removed during my slumber.

... Weird. There weren't here?

The chain mail that was hung on the chair...

Could not be found.

The bag of silver coins on the table was gone too!

Not only that, even my original spare clothes were gone!

“What the...”

OH SNAP!

Nighttime invasion!?

I was robbed during my sleep!

This inn had some serious problems with their security!

Anyways, I had to hurry over to Mein and warn her!

Bam! I rushed out and knocked on the door next to my room.

“Mein! There's a problem! Our money and my equipment--!”

Don don don!

There was no sign of Mein coming out no matter how hard I knocked.

Tah tah tah!

Noisy footsteps could be heard approaching my direction from a bit further down the corridor.

The castle knights came over and stared at me.

Since I was the victim of a night-raided invasion, they were going to help me arrest the culprit, right?

This thief must have been quite a fool to rob a hero in his sleep.

"You guys are knights from the castle, right? Please hear me out for a moment!"

I faced the knights and eagerly appealed to them.

Mein, please come out of the room quickly, I'm in serious trouble right now.

"It's the Shield Hero!"

"Well, yeah. That's me."

What in the world? They seemed to be strangely hostile towards me.

"The king has requested your immediate presence. We are to accompany you along the way."

"Requested my presence? No, I have a reason for looking like this, I was a victim of a bedroom invasion. The Culpri—"

"Come along now!"

Squeeze.

"That hurts! At least listen to my story."

The knights forcefully gripped my arms and took me by force.

I'm still in my underwear here. What kind of treatment is this?!

"Hey, Mein! Come quickly--"

The knights refused to listen to my situation, and thus I had to leave Mein behind at the inn while I was being dragged back to the castle.

A carriage like the ones I saw earlier was there waiting for me.

I had no idea what was going on. All I knew was that I was being treated like a criminal while the real one was somewhere roaming free.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 7 – False Charge

Things happened and so on and so forth. I was abducted while being dragged through the castle walls, and within the audience chamber, the knights had their spears pointed at me.

Inside we have a pair made of an ill-mannered king and his minister.

As well as...

“Mein!”

Itsuki, Ren, and Motoyasu, along with their respective merry companions, were also gathered here.

After calling out to Mein, she hid behind Motoyasu and I was dumbfounded.

“W-what’s with that attitude?”

Everyone was staring at me as if I was a villain.

“You really don’t remember?”

Motoyasu cross-examined me with an imposing posture.

What in the world was his problem?

“Remember what? Wait a sec... that chain mail!”

That bastard Motoyasu was wearing my bloody chain mail!

"So you're the bedroom intruder!"

"Who the hell is a bedroom intruder?! Don't even think of escaping from your sins using that nonsense!"

"Sins? What sins?"

As if in response, the audience chamber began emitting an atmosphere much like a criminal trial.

"Now then, what is the charge against the Shield Hero?"

"Charge? Charge for what?"

"Sniff... Hic... Shield Hero-sama got drunk yesterday... Hic... Th-then he suddenly bursted into my room, giving into his beastly desires while forcing himself on me."

"Huh?"

"The Shield Hero said that, 'The night is still young' and violently tore my clothes off."

Motoyasu then comforted the sobbing Mein.

"I-I was horrified... I ran out of the room, screaming for my dear life when Motoyasu-sama appeared and defended me."

"... What?"

What was that?

Yesterday evening after I separated from Mein, I headed straight to bed. So when did all that happen?

The mortified Mein did nothing but sob.

"What are you saying? After dinner last night I went straight to bed."

"Stop spewing such lies, you bastard. It's clear as day that the reason Mein's crying is because of you."

"What secret motives do you have for protecting Mein? Forget that, where did you steal that chain mail from?!"

You only met once yesterday, no?

"Er, well, yesterday I found Mein drinking alone in the tavern, and she gave me this chain mail as a gift."

"Huh?"

That was mine no matter how you looked at it.

Of course, there's the possibility that it was bought by Mein with her own pocket money, but Motoyasu got one right when mine disappeared. This was all too suspicious.

Motoyasu's story was full of shit. I had to convince the king of that.

“Right! Your highness! My bedroom was raided and everything inside was stolen except for this shield! Please arrest the culprit.”

“Silence, you fiend!”

The King flatly declared and ignored my plead.

“You brutally committed rape against my dear countryman, villain! If you weren’t a hero, I would've executed you on the spot!”

“This is a huge misunderstanding! I didn't commit any crimes!”

Unfortunately, everyone here had already judged me guilty before the trial had even begun.

I could feel my blood boiling and my fury rising.

What the hell? What the hell is this? What the hell is this shit?!

I don’t recall any of this crap, so why should I be abused like this?!

I locked eyes with Mein while trying to convey my plea for help. In response, Mein mirthfully stuck her tongue out while everyone was focused on me.



... That was when I realized it.

I glared at Motoyasu.

I could feel a deep, dark emotion swelling up from within me, seeping into my guts.

“You fiend! You must have thrown away your clothes and money to create an alibi for your crimes!”

Motoyasu pointed at me and accused with an extremely loud yell.

“What! Are you trying to say that I’m a serial rapist?!”

Motoyasu shielded Mein with his body, trying to uphold his fake heroic act.

“Don’t fuck with me! I’ve already spent all of my money to gear up my comrade!”

It seemed that Mein, who originally intended to be Motoyasu’s companion, plotted this beforehand. Since I was the loser who could only use a shield, I bought her all of the good equipment. And after acquiring everything she wanted with her sweet flattery, Mein then ditched me and stole the rest of my money. She later came back crying to the king, acting like the victim, and driving me into ruin.

... This is so messed up.

Ever since the beginning, Mein had always called me by my title, Yuusha-sama, while she called Motoyasu by name.

If this isn't enough evidence then what is?

Does that mean this world only needs one hero?

"Even after coming to a parallel world, I still have to put up with this garbage of an associate."

"Yeah, I guess, but I hold no sympathy towards you."

Ren didn't hesitate to condemn me as guilty.

I see... So everyone here was in on the conspiracy from the very beginning... Since I used a shield, since I was weak, and since I didn't know anything; they had already intended to get rid of me because I was nothing more than dead weight to them.

——Cheap bastards.

No matter where I go, these types of filthy maggots always pop up.

The people of this country held no regard towards me from the start.

You know what?! Why the hell do I even need to protect you people?!

Perish already! This god forsaken world!

"... Fine, I don't give a shit. Just return me to my old world already, won't you? After that, just summon a new Shield Hero."

A parallel World? Hah!

I wouldn't even want to come to here in the first place if I knew this kind of shit would happen!

"Running away when it's inconvenient? What filth."

"I suppose you're right. But as long as I fulfill my obligations properly, then a few forceful relationships with women shouldn't be that much of a problem..."

"Go home, be gone! I refuse to accept this kind of trash as a fellow hero!"

Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki glared at me with bloodlust.

It was a fun experience, I suppose, being in a parallel world. Yet it was all ruined by this jerk.

"Okay! Now send me back to my old world already!"

Then, the King groaned as he held his head.

"Unfortunately, there isn't a known method to send heroes back to their own worlds... Even if we wanted to re-summon new heroes, then all of the current ones would first need to perish."

"... Wh-why?"

"What the..."

"I-It's got to be a lie..."

The other three heroes, bewildered, responded in unison.

There's no magic that could return us to our old world?

"Then I can't go back home now?!"

Don't fuck with me!

"Give me a proper explanation!"

I violently shook off the knights' restraint.

"Hey! Stop resisting!"

"Let me go!"

One of the knights hit me.

Guh!

A nice sound was heard, but it felt kind of ticklish rather than painful.

I quickly punched that knight back, but instead of hurting him, my hand grew numb instead.

"So, King? What's my punishment?"

I asked as I held my hand, waiting for the numbness to pass.

"... Right now, you shall not receive any discipline due to your value as our trump card against the incoming wave. However, we will spread the rumors of your crimes to the citizens. That will be your punishment. Don't even think about finding suitable work in my country."

"Haha, thanks oh so much for your lenience!"

That meant I was only left with adventuring in order to level up and prepare for the incoming wave.

"The next wave is predicted to come in one month. Even though you're a criminal, a fiend like you is also the Hero of the Shield. You won't be able to escape from your role."

"I know! Since I'm weak and all that. Time is pretty precious to me, you know!"

Chari...

Ha, as expected. Even after everything, only this shield stayed loyal to me.

"Yo! You wanted this, didn't you?!"

I took out my pouch with all my remaining 30 silver coins and threw it in Motoyasu's face.

"Uwa! What are you doing?! You bastard--!"

I just pretended that Motoyasu's disparagement didn't reach my ears.

After leaving the castle and entering the main road, people looked and pointed at me while gossiping amongst themselves.

Really, word sure travels fast.

Isn't that just amazing?

Whatever, everything already looks hideous in my eyes.

That's why I'll only place my trust in cold hard cash... and nothing else. So now the curtain of my new adventuring arc rose in the worst possible way.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 8 – Fallen Fame

One week had passed since then.

Yet I was still hanging around the castle's vicinity.

“Hey, Shield lad.”

“Wah!?”

After storming out of the castle, I was called out by Oyaji from the Weapon Shop, half-naked with nothing but my underwear on...

To be more accurate, I was strolling past the entrance to his store.

“I’ve heard about your exploits. You raped that companion of yours, didn’t you? Mind letting me get a punch in?”

He seemed to have heard the rumors and was boiling over with rage, announcing his intentions while grasping his fist.

“You too, asshole?!”

This guy's probably the same as everyone else, they'll never listen to my side of the story.

Ah yes, I had absolutely no idea what passed off as common sense in this country - no - this world when I first arrived. But raping a woman must have been one of the cardinal sins.

Ah, damn... When I saw Oyaji, the face of that slut rose into my mind.

I was about to get beaten into a pulp.

He violently grabbed me and scowled.

"Hu... Bastard..."

"What? Don't you want to hit me?"

Oyaji loosened his fist and dropped his stance.

"No... I won't do it."

"That so? Sure was cutting it close."

I was pretty confident that despite my low attack power, I could still go blow for blow and outlast anyone in a fight.

Unfortunately, pulverizing people will never convince them to believe me. That's why I chose to focus on saving money for any future occurrences. Although, venting my frustrations on the balloons did help clear my mind.

"Hold on a second!"

"What do you want?!"

I was about to leave through the town gate when was stopped by Oyaji.

A small bag was thrown at me.

"You won't get very far with that appearance. At least let me give you this parting gift."

Inside the bag contained some cheap linen clothing and a worn out mantle.

"...How much are you charging?"

"Let's say 5 Copper Coins. It's on a bargain sale."

"...Got it. I'll come back to pay you later."

It was a bit weird moving around in my underwear. Guess the old man never passed up a chance to do business.

"Remember to pay me back in full, since the only thing I believe in is cold hard cash."

"Ah, sure thing."

I put on the clothes and donned the mantle, then I headed to the meadows. After that, I went in and subjugated a horde of Balloons.

"ORA ORA ORA ORA ORA ORA ORA!"

It took roughly 5 minutes to kill one of them, but it wasn't too much of a problem since I received 0 damage no matter how hard they bit me.

In order to distract myself, I fought all day long and obtained some Balloon's skins as a result.

Level UP!

I'm now at Lv 2.

Conditions for Orange Small Shield and Yellow Small Shield have been released!

Now then, time to carefully do my various daytime chores.

I became hungry as evening approached.

Reluctantly, I returned to the castle town, heading straight for the Merchant's Shop where they buy various materials from monster drops.

The merchant was a little chubby, and he let out a phony, unpleasant laugh upon seeing my face.

……Looks like he was looking down on me.

I understood him with only a glance.

There was a prospective customer ahead of me who had come to trade in some goods.

Coincidentally, he was also selling Balloon's skins.

"Let's see…… how about I buy these for one copper per two pieces?"

The merchant assessed while pointing at the Balloon's skins.

2 pieces for each Copper Coin……

"Please do."

"Thank you for your patronage."

The customer left and I was next in line.

"Hey. I've brought some monster materials to sell today."

"I humbly welcome you."

Thought I didn't hear your little laugh at the end, you moron?

"So you do have some. Balloon's skins, I see. How does ten pieces for a copper sound to you?"

One fifth of the original amount! This bastard's looking down on me way too much.

"Didn't you buy two pieces per copper from that other guy just a little while ago?"

"Did such a thing happen? Why can't I seem to recall..?"

Bullshit, he keeps making up some dumb excuses…… so you want to do THAT kind of business.

"Hmph. Fine then."

I grabbed the merchant's collar and pulled him toward me.

"Guh, wh-, what——"

"You want to buy THESE guys? They're still alive and are very energetic, you see."

Gupu!

I took one of the Orange Balloons that was hidden inside my mantle and let it bite the merchant's nose.

"GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!"

After pulling the Balloon away from his face, I kicked the stumbling merchant down.

"The meadow's a pretty dangerous place as you can tell. So, you feel like doing some proper business now?"

I flipped open my mantle a little to show him the 5 Balloons hidden underneath it.

Since it doesn't hurt at all when they bite me, I figure that they can be quite useful in case some asshole picks a fight with me.

Regrettably, since my attack power is close to 0, I'm not much of a threat.

But thanks to my ingenious strategy, the negotiations were successful.

This pig understood his position. With this little demonstration, he could picture a future where none of his bones remained once these balloons were done with him.

"I'm not demanding any extravagant costs from you. I just hate being looked down upon with people trying to exploit me."

"You won't get away with this——"

"Tell me, if a merchant was extorting money from an adventurer, and others were to find out about this, I wonder what will become of him?"

Trust was a merchant's greatest ally, so he would have already defeated your average adventurer. But sadly for him, his opponent was me.

Which is why I kindly provided him with the alternative of going bankrupt from lack of customers instead.

"Guh……"

The merchant glared resentfully at me with bloodlust lingering in his eyes. However, he soon gave in.

"……I got it."

"Haha, please don't be so obvious when overcharging people in the future. From now on I'll be a regular of yours, so I'll be expecting some reasonable deals from you.

"I'd very much like to refuse your offer, but I suppose money holds no sin, no matter where it's from. I'll look forward to your business."

I guess he was the type of villain who knew when to call it quits. My Balloons were then purchased at a price slightly below market value.

“Haha. Feel free to proclaim my greatness by spreading it to others. It'll serve as a good lesson for the merchant who tried fooling around with the Balloon industry.”

“Yeah, I got it. You, dear sir, are one bloody hell of a customer!”

And thus, I received enough money to pay for the clothes that Oyaji threw at me.

I stopped by at a restaurant for dinner. However, the food didn't have any taste. At first I thought that I was scammed by the restaurant, but it seemed there was an actual problem with my taste buds.

How about the Inn? Since I didn't have money, I had to sleep in the meadows! But that was no problem since I wouldn't feel any pain even if a Balloon attacked me all night long.

The next morning, there was also this bird-like creature which joined in along with the Balloons. So I pounded on it to relieve my stress.

And I got myself some morning pennies!

A person will learn how to treasure money once they madly struggle to acquire some.

First, I looted some tradable goods from the Balloons.

I then saw some herbs clustered together in the meadows.

I remembered that the Pharmacy in town sells medical herbs, so these should add up to quite a sum.

While I was clearing away the surrounding weeds, the shield reacted. I slowly let the shield absorb them.

The requirement of Leaf Shield had been unsealed.

Come to think of it, I totally forgot about the Weapon Book.

I went ahead and checked the shields that were lit up.

Small Shield

True power unsealed! Increases Defensive Power by 3+!

Orange Small Shield

True power sealed·····Equipment bonus: 2+ Defensive Power.

Yellow Small Shield

True power sealed····· Equipment bonus: 2+ Defensive Power.

Leaf Shield

True power sealed·····Equipment bonus: Collection skill 1+.

I opened the Help menu for more details.

「Weapon Transformation and seals on their True power」

Weapon transformation refers to: the instance where the legendary weapon takes on a different shape.

In order to perform weapon transformation, the owner must place their hand on the weapon and silently conjure the desired weapon's name.

True power unsealing refers to: the instance where the user receives permanent stats and abilities from the transformed weapon.

「Equipment Bonus」

Equipment bonus refers to: the abilities that will be given to the user if they equip this certain weapon.

For example, when equipped a weapon with 'Erst Bash' the user will be able to use the skill 'Erst Bash'.

If 3+ Attack Force is the bonus when equipping that weapon, the user will be granted 3+ attack power.

I see, so by unsealing their true power I'll permanently receive the bonus even without equipping that particular weapon.

Perhaps in the long run, it would be wiser to gather materials along the way instead of just blindly massacring enemies.

Just how much more game-like will this world get?

After contemplating matters, I became interested in the equipment bonus of Leaf Shield.

Collection skill 1+

This skill will most likely be giving me some sort of bonus when I gather herbs.

Right now I have no money.

With all things considered, this seems like an easy, high paying job.

I equipped the Leaf Shield without a shred of hesitation.

Shun…… a sound like something cutting through air was made, and my shield transformed into lush green, earthy leaves.

……There's no decrease in my Defensive Power. The Small Shield was too weak to begin with.

Now then, should I begin collecting these clustered medical herbs?

Puchi.

A nice sound was heard as I easily collected one of them.

Pa……

The herb really did glow when I picked it up.

Collection skill 1+

Aero Herb : Normal Quality -> Great Medical Value

Its icon also shined and changed its form.

Heh……a nice, brief description, this will be surprisingly useful.

Sunset quickly came as I wandered around the whole day, stuffing my bag with medical herbs.

By the way, I don't know if it was due to all the collecting or its short time requirement, but it seems the Leaf Shield's true power was successfully unsealed.

Other colored Small Shield Series were also unsealed that day.

I returned to the castle town, planning to sell the big bag of medicines in my hand.

"Hou……This is quite a collection here. Where did you get them?"

"From the meadow spreading outside the castle. You don't know about these?"

"Fumu……you do indeed have a lot of them…… but it seems the quality is a bit bad……"

I then sold the herbs after some small talk. Today's profits were 1 Silver Coin and 50 Copper Coins.

A considerable amount compared to my previous days: a new record.

On a side note, there was this one fellow that came over to me while I was eating, saying that he wanted to be my companion.

I was getting tired of these guys with their nefarious faces.

……Today's food didn't have any flavor either.

Since I couldn't taste anything, I just ordered enough food to fill my stomach.

"Shield Hero-sama, please let me be your companion."

He came over and spoke to me with an air of superiority.

Speaking as if you're my boss, that meant nothing but trouble. And after taking another look, she was a goddamn woman like that slut from before.

"Well then, let's confirm the terms of our contract, shall we?"

"Hai."

Gah!!!!

Calm down, this is the part where I withdraw, just like how I practiced it beforehand.

"First of all, it'll be a full time job. I suppose you know what that means, right?"

"Nope."

I want to kill him already!

"We'll be distributing income obtained from adventuring. For example, let's say we get a fund of 100 Silver Coins, I'll be taking at least 40% of it, and the rest will be given out: depending on your efforts. Since you're the only other party member right now, the amount will be divided between you and me. But since we won't know anything until I see you in action, I'll be distributing the money at my own discretion for now."

"What the heck, aren't you just trying to hog all the money with this roundabout talk?!"

"Didn't I say it depends on your efforts? If you work properly then you'll get paid appropriately."

"Well then, I suppose that's all well and good. Let's go buy some equipment then."

"..... Go buy it yourself; I have no obligation to buy YOUR equipment."

"Tsk!"

Most of the time, these type of people are only after the chance of scamming free equipment off of me.

I see right through their facade. They'll just ditch me the moment I pay for their stuff.

Such scum. Just like that bitch.

"Fine then. Hand over all your money."

"Ah, why is there a balloon here?!"

Gabuu!

"No! Stay away!"

A Balloon was wreaking havoc in the tavern, but it's not any of my business. After pulling the Balloon off of his hilariously bitten nose, I put away my meal and exited the establishment.

In the end, there are no good people in this world.

All they think about is how to prey upon others.

Anyway, I continued earning money as my daily routine. And before I knew it, the second week had already begun.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 9 – Something called a Slave

One, two, three...

Two weeks and only 40 silver coins.

I gathered a bit more than what I had thrown at that bastard spear hero, it seemed.

This was all pointless.

The places I could go with my attack power was extremely limited.

But I did try going into the forest once since I wouldn't take any damage.

Was that a Red Balloon?

When I struck it with my bare hands, I received a shock similar to hitting a can.

Even after 30 minutes of whaling on it, the monster wasn't getting any closer to dying.

I had enough and left the forest.

Basically, I couldn't fight any monsters beyond what was found in this grassland.

By the way, after two weeks I was now at level 4.

Though I don't know how much those other bastard heroes have leveled.
The Red Balloon was still relentlessly biting my arm, trying to sever it.
Had it already been a week since I went into the forest?
Maybe I should give it another shot.

BANG!*

"Hah..."

Nope. My attack power was still too low.
Since I couldn't deal any damage, I couldn't defeat any monsters.
And since I couldn't defeat anything, I received 0 experience points.
And with 0 experience points, I couldn't raise my attack power.
What a detestable loop.

From the tavern, I was walking through a back alleyway which led into the meadows.

However, today was a tad different compared to all the other days up until now.

"Looks like you're facing quite a predicament."

"?"

A strange man wearing a tailcoat and a hat, which looks to be made of silk, stopped me.

This eccentric gentleman was wearing - how should I say this? - a pair of super obese sunglasses.

He really is a weird guy.

He left the impression that deviated away from the medieval theme.

It's best to simply ignore him.

"I don't have enough manpower."

Bull's eye!

A direct hit right into my weak spot.

"I can't defeat any monsters."

He was the type that continued making unwanted conversations.

"If that's the case, then I have something just for you, kind sir."

"And here's where you're gonna advertise some companionship service to me, right?"

I don't have the time or luxury to babysit some loser who's only after my money.

"Companion? No no, I'm not providing such an inconvenient substitute."

"Huh... Then what are you providing?"

That man swiftly came closer and asked.

"Are you interested?"

"Don't get too close to me! It's disgusting."

"Fu fu fu, I like the look in your eyes. Good, I'll tell you!"

The weird gentleman teasingly shouted while waving his cane.

"A slave, of course."

"A slave?"

"Yes, a slave."

'Slavery is a system where certain people are are forced into labor and treated as tradable property. Slaves can be held against their will; deprived of their basic freedoms such as leaving, demanding compensation, and refusing to work.'

This was written on a Wikipedia page, I think.

So slave trade exists in this world. Wow.

"Why would I want a slave?"

"In order to have a person who's both competent and loyal."

Twitch...

"We cast a curse that will castigate the slave to death should they ever betray you."

"Huh..."

Very interesting.

Die for disobedience. Someone who wouldn't foolishly think about taking advantage of me was exactly what I needed.

I had low attack power, so I wanted party members. But they were all disloyal money mongers.

Therefore, I couldn't afford to keep them around.

But slaves will never betray you. Because betrayal means death.

"What's your reply?"

"Let's have a look."

Smirking, the slave trader led the way.

We walked through the back alleys for awhile.

It seems this nation has its own state of corruption.

Ducking into a dark, hidden side street, we came across what looked like a circus tent.

"Right this way, Sir Hero."

"I'm coming."

The slave trader walked creepily. How should I describe his steps? They were too big to be called hops, at least.

Then, as expected, the slave trader led me inside.

"Now, I'm gonna say this just in case. But if you're thinking of conning me..."

"That must be the so-called 'Balloon Release' which has made you infamous around town. Planning to escape amidst the chaos, are you?"

Huh... They're calling it by such a nickname now.

Well, it was a convenient way to punish idiots. So its fame was only understandable.

"There was a customer who wanted to enslave a hero. So I intended to approach Sir Hero with that open possibility, but I've changed my mind. Oh yes."

"?"

"You have the qualities of a fine customer, both good and bad."

"What do you mean?"

"Who knows? What do you think?"

I don't get this slave trader. What does he expect from me?

GACHANG!

The heavy gate opened from inside the circus tent.

"Huh..."

The interior was dimly lit with a faintly necrotic odor hanging in the air.

Because of the strong, beastly smell, I could easily tell that the environment wasn't clean.

Within the numerous cages, humanoid shadows wriggled and squirmed.

"Now, this one here is my recommendation."

I approached closer to the cage and checked what was inside.

"Grrrrrrr... GRAR!"

"It's not human."

Inside the cage partially resembled a human with fur, fangs, and claws.

"This is a beastman. It's classified as a humanoid, more or less."

"Huh, a beastman."

A species which shows up fairly often in fantasies, mostly as enemy monsters though.

"I'm a summoned hero, so I'm not well-informed regarding this world. Tell me more."

Like those bastard heroes, I'm completely clueless when it comes to this parallel world.

But without a doubt, I've noticed people with dog or cat ears in town. And I do get a phantasmic feel when I look at them, since they are rare.

"The Melromarc kingdom has a human superiority custom, which makes it a difficult place for demi-humans and beastmen to reside in."

"Huh..."

While I certainly do see those species around, they're only venturing merchants or vagabond adventurers. In other words, they are segregated from society and can't hold a proper job.

"So, what are demi-humans and beastmen anyway?"

"Demi-humans closely resemble humans, yet they have defining non-human traits and features. Beastmen are even less humanoid than demi-humans. Oh yes."

"I see, so they belong in the same category."

"Correct. And since these demi-humans are thought to be closely related to monsters, they have trouble living in this nation. Therefore, they are often treated as slaves."

Every world has its own darkness. And in this place which is fully aware of the non-human sentiment, there's no creature more convenient to use than them.

"And you can punish a slave."

The slave trader snapped his finger. A magic circle appeared on his arm while a similar circle implanted into the werewolf's chest started to glow.

"GRAAAARRR! GHAAAAA!"

The werewolf held its chest and twisted in pain.

When the slave trader snapped his fingers again, the magic circle disappeared.

"With one simple action, as you can see."

"A very convenient spell."

I whispered, looking at the werewolf who fell on its back.

"Can I use it too?"

"Certainly. You can change the trigger command, so it doesn't need to be with a snap of your fingers! The trigger can be implemented as a conditional clause as well."

"I see..."

It's got a pretty convenient design.

"However, a ceremony to input your body's innate code into the spell will be necessary."

"So it won't be confused by commands from other owners?"

"Your sharpness on this subject is greatly appreciated."

The slave trader smirked creepily.

What a weird guy.

"Anyways, how much does this cost?"

"As you know, this werewolf is from a capable species..."

When it comes to money, I'm sure there are many rumors about me.

"How does 15 gold coins sound?"

"I'm not sure about the market price... But you're stating a modest fee, I trust?"

1 gold coin is equivalent to 100 silver coins.

There's a reason the king delivered them with roses. Because of their high value, the gold coins are hard to exchange.

The shops in town mostly dealt with silver coins, since they were more commonly used as the form of currency.

"But of course."

...

The slave trader smiled as I stared back.

"You showed this to me knowing I couldn't afford it, didn't you?"

"Yes. You will become a prominent person one day, and it'll be inconvenient for us if you aren't aware of our high standards. We can't have some other incompetent trader sell you inferior goods."

He's a peculiar guy either way.

"This is the status of the slave, for your reference."

The slave trader showed me a small crystal. An icon began to glow and words appeared.

Battle slave Lvl. 75. Species: Werewolf.

Other skills and techniques are displayed as well.

75... Almost 20 times my Lvl.

How easy will fighting be with someone this powerful under my command?
It's likely stronger than any of the other heroes right now.

Though the pricing was iffy for its quality.

Because of its poor state of health, it was probably still a drawback even if it could follow my orders.

And does this price include all the other troublesome fees?

"It had previously been fighting at the Colosseum. I picked it up when it was discarded due to its broken arms and legs."

"Huh."

So this is an inferior model.

Weak despite its level.

"Now that you have seen our best product, what kind of slave is to your liking?"

"Something cheap and not crippled."

"Neither for fighting nor labor? So according to the rumors..."

"I didn't do it!"

"Hu hu hu, either way is fine with me. So what other qualities are you looking for?"

"Being domestic will be inconvenient. And of course a sex slave is out of the question."

"Huh... Seems like the rumors were indeed false."

"... I didn't do it."

Yeah, I can say it, since I didn't actually do it.

What I need now is simply someone who can defeat monsters for me, as long as they're usable.

"Gender?"

"Male would be preferable, but I won't stress over it."

"Huh..."

The slave trader scratched his cheek.

"The quality won't be good enough to be deemed as a pet. Is that alright?"

"What do I care about looks?"

"Even though its level may be low?"

"If I want strength, I'll train it myself."

"... A humorous answer for someone who doesn't trust in people."

"A slave isn't human, is it? Training a slave is no different than practicing with this shield of mine. So long as it doesn't double-cross me, then I can train it."

"You've got me there."

'Pft pft.' The slave trader held back his laughter.

"This way, please."

We walked through the cage-filled tent for several minutes, passing the chaotic area into one which was less noisy.

I turned my gaze and saw both decrepit youths and the elderly with forlorn faces.

After walking a bit more, the slave trader stopped.

"These are the cheapest slaves which we can provide to Sir Hero."

He said while pointing to three caged slaves.

The first one was a bunny-eared guy around the age of 20 with an arm bent at an odd angle.

The second was a bony girl around the age of 10 with circular dog-like ears and a strangely fat tail, shuddering and coughing in fear.

The third was a blind lizard man. He radiated a strangely evil aura, however, he looked much too human to be a lizard man.

"From the left, we have a rabbit species with a genetic disease, a raccoon species afflicted with panic and ailment, and a beastman lizard man.

Ah, so the third is a beastman.

"All of them seem problematic."

"Only these fulfill your requested conditions. Anything lower than this, well frankly..."

The slave trader looked to the back. I did the same.

I could tell even from afar: the stench of death. That highly concentrated smell similar to a funeral. Something in there...

The necrotic odor was coming from there too.

I didn't want to look: it would be mentally scarring.

"What's the price, by the way?"

"From the left: 25, 30, and 40 silver coins."

"And their level?"

"5, 1, and 8."

Looking at the current standings, the beastman lizard man seemed to be the best. But the price and genetic disease, not to mention he was very thin.

Although the rabbit guy can't use one of his arms, the rest of his body should be fine. His expression was awfully grim... though it was the same for everyone else here.

"Speaking of which, they're very quiet."

"They'll be punished if they make noise."

"I see."

Either they were well trained, or the trader didn't show me the untamed ones.

The lizard man was probably useful in battle, but not for anything else.

"Why is this middle one so cheap?"

Although she was skinny and scared, she was still a girl. Her face wasn't all that pretty, however.

A raccoon species, literally a raccoon dog.

But a girl closely resembling a human could be sold for other specialties.

"The raccoon species is somewhat inferior aesthetically. If it were the fox species, then it could be sold at a high price despite any problems."

"I see..."

Too inferior to be a pet then.

"Her face is below standards and she panics during the night, so we're having difficulties with her."

"So this is one of your goods in stock?"

"Wow, right into the heart of the matter."

Not suited for labor compared to the other two. Her level was the lowest as well.

It's hard to decide which of these three is the best.

My eyes met with hers.



Then. I noticed my emotions suddenly swelling deep inside.

Yes. This one is a girl, the same sex as that bitch.

Looking at its frightened eyes, I can feel the intense desire to dominate her.

It's good to imagine her as if I enslaved that woman. So even if I die, my soul also won't bear as much of a grudge that way.

"Then I'll buy that slave in the middle."

"Your immensely wicked smirk is very gratifying to see."

The slave holder took out the key, let the raccoon girl out of the cage, and chained her to a leash.

"Hee!?!"

Looking at the fearful girl, I felt extremely satisfied.

What a nice feeling to imagine that woman making this face.

Dragging the girl along, the slave trader returned and called someone from inside the semi-opened circus tent to retrieve a vase.

Then, he poured some ink into a small saucer and directed it towards me.

"Mr Hero, please share some of your blood. Then the ritual process will be complete, and this slave shall become yours."

"I see."

I used a knife to slightly cut open a finger.

If someone else tried to stab me, the shield would respond. Yet it was unresponsive if I ever harmed myself.

Furthermore, it won't activate outside of battle.

I waited for blood to ooze out, then dripped several drops into the saucer.

The slave trader used a brush to soak up the ink, then he tore the slave's clothes down to her waist and painted the stigma on her body.

"GYAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!"

The slave stigma started to glow, and an icon appeared in my status window.

Obtained a slave.

A message with terms of service agreement appeared.

Numerous terms and conditions are listed.

I skimmed through it and set the punishment for betrayal to extreme pain.

I checked the companion icon next to the slave entry.

Since her name was unknown, 'Slave A' was written in there.

It seemed like I can change the specifications however I wanted. I'll read it closely later.

"Now this slave is yours, Sir Elderly Hero. Please complete your purchase."

"Yeah."

I handed over 31 silver coins.

"There's 1 extra."

"It's for the ceremony service. You were going to demand it anyways, weren't you?"

"... You know me quite well."

If I pay the service in advance, he can't complain about it later either.

Though if he planned to demand more, what should I do?

"Well, it's fine. Since we cleared out our inventory too."

"How much were you going to charge for the ceremony, by the way?"

"Haha, our services were included in the 30 silver coins."

"Is that so, who knew?"

The slave trader laughed, so I chuckled back.

"You really are too sharp! I'm shocked."

"Feel free to say whatever you want about me."

"We're looking forward to your next visit."

"I'm sure."

I commanded the slave to follow and left the circus tent.

The slave trailed behind me with a dark expression.

"Tell me your name."

"...*Cough*..."

She turned her face away, refusing to answer.

But that reaction was foolish.

The slave disobeyed, so the punishment was activated.

"A, UGHHHHHHH!"

The slave held her chest in pain.

"Now then, say your name."

"Raphtalia...*Cough* *cough*!"

"Raphtalia? Okay, let's go."

After announcing her name, the pain stopped and Raphtalia was able to breath again.

Holding her hand, I continued to walk through the back alley.

"..."

Raphtalia looked up to me, at the hand which held hers, and walked along as well.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 10 – Kid's Lunch

"You...."

Oyaji was completely dumbstruck when I brought Raphtalia along with me to the Weapon Shop.

Yep, in order for her to fight efficiently... she needed more offensive power. So it would be absurd not to buy her a weapon.

"Give me a weapon within the range of 6 silver coins that this girlie can use."

"... Hah."

The Weapon Shop's Oyaji lets out a deep sigh.

"Is this country really that corrupted, or did you become completely rotten to the bone... but whatever, I'm getting 6 silver coins out of this."

"Do you still have any left, things like ordinary clothing or a cape?"

"... It's fine. I'll add those in as a freebie."

Oyaji muttered with a detested tone while bringing out several knives.

"These fall under the 6 silver coins and below category."

From left to right, we have knives made from: Copper, Bronze, and Iron.

They all have the same attack range but different prices.

I made Raphtalia hold each of the knives a few times before choosing the one which she was most comfortable with.

"This one's good."

Raphtalia's face paled as she looked at me and Oyaji with the knife in her hands.

"Here, your free clothes and mantle."

Oyaji handed them over with a brusque shove and guided us to the changing room.

I seized Raphtalia's knife and then instructed her to wear the donated clothing.

Raphtalia tottered into the changing room while coughing; she then got changed.

"She still looks rather messy... let's give her a bath later on."

There was a river flowing near the meadow.

In this country, the river splits into various branches as it flows downstream. My camping grounds have recently been relocated in that area.

It's a great spot since I can always fish for food.

Some of the fishes that I caught were absorbed, unsealing the effects of the 'Fish Shield' and acquiring Angling Techniques 1 as a result.

Raphtalia timidly tottered over to me after she finished changing.

It seemed she understood that disobeying will bring about pain.

I squatted down to Raphtalia's eye level and spoke to her.

"Now then, Raphtalia, this here is your weapon. From now on, you and I will be fighting monsters together. You get what I'm saying?"

"..."

Raphtalia nodded at my words with frightened eyes.

Good, because it'll be painful if she didn't understand.

"Now then, with that knife in your hand——"

I took out the Orange Balloon that was hidden within my cloak and placed it in front of Raphtalia.

"Hack and slash this thing."

"Hii!?"

When I showed her the hidden demon, Raphtalia screamed in shock and dropped her weapon.

"Eh... N-...No."

"That's an order. Do it."

"I-, I can't."

Raphtalia shook her head vigorously. However, she was then struck with a surge of pain due to her disobedience from the slave spell.

"Guh..."

"Come now, it'll only continue hurting if you don't stab this thing."

"*Koho...koho!*"

Raphtalia's face contorted in pain as she firmly gripped her weapon.

"You..."

Oyaji was rendered speechless as he witnessed our little theatrics.

Raphtalia firmly steeled her will to kill as I shoved against the Orange Balloon that was biting on my arm.

Buni...

"That's weak! Put in some more effort!"

"..!? Ei!"

Startled, Raphtalia recoiled back for a moment. Then immediately using the momentum, she once again charged at the Balloon with great force.

POP!*

The Balloon burst with a loud noise.

EXP 1

For the first time, a text box popped up and indicated that my ally had defeated an enemy.

Yet again, my head was filled with bloodlust.

That bitch. She never had any intention of staying with me or teaching me how the system works.

“Good, you did well.”

I patted Raphtalia.

She then looked up to me with a mystified expression.

“Alright, the next one will be this.”

The strongest balloon that I’ve encountered was still attached to me, trying to devour me with its bites. I held out the munching Red Balloon just like I had done with the last one.

The Red Balloon didn’t eat or drink anything for about a week, so it should have been weakened considerably.

But even so, this thing could probably endure an attack from a sick, newbie girl.

Steadily, Raphtalia nodded her head and pierced the Balloon’s eye more firmly than before.

POP!

EXP 1

Companion EXP 6

It was then that the icon caught my attention.

“Good, from now on, just keep fighting like this; let's go.”

“... *Koho*”

Following my orders, Raphtalia sheathed her weapon around her waist and obediently followed me.

“Hah, hey buddy. I have something to say to you.”

“And that is?”

Oyaji grumbled while scowling at me.

“Don't YOU, EVER, DIE, DISHONORABLY, you hear?”

“I'll take those kind words to heart.”

I returned his sarcasm with one of my own.

Quickly heading towards the meadows, I noticed some stores and street stalls along the side road which continue stretching into the horizon.

While Raphtalia held my hand and walked beside me, she glanced around the town restlessly.

The food stalls were releasing a delectable aroma.

Remaining money after my purchases: 3 silver coins... Speaking of which, my belly was a bit empty.

- Gu...*

Such a sound was heard from Raphtalia's direction.

She averted her gaze with an:

"Ah!"

While trying to deny what just happened...

I wondered why she was holding back.

Right now, if Raphtalia doesn't have the strength to fight enemies, then I won't be getting income anytime soon either.

A dull knife is useless. She won't be able to muster any strength when she's hungry.

I went inside a restaurant which seemed affordable enough for our budget.

"Wel-...come!"

Our server guided us to a table with a displeased look, due to our shabby appearance.

Along the way, Raphtalia looked over at a parent/child pair who were sitting elsewhere.

With a finger to her mouth, Raphtalia seemed quite envious of the child digging into that kiddie lunch.

I guess she wanted to eat that.

We sat down and quickly ordered before our server left.

"Etto, I'll have the cheapest meal on the menu, while this little lady will get whatever that kid over there is eating."

"!?"

Raphtalia stared at me with clear astonishment. Was it so surprising for me to order that lunch for her?

"Understood. That comes to a total of 9 copper coins."

"Here."

Handing over a silver coin, our server then gave me back the difference.

I looked around the store absentmindedly while waiting for our lunch to be served.

...

People around us began to gossip after noticing my presence.

Yep, it's totally a parallel world in here.

"Wh-,y?"

"Hm?"

I lowered my gaze towards Raphtalia after hearing her voice.

She was staring up at me with a face full of wonder.

"You looked hungry for that meal, no? Or did you want to order something else?"

Raphtalia shook her head so fast that a bustling sound can be heard from the movement.

This is quite a delicate topic for her.

"Wh-, why, would you let me eat that lunch?"

"Like I told you, I ordered it since you seemed to want it."

"But..."

How come she was being so persistent on this subject?

"Anyways, eat some food and get some nutrition. You'll die if you're too skinny, you know."

Well, since I just bought my new slave, I can't have her dying on me before she paid me back with interest.

"Sorry for the wait."

Our meals have finally arrived.

That's the lunch which I ordered for Raphtalia? It's a bacon meal set (?) about as big as a person's arm.

Mhm. The presentation is in pretty good taste at least.

"..."

Raphtalia froze on the spot while having thoughts like "is this kid's meal really meant for me?"

"You don't want to eat?"

"... Is this really alright?"

"Hah... it's fine, so eat up."

Raphtalia's face contorted a bit upon hearing my instructions.

"Okay."

Raphtalia timidly began eating her kid's lunch with her bare hands.

Well, it couldn't be helped since she grew up in a harsh environment.

It somehow seemed that the amount of gossip floating around had grown once more. Though it's not a matter worth concerning myself with.

Raphtalia adoringly held the flag which had stood at the chicken rice-like summit of her meal.

Mumble mumble mumble*

Raphtalia then began savoring each and every morsel of her lunch.

So I'll be eating my meals with this slave from now on... just a solitary thought which crossed my mind.



TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 11 – Slave's Accomplishments

After our lunch inside the restaurant, we headed off into the meadow.

Raphtalia was humming cheerfully by the way.

However, upon seeing the meadow, she began to tremble with fear lingering in her eyes.

"It may be scary but I will definitely protect you from the monsters."

She tilted her head upon hearing my words.

"C'mon, these small fries can only make me itchy when they bite, I don't even feel any pain."

Raphtalia was dumbfounded when I showed her the gallery of Balloons hidden under my mantle.

"That's not, painful?"

"Nope."

"Then..."

"I'll tank."

"Yes... *Koho*..."

I was a bit concerned over her coughing, but she seemed to be fine.

We picked up medicinal herbs along the way while heading towards the forest.

Oh, here they come again.

Three Red Balloons came flying out from a bush inside the forest.

I sacrificed myself to make sure that none of them bit Raphtalia.

"Alright, just do it like we had done it a while ago."

"... Hai!"

A motivated Raphtalia vigorously charged and backstabbed the Red Balloons.

POP!* POP!* POP!*

With this, Raphtalia raised her Level to 2.

The requirement for Red Small Shield has been unsealed.

Red Small Shield

True power sealed Equipment Bonus: 4 Defensive Power

I immediately changed my shield.

Raphtalia's eyes popped out when she saw my shield transform.

"Goshujin-sama... just who are you?"

She didn't seem to know that I was the one and only Shield Hero. Well up until now, she was nothing but a demi-human slave after all.

"I'm a Hero. The Hero of the Shield."

"The legendary hero?"

"So you know?"

Raphtalia timidly nodded.

"That's right, I'm a summoned Hero. There are 3 more people like me... but I'm the weakest of them all!"

I began biting my fingernails, trying to contain this sudden outburst of rage. My head was filled with nothing but bloodlust when the face of that fucker popped up.

Raphtalia was frightened by my eyes, instinctively knowing that she shouldn't dig any deeper into this.

"For the time being, today's task will be hunting monsters in this forest. I'll seize them and you'll pierce them."

"Hai..."

She had become somewhat accustomed to this as Raphtalia nodded obediently.

And then, whenever we encountered enemies inside the forest, we'd always use the common tactic where I aggro'ed and disabled them while Raphtalia went in for the kill.

Midway through, we encountered an enemy other than Balloons for the first time.

Roux Mush

A white, moving mushroom. It had sharp slanted eyes, and was roughly the size of a human head.

I experimentally hit it, and it gave off a response identical to a Red Balloon's. Raphtalia then knocked this one down too.

This type of mob also appeared in different shades of color, there were Blue Mushes and Green Mushes.

Requirement for Mush Shield has been unsealed.

Requirement for Blue Mush Shield has been unsealed.

Requirement for Green Mush Shield has been unsealed.

Mush Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Plant Identification 1

Blue Mush Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Simple Compounding Recipes 1

Green Mush Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Apprentice's Compounding

There were no status bonus; all of them gave level-based skill bonuses.

Compounding... Mass producing medicine will be very valuable.

By the end of the day, Raphtalia's Level increased by three, so in total she was now at Level 5.

We walked through the meadow and camped around the riverbed in the evening.

"*Koho*..."

Raphtalia arrived at my side without voicing any complaints.

I suppose it would do her some good if she learned to appreciate money by experiencing the difficulty of making some.

After we lit a campfire with some firewood by the river, I took out a towel from inside my bag and gave it to Raphtalia.

"Go wash yourself for now. After you're done, come back here and warm your cold body with the fire."

'... Hai."

Raphtalia removed her clothes and dove into the river, where she then began cleansing herself.

During that time I began fishing in order to prepare our dinner.

I properly kept an eye out for Raphtalia while doing so.

There should only be weak Balloons lurking around this area, but it would be wise to never let my guard down.

I took a look over today's harvest.

An abundant amount of 'Meadow's Wild Medical Herb'.

A splendid amount of 'Medical Herbs that don't usually grow in the Meadow'.

A reasonable amount of 'Balloon's Balloon'.

A reasonable amount of 'Assorted Mush'.

Number of shields unsealed: 4 types.

Mhm. An obvious difference in efficiency.

Buying a slave was the right choice.

That's right. I should try to challenge compounding.

I called forth some simple recipes.

A window popped up, showing combination formulas that can be made with the medical herbs which I collected.

As for equipment... I suppose I can only make a limited amount using the rocks and pebbles on the riverside. So let's try the recipes that can be made from a mortar.

However, the simple recipes didn't have any record of mixing techniques within it.

Gori gori gori*...

I tried imitating how the pharmacy owner mixed his medicine in order to witness the results.

Heal Pill has been made!

Heal Pill Quality: Bad -> A Bit Bad A pill that hastens a wound's recovery, needs to be applied on the wound to receive effects.

This type of Icon floated in front of my eyes.

Nice, it was a success.

The shield was reacting, but I decided to hold onto the medicine for now.

Alright, time to challenge an unfamiliar recipe.

Sometimes the compounding failed and the stuff turned into a jet black waste. This was more fun than I expected.

Pachi pachi pachi*...

The sound of fire crackling could be heard.

Raphtalia finished washing and had gone to warm herself up by the campfire.

"Are you warm yet?"

"Yes. *Koho*..."

This looked very similar to a cold. The slave dealer did say that she was plagued with an illness.

Coincidentally... there was a cold medicine amongst the experimental remedies.

Regular Medicine Quality: Somewhat acceptable. This medicine is effective against a mild cold.

"Hey, drink this."

I was a bit anxious, but this was better than nothing.

"... So bitter, dislike it... guh..."

Raphtalia tried to say something selfish but held her chest in pain instead.

"Here."

"Y-, Yes."

Raphtalia trembled as she swallowed the medicine that I passed to her.

"Haa... Haa..."

"There there, good girl."

Raphtalia once again gave me a perplexed stare when I patted her head.

Ah, these tanuki ears sure were fluffy.

She hugged her tail while blushing, refusing to let me feel it. Did she think that I would try touching her tail when I looked at it?

"Here, this is your dinner."

I handed a grilled fish over to Raphtalia, and then returned to compounding medicine.

I've always loved to work on these kinds of delicate projects.

The sun set completely yet I kept on compounding, using the campfire for light.

Fumu... This was fun in a lot of ways.

Having already finished eating her fish, Raphtalia drowsily stared at the campfire while letting out some subtle snoring sounds.

"Go to sleep."

Upon hearing my order, Raphtalia repeatedly shook her head.

Was she being shy? She was refusing to sleep like a spoiled child... Well, I guess she was one.

Anyways it seemed like she would fall asleep eventually.

Come to think of it, was the medicine effective? I hadn't heard her cough since then.

Afterwards, I examined the remedies which were made from my experiments, and most of them had simple effects.

Those deemed inferior were absorbed into the shield.

Requirement for Petit Medicine Shield has been unsealed.

Requirement for Petit Poison Shield has been unsealed.

Petit Medicine Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Raises Medicine's Effects.

Petit Poison Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Poison Resistance (Small)

Both of them seemed to be related to the Leaf Shield and Mush Shield.

Though I had no idea how 'Raises Medicine's Effects' works.

Does it increase the effect of the medicines that I use on myself, or the effect of the medicines which I create?

Well, whatever.

There was no mistake that today's harvest was a good one.

"No... help me..."

Raphtalia let out a strange voice.

The sleeping Raphtalia seemed to be having a nightmare.

"N0000000000000000000000000000000000!"

I felt like my ears went deaf for a moment there.

This sucked. Balloons were coming our way; they probably got attracted by her screaming.

I quickly went over to Raphtalia and covered her mouth.

"H—————!"

However, a loud noise could still be heard, I then recalled the slave dealer's concern about this dilemma.

This certainly was problematic.

"Calm down, just settle down already."

I held the sobbing Raphtalia in my hands and cradled her.

"Noo...a-san...o-san."

Was she calling for her parents? Raphtalia could do nothing but cry and stretch out her hand, begging for help.

"It's fine... it's alright, you're safe now."

I patted her head and continued cradling her.

"Don't cry. Be strong."

"Huhu..."

I continued to hug the weeping Raphtalia.

"Grah!"

A Balloon that was attracted by her cries appeared.

"Fu..."

Really, even at a time like this.

I held Raphtalia close to me and charged at the Balloon.

"Uwoooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!"

Chun... Chun!*

"Is it morning?"

What a terrible night.

By the time I finished with the horde of Balloons that appeared, Raphtalia's cries had also begun to quiet down. But when I tried to separate myself from her, if even a little, she would start wailing out loud again.

Then the Balloons would appear once more.

Which is why I was unable to get a wink of sleep.

"Nn..."

"You awake?"

"Hiii!?"

Raphtalia widely opened her eyes in surprise since I was holding her up in front of me.

"Ha... I'm tired."

There was still some time before the town's gate opened. So I planned on taking a quick nap for now.

Today, I would be selling the medicine which I had made yesterday; this should yield more profit than the raw medical herbs.

If the herbs' value were higher than the medicine's, then there would be no point in people making them.

"I'll be sleeping for little while. As for breakfast... would the leftover fish from yesterday suit your taste?"

Raphtalia timidly nodded.

"Then good night. Call me if any monsters appear."

It was painful just to keep my eyes open, so I was quickly invited into a slumber full of dreams.

I still didn't know the reason behind Raphtalia's panic attacks. And I wasn't interested in hearing about it either.

It's most likely due to the shock of being sold by her parents, or maybe from being kidnapped.

Even if it was the latter, I had no obligation to return her. This gentleman here had paid big bucks for this slave after all.

It was fine if she held a grudge over this. I needed to do all I could in order to survive.

I have to find a way to return to my old world, that's all there is to it.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 12 – What's Yours is Mine

Around high noon, I opened my eyes and Raphtalia was there waiting for me.

"Are we going to the castle town? *Koho*"

"Ha ha."

She's coughing once again.

I silently handed her the 'regular medicine' and Raphtalia took it while frowning.

After that it was time to drop by the pharmacy to do some business.

"Fumu... the quality of these isn't bad. Yuusha-sama, are you familiar with pharmacology?"

Since I was no longer a stranger to the store, I was able to catch glimpses on some of the medicine's production.

"No, it was my first time making some yesterday. Compared to selling raw medical herbs, which one is more profitable?"

"That's a difficult question. Although medical herbs are cheaper to use, medicines can usually save lives."

Although the pharmacist frowned when he saw Raphtalia, I knew from observation that he didn't use cheap lies and was speaking honestly.

"The price of medicine has skyrocketed recently due to the prophecy, so demand for them is very high right now."

"Fumu..."

Either risk failing to craft them for better sales, or selling raw materials to their product line directly; it's debatable on which of the two will yield more gold.

However, everything has its own silver lining. There's no disadvantage in continuing to collect more.

"Hey, does this mean you're not coming anymore?"

"... Didn't I say something along the lines of: 'For two weeks, I'll be selling medical herbs around town'."

The pharmacist understood my answer and looked at me with an odd expression before laughing.

This time around he gave me some hand-me-down equipment and taught me how to use them, taking my medical herbs as his payment while still buying the medicine off me.

I received various tools besides the mortar.

Laboratory equipment like: measuring device, flask, and distiller.

These should last me for quite a while before I have to get some new ones.

"Since these used goods were only collecting dust in the warehouse, you won't know when they might break."

"I suppose it's a good enough set for beginners."

Anyways, with this I'll be able to challenge more formulas.

I just have to dispose of the Balloon skins now.

While on my way to the Balloon buyer, I caught sight of some children from my peripheral vision.

It seemed those Balloon skins that the merchant bought were used as material to make actual, marketable balloons. The children were playing around with one of those as if it was a ball.

Raphtalia was looking at those kids with envy.

"Naa, what's that?"

"Yes?"

I pointed at the ball those children were playing with and asked.

"Well, that's one of the practical applications of what we do with the Balloon skins."

"I see, then can you make another using the goods we're about to sell?"

"Eh, well... if you really want one."

We headed over to the buyer to sell our goods and left with money in hand.
He then let me have one of the balls that was made from a Balloon skin.

I threw the ball and Raphtalia caught it.

「ほら」

受け取ったボールを

俺はラフタリアに

投げ渡した。

ラフタリアは

ボールと俺の顔を

何度も交互に見て、

目を丸くさせる。

「なんだ？ いらないのか？」

「う、ううん」



With wide eyes, Raphtalia alternated between the ball and my face several times.

"What? You don't want it?"

"M-, Mhm."

Raphtalia laughed merrily, waving her head around.

She laughed for the first time.

"Once we're done with today's work, you can go play around with it."

"Yay!"

She was somehow very energetic. This is good progress.

Because an energetic Raphtalia will be more beneficial for me.

After that we returned to the forest, exterminating monsters and collecting herbs just like yesterday.

We were able to go in deeper thanks to my enhanced defense.

... Apparently there is a village if we continued to advance into the forest.

However, I refused to follow that bitch's advice.

It was profitable and we discovered various things. It was likely due to the fact that we were approaching the foot of the mountain range.

Oh? We've found a new enemy.

An egg-like creature.

This thing looked like it belonged to a branch of the Balloon family.

"We're fighting this monster for the first time. I'll be going in first. Once I give you the signal, rush in for the kill."

"Un!"

That's a good answer.

I charged at the monster; it also noticed me and bared its fangs my way.

Gan!*

It really did no damage. There wasn't any pain or so much as an itch.

Rapharia's blade flew through the air and easily impaled it.

"Taha!"

We cleared monsters more vigorously compared to yesterday.

An Egg.

Another one of the earlier enemies.

Followed by a 'Parin*' sound, Egg crumbled into pieces with egg yolk splattering everywhere when it died.

"B-ue, this is nasty!"

Couldn't the shell be sold? This was such a waste.

It smells rotten so I guess it's inedible.

I absorbed the shell pieces into the shield.

Since she got used to it, Raphtalia was able to pierce the Egg in an experienced manner.

Requirement for Egg Shield has been unsealed.

Egg Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Culinary 1

Another level based skill bonus.

This time was cooking, huh?

We continued hunting the different color variations of this monster.

Requirement for Blue Egg Shield has been unsealed.

Requirement for Sky Egg Shield has been unsealed.

Blue Egg Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Judgement 1

Sky Egg Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Beginner Cooking Recipes

Weird, it has only been skill bonuses lately.

Does it depend on which type of enemy we defeat?

Oh well, in the meantime I'll just utilize my herb collecting skills more.

The day seemed a little bit longer while up in the mountain.

Still, I was a bit concerned over Raphtalia's equipment.

Here are today's results:

Me: Level 8

Raphtalia: Level 7

Damn. She almost caught up to me already.

This was undoubtedly due to Raphtalia dealing the finishing blows.

Gu*...

"My stomach's empty..."

Raphtalia made a troubled expression as she said this to me.

"I guess you're right, let's head back for our meal."

We ended our exploration and headed back to town.

After returning, I sold the Egg Shells that looked unusable for compounding.

We made 9 silver today, including what we sold this morning.

It was doubtful that we could make much from these shells. However, they were bought from me for an unexpectedly high price.

The medicine and herbs also fetched a good price, making me reconsider what we should eat today.

Well, considering that Raphtalia had been drooling all over the food stalls for a while now...

I had no intention of pampering her, but she should be rewarded for her good work. So, why not?

"Let's drop by, just for today."

"Eh? Is it okay?"

"You wanted to eat here, right?"

Raphtalia nodded fiercely at my question.

She had become quite honest.

"*Keho*..."

She's coughing once again.

I silently handed her a 'regular medicine', then I ordered what looked like hardened mashed potatoes on a skewer from one of the stalls.

"Here, you worked hard today."

After swallowing the medicine, Raphtalia happily accepted the skewer I held out and stuffed her face with it.

"Thank you!"

"N-, no prob..."

... I'm glad that she had become so energetic.

I looked around for a cheap Inn while eating and walking.

"Do you want to stay here tonight?"

"Aaah."

Raphtalia crying all night long was troublesome enough already, please at least spare me the fights with the Balloons.

We went into the Inn.

Upon entering, the Innkeeper blatantly scowled, however, he instantly switched on his business smile.

"There's a chance my companion here will be crying at night, is that alright?"

I dangled the Balloon concealed under my cloak threateningly in front of the other party as I asked.

"Tha-, that's a bit——"

"I can count on you, right? We'll be keeping the noise at a reasonable level."

"Y-, yes."

Ever since coming to this world, I had learned that blackmailing was an important part of business.

This whole damn country had made me into a target of ridicule; the damn king couldn't even fully comprehend how much damage his actions caused me.

No, even if he did, he would probably say something like 'it couldn't be helped'.

Seriously, all these parallel world elitists.

I paid the fee and then unloaded our luggage inside the room we rented.

Raphtalia's eyes sparkled while looking at the ball.

"Come back before nightfall. Also, stay as close to the Inn as possible."

"Yaaay!"

Good grief, she really did act like a child her age.

Demi-humans seemed to be the object of contempt, but there shouldn't be any problems if she was seen and treated like an adventurer.

Looking out of the window, I saw Raphtalia playing with her ball. I then did research on more methods of compounding.

Approximately... 20 minutes had passed since then.

That was when I heard a loud, childish scream.

"Why is a Demi-human playing in our turf!"

What was that? I peered out of the window.

No matter how I look at it, all I saw was some shitty bullies pointing at Raphtalia and harassing her.

Good grief, no matter where you go there will always be these type of kids lurking around the place.

"This brat. You have a nice toy, so hand it over."

"Eh-, a-, that's..."

Raphtalia seemed to be aware of the demi-human's low standing in society. So their reaction wasn't strange to her either.

Ha...

I went out of the room and headed downstairs.

"I told you to hand it over."

"N-, no..."

These fucking punks were intending to use violence as they encircled the frail and defiant Raphtalia.

"Hold it right there, you little shits."

"What do you want, old geezer."

Guh, old geezer he says!

Whatever, I'm only 20 this year and I don't care about this world's standards for age.

I don't even care if I'm an old geezer to them.

"What reason do you have for demanding other people's belongings?"

"Hah? That isn't your ball, is it?"

"It's mine. I'm lending it to this girl. If you stole it from her then that means you stole it from me."

"Just what are you saying, damn geezer."

Sigh... It seemed they couldn't even understand that much with all the blood rushing into their brains.

Even if he was a kid, I never intended to forgive him. Those that steal from people deserved to be punished.

"I see I see, then I'll give you an EVEN BIGGER BALL."

Noticing my demeanor, Raphtalia squeezed out her voice, telling the startled children.

"Run away!"

However, the eyes of those little shits underestimated me.

I silently snickered deep down while I took out the Balloon that was biting my arm.

GABU!*

"MY ASSSSSSSSSSS!"^[11]

The Balloon immediately paid the brat a visit with a bite on his ass.

"So kids, that one was a REAL ball, you guys want some too?"

"Ouuchhhhh!"

"That was not a joke. Dumbasses!"

"Die! Retard!"

"I'll kick your ass too, you little shit!"

I turned back towards the Inn with the brats cursing me as they ran away.

"Er, umm..."

Raphtalia grabbed my mantle.

"Oi, there's a Balloon still living in there."

The frightened Raphtalia quickly flinched her hand away, her timid look making me laugh.

"Arigatou."

What was she talking about?

"Oh..."

While stroking Raphtalia's head, we both returned to the Inn.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 13 – Remedy

The day died out and the night grew cold; it was about time for Raphtalia's stomach to grumble. Leaving the luggage behind at the inn, we went to a nearby restaurant for dinner.

We had some snacks just a while ago.

Raphtalia got them from an unfamiliar shop, though I had no idea what was so good about them.

Good grief, I needed a way to fatten up my wallet. I guess camping out will be our plan from now on.

So I'll let you eat your fill for now!

"Let's see, Delia-set for two people and a Neapolitan please."

After giving the order to our server, our dinner soon arrived.

"Let's dig in."

"Un."

Raphtalia began eating by stuffing food into her mouth with her bare hands again.

Judging from her growth, I would say that she was roughly 10. She had been eyeing my plate, so I went ahead and ordered extra.

"Eat up while you can since we'll be camping out from tomorrow onward."

“Ha-gu-i!”

Nodding and eating at the same time is bad table manners. But since she’s eating so gratefully, I’ll excuse her behavior this time.

After that, we returned to our room where I took note of Raphtalia’s appearance yet again.

“Your hair is a mess, let’s trim it a bit.”

“... Hai.”

I patted Raphtalia head with a 'pon*' since she was making an uneasy face.

“It’ll be fine. I’m not going to give you a weird haircut.”

Besides, it was her current appearance that looked weird.

Using a knife, I began trimming off the excessive hair with a ‘gushi*’.

I trimmed her hair to about shoulder length before I was done.

“Alright, this much should be good, right.”

Compared to her old hairstyle, this one was at least more presentable.

With this, she would look quite nice after dressing up.

Raphtalia began twirling around, her face swelling with confidence.^[4]

I wonder what she's so happy about.

The shield reacted when I was cleaning up the leftover hair.

...

I never would have imagined that.

Suuu*...

I opened my status to confirm. Though it appeared that my Lvl and 'Tree' were still insufficient.

"Hm?"

Crap, she turned around.

"Now then, you should hurry up and go to bed."

"Un!"

She was being strangely honest, unlike yesterday.

Well, that's good.

She might weep again, so I busied myself by compounding inside the room.

...

Nutritional Supplement was created.

Nutritional Supplement Quality Bad -> A Bit Bad A medicine that relieves fatigue, it is also effective as a method of rapidly recovering from malnourishment.

Recovery Potion was created.

Recovery Potion Quality A Bit Bad -> Normal A medicine that treats certain illnesses. It will be less effective against more severe diseases.

Fumu... there are various things that can be made using the mountain and forest herbs.

Because of this, I can trade these at the pharmacy for a splendid sum of money.

It was just that the materials were consumed at a fearsome rate that was borderline hazardous.

Altogether, I made 6 Nutritional Supplements and a few other remedies.

However, it was still very difficult to make high quality medicines; I had no chance of winning against a specialist.

Since I'm the Shield Hero and not a Pharmacist.

... Let's absorb some of them into the Shield then.

The requirement for Calorie Shield has been unsealed.

The requirement for Energy Shield has been unsealed.

The requirement for Energetic Shield had been unsealed.

Calorie Shield

True power sealed Equipment Bonus: Stamina Boost (Small)

Energy Shield

True power sealed Equipment Bonus: SP Boost (Small)

Energic Shield

True power sealed Equipment Bonus: Stamina Consumption Decrease (Small)

For the time being, all of them gave status related bonuses.

Just what is 'stamina' anyways? Is it like physical fitness?

It seems that I'll need to experience this for myself.

Next we had the medical herbs, but... I wonder if it'll become more difficult if I continue to recklessly learn more crafting skills.

I want more combat bonuses.

Or maybe it's because I can't meet the unsealing requirement with only the herbs I had collected.

Well, that's fine.

"Nn~..."

While stretching and preparing to go to sleep, I spotted Raphtalia squeezing her eyes tight. Looks like she wasn't able to get a good night's sleep; that was a sign she was about to weep.

"Kya——"

I covered her mouth right before she screamed, then I held her in my arms while gently patting her with a 'pon pon*'.

Phew, I was somehow able to calm her down tonight.

But she would cry her eyes out if I tried to let go of her now.

Guess it can't be helped. Let's sleep together then.

... It felt kind of chilly.

Feeling the sunlight shining on my face, I opened my eyes.

Raphtalia, who was supposed to be sleeping next to me, was trembling in a corner of the room.

"What's wrong?"

"Gomennasai gomennasai, gomennasai gomennasai!"^[11]

I furrowed my eyebrows at Raphtalia who was desperately muttering apologies; I could roughly guess the reason due to this damp chilliness which was coming from underneath me. I see... Raphtalia wet the bed.

Haa...

She thought I would be angry.

I had never heard of a 10 year old wetting the bed, but there was no way I could be angry after looking at those frightened eyes of hers.

I went over to Raphtalia.

I reached my hand out, startling Raphtalia as she curled herself up into a ball and shielded her head.

"Good grief..."

I used that hand to pat the shoulder of a trembling Raphtalia.

"Wetting the bed wasn't something that you can control, right? Come now, hurry up and undress so you can wash yourself up."

She'll need a spare change of clothes too, I suppose.

"Eh..."

Raphtalia looked at me with a mystified expression.

"You're not angry?"

"How could I lash out at someone who's been regretting their actions? You reflected on what you did, so I'm not angry."

The sheet was stained. I wondered how much I'll have to pay the Innkeeper... we'll keep it as a piece of cloth for the time being.

After that, I explained the situation to the Innkeeper, paid for the damages, and then rushed off to buy some spare clothes from the Weapon Shop.

Although the well water was a bit cold, I washed the sheet clean and packed it in our luggage bag.

It seemed like a great idea to dry this sheet by tying it on a branch and hanging it as we walk through the meadow.

"Now then."

It's getting a bit irritating to walk with Raphtalia, who continues apologizing.

"I told you not to worry about it!"

"... Hai."

Haa... She really was an obedient child.

However, it would also be troublesome for me if she had no motivation.

Guu*...

Raphtalia's stomach grumbled again.

Oh, and her face was flushed with shame.

"I guess it's about time for breakfast."

"Un..."

Raphtalia walked besides me while holding onto the hem of my shirt.

"...*koho*"

“Alright then, you'll need to take this medicine as punishment.”

I handed a ‘recovery potion’ over to Raphtalia.

It seems like a persistent illness, one which required a regular intake of medicine, so this is exactly what she needs.

Raphtalia’s face turned extremely sour after just a sniff. However, she was very enthusiastic about drinking it since this was her punishment.

“Uwaa... So bitter...”

“Just bear with it.”

Gokugokugoku*

Raphtalia, who finished drinking the whole thing, had a blenched face and looked about ready to vomit.

By the way, that compounded medicine seemed to fetch a good price. But since the quality was poor, the intensive taste was even worse.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 14 – Taking a Life

Exiting the meadow, we arrived along the fringe land between the mountain and forest.

Raphtalia's fighting style had greatly improved thanks to her experience, and her movements were more skillful too.

Our herb collecting was going well. Monsters steadily kept on coming and provided us with exp, while our luggage was being overstuffed with all the item drops.

But then 'it' happened.

Before we had only fought fable-like monsters. But now we had finally encountered our first animal class creature.

A one-headed... chestnut rabbit?

Usapiru.

That's a weird name.

"Pyo!?"

The Usapiru spotted our presence and leaped at us, attacking with its huge buck teeth.

"Watch out!"

It targeted Raphtalia after judging she was weaker.

I jumped out to protect her like usual.

Chomp! Chomp!

It seemed that my defensive power was still higher than its attack.

"Alright! Stab it."

"A... Aah..."

"What's wrong?"

"A, a living thing, will, will have blood, right..?"

I was barely able to make sense of Raphtalia's stuttering words.

"Deal with it, we'll be fighting these kind of enemies from now on."

"B-,but."

Chomp! Chomp!

Usapiru repeatedly bit me with its teeth.

"Brace yourself and bear with it. Or else you'll become too much of a burden that I'll have to abandon you."

That's right. Even if she's my cherished slave; if she can't fight then she isn't needed.

I'll just have to visit that perverse slave dealer and buy another slave, one who can fight properly.

"N-, no!"

Frightened with her eyes shut tight, Raphtalia stabbed the Usapiru multiple times with her knife.

Blood began spewing after she pulled her weapon out.

"Ah..."

The Usapiru died with a thud and laid motionless on the ground.

Raphtalia stared at her own knife while trembling, the scene thoroughly burnt into her eyes.

Her complexion pale, she looked as if she wanted to escape from all of this.

However, we mustn't feel any remorse.

Because we'll be fighting monsters like this again and again for hundreds, even thousands of times.

"Pyo!"

Another Usapiru appeared out of a bush and it leaped at Raphtalia, trying to bite her.

"Ah——"

I immediately prevented the attack by jumping in between the two.

Chomp!

"... Sorry. To be honest, I had to push you. Because I can't do anything but protect others. So I have no choice but to leave you with all the dirty work."

The Usapiru was chewing on my arm while I told this to Raphtalia.

"There's no other alternative but for me to grow stronger. For that purpose, I need your help."

If I don't, then there won't be a future for me. The time limit is fast approaching and the waves of disaster will soon appear.

I had no confidence in my survival with how things stood now.

"... But..."

"Within one week, a world-ruining wave will spawn."

"Eh!?"

"Because of that, I want to become stronger, even if it's only a little bit."

Raphtalia was trembling as she listened to me.

"Are you... fighting against that disaster?"

"Haha, I was told that this was my role. So I'm not doing it because I want to... Guess we're similar in that regard. I was forced to defend against the wave; there's no sense of obligation or duty in it for me."

"..."

“So, please try to understand that I don't want us going our separate ways.”

Having to raise another slave will definitely be a waste, and sending her back into that cage won't make me feel good about myself either.

But unfortunately, I have no money. If I want to buy a new slave, then I'll have to sell her.

“... Understood. Goshujin, -sama, I... will, fight.”

Color gradually returned to her pale face. She slowly nodded her head and thrust her blood-stained knife at the Usapiru's vital point.

For some reason, her demeanor was the polar opposite of what she was like before, her eyes now shined with determination.

At the sight of the Usapiru squirming and convulsing, Raphtalia silently closed her eyes.

Then a moment later, she changed her grip on the knife and began skinning the rabbit.

“Let me do that. I don't want you handling all the grunt work.”

“Hai.”

I took out a knife used for dismantling, and with that the body of the Usapirus was soon dismembered.

This is reality, not a game.

It was understandable for someone to want to look away.

But after killing a living creature for the first time, I truly understood what it means to be alive in this world.

With the Usapiru's blood staining my hand, I was able to understand what Raphtalia had just gone through.

I dismantled both rabbits and absorbed the pieces into the shield.

The requirement for Usa Leather Shield has been unsealed.

The requirement for Usa Meat Shield has been unsealed.

Usa Leather Shield

True power sealed...Equipment bonus: 3 Agility

Usa Meat Shield

True power sealed...Equipment bonus: Dismantling Techniques 1

I equipped the latter shield then stood up.

"Goshujin, -sama. Please, don't abandon me."

Raphtalia begged me while raising her face.

She probably hated the mere thought of going back to that place, where she cried at night and was sick and famished.

Without proper care, she'd probably die in there. That would certainly leave a bad aftertaste in my mouth.

Although I'd love to imagine ridiculing that bitch until the climax of her death, it would be impractical for it to actually happen.

"You've properly fulfilled your role, so I won't abandon you."

Besides, I would be troubled if Raphtalia were to die.

But then again... That's right. She's a creature of the similar gender just like that bitch... the exact same as that bitch!

I shook my head repeatedly.

I need to stop thinking like this. It's bad for my heart.

Right now, I have to find a way to grow stronger with this slave of mine, even if just a little.

EXP 7 x 2

"I want to, lend my strength, to goshujin, -sama, desu."

From then on, Raphtalia was unbelievably enthusiastic about charging in and skewering the monsters which appeared.

Someone who I always needed to keep safe was now being so aggressive without any inhibitions.

This was some good development, but it seemed like... she was motivated for the wrong reasons.

The way I handled matters could never be praised.

It was entirely for self-interest.

But still... these sort of things needed to be done no matter what.

When the evening came, we decided to rest within the forest. For that purpose we found a spacious area, lit some firewood, and began setting up camp.

We made a stew out of the Usapiru's meat and edible herbs which we collected.

The remaining meat was grilled over the campfire.

Although our plan was to return back to town by tomorrow evening, we have no concrete proof that the monsters' meat will even sell.

Since I was a bit skeptical, I used the 'Judgement' skill to identify the food and see if it was safe to eat.

I cut a piece of the cooked meat to confirm that there was nothing wrong with it. But I still had no idea what it tasted like.

They were just grilled and boiled so it couldn't be considered a proper cuisine.

I also activated my 'cooking' skill, and the quality turned from 'normal' to 'a tad good'. So they shouldn't taste terrible either.

"Here, eat up."

Raphtalia then began devouring the cooked stew and grilled meat.

"O-, Oishii!"

Her stomach grumbling in anticipation a little while ago, Raphtalia heartily ate with shining eyes.

After today's fights, I became a Lvl 10 and Raphtalia also became a Lvl 10. She finally caught up with me.

Oh well, it couldn't be helped.

I started compounding under the light of the campfire.

Our immediate goal is to gradually save up money, then to gear ourselves up. Which is why I'll try to create the most expensive medicine in order to sell it.

grind grind grind

I grounded the medical herbs with the mortar, then mixed the extracts together before transferring the solution into the beaker.

Recovery Potion was made.

Nutritional Supplement was made.

Again, these recipes were ones which I had already discovered.

This was the limit of "Simple Compounding Recipes 1". Even though these two drugs were miracles made earlier from other intuitions.

The shield's power - which was fueled by an 'eternal torch' that will-, who am I kidding - of 'compounding' had reached its limit.

Basically, most of the qualities were somewhat bad.

“... Ah chou*”

Did the effect of the medicine run out?

I silently passed her a ‘recovery potion’, and Raphtalia drank it while frowning.

Anyways, in order to acquire new sources of income, we will need to grow stronger.

“I’ll watch over the campfire, you go ahead and sleep. So yeah... I’ll wake you up after a while.”

“Understood.”

She was strangely obedient. One could see a huge difference between this and our first meeting.

“Good night.”

“Haha, pleasant dreams. Oh right, we’ll be selling those tomorrow. So go ahead and use the fur as a blanket.”

I passed Raphtalia the fur, which was fumigated while I was cooking in order to drive away fleas.

It was a little small, but it should keep the body warm after bundling yourself up, right?

"Hai."

Raphtalia frowned a bit after sniffing the fur's scent.

"Is it smoky?"

"Yes. It's very smoky."

"I thought so."

"But, it looks very warm."

Raphtalia snuggled up to me, leaned against my back, and closed her eyes.

Oh well, this was fine.

I continued to make medicine and threw more wood into the campfire, just waiting for the moment when Raphtalia would begin shrieking like a banshee.

... sigh.

I wondered how long this lifestyle would continue.

It might only last for one week more, huh.

Although I shouldn't be thinking about dying anytime soon, I should always be prepared for that possibility.

... It's about time. Since we've been together for three days, I could somehow sense when she was about to make another uproar.

"Nn..."

Raphtalia gently rubbed her eyes and slowly got up.

"Are you awake?"

She didn't scream.

Ah, I see. It was because she was contently sleeping against my back.

It may be a trauma, but it seems like she'll be fine if there's another person's warmth besides her while she slept.

Guu*...

"... My stomach's empty."

She got hungry again right after the feast she just ate.

"Hai hai."

I gave Raphtalia the grilled meat which was meant to be reserved for tomorrow's breakfast.

Raphtalia delectably stuffed her mouth full of the meat.

"Well then, I'll be going to sleep now. Wake me up if anything happens."

"Hai!"

Raphtalia nodded while munching her food.

Good grief, she became a lot more energetic. But look at how much of a glutton she turned into.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 15 – Demi-Human's Traits

We took turns sleeping until morning came.

At around noontime, a certain incident occurred.

We were hunting some Usapiru which had appeared before us.

“Ah...”

The bladed knife in Raphtalia's hands had snapped off completely. *pokin*

“Show it to me.”

It couldn't be helped. The knife had done its job and broke only after killing the last Usapiru which had been gnawing at my arm.

“I'm sorry.”

“Nothing lasts for an eternity. So it was inevitable for this knife to break.”

It was a cheap knife, not to mention it had never even been polished.

“We'll stop here for now before returning to town.”

“Hai.”

The bag that Raphtalia carried was splendidly stuffed full of loot.

On a side note, I've become a Lvl 11 and so has Raphtalia.

Along the way we had encountered several monsters, but we somehow managed to get by with my spare knife.

Later on, we sold off our spoils, including the compounded medicine, for a grand total of 70 silver coins.

Chari chari*...

"I wonder which one we should get."

"You mean a knife?"

Raphtalia murmured while eating her lunch inside a street stall.

We should be able to cover our living expenses by camping outdoors.

And there wouldn't be a problem with food if we skinned the Usapiru^[2] for their meat.

I stopped thinking about that for now.

Since I didn't have a favorite store or know of any other good places to shop, I at least wanted to know more about the details of our purchased equipment.

"Well, guess we should go over to the Weapon Shop."

"Un."

- Guu...*

I heard a grumbling noise coming from behind me.

"My tummy's empty."

"Didn't you just eat a moment ago!?"

Is it a growth spurt!?

Just how many times a day were you planning to eat!

"Haa..."

Right, Engel's Coefficient would skyrocket with her in the equation.

We need to start hunting again as soon as possible. At this rate our food expenses alone will bring us to ruin.

"--And that's what happened, Oyaji. I'd like some weapons and protective gear within the range of 65 silver coins, plus a cheap knife."

For some reason, Oyaji groaned with his palm on his head.

"Well..... it's none of my business, but please properly maintain your equipment at least."

"Sorry about that. I thought the blood-clean coating would take care of everything, so I didn't plan for it beforehand."

Right. The Balloon, Mush, and Egg were creatures made from inorganic substances after all. And the bodily fluids of the Egg could definitely be wiped off without much effort.

However, the blood of the Usapiru stained the weapon.

Not only that, but the blade seemed to deteriorate even faster because of improper care.

“But I'm amazed this girl's complexion is so much better after just three days. And haven't you gotten quite plump now?”

Raphtalia nodded at him with a proficient smile. Just what was Oyaji talking about?

“Hoh? That's a fine expression.”

“Un!”

Alright, let's get down to business.

“Oyaji, please prioritize the weapon's durability when you show us the wares meant for her.”

“And how about you?”

“I don't need any.”

“You don't want anything?”

Raphtalia looked up at me and asked.

"Does it look like I'll be needing any gear?"

Up until this point, I had yet to receive a single wound from a monster's attack.

Didn't those dipshit Heroes once say that: 'shields are easy at the beginning, but suck towards the endgame?'

That's why I didn't feel the need to buy myself equipment until we got to the point where I start taking damage.

"Uun."

Raphtalia groaned, looking unconvinced. Her hands were preciously holding onto the ball which I had bought for her before.

"Well, I guess this must be karma at work. I'll give you a little something as a bonus."

"I'll be haggling if the cost is too high."

"I'm already selling to you at dirt-cheap prices here. Or else you'll be throwing those Balloons around after being pushed too hard, won't you?"

The merchant incident from before must have started that rumor. Well it's fine, since the end result will be the same either way.

"An eye for an eye, that's all I'm doing."

"... Not that it matters to me. But even if I came up with a countermeasure, you'll just find another way around it. That'll be just like you, right?"

"You certainly know me well."

"Anyone can tell with a glance: That you, sir, are a shrewd businessman under the guise of a Hero."

"I'll take that as a compliment."

"Well then..."

Oyaji rubbed his chin while looking at Raphtalia.

"It looks like this Jou-chan will soon be assessing herself with a sword rather than a knife."

"Will it be alright?"

"Seems she's quite enthusiastic about it. A sword proves to be a rather fine weapon for a beginner, no?"

Oyaji searched through a corner of his shop. *gacha gacha*

"So that's it."

"Will I be using this sword?"

"Looks like it."

"I'll be tutoring her on how to use one."

Then a tanned hide breastplate was brought to us from the back of the store.

"An iron short sword and a hide breastplate. Although they're a bit old, please bear with it. The size fits you at least."

Oyaji handed Raphtalia the sword while the breastplate was worn on top of her casual clothes.

Guu*...

"Again!?"

"Duh, she is a demi-human, right? Since she's still a child, this much difficulty should be expected if she keeps leveling up."

Wait, what? Is that common sense around here? This world sure worked on weird standards that I couldn't comprehend.

A long time ago, I did hear about the tale of Hina the crow, where she'd die if she wasn't continuously fed.

"So there is some truth to that story... guess it can't be helped. Just stay here and listen obediently to the lecture, I'll go buy you some food while you practice."

"Haaai!"

Seeing our conversation, Oyaji bursted out laughing for some reason.

gahaha

"Okay listen up, I'll now teach you all about the basics--"

I left the Weapon Shop and hurried towards the market.

Demi-humans are truly a strange race, using hunger to compensate for level raising.

Although her condition grew favorably and her self-consciousness also gradually became more resilient.

But still, the food expenses were no joke.

To make a long story short, I bought some food from the vending stalls and returned to find Oyaji teaching Raphtalia how to grip and swing a sword.

"Here you go."

"Thank you!"

She then munched away as Oyaji diligently taught her evasive maneuvers.

Even in such a situation, the mood didn't change at all.

"What about you?"

"I've got those evasive moves memorized."

"Well, you do seem like the blocking type. It would be rather dangerous for you to gawkily upset your balance."

That marked the end of Oyaji's crash course on sword handling, I then paid the bill.

After that, Oyaji passed me a small slab of white stone.

"What's this?"

"A whetstone. The 'coating' wasn't applied on the weapon this time. So it'll break in no time if you don't regularly maintain it."

"Hmm..."

The shield reacted when I slowly grabbed the whetstone.

Which is why I ended up absorbing it.

"H-,Hey!?"

The requirement for Shield of Whetstone has been liberated.

Oh? This was the first shield that wasn't in English.

Well whatever, it's still a shield.

I should absorb more minerals from now on.....

Ah I see, this isn't a new branch, but one that's combined with the Sky Egg Shield and Usa Meat Shield.

Was it because the whetstone was as indispensable as a kitchen knife?

The huge defensive power of the Egg Shield was quite frightening.

It's likely that I would get the 'Usapiru Shield' if I absorbed the whole Usapiru without dismembering it.

Shield of Whetstone

True power sealed Equipment Bonus: Mineral Identification 1+

Special Effect: Automatic Polishing (8 Hours), High Consumption

A Special Effect?

I clicked the 'help' confirm button.

「Special Effect」

An exclusive effect that will only be usable when equipped with a specific weapon.

The effect won't be usable by other weapons even if its true powers have been unsealed. Therefore, one will need to fit a specific weapon into a slot for this special ability to take effect.

So it's something like that?

A type of effect that grants immense power like in those ○○ games.

I quickly changed my shield.

“Huh!? What the, heck is that?”

Shield of Whetstone, it looks like the Small Shield but is a whole lot bigger.

A huge shield made of whetstone.

But there's a pattern of slots on top of the shield, with the multiple holes varying in shapes and sizes. Some are fat while others are thin.

"Hey, you! Tell me what's going on."

Fumu... Just what did 'Automatic Polishing (8 Hours), High Consumption' mean?

Although, I am expecting it to do what it's advertised...

"Hey!"

"Huh? What's up, Oyaji."

"What on this flat Melromarc is that shield?!"

"Don't you know already? It's the legendary shield."

"I've never seen or heard anything like this!"

"You saw it before, though it was a Small Shield back then."

"Huh!? Then why on Melromarc did it turn into a whetstone?"

"I guess it's because it absorbed the whetstone?"

"..."

At this rate, Oyaji wouldn't be able to comprehend this situation anytime soon.

"You must have heard that the Legendary Weapon hold mysterious powers. This is just one of its powers."

"... You didn't hear this from the other Heroes?"

"I hadn't seen them recently. You were the first one to transform your weapon right in front of me."

Our natural adversary will be spawning in about one week. So shouldn't they be sharing what they know with others, even if just a little? It seems those bastards were too selfish to even assist their peers properly.

I don't even have an ounce of trust for those type of people either.

... But then again, it may not be necessary for them, since they weren't in the 'loser' category like me.

"So, what are you troubled about?"

"Haha, it seems to have an effect of 'Automatic Polishing (8 hours) High Consumption'. But I don't know if it's really possible to polish without using anything else."

I didn't know what would be consumed.

"Fuuumu..."

Oyaji went to grab a rusty sword from within his shop and inserted it inside one of the slots in my shield.

"I'll give you this trash weapon as a bonus. Use that and see what it does."

“Ooh, you have my thanks.”

There was an icon which popped up in the corner of my screen:

「Polishing」.

There was a lot of pressure.

Then, I felt a heavy weight on my shoulders.

I immediately glanced at the Icon and opened up my Status. In there, I saw my ‘SP’ gradually reducing.

I previously thought that something physical would be consumed, but I guess this shield can be used in this way too.

“Now then, guess we'll be taking our leave.”

“We’re going?”

“Haha.”

Stepping out of the Weapon Shop, I continued to stroke Raphtalia’s head for a short while.

So now, in order for us to raise our level and procure food for the ever-growing Raphtalia, I'll need to go on another journey.

“Ah right, Oyaji.”

Glaring heedlessly at me, Oyaji said with an exasperated tone.

“... You still need something?”

"Do you know about the dungeon that's located near the forest village?"

I asked while opening up a cheap map and pointing at the spot where that bitch had recommended.

I want to have another person's reference just in case. Though actually trusting them is another matter entirely.

"The monsters are different from the forest; I heard they're more similar to the ones which show up along that village's highway."

"I see, guess we'll see for ourselves once we get there."

Right now, we have to evolve my shield and earn as much money as possible before the next wave.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 16 – Preparations for the Wave

Requirement for Rope Shield has been released

Requirement for Pikyu Pikyu^[1] Shield has been released

Requirement for Wood Shield has been released

Requirement for Rock Shield has been released

Requirement for Butterfly Shield has been released

Requirement for Pipe Shield has been released

ETC...

Rope Shield

Unsealing^[2] completed.....Equipment Bonus: Skill - 「Air Strike Shield」

Pikyu Pikyu Shield

Unsealing completed.....Equipment Bonus: Beginner Rank's Weapon Repair Techniques I

Wood Shield

Unsealing completed.....Equipment Bonus: Lumbering Techniques I

Butterfly Shield

Unsealing completed.....Equipment Bonus: Paralysis Resistance (Small)

Pipe Shield

Unsealing completed……Equipment Bonus: Skill - 「Shield Prison」

ETC...

It had been eight days since then.

After parting with Oyaji, we journeyed to the new village.

The village's name was Riyuuto. It seemed like a good, operational base for adventurers. But since there was only one Inn around, the fee was one silver coin per night.

The Merchant Buyer^[3] dropped by this place only once every two days.

There was no pharmacy store, so I had to sell cheaper medicine directly to the villagers in order to compete with the castle town's pharmacy imports.

To compensate for this, the medicines I sold were all subpar in quality.

By the way, my notoriety had spread quite far. When I first I arrived, I had to punish quite a few morons with my 'Balloon Release'.

And that's the gist of it.

Thanks to the monsters around town, the medical herbs, and the lumber, I was able to absorb them all and create multiple shields. I also learned a lot of new skills and techniques.

There were also various stat increases, but I won't go into that since it's such a hassle.

“Wait—!”

Raphtalia began chasing the porcupine-like monster who, upon realizing its disadvantage, fled the battle.

Raphtalia's level had raised considerably. I was now at Lv 20 while she was at Lv 25.

Her growth was surprisingly fast.

... On a side note, I was still fighting in my ordinary clothes.^[4]

And since I had yet to take any damage, not to mention all the monster attacks seemed quite weak up until now, this incident became a real head scratcher when I thought about it.

Yet it served as a painful experience for me.

Overestimating my defense, I went into battle with a weak shield, and it hurt like hell when I had gotten hit.

Astonishingly, I had received some small scratches from this Porcupine's ambush attack.

"Ouch, that hurt a bit. It's been awhile since I last felt like this."

I promptly smeared the wound with a 'heal pill' to prevent the bleeding.

That needle sure stung when I got hit, naturally.

I've already forgotten about these sort of sensations ever since coming to this world and receiving the shield's protection.

"Like I said before, it hurts, right? Naofumi-sama should just give in and buy some equipment already."^[5]

"No... It was only because I was using a weak shield."

Since when did Raphtalia start calling me 'Naofumi-sama' instead of 'Goshujin-sama'?

Well whatever. It wasn't such a bad thing since it had a nice ring to it.

Anyways, my shield could cover up my whole body. So it wouldn't make any sense to also wear individual pieces of small protective gear.

Just in case, I had always defended with the sturdiest part of my shield, and I hadn't received a single injury up until now.

So this is my very first time experiencing damage. That's all there is to it.

I watched the Whetstone Shield's auto-polishing at work. It really was quite a convenient shield, one that I always used.

The polishing time period was 8 hours. There'll be no effect if I pulled any weapons out beforehand.

The only drawback was that while in use, my SP won't recover since I'll be continuously drained.

Ah, speaking of which, I guess I should try utilizing the other abilities in my skill set...

"Air Strike Shield!"

It's the first skill which I learned. It summons a shield within a range of about five meters.

But it served no purpose if I was alone.

It felt like everyone was forced into having a specialized role.

I focused my mind, imagining the desired location to call forth my Air Strike shield; this mysterious ward which will vanish once its duration time is over. Alright, just a little bit more.

The porcupine stumbled in surprise due to the sudden appearance of my conjured shield.

However, it immediately regained its balance and resumed its escape once again.

Kuh...^[6] And here I thought that five meters was more than enough distance to catch up with you; this one was surprisingly fast at fleeing. Guess I'll have to use this.

"Shield Prison!"

A skill which allows me to summon an enclosed cage^[7] anywhere within a six meter radius.

This time around, I'll be dropping it directly on my target, the porcupine. Although this skill was intended for protection, it could also be used as a restraining device to trap a target inside.

Indeed, it was both an offensive and defensive skill.

"Kii!"^[8]

No longer able to escape, the Porcupine rampaged inside 'the Shield Prison'. Its duration period was 15 seconds.

During that time, Raphtalia rapidly approached the 'Shield Prison'. Then right as its effect had ended, she pierced the Porcupine with her sword.

"Kii!?"

"I did it!"

Raphtalia triumphantly returned while gripping the dead porcupine.

"Nice!"

EXP 48

An adequate harvest.

We defeated our quarry, properly dissected its remains, and then absorbed the pieces into the shield so that it would undergo transformation. I only discovered this last week, but it seems the Balloon, Mush, and Eggy were all classified as 'material'^[9]. Well, that hadn't been anything worth noticing back then, really.

I immediately dismantled the porcupine into needles, meat, and skin. It was quite easy after learning the trick to it.

All of them were precious materials and must be handled with care.

I absorbed the leftovers into the shield.

The bones belonged to the bone category, which required several other bones from different monsters, while the skin belonged to the pelt category

and granted some additional stats through equipment bonuses. Of course, there were some cases where I lacked the required Lvl or category in order to unseal.

The meat belonged to the cuisine category. A topic which certainly caught my attention.^[10]

I'm looking forward to what the needles will do. They are a porcupine's trademark after all.

Requirement for Animal Needle Shield has been unsealed.

So it's a shield made of an animal's spikes. A needle shield... I'm excited to see what the unsealed effect will be.

Animal Needle Shield

Sealed^[11].....Equipment Bonus: Offensive Power 1+

Special Effect: Shield of Needles (small)

Hell yeah! An increase in my offensive poweeeeeeeeeeeeeeer!

Yeah. I know. It's only a measly increase of 1+.^[12]

Although I didn't know what 'Special Effect: Shield of Needle (Small)' could actually do, I was able to acquire an offensive shield, which is far more important.

This is just the beginning. From now on I'll be able to attack too if I kept absorbing items which are connected with this shield type category.

The defensive force was slightly lower than the others belonging to the mineral category, but that should be alright.

"How did it go?"

"Haha, it seems that this shield will increase my attack power."

"So you finally got one, good for you. But how about its defensive force?"

Raphtalia pointed at my wound with a dubious look.

"It's so-so, I guess."

"Is that so... Um, I wanted to ask if my sword could be polished but..."

"Got it. Let's end our hunt and return to the forest for now."

"Hai!"

I equipped the 'Whetstone Shield' and inserted Raphtalia's sword into one of its slots.

Currently polishing...

Now then, our levels rose considerably after a full week's worth of extensive money making, and we saved up a grand total of 230 silver coins.

A moderate amount of medicine was sold, and the business on lumbering and mining was booming thanks to my new shield skills.

There was a shallow cause for concern, however, as it seemed that my online gaming tendencies were influencing how I had been acting.

Well, I was too preoccupied with choosing the best possible method in order to earn money.

And I didn't waste time on pointless actions which didn't strengthen me either. So it couldn't be helped since this was what I needed to do to survive.

"Well then, we should return soon and upgrade your gear, Raphtalia."

"... Naofumi-sama?"

Huh? For some reason, Raphtalia was softly smiling at me. Yet I couldn't help but feel a strange, spine-freezing chill at the mere sight of her.

"Although, I very much welcome the idea of buying new equipment, but can you please pay a little more attention to yourself and how you're dressed?"

"Do I look weird or something?"

"Except for that shield, you look like a common villager."

"W-...well, it wasn't really necessary... but I guess a small change in my attire should be alright?"

Gashi!*[13]

Raphtalia threateningly gripped my shoulder with a smile.

"Didn't you just get injured a short while ago?"

"Like I said, I was deliberately using a weak shield... so it should still be fine, right? Your weapon's much more important than me right now, so it's better to invest our——"

“Naofumi-sama? Do you know that you'll be dying very soon if you keep on joking like this?”^[14]

“Death!?”

With spare sword in hand, Raphtalia was poking me with it forebodingly.^[15]

Although, I supposedly couldn't be harmed by her due to the slave's restraining spell.

“... To begin with, shouldn't you worry more about your own equipment? The deadline is approaching, isn't it?”

“... haha.”

Come to think of it, she's right.

There were only a few days left before the wave of calamity spawns.

I'll need to continue growing stronger until then.

Though I've certainly become anxious about dressing up like your average townie.

The ends and the means had truly been misplaced.^[16]

“Haa…….”^[17]

Even though I wanted to raise my offensive power a bit more...

“Instead of me, let's hurry up and find Naofumi-sama's equipment right away.”

"I guess so, we'll be buying my equipment for the time being. But we'll use the remaining money to get your weapon."

"Hai."

Although it's fine with me since I've gotten use to it, she sure has become rather cheeky...

Her violent actions have escalated recently along with her stubbornness. I really wanted to know why our positions were somehow reversed.

She's become quite a bossy slave if I do say so myself.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 17 – The Barbarian's Armor

“Oh well, isn't that the shield lad? It's already been over a week now.”

After returning to the castle town, we had gone straight to the shopping district.

Yet for some reason, Oyaji had his mouth wide open when he looked over at Raphtalia.

“We're only meeting again after a short while... and look at how much of a beauty you've become.”

“Haah?”

Just what was he saying? Why was Oyaji mumbling incoherently like this?

“You've developed so nicely... this is far too different from your previous, famished complexion.”

“Please don't phrase it as if I'm getting fat.”



Seemingly bothered by his statement, Raphtalia fidgeted while fiddling with her fingers.

That reaction of hers was repulsive!

She reminded me of that bitch of a woman.

“Gahaha, you grew up into such an adorable mink.”^[1]

“Grew up? Well, her level certainly rose.”

A week ago she was at Lvl 10, and now she was at Lvl 25. But did her physical appearance really change that much?

“Fuumu... you’re quite cynical, you know that?”

“I have no idea what nonsense you're talking about.”

It was true that anyone would find a little 10 years old girl cute^[2]. But since she had only been eating meat, meat, and more meat all day long, it might have made her a bit chubby.

Every time her stomach grumbled, we would immediately cook up the meat from the monsters we had encountered.

I was afraid she might turn into one of those beriberi people^[3] due to her unbalanced diet. So I started adding medical herbs into her meals, even though it broke my heart and wallet by doing so.

She hadn’t been coughing recently, probably thanks to the recovery potions finally taking effect.

"What were you up to this past week? Hunting?"

"The village inn staff had taught me some table manners. Since I wanted to be able to dine as elegantly as Naofumi-sama someday."

"Looks like you're well on your way."

Unexpectedly, Oyaji was in a real good mood. At this rate he'll probably sell us some high quality wares.

So keep on flattering him, Raphtalia!

"So, what's your business with me today?"

"Haha, I plan on purchasing some equipment."

I said while pointing at Raphtalia. In response, she firmly gripped my finger with an eerie smile on her face.

"Please consider Naofumi-sama and his protective gear this time around."

"Gotcha. But for what reason?"

"I'd like to ask that you take a moment to ponder it over yourself."

"Mmm... Well, to prepare for the incoming wave, I guess?"

"Just what are you two getting at? I seriously don't have the slightest idea of what this Jou-chan is saying here..."^[4]

Just what in the world were these guys even talking about?

Both Raphtalia and I had already decided that we'll be buying my equipment, right?

"So, seems like we'll be getting you some armor. Around how much are you looking to spend?"

"Within the range of 180 silver coins, if you would."

Raphtalia rattled off our budget range without my consent.

Now, that had ticked me off some.

If we settled for that price, then we couldn't buy a new weapon for her!

"Let's see... well, my best balanced armor for that amount would be this chain mail here."

"That chain mail... BAAH!"

Dark emotions began creeping up from deep within my gut.

It'd be utterly humiliating for me to re-buy a piece of equipment which had originally been mine.

"Well... if the shield lad hates this so much, I suppose we should go with something else."

Oyaji replied while scratching his head, understanding my reaction, as he turned to his other armory in stock.

"To be honest, it's kind of hard to find an appropriate gear within this price range. How does an iron plated mail sound to you?"

He asked while pointing at the armor in question.

It was a huge sheet of iron morphed into... a full guarded plate. The armor was decorated with the castle town's symbol.

I knew about this! Back in my old world, this was what people called a 'full plate mail' or something like that. This type of armor was said to be extremely tedious to move in; the wearer couldn't even stand by themselves; and finally, they were the fastest to sink in a swamp.

"Some physical stamina will be needed in order to wear this. Its only fault is that the 'Air Walk' feature isn't applied to it."

"Air Walk feature?"

"A function which allows the wearer to lighten their weight by consuming their own magic power. A truly magnificent ability."

"I agree."

Basically in this world, if a full body armor didn't have the Air Walk function then it was nothing more than an immobile sandbag.

That's not quite right. If the wearer was physically capable then they should be able to move around somewhat.

However, I don't have much stamina at this point in time.

"Seems like we can make it lighter and cheaper by removing the bulkier looking parts..."

"So lad, you were thinking along those lines after all."

"Isn't that a given?"

"Iron breastplates are indeed cheaper to buy. But their protective coverage is very limited."

"Fumu... While high defense is a must, losing your mobility in exchange would make it meaningless."

It was good and all to become as solid as a wall, but it would be a huge problem if I could barely move at all.

I'd like to refrain from equipping gear which decreased mobility as much as possible.

The Air Walk feature, huh? I wonder how much it would cost to add that function on.

"With that said... I might be able to craft a custom made armor if you can bring me the materials..."

"Sounds good, I enjoy doing these sort of things."

"You have a satisfied expression there, lad... Guess we'll go with this plan."

Oyaji spread out a parchment with the names of various materials written on it.

"I can't read this."

While it was possible to communicate directly thanks to the shield's translation feature, I still couldn't read the writings of this world.

Oyaji looked troubled, so he went ahead and explained everything to me.

"You can buy some cheap copper and iron from the atelier over there. After that, bring me some Usapiru and Porcupine hides, and then a few Pikyupikyuu feathers."

"Here are the hides and feathers."

With a smile, Raphtalia happily took out the hides and feathers from inside our luggage sack.

Those were used as our blankets and bedding since they were warm and fluffy. But... well, I suppose it's fine either way.

"The quality of the armor will be a bit bad. But it's still good for practical use."

"Then what's the reason for making it?"

"This is the Barbarian Armor. Its performance is on par with the Chain Mail and covers the majority of the body. It may be a bit cold to wear but it's very strong."

"Oh..."

Barbarian Armor... Somehow the phrase sounds a bit unpleasant.

"There's a trick to add some magical options as a bonus, but this step can be done later when you've finished with gathering the other materials."

"That's reassuring. Well then, let's go and buy some iron and copper."

"Let's go! Let's go right away!"

Raphtalia energetically pulled my hand along while rushing me outside.

"What's the big deal?"

"Naofumi-sama is going to look like a real adventurer. I can't wait to see it."

"W-well... I guess so."

She did say that I looked exactly like a villager.

Although the equipment would be a bit barbarous, it wasn't like I had much choice.

We then headed towards the metal atelier and bought the required amount of iron and copper.

They seemed to have heard about us from Oyaji, so they sold us the goods at a surprisingly cheap price.

They also said that Raphtalia was cute and gave us a little extra.

The ossan^[5] from the metal atelier was grinning widely while looking at her. Raphtalia graciously waved back at him in return.

I didn't even want to start preaching about the pedophilia morality to this world.

"That was some quick material gathering."

"It's all thanks to your own efforts, isn't that right, lad?"

"Well, yeah. Since a lot of Oyaji's acquaintances are lolicons. I can already point out two or three of them."

"Lolicon? What on Melromarc are you saying?"

"You don't understand what lolicons are? I thought you would understand this word through the shield's translating feature."

"Not that, I just don't get why you think my co-workers' preferences are for young girls..."

"They said that Raphtalia was cute so they sold even cheaper goods to us."

"Lad... could it be that you seriously don't know?"

"Don't know what?"

"Oyaji, it's fine for now."

Raphtalia said for some reason while shaking her head.

Oyaji somehow understood. Resigned, he slumped his shoulders and threw me a glance.

"It'll be done by tomorrow, so please wait until then."

"That's fast, I thought it would take at least two days minimum for you to finish."

"Hmm, that might be the case for some stranger. But it's different for you, lad."

"For once, you have my gratitude."

"Wahaha, that sure was a butt-scratcher^[7] of a reply."

He sure was making fun of me just because I showed him a little appreciation.

"So, what's the price of this custom made armor?"

"Including the fee for copper and iron... about 130 silver coins. In addition, you can add some optional enhancements."

"Is that the base cost? I thought it would be fine so long as I got the required materials."

"Waha, those were already taken into account at the 130 coins price tag, I can't go any lower than that."

"I understand. Then it's good enough for me."

I took out 130 silver coins and handed them over to Oyaji.

"Thanks for your patronage."

"Ah, that's right. Oyaji, I want to buy a weapon within the range of 90 silver coins."

"I guessing it's for this Jou-chan here?"

"Haha..."

That's right. The ordinary sword which we bought last week was newly polished now. So we should ask for a trade-in?

"Raphtalia."

"Hai."

Raphtalia pulled out the sword from her waist and put it on the counter.

"I want to ask for a resale. So here, include this sword into the payment amount."

"Fumu... looks like you've properly maintained it this time around."

"All thanks to my shield."

The polishing maintenance would end by the next morning if we inserted the weapon inside the whetstone shield before going to sleep.

It also kept the blade nice and sharp for ease of cutting.

"That's a convenient shield... I want one too."

"You won't be able to equip any other weapon, you know."

I'm just a moving wall without any attack power.

I would gladly hand this over to anyone who wanted it. If only that was possible.

"That part is quite bothersome."

I waited for the trade-in to commence while enduring Oyaji's obnoxious laughter.

"There's not a speck of rust on the blade. As expected of the legendary shield, its performance is superb."

Oyaji stated his open admiration while inspecting the sword's durability.

"Let me see... with this much left over, I can sell you a magic iron sword."

Magic iron sword was definitely higher than an iron sword in terms of weapon ranking.

"It should be a given that blood-clean coating is included, right?"

"Urg, I'll add that as a bonus. I know full well that you're working hard, lad!"

Oyaji sure was a great guy. If you think about, he had been giving me various extras ever since the day I had gotten robbed and been left with absolutely nothing.

"Thank you..."

From the bottom of my heart, I expressed those sincere words of gratitude to Oyaji.

"Lad. It's good news to see that same glint in your eyes just like the first time we met. You've shown me some fine stuff today."

Oyaji somehow seemed satisfied as he handed the magic iron sword to Raphtalia.

"Good weapons will only become powerful in capable hands, while they'll only turn into worthless junk in the hands of the talentless. However, I believe that you'll be able to fully master their strength. Give it your best shot, Jou-chan."

"Hai!"

Raphtalia sheathed the sword on her waist with sparkling, motivated eyes.

"Now then, please come again around this time tomorrow."

"Aarg."^[8]

"Thank you very much!"^[9]

"Until then."^[10]

And thus, we left the weapon shop.

With our business there done, we headed off thinking about what to eat and what we should do for the remaining day.

Even though I couldn't taste anything, I still needed to eat since I got hungry like everyone else.

In my hands were 10 silver coins. What we managed to save up in one full week had vanished instantly.

Oh well. This was well within expectations, and these coins should be good enough to make our future investments.

Fortunately, there were plenty of ways to earn money.

"Ah, that's right. Do you want to eat at the shop which we went to awhile ago?"

"Are you sure it's alright?"

"I'm looking forward to seeing Raphtalia's gluttonous manners as she devours the food off her plate again."

"Please stop that! Mou^[11], I'm not a child anymore!"

The previously cheerful Raphtalia was now getting angry as she puffed her cheeks.

Why would you suddenly try to be an adult when you were acting like a kid only a week ago?

It looked like our little girl had just hit puberty.

"Yeah, yeah. You honestly want to eat. I understand that, I truly do."

"Naofumi-sama isn't even listening to a word I'm saying."

"It's okay. You're totally an adult. With that being said... you really want to chow down, don't you?"

"You think I can't see through your true thoughts behind those kind eyes used to patronize children?! I don't need that kind of sympathy!"

Good grief, she sure was at a difficult age.

Should we still get a Kid's Lunch for her? We entered the same shop which served those.

"Welcome!"

Oh? Our server courteously guided us to our table this time.

Was this the effect of changing Raphtalia's hairstyle? People sure were cruel over the smallest things back then.

"I'll be ordering the cheapest meal set you have, while this girl will get the lunch for kids, the one with the little flag on it."

"Naofumi-sama!"

The employee confirmed our orders with a perplexed expression while alternating between me and Raphtalia.

"Err, please give me the cheapest table course meal as well."

"Y-yes."

Our server nodded at Raphtalia and returned to the kitchen.

"What was that for? Do you really dislike the kid's lunch that much?"

"As I said before, I've already grown up."

“Um... okay?”

Guess it couldn't be helped. I'll let Raphtalia indulge in her selfishness for now.

I suppose my only current obligation is to let her eat what she wants to eat.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 18 – Engraved Dragon Hourglass

The next day, we showed up at the weapon shop.

"Well, if it isn't the lad."

"How's our order coming along?"

"Done! I finished it a long while ago."

Oyaji said while bringing out a set of armor from behind the counter.

What came out was a rather rough and lawless looking... set of unrefined armor; there was a wild vibe to it.

The Usapiru hides made up the fluffy wool portion around the neck, while the chest area was comprised of a metal plate.

The joints weren't connected by metal, but by the Porcupine skins. Putting my hand in, I could feel the Pikyupikyu feathers fully stuffed between the dual skin layers.

"... I'm going to wear this?"

How should I say this, it looked like the type of armor that bandit lords would wear.

Just what were they thinking by calling this the 'Barbarian's Armor'? I would look like one of those small time yankees back in the 90's if I wore this.

"What's wrong, lad?"

"No, I'm just thinking this looks like the armor of a wicked scoundrel."

"What are you saying at this late hour, lad?"

Huh?

"Are you implying that I'm already a wicked scoundrel to begin with?"

I certainly made the most efficient choices when it came to making money, but that didn't make me a villain, okay?

"It will definitely suit you, Naofumi-sama!"

"Raphtalia... you--"

Wasn't that like admitting I was one of them?

"Anyways, just try it on for us."

"Urg... I would avoid it if possible... but there isn't any other choice since we went through so much trouble in making this armor."

I immediately got changed after entering the dressing room.

... I couldn't even begin to describe my amazement on how perfectly fitted the size was.

It truly was something that could only be made by Oyaji, a true owner of a store who deals with weapons and armory. He could tell my specific sizes just by looking.

I came out of the dressing room and presented myself to both Oyaji and Raphtalia.

"Fumu... your face may not give off that barbaric vibe, but I can see the glint of a lawless thug within your eyes."

"Hah? Are you saying that I have nasty looking eyes?"

"Lad, you sure are quick on the uptake regarding important details."

Damn it, just what did you mean by that?

"Naofumi-sama, it suits you so well and you look so COOL!"

Raphtalia gushed over with a smile.

I glared at Raphtalia in silence.

Using the meanest look and most hurtful eyes as possible...

... That was my intention anyways.

Just what kind of environment did she grow up in?

Ah, I forgot that Raphtalia was a Demi-human. It was probably because she had a different aesthetic sense compared to me.

I confirmed through the status that this armor's defense was on par with the chain mail. Rather, it was a bit higher.

Oyaji sent me a wink. So this was his bonus for us, that was quite considerate I must say.

"Haah... Thank you."

Franking speaking, this kind of thing wasn't a hobby of mine, but I couldn't do anything about it since I had to prepare for the incoming wave.

I convinced myself using that reasoning.

"Now then, what should we do?"

"That reminds me, the town's atmosphere had been kind of tense lately."

"The wave will probably be coming very soon, but where and when will it spawn?"

"Huh? Nobody told you, lad?"

"About what?"

Information that Oyaji knew but I was ignorant of... that should be this country's counter measures against the calamity. I secretly cursed while listening to what Oyaji had to say.

"You've probably seen this country's huge, famed clock tower in the town plaza, right?"

"Well, only a glimpse. I've usually been operating around the outskirts of town."

"The Dragon Engraved Hourglass is inside that building. When the final bit of sand from the hourglass drips down, the Heroes along with their merry band will be teleported to where the wave of great calamity will occur."

"Oh..?"

Without a doubt... that shitty king probably told this tidbit of info to the other heroes and their companions beforehand.

"If you don't know when the wave will appear, why not stop over and take a look for yourself?"

"I... guess."

It'll trouble me greatly if I had no idea when I would be warped.

I planned on dropping by that place for some reassurance.

"Well then, Oyaji."

"So long then!"

"Until next time."

We said our farewells and headed for the clock tower.

Throughout the town, the clock tower was the tallest structure around. It would rival the height of modern city buildings from up close.

For some reason, the clock tower roof was dome-shaped much like a church.

It seemed there was no entrance fee; the gates were wide open as other people were coming to and fro.

Wearing an outfit similar to a nun, the female receptionist was eyeing me suspiciously. She probably recognized my face.

"You're the Hero of the Shield, are you not?"

"Haha, as you can see, I'm here since the time limit is just around the corner."

"Then, please come this way."

I was then guided towards an hourglass enshrined in the middle of the church.

A gigantic hourglass with a whopping height of approximately 7 meters.

It was decorated and gave off an indescribably divine aura.

... What was it? My spine felt tingling, like a surge of electricity was rushing up.

Just by looking at it, my instincts kicked in and a strange sensation began to stir from within my body.

The color of the sand... was red.

I turned my gaze upon the smooth, dripping sand.

I immediately understood what would happen once the last grain fell.

Letting out a "piin*" sound, a single beam of light flashed from my shield and into the center of the dragon engraved hourglass, striking the jewel from within it.

Then a digital clock appeared in my peripheral vision.

20:12

The 12 value soon turned into 11 after a short while.

I see, so the exact time remaining was translated for my own understanding.

Using this will allow me to act accordingly.

However... the things that I could do within a 20-hour time frame were extremely limited. All things considered, the best option was to gather as many meadow herbs as possible for the rest of the day.

I also needed to prepare some healing medicine.

"Huh? Isn't that Naofumi over there?"

A loathsome, despicable voice resounded from within the tower's interior.

Walking around with a huge harem of women, the Spear Hero Motoyasu casually came over to me.

What a pain, I want to immediately send his ass flying. But considering the time and place, I restrained myself from doing so.

"Did you also come here in preparation for the wave?"

That was one hell of an indescribably lascivious look. He looked me over from top to bottom with a single, scornful glance.

"What the hell, man. Are you planning on fighting with equipment of that level?"

And what if I am?

Who do you think I have to thank for putting me in this situation? You and that goddamn bitch behind your sorry ass.

Motoyasu's gear was vastly different from a month ago, one can tell how high-leveled he was with a single glance at his equipment.

It wasn't iron-based, but a shiny armor made from silver. He wore cloth underneath which emitted a beautiful pale green tint, most likely due to the extra effects blessed by those clothes. Not only that, but there was the layer of chain mail worn in between those two; it was as if Motoyasu was boasting his absolute defense.

His legendary weapon wasn't in its original, sorry state either. And although it is vexing to admit, the spear's design was simply downright awesome to be honest.

It was a pike... well, I guess that was still a spear.

"..."

Talking with this guy was such a pain.

I turned my back on Motoyasu and ignored him while heading back to the clock tower's entrance.

"What in the name of Melromarc, Motoyasu-sama is talking to you! Open your ears wide and pay attention to him."

A fangirl bitch from behind Motoyasu said as they all glared at me with eyes full of contempt and bloodlust.

After that came the stereotypical mockery. They began to provoke me by sticking out their tongues and jeering.

This bitch, I'll kill her someday.

"Naofumi-sama? Who are these people...?"

Raphtalia inclined her head and pointed at Motoyasu's group.

"..."

I tried to walk away, deciding that it was best to simply leave and not answer her.

At that same moment, Itsuki came waltzing through the entrance.

"Tsk."

"Oh, Motoyasu-san and... Naofumi-san."

Itsuki seemed displeased with me clicking my tongue at him, but his 'good boy' features soon returned.

"..."

Ren had also come and walked up to us in silence, pretending to act cool. His equipment was undoubtedly much stronger than when his journey began.

And then, both of their companions popped up one after another.

The population within the clock tower quickly escalated.

4 + 12 + 1

We, the four summoned heroes, along with the twelve adventurers chosen by the king, and finally Raphtalia.

That added up to a grand total of 17 people, a rather disappointing amount of troops for the impending threat.

"Haa..."

"Just who is this beauty? She's simply adorable."

Motoyasu pointed at Raphtalia and uttered.

This guy, he's fine with anyone as long as they're female?

To think that a hero would lust after a little girl... this country was finished.

On top of that, he approached Raphtalia with filthy motives while affectionately introducing himself.

"Nice to meet you, young miss. I was summoned to this world as one of the four great heroes. Please call me by my name, Kitamura Motoyasu. I'm honored to make your acquaintance."

"Ah, yes... so you are one of those heroes."

Raphtalia nodded timidly while her eyes eluded his gaze.

"May I have the pleasure of knowing your name?"

"Umm..."

A troubled Raphtalia looked over at me and darted her glance back to Motoyasu.

"I'm Ra-Raphtalia. It's nice to meet you."

She had probably guessed that I was quite ticked off. I understood that much from the cold sweat running down her face.

This girl also wanted to ditch me and join Motoyasu's fanclub, didn't she?

Goddamn it, I already tried making a peaceful retreat here, so why did these bastards still have to fuck with my heart?

"What's your business here today, cutie? For what purpose are you carrying around such a dangerous sword and equipment?"

"I am here to fight along with Naofumi-sama, that's why."

"Hah? For Naofumi?"

Motoyasu turned and stared at me with eyes full of suspicion.

"... The hell are you looking at?"

"You fiend, why are you dragging such a cute girl into these dangerous places?"

Motoyasu said while looked down on me with his eyes.

"I don't need to tell you the reason, asshole."

"And here I thought you would shoulder this battle alone... so you're just leeching off Raphtalia's kindness in the end."

"Damn, delusional retard."

The trash spewing out from this son of a bitch, who trusted this parallel world's biggest whore more than a fellow hero, was seriously beginning to piss me off.

I headed toward Itsuki and Ren's direction in order to make my exit.

Those two and their merry companies opened up a path for me.

"Let's meet again during the wave."

"Don't be a burden to us."

I walked pass them with Itsuki giving off a professional response, while Ren gave a cruel, bossy one like a real lone wolf hero.

Surprised by my suddenness, Raphtalia quickly rushed over to my side while looking around restlessly.

"I'm going."

"Ah, hai! Naofumi-sama!"

After hearing my voice, she finally returned to her energetic self.

Good grief, that was painfully unpleasant.

Exiting the clock tower at long last, I quickly pass through the castle town and made a beeline towards the meadow, growing more and more frustrated with each passing second.

"Um, Naofumi-sama? What happened to you?"

"Nothing really..."

"Back then..."

"What?"

"Never mind..."

Sensing my awful mood, Raphtalia hung her head dejectedly as she followed behind me.

... Then a wild Balloon appear!

Raphtalia immediately unsheathed her sword.

"Wait, let me handle this one alone."

"Eh... but--"

"Just let me!"

Raphtalia cowered in surprise from my sudden shout.

The Balloon appeared before my eyes.

"Ora ora ora ora!"

Shit! Shit shit shit shit shit!

Distracting myself by pummeling the balloon, I was able to calm down a little.

I checked the remaining time from the corner of my vision.

18:01

18 more hours.

I needed to do what I could until then.

After that, I went on a Balloon Hunt and collected medical meadow herbs along the way.

They still needed to be compounded into beneficial medicine in preparation for the incoming wave.

Then came the evening... after returning to the inn to rest, Raphtalia humbly spoke to me.

"Naofumi-sama."

"... What?"

"This morning, those people were heroes just like Naofumi-sama, right?"

"... Urg."

She had to remind me of that terrible experience.

And here I had finally forgotten about it after all that diversion.

"Just... what happened between all of you?"

"I don't want to talk about it. If you want to know then go to a bar and ask around."

No one believed me when I told them the truth anyway. This girl was probably the same as the lot of them.

However, a big difference between Raphtalia and others was that she was my slave.

If she refused my orders, tried to escape, or rebelled against me then she would be tormented by the curse.

Judging it was for the best, Raphtalia didn't press the issue since I wasn't going to talk.

To prepare for tomorrow, I compounded medicines until I fell asleep; I continued doing so for a long while.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 19 – Memory/Black Beast

00:17

In just another 17 minutes, the anticipated wave will spawn.

This news should already be well-known around town.

Squadrons of knights and adventurers were geared up and ready to dispatch at a moment's notice, while the civilians barricaded themselves in their own houses.

Since I was a hero, I couldn't even attempt to escape from the wave's outbreak due to the hourglass' power.

The same was applied to my party member; it was likely that Raphtalia would be teleported along with me.

"It's almost time, Raphtalia."

"Hai!"

Raphtalia nodded with a strangely enthusiastic and excited response.

Well, I didn't voice any objections since it was a blessing to have her so motivated.

"Naofumi-sama... may I talk with you for a while?"

"Hm? That should be fine, what's your concern?"

"Ah no, somehow I felt so moved since we'll be fighting against the calamity soon."

... Why was she murmuring this and raising her own death flag?

I'll protect her since it would be a pain if she died... Wait, that was so unlike me; I was being influenced by too much anime and manga.

Although this world was like a game, it definitely wasn't one. This world was real.

And look at that, those shitty heroes had such fine equipment. I didn't even know if my armor was strong enough or not.

It was likely that I would suffer some wounds.

It would be great if this battle ended with only injuries, since I might even lose my life.

If that were to happen, the trash heap of this country would rejoice at the sight of my corpse.

——A criminal's fitting end.

... Let's stop that. If I keep thinking this way then I won't be able to fight.

In order for me to survive for another month.

"The truth is that... I was enslaved due to the spawning of the first calamity."

"... Is that so?"

Certainly, I thought there was a slim chance that might have been the case.

"I used to live in a remote region of this country. The demi-human village that I grew up in focused on agriculture and farming; it was also the spawn point of the very first wave."

Her parents were kind and everyone in the village lived peacefully.

However, a huge horde of Skeleton Soldiers came out from within the wave of disaster.

The Skeleton Soldiers only had large numbers at first, so the adventurers within the vicinity were able to suppress them.

But the beasts and giant beetles kept overflowing in massive quantities. Because of that, the line of defense was soon breached.

Then a pitch black, three-headed Cerberus appeared. And the villagers were trampled upon like they were helpless wilderness buds.

As Raphtalia's village was desolated beyond recognition, the villagers desperately tried to escape.

Unfortunately, the monsters were merciless; they murdered everyone as if it was the greatest sport in the world.

And like all the others, Raphtalia's parents took her and also fled until they finally reached the edge of a sea cliff.

Knowing that escape was futile, both parents faced Raphtalia and smiled.

They didn't use that time to escape, but to gently stroke her frightened head instead.

"Raphtalia... from now on, you will surely find yourself in a terrible situation. You might even die from it."

"But you know what, Raphtalia? Both of us want you to continue living... so please forgive us for our selfishness."

Even though she was young, she knew in her heart that her parents were only trying to keep her safe.

"Noo! Mommy! Daddy!"

Don!

Their single greatest wish was for Raphtalia to live, and so they pushed her off the cliff.

While she was falling, Raphtalia witnessed the scene of her parents being pounced upon by vicious monsters.

Raphtalia plunged into the sea with a huge splash, yet she miraculously survived and was washed ashore at a nearby beach.

After regaining her senses, Raphtalia rose up and returned to the cliffside in search of her parents.

By then, the monsters were already subjugated by the adventurers and knight squadrons.

Walking through the sea of corpses with great difficulty, she managed to locate her parents.

On that spot was a vast amount of blood... and scraps of meat scattered everywhere.

Realizing her parents' death, Raphtalia dropped down as something deep within her burst opened.

"Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!"

She then wandered around aimlessly, sobbing and sincerely wishing for the warmth of her parents in an effort to escape reality.

And before she knew it, she had already been imprisoned within that dark corner of the circus tent.

That place... was comparable to hell.

Every day, someone would be purchased or returned.

Raphtalia was also among those cases.

In the beginning, they considered making her into a servant. A well-buffed noble bought her and tried teaching her multiple things.

But the coughing was trouble enough, and she also shrieked like a banshee at night on top of that.

Thus, she was promptly refunded back to the tent the next day.

The next buyer also attempted to teach Raphtalia various stuff, but again she was immediately returned the following day.

The owner before me was the cruelest buyer of them all.

They purchased her one evening, whipped her throughout the entire night, and resold her, tattered and torn, the very next morning.

I wasn't the least bit surprised that this country had sickos who would take pleasure in inflicting pain upon others.

She was wrecked by illness, her heart was almost broken from the recurring nightmares, and she was used and abandoned countless times... that was when she was bought by me.

"You know, I'm very glad to have met you, Naofumi-sama."

"... Yeah."

"You were the one who taught me how to live a proper life after all."

"... Yeah."

I absentmindedly replied to Raphtalia's story with a mechanical tone.

This didn't matter much at any rate.

"For that reason, please allow me a chance. A chance to confront this wave."

"... Yeah."

"With that said, I'll do my best!"

"Ha... ha... give it your best shot."

Even I thought that I was acting a bit too cruel.

However, my past self could only act in such a pitiful manner.

00:01

We have one more minute before it's time.

I took my stance, prepared for the teleportation.

00:00

Bikin!

A deafening sound echoed throughout the world.

The very next instance, my vision was flushed away and the scenery around me changed. I was probably being warped.

"The sky..."

Dyed an eerie wine red, cracks began peeling away and expanding outward through the sky due to the dimensional rift.

"So this is..."

While assessing the scene, three shadows dashed passed me, followed by twelve other people.

Those shitty heroes.

I also tailed them since it was the obvious thing to do, but where were they heading off to?

While sprinting onward, I saw enemies come crawling out and pushing against each other through the large crack in the sky.

"This is the vicinity of Riyuuto village!"

Raphtalia anxiously exclaimed after examining the surrounding area.

"Since this is all farm land, a lot of people should still be dwelling here!"

"But everyone should have already evacu--"

Then a sudden realization hit me.

We never knew beforehand where the Wave of Calamity would appear, right? Then how the hell would we know which locations needed to be evacuated?

"You fools, wait a minute!"

Refusing to heed my calls, the three idiotic heroes dashed straight towards the source of the wave.

During that time a group of monstrous spiders, having separated themselves from the overflowing monster horde, headed straight towards the village's direction.

Wait, the buffoon hero troupe had shot something like a bullet flare up into the sky, signaling a sort of message.

It must have been to inform the knight squadrons and rally them to their location.

"Tsk!! Raphtalia! Let's go protect the village!"

I was indebted to many of the people from Riyuuto village.

I'd definitely suffer from remorse if they got killed by the wave!

"HAI!"

We then rushed to a different direction, separating from those shitty heroes.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 20 – Wave of Calamity

We arrived right on time as the demons overflowing from the wave started to wreak havoc within the village.

The adventurers and soldiers stationed there were barely able to defend against the horde's onslaught. They were greatly outnumbered...

... and the line of defense was about to break.

"Raphtalia, please evacuate the villagers."

"Huh? What about Naofumi-sama..?"

"I will aggro the enemy!"



I flung myself into the frontline and bashed my shield against a group of locust-looking monsters.

The sound of metal colliding was there but the damage obviously wasn't.

However, I was able to grab their attention.

It was the same as what I had always done with Raphtalia.

"Gugi!"

The herd of tiny locust-like monsters charged at my direction. Moving on, I immediately decided on my next targets: the ghouls and the swarm of wasps.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Was it thanks to the barbarian's armor, or was it the shield? Either way I received zero damage as usual.

"Yu-yuusha-sama?"

"Ah, right... You guys go and reorganize yourselves while I hold them back!"

I saw a lot of familiar faces within the Riyuto village bunch.

"Y-yes sir!"

Fortunately, no one was fatally wounded among the survivors even though I was the only one on the frontline.

"What the..."

What was that thought just now? How unpleasant.

While I was dazed, the monsters attempted to knock me out of commission with their claw, fang, and needle attacks.

Even though there were the sweet sounds of impact, I didn't feel any pain, only a bit of an itch. However, the feeling of them crawling all over my body was beyond disgusting.

Hence I beat the crap out of the mobs.

WAMP!

Damn it, didn't any of the inhabitants of this world know how to leave people alone?

But I guess it couldn't be helped since the wave of great calamity was happening and all that.

"He-help m—!"

Behind me, the innkeeper whom I was indebted to was being attacked by a monster.

Right before the innkeeper got decapitated by the monster's claw, I shouted:

"Air Strike Shield!"

I casted the skill, and a lifesaving shield was immediately summoned and rescued the innkeeper.

He was surprised at the sudden appearance of the shield and looked towards my direction.

"Run for it!"

"... Ooh, thank you."

After he bowed from his waist and voiced his gratitude, the innkeeper left the scene along with his family.

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

A stereotypical, ear-deafening shriek.

It was the sight of a damsel in distress fleeing away with a gang of pursuing monsters.

I approached the vicinity.

"Shield Prison!"

I called forth a box of shields to surround and protect the damsel.

With the shields' sudden appearance, the monsters switched their target to me.

That's good. Come over here. I'm very delicious.

Before the duration time of the Shield Prison expired, I lured the monsters away and returned to the frontline.

WAM! BAM!

Haah haah...

My body steadily became heavier with the increasing number of monsters.

Then, a rain of fire poured down on top of me.

Behind the horde of monsters, I could spot the knight squadron's arrival.

The magic users among their ranks were shooting out their magic; so this was the cause of the fire.

"DUDES! There are allies over here!"

Although, there was only me here.

The monsters were quickly ignited and turned into cinders.

Since there were a lot of insects they burned nicely.

Apparently, not only was my physical defense high but my magical defense was as well.

The front line was burning brightly with a crimson red. Anger swelled up from within me while questioning the motive behind this friendly fire; I glared and approached the knight squadron amidst the mayhem as my cloak fluttered, scattering the flames.

"Hmph, so that is the Shield Hero... He's surprisingly resilient."

The person who appeared to be the knight commander threw me a glance and spat on the ground while uttering those words.

Then a shadow dashed at him, brandishing a sword.

And with a loud 'Klang!', the knight commander quickly unsheathed his own sword and locked blades with his attacker.

"What was the meaning of your actions against Naofumi-sama?! I will cut you down depending on your answer!"

Raphtalia declared with great bloodlust.

"A companion of the Shield Hero, huh?"

"Correct, I am Naofumi-sama's blade! I shall not forgive any act of disrespect!"

"... How dare a demi-human try to speak on the same level as us knights?"

"You have neglected your duties of protecting civilians and attacked your own allies, specifically Naofumi-sama whom you tried burning along with all the monsters using your magic. For those reasons, you people are unfit to be called knights!"

"Isn't it fine since he's still safe and sound over there?"

"No it's not!"

Raphtalia passionately continued arguing with the knight commander while the others began to surround her.

"Shield Prison!"

"Damn, you basta——"

I confined the encircling knights with my shields and stared down at the knights who tried to usurp my hard work.

"... Aren't the real enemies here the monsters spawned from the wave? Don't mix up your objectives!"

Ashen-faced, the knights turned their heads away after my rebuttal.

"A criminal Hero doesn't have the right to say such crap."

"Oh well... I'm fine with anything. So I guess it's safe to say that you guys want to make an enemy out of me?"

The frontline was brimming with fire blazing monsters who were crawling all over my face, with more and more from the wave joining the fray.

Looking at me withstanding all of that, the knights' faces turned completely blue.

After all, I was the Shield Hero. 'Do not mess with this guy' or other lines of reasoning were there.

"Raphtalia, did you finish with the evacuation?"

"No... it's not done yet. I believe that it will take a little bit more time."

"Understood, then hurry up and evacuate the civilians."

"But..."

"Though our allies had rained fire on me, it wasn't even painful or ticklish. It just... left a feeling of being licked on my arms and legs."

I patted Raphtalia's shoulder and followed with a glare at the knights.

"... I will definitely kill you, no matter what it will take. I'll lure the worst monsters here and abandon you, for example, as well as all that other fun stuff too."

My threat was effective; the knights stopped chanting magic and gasped.

"Now then, Raphtalia. The fight's already started; let's remove the disabled away from the battlefield, discarding all this dead weight.^[4] Wow, look at that. There sure are a bunch of enemies.^[5] Yes, let's do just that."

Unexpectedly, since the knights can seemingly hold their own... it should be alright to ditch them here.

"Y-yes!"

Upon my orders, Raphtalia rushed back to the village.

"Shit! Putting on airs even though you're just a criminal Hero."

The knight commander bellowed at me like an idiot right when the Shield Prison's duration time expired.

"Alright, so you... want to die?"

Monsters began to stir towards me.

The idiot shuts up, knowing what would happen if I were to abandon them and only protect myself.

Geez, I couldn't seem to find a decent person amongst all of these people.

These guys were the type that thought that I wouldn't be able to do anything other than protect others since I was nothing but a Shield Hero. Who the hell would ever help others for the fun of it?

Afterwards, the cleanup of the stranded monsters from the wave was completed to some extent.

Once she was done with evacuating the civilians, Raphtalia returned to the frontline, that was when I commenced my retaliation.

Using the knight squadron as our human shield, we finished off the monsters by baiting them into our encircled formation. And a few hours had passed by in no time at all.

"Alright, I guess that's the end."

"Seems like it, this boss was a cakewalk."

"Yep, at this rate, the next wave will also be a cinch."

Our bravely fought heroes were simply chatting at the heart of the frontline; where the corpse of a Chimera, the wave's Boss, laid.^[11]

It was as if the job of evacuating civilians were only the adventurers and knights' responsibility...

Even though a month had already passed, these folks still think that all of this is nothing but a game.

It was quite a hassle for me to ignore these shitty heroes, but I was relieved that I managed to survive this wave.

The sky's color was still pitch black. Although it was only a matter of time before it would be dyed orange by the setting sun.

With this, I should be able to stay alive for at least another month.

... Although I didn't receive any damage, that was probably due to the wave being weak: for now. I honestly don't know if I can endure the next one.

Sooner or later I'll be unable to withstand their attacks... what in the world would happen to me then?

"A job well done, oh brave heroes. The king has properly readied a feast in celebration for your achievements. We humbly invite you to join in since we will also be handing out your rewards there."

I naturally didn't want to participate. However, I had no more money. So I'll bless them with my presence. Let us depart together!

Indeed, it was expected for them to prepare our tributes, ones which equal our efforts for every wave.

500 silver coins. That was quite a sum of money for me at the moment.

"Ah, um..."

The Riyuto villagers saw me and came over to talk.

"What?"

"Thank you very much. We would all be dead if you weren't here."

"It would be the same if I wasn't around."

"No."

Another villager refused my comment.

"It was thanks to you being there that we were able to survive."

"If you think so, then just do whatever you want."

""""YES!""""

The villagers bowed to me and went back.

Their village was violently raided. I suppose that it would be quite a hassle to reconstruct it afterwards.

They merely expressed their gratitude to their life savior, whom they usually despise... what a calculating bunch.

"Naofumi-sama!"

After the long battle, a muddy, sweaty and smiling Raphtalia came running over to me.

"We really did it! Everyone is expressing their gratitude."

"... I guess."

"With this, there will be nobody who'll end up like me. It was all thanks to Naofumi-sama!"

"... Haaa."

So this was what they called a post-war bliss, famous throughout the history of my birthplace; Raphtalia was moved to tears.

"I too... tried my best."

"Right, you did well."

I praise her while patting her head.

That's right. Raphtalia had followed my orders and fought devotedly.

It would be a folly of mine to falsely evaluate that.

"I defeated a bunch of monsters."

"Haha, that certainly saved me."

"Guhehe."

I felt a bit uncomfortable with Raphtalia laughing so blissfully like this, dood;^[17] we headed towards the castle.

"Well well! As expected of our heroes. I cannot contain my surprise after seeing the difference between the casualties from this battle and the last."

Once the sun had gone down and the night sky had taken over, the king declared loudly to his grandiose banquet held within the castle.

On that note, I had no idea what the casualty count was before, but this time the casualties were within the single digits.

... Though I had no intention of taking credit for that.

I didn't resent that bunch of muscle-headed heroes at all for charging in and beating the crap out of the monsters while leaving me behind to do all the cleanup.

However, I thought to myself that we'll eventually be left in a sorry state at this rate.

We were lucky this time, but who knew what would have happened if the knights didn't arrive on time. It was thanks to the sand hourglass for sending us close to them.

This was such a heavy subject...

Cry out for help, and aid shall come.

It was about the battle against the wave.

Mobilizing knights to accompany us when we got teleported by the hourglass was a valid possibility.

But didn't the knights get left behind right after we were teleported the last time?

It must have been their attitude! Those people didn't want to acknowledge me as a hero, so that's why they weren't teleported!

But... didn't the party of those shitty heroes get teleported too?

Just, how the hell?

This kind of setting was weird as hell if this was a game.

... Anyways, aren't we in big trouble? This is the part where they will drop their guard just because aid arrived.

In short, it's complicated stuff.

I ate my share in an appropriate looking corner while the banquet was being held.

"This is such a feast!"

Raphtalia stared at the mountain of food which she normally couldn't get a chance to eat with eyes shining like stars.

"Go and eat whatever you want."

"Yes sir!"

I don't usually give her a lot of good food to eat... so it would be wise to let her eat whatever she desired here. Once she ate her fill, she would be an even better war asset.

"Ah... But, I'll gain weight if I eat too much."

"You didn't even hit your growth spurt yet, right?"

"Urg..."

For some reason Raphtalia was making a very troubled expression.

"It's fine to eat whatever you want."

"Do you prefer fat girls, Naofumi-sama?"

"Huh?"

What was she saying?

"Not at all."

Just thinking about women would only make me imagine that bitch. A lot of unpleasant feelings would also pop up.

To begin with, that woman was a life form that was repulsive to the mind...

"I suppose that's right. That's just like the usual Naofumi-sama."

She said as if giving up on whatever was on her mind.

"Naofumi-sama, this is so good."

"That's nice."

"Yes."

Hmm... This banquet was such a waste of time. Just when will I get my reward?

This place was like a cesspool of garbage, just looking around made my anger boil.

... Thinking back, it was quite possible that the rewards would be handed out tomorrow.

Then this was a fool's errand? No, since the food was good I'll let it fly.

It's not the same for normal people since Raphtalia was in the middle of her growth spurt! By no means I am a fool to pass this chance up.

"I wonder if they have something like a container in order to bring food home."

One should always think about tomorrow and never waste money.

... I'll have ask them to let me have the rest and re-cook the food later. Anything that can be considered food will be fine.

Amidst the crowd, a raging Motoyasu was pushing his way through, heading towards our direction.

Really, just what the hell is wrong today?

Since it looked like a pain in the ass, the crowd split apart and made way for that trash, Motoyasu, as he glared at me with intense hatred.

"YO! NAOFUMI!"

"... What?"

He removed the glove on one of his hands and threw it at me.

If I was right, that guy wanted to challenge me to a duel.^[28]

The crowd was stirred into motion by his following statement.

"Duel with me!"

"Just what are you talking about?"

Did his brain finally fry?

You'll turn into an idiot if you kept on thinking about games all day long.

The goddamned spear hero who charged in to kill the boss like a madman, ditching all the innocents that he should have defended.

"I know it all! Raptalia-chan was only tagging along with you just because she's your slave!"

He was burning with fighting spirit as he pointed at me and denounced.

"Hmm?"

The person in question was feasting upon her piled up delicacies.

"So, what about it?"

" 'So, what about it?' ... you say?! Did you seriously just say that!?"

"Haaa."

What's wrong with possessing a slave?

There was nobody that was willing to fight alongside me. Hence, I bought and used a slave.

And this country didn't have a ban on slavery anyway.

So, for what reason did he go on a rampage for?

"She's my slave. What's it to you?"

"It's... it's not the enslavement that's wrong! It's because we're heroes with different worldly ethics than the people here which makes your actions wrong!"

"Isn't that a bit too late... there were plenty of slaves back in our world, right?"

I didn't know anything about Motoyasu's world. But it was literally impossible for mankind's history to be without the existence of slavery.

A different way of interpreting it would be: members of society are slaves to the higher corporations.

"Unforgivable? Are you even using your head? Think with that goddamn brain of yours!"

Forcing others to follow their own biased beliefs... This guy's mind has problems.

"But it's such a shame that this is a different world. Slaves exist here. And what's the problem with me using them?"

"Bas... tard!"

Gritting his teeth, Motoyasu swung his fist at me.

"Duel with me! If I win, release Raphtalia-chan!"

"Why would I have to accept this challenge to begin with? What's in it for me anyways?"

"You can do whatever you desire with Raphtalia-chan! Just like now."

"Are you retarded?"

I attempted to ignore Motoyasu and leave, since this duel had nothing to offer me.

"I have heard Motoyasu-dono's story."

The excited crowd made room for the king to pass through.

"I heard that one of the heroes was using slaves... although only as a rumor. If you refuse Motoyasu-dono's proposal then I shall order it. Duel!"

"My ass. Just hand over this wave's reward already. I have no time to waste in a place like this!"

The king sighed and twitched his fingers.

The soldiers appeared out of nowhere and began to surround me.

When I looked over at Raphtalia, she was detained by the soldiers.

"Naofumi-sama!"

"... Are you threatening me?"

I said while staring him down with all the force I could muster.

This guy, he didn't believe what I said at all.

So that's the case, didn't know that I was intruding here.

"If you're in this country then my word is absolute! I can even forcibly confiscate the Shield Hero's slave if it comes down to that."

"... Tsk!"

Things like solving the curse placed upon a slave, the court magicians probably knew about such techniques.

In other words, to preserve my connection with Raphtalia, I have to fight.

Don't fuck with me! I barely even got any return from my purchase on this slave!

Whose money and time do you think was invested on her?

"This match is meaningless! I am——uuuuurg!"

A piece of cloth was rolled up and stuffed into Raphtalia's mouth so that she wouldn't be able to say anything.

"The owner has the power to strengthen the punishing curse of the inflicted individual. Therefore, let us stop this slave from speaking any further."

"... You just did that so that I would have to participate in the duel."

"Aren't we simply granting you the participation prize?"

"What! You bas——"

"Well then, the duel shall be held in the castle's garden!"

That asshole of a king interrupted my complaint and declared the duel location.

Shit, don't you people see that I have no attack power? This is like a gimped race!

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 21 – Contradicting Actions

At this very moment, the castle's garden had turned into a dueling arena. Along the edge of the vicinity, torches were brightly lit and the joyful folks from the banquet expectantly gathered around to witness a duel between heroes.

Unfortunately, the outcome of this duel was already predetermined.

I, who ultimately dealt zero damage, versus the Spear Hero, Motoyasu.

A match between the parties of both the Shield Hero and the Spear Hero! ...not! What was about to take place was a one-on-one duel between Motoyasu and I.

It seemed that the proposal for a team battle was rejected by Motoyasu due to his overflowing pride, and thus we came to have our solo matchup.

Everyone already knew how the duel would turn out.

No sounds of people placing their bet could be heard.

Although this event was taking place within the royal palace, among the varying mix of nobles were adventurers who aided in the wave-effort.

Hence it was natural not to start a gambling circle here.

Everyone unanimously believed that I would end up being defeated.

As spectators, Ren and Itsuki could be seen looking and laughing from within the castle terrace.

They seem to take anticipated joy in witnessing the moment when I have my slave stolen from me.

Shit. Shit! SHIT! FUCK IT ALL!^[6]

Every last one of them thought of nothing but to harass me.

For example, raining fire down on me amidst the battlefield confusion during the wave.

In the eyes of the people in this world, I am nothing but the object of scorn and ridicule.

... That's just great. Defeat might have been the only choice for me all along. But, I won't be defeated without putting up a fight.

"Now then, let us commence the duel between the Spear Hero and the Shield Hero! The victor and the vanquished shall only be determined either before the finishing blow is directly dealt or when one of them accepts their defeat!"

I twisted my joints, cracked my fingers, and shifted into my battle stance.

"Who will fall first, the shield or the spear? Such a match... this will be a joke."

Motoyasu spitefully stared at me and hissed with his nose.

Are you mocking me?

"Well then——"

Motoyasu, I'll show you that only knowing how to fight won't defeat your opponent.

If one were to ask a merchant whether the sharpest weapon or the sturdiest shield is the 'strongest' equipment a person can have, then that merchant will just contradict themselves over the meaning of 'strongest'. As a matter of fact, the word itself holds no meaning.

However, even if the word is a contradiction in and of itself, I will accept such a contradiction.

And to begin with, what elements decide the outcome of this duel?

Isn't this just the same as Shogi and Go?

Even if that's the case, how would this affect the outcome of the duel?

The ultimate purpose of a spear is to kill your opponent.

The ultimate purpose of a shield is to act as your guardian.

If one was to carefully analyze and think about it, the sturdiest shield will always triumph over the sharpest spear.

Their purposes were fundamentally different. The spear and shield that is.

"Begin!"

"Uwoooooooooooooooooooooo!"

"Hyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"



I rushed at Motoyasu with a Falcon Punch while Motoyasu rushed at me with his spear leveled, preparing to pierce me.

The distance was shortened in an instant. Motoyasu thrust his spear at me, utilizing our momentum to amplify the penetrative force.

There is no attack that cannot be blocked if one is able to see the direction it's coming from.

"Chaos thrust!"

Motoyasu flicked his arm and his spear instantly appeared to have multiplied several-fold.

A Skill! That certainly came at an unexpected moment.

But my rush was unstoppable.

I charged through while holding the shield over my head.

Clang!

Whoosh!

Arg... I could feel pain run through my shoulders and into my legs.

Although they were only scratches, attacks from a hero sure were different as expected.

However, Motoyasu's Skill came to a sudden halt; it seemed to have entered its cooldown period.

"Eat this!"

But Motoyasu continued to thrust his spear at me.

The spear, its weakness lies within its range.

Like any other polearm, it is specialized for mid-ranged combat. Once inside of this range, its difficulty of usage becomes apparent.

Usually this doesn't matter as you only need to defeat your enemies before they have a chance to get close. Not for me though, my shield won't collapse to a single blow.

I dodged Motoyasu's thrust by a hair's length and charged with my whole body weight, focusing everything on a single point.

And thus my fist dug splendidly into Motoyasu's face.

Guh!

Tsk! It's impossible for me to deal any damage after all.

However, my attacks won't end with just that.

That bastard Motoyasu didn't even seem to move an inch from my attack and just rolled his eyes.

Let's see how long you'll be able to keep that face, hmm?

I pulled a deadly weapon from within my mantle and threw it towards Motoyasu's face.

GABUUU!

"GO!"

My stockpile was completely wiped out earlier during the wave and the fiery rain, so I picked up a few along the way to the castle for negotiation usage.

"Wait? WHAT!?"

Kukuku... look at that idiot Motoyasu speaking in a confused and puzzled voice.

NOM NOM CHOM!

"Ouch, OUCH!"

Motoyasu writhed in agony from the pain of his oh-so-precious face being bitten.

Yep, my attacks aren't just barehanded only.

There is also the existence of a convenient weapon invented by humanity's experts, BALLOON!

"ORA ORA ORA!"

Two on the face and an extra one to his crotch ensure that he's unable to get back up.

"Wh-, WHY THE BALLOONS!?"

The spectators shrieked.

Now you know!

I kept adding kicks with all of my weight to the balloon that was feasting upon his crotch.

"Kuh... Asshole! What sort of move is this?!"

"I can't win anyways so I'll just harass you to the utmost of my abilities! The targets are: the face – a popular guy's lifeline – and the crotch – the proof of your manhood! Inside those balls of yours are just gross otaku-substances!"

"WHAT!? STOP ETTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTT!"

"Don't ask for the impossibleeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

I relentlessly knocked Motoyasu's loins with one heavy kick after another. Motoyasu managed to peel off the balloon on his face, but was unable to muster any of his impotent strength to lift his spear.

To buy even more time, I decided to throw the previously peeled off Balloons onto his face once again.

And of course the Balloons weren't the only weapons I had, there were Eggies too. Motoyasu's situation was like sitting on a throne of needles. I'll have my fill of harassing him this time around.

I will lose either way, so I'll carve the utmost trauma onto his soul.

"ORA ORA ORA!"

"ARG! DAMN YOUUUUUUUUU!"

Motoyasu concentrated all of his power into lifting my weight off his body, but I continued with my malicious strikes.

FUFUFU!

This is invigorating! Let me hear more of your tormented cries!

My laughter and smile naturally surfaced from deep inside me.

"GUAH..!"

Suddenly my back was forcefully pushed and I ended up staggering forward.

I looked back at the direction from where the staggering force came from.

What I found was that bitch!

Mein was hiding within the crowd of people with her hand extended toward my direction.

Most likely, that was a type of wind magic.

To be more precise, Wind Blow is a spell that accumulates and fires a condensed, fist-sized mass of air.

Since the condensed mass of air is transparent, it wouldn't be noticeable if not closely observed.

That bitch Mein smirked then pulled down one of her eyelids and provokingly stuck out her tongue.

"Biiiiiitch!"

I staggered again in mid-shout due to Motoyasu's counterattack, having regained his stance thanks to the reduced weight on his body.

Motoyasu panted as he pushed me down, threateningly holding his pike at my neck. All of my Balloons were shaken off at this point.

"Haa... Haa... My, WIN!"

While holding his spear, Motoyasu declared with a tone ever more desperate than when he fought against the wave of calamity.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 22 – What I Wanted to Hear

"What do you mean by 'win', you coward!"

Our one-on-one duel was interrupted, right!?

"What are you talking about? You lost because you couldn't stand up to my strength."

... You bastard, you're seriously saying that.

What was that crap about heroes! That they shouldn't own slaves!

You trash, acting like a hero while rigging this battle to satisfy yourself.

"Your comrade interfered in the middle of our fight! That's why I staggered!"

"Ha! Is that lie the bitching of a loser?"

"That's not it, you asshole!"

That coward Motoyasu looked down on me, ignoring my complaints while feeling victorious.

Even though there really was an intrusion... that bastard!

"Is that so."

The spectators had their eyes on Motoyasu.

Did they not see what happened..? Everyone was completely silent.

"There is no need to believe the words of a criminal Hero. Hero of the Spear! It is your victory!"

That asshole!

Just like that, the king boldly announced the result.

Even then, some of the crowd were unsure. They looked around as if they wanted to speak up. However, there was no one who would challenge what the king had declared.

Because the king had silenced all dissent.

This kingdom was a complete dictatorship!

"As expected of Motoyasu-sama!"

The bitch who was the instigator of this incident shamelessly rushed to Motoyasu's side.

Furthermore, the castle's magicians only cast healing magic on Motoyasu, treating his wounds.

Looks like they had no intention of helping me.

"Fumu, as expected of the Hero whom my daughter, Malty, has selected."

The king says as he places his hand on Mein's shoulder.

"W-what..!?"

Mein is the king's daughter!?

"Ah... I was also surprised at the time upon hearing that Mein is a princess. She used a fake name in order to slip amongst us."

"Yes... I wanted to help for the sake of world peace~"

... I see. So it's like that.

It seemed strange how easily I was labeled a criminal with just the victim's testimony.

So that's what it was... The king overlooked his idiotic daughter's selfishness and pushed a false crime onto me using fake evidence. For the sake of the Hero that his daughter had chosen, he sacrificed me and reclaimed my money because I was the weakest among the Heroes.

And because Motoyasu saved the princess from me, they ended up becoming closer, more so than all the other girls around him.

This also explains why I received additional funds at the beginning.

In other words, she was able to obtain good equipment for herself as well as support her chosen hero, Motoyasu.

If Motoyasu alone started off with equipment far better than the other Heroes, then even he would find it suspicious and be wary.

With such meticulous planning, there's definitely no way to find the truth other than from the culprits themselves. In the end the result was a worthless, criminal Shield Hero and the Spear Hero who magnificently saved the princess.

Piece by piece, everything began to make sense.

There was no evidence other than the blow I received, which did no damage apart from making me stagger. There was no clear evidence that the princess was cheating.

Any objections to this rigged match were probably silenced behind the scenes.

So she could interfere in our duel and cover for her favored hero, Motoyasu.

In that case, it must have been planned from the start for Motoyasu and I to have this duel.

...Oh, it's so simple. All she had to do was whisper this to him:

"That girl has been forced into slavery by the Shield Hero. Please save her."

A chance to both test her potential husband as well as to show herself in a good light. If it's her, she definitely won't let that chance slip by.

If they do get married in the end, this will become a heroic tale of how they rescued a slave from a criminal.

And in the distant future, her name will be carried on as the wife of the virtuous Hero who defeated the evil Hero.

Shit! This trash king and bitch princess!

No, wait... the princess, a bitch...?

This phrase, where have I heard it before?

Where? Where did I hear such a thing?

... I remember now. I read it in the 'Four Heavenly Weapon's Manual'.

In that book the princess was a bitch who whored herself to all the Heroes.

If the book I read in the library is related to this world, then it makes sense that the princess is a bitch. The same can apply to all these other shitty Heroes.

A seething rage from the very depths of my body enveloped me.

Curse Series

The conditions for unlocking this shield have been met.

My vision distorted as my shield was swallowed by the pitch black emotion overflowing from my heart.

"Now then Motoyasu-dono, the girl which the Shield Hero has kept enslaved is waiting."

The crowd separated as the magicians began to release Raphtalia from the slave curse.

The magicians brought a bowl overflowing with a certain liquid and smeared it on the slave mark etched onto her chest.

The mark faded away before my eyes.

Raphtalia was now officially freed from her enslavement.

My stomach churned as my heart was consumed by a dark feeling.

It's as if this world was ridiculing and scorning me, all the while laughing at my struggles.

All I can see... are the dark grins of the shadowy presences around me.

"Raphtalia-chan!"

Motoyasu rushed over to her.

Raphtalia, with the gag now removed from her mouth and tears flowing down her face--

--slapped Motoyasu.

"You... coward!"

"... Eh?"

Motoyasu had a dumbfounded look on his face after being hit.

"I never asked to be saved by your cowardly tactics!"

"B-but Raphtalia-chan was being exploited by him, right?"

"Naofumi-sama has never forced me to do anything! Only when I was too afraid to fight did he ever use the curse!"

Slipping in and out of consciousness, I couldn't hear what was being said.

No, I could actually hear it.

But I did not want to listen to anyone.

I just want to hurry and run away from here.

I want to return to my world.

"He shouldn't have done that!"

"Naofumi-sama can't defeat any monsters by himself. That's why he has to rely on someone else to defeat them!"

"You don't need to do that! He'll just use you until you're broken!"

"Naofumi-sama has never once let any monsters harm me! And if I become tired he lets me rest!"

"N, No... he's not the type to be so considerate..."

"... Would you be able to offer your hand to a dirty slave wrecked with illness?"

"Eh?"

"Naofumi-sama has done so much for me. He allowed me eat whatever I wanted. He gave me precious medicine when I was sick. Would you be able to do that?"

"I- I would!"

"Then you should have another slave by your side right now!"

"!?"

For some reason... Raphtalia ran over to me.

"S-stay away!"

This... is hell.

A maliciously created world.

Women - no - everyone in this world scorns me as if to torture me.

If she touches me, then I'll just be reliving those bad memories.

Raphtalia witnesses my condition and again glared at Motoyasu.

"I've heard the rumors... that Naofumi-sama forced himself onto his companion, that he is an awful Hero."

"A-Ah. He's a rapist! As a female slave, you should understand that, right!?"

"Why would I!? Naofumi-sama has never once laid his hands on me!"

Raphtalia then grabbed my hand.

"L-let go!"

"Naofumi-sama... How can I earn your trust?"

"Let go of my hand!"

Everyone in this world accuses me of a crime I didn't commit.

"I didn't do it!"

Pompf...

My frenzied self was covered by something.

"No matter what, I will always believe in Naofumi-sama."

"Shut up! You people are just going to pin more crimes on me!"

"...I don't believe those rumors. You are a person who would never do such a thing."



I heard the words that I've wanted to hear ever since arriving in this world.

Gently, the shadows that clouded my vision disappeared.

I received the tender warmth of another person.

"Even if the whole world blames Naofumi-sama, I am different... No matter how many times it takes, I will refute them all."

When I lifted my head, what laid in front of me was not a little girl, but a young woman around the age of seventeen.

While her features looked like those of Raphtalia, she was an unbelievably cute girl.

What should have been dry, cracked skin was now a healthy complexion, with beautiful hair that was slightly dusty in color.

The body that was once all skin and bones was now curvy with a fit, robust figure.

Most prominently, her eyes were no longer filled with hopelessness, but brimmed with a strong will.

I could not recognize a girl like her.

"Naofumi-sama, now let's go and place the curse on me again."

"W-who are you?"

"Eh? What are you saying? It's me, Raphtalia."

"No-no-no, isn't Raphtalia a little girl?"

She claimed to be Raphtalia. Troubled, she tilted her head while trying to convince me.

"Geez, Naofumi-sama is always treating me like a child."

That voice... is definitely the voice of the Raphtalia I remember.

However, her body was completely different.

No-no-no, this is strange even if she was Raphtalia.

"Naofumi-sama, I'll say this due to the circumstances."

"What?"

"When young Demi-humans raise their level, their bodies also mature quickly in order to match their level growth."

"Eh?"

"Demi-humans are not like humans. It is the same with monsters."

Embarrassed, the girl who claimed to be Raphtalia continued.

"Although my... my mind is still that of a child, my body has already become similar to an adult."

While telling me this, Raphtalia once again buried my head into her voluptuous chest.

"Please believe me. I believe that Naofumi-sama has not committed any crimes. You are the great Shield Hero who has saved my life, given me precious medicine, taught me how to survive and how to fight. I am your sword, and I will follow you no matter what hardships we may face."

Those were... the words that I wanted to hear.

The words spoken ever since Raphtalia swore to fight alongside me.

"If you don't believe me, then make me your slave or do whatever you wish with me. I will always stay with you."

"Ku...u....uu...."

From the first kind words that I received since arriving in this world, I unwittingly began to weep.

Although I felt that I shouldn't cry no matter what, I couldn't stop the tears from falling.

"Uuu..... uuuuuuuuuu..."

"The duel just now... Motoyasu, you are disqualified."

"Haa!?"

Ren and Itsuki appeared from within the crowd and said.

"We saw it clearly from above, your companion targeted Naofumi with wind magic."

"No, but... That can't be."

"The king has become silent. You understand from that much, right?"

"... Is that what happened?"

Motoyasu's head swept through the room, looking at the audience.

"But he attacked me with monsters."

"They did no damage. You can check it for yourself."

Acting self-righteous now, Ren scolds Motoyasu.

"But... He! He aimed for my face and crotch!"

"Using dirty tactics after being forced into a fight where he had no chance of winning. We should overlook something like that."

After hearing Itsuki's words, Moyotasu gave up arguing with a displeased look.

"This fight seems to be your mistake this time, so just let it go."

"Hmph... what a shitty result. I'm still suspicious that Raphtalia-chan is being brainwashed."

"How can you still say that after looking at them like this?"

"That's right."

With the atmosphere turning awkward, the heroes began to leave while the crowd returned to the castle.

"... Hmph! How boring."

"Yes... this was quite a disappointing result."

The two royalties who were dissatisfied with the match's conclusion left in irritation. Only Raphtalia and I were left in the yard.

"It must have been tough for you. I didn't realize it at all. From now on, I want to share in your hardships."

My consciousness drifted away when I heard her kind voice.

After that, I slept while being embraced by Raphtalia for about another hour. I was surprised. I didn't realize Raphtalia had already grown up so much. Why didn't I notice?

... I was too stressed, probably.

I didn't have the luxury of noticing Raphtalia's growth. All I could see were her rising stats in the status screen.

The feast has long ended. So I fell into a deep sleep in a dusty unused room, originally prepared for the servants.

Someone believes in me. With just that, I feel like a burden had been lifted from my heart.

The meaning of this became clear the next day during breakfast.

For the first time since I was betrayed by Mein, my sense of taste had returned.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 23 - Shared Pain

Just like last time, we assembled around 10.

This damn trash king is simply jerking me around... he should have just told us what was going on.

Now I have to meet up with these dicks. What if I end up getting an ulcer?

"Now then, I will distribute this wave's bounty reward and support funding."

Bounty?

An assistant appeared carrying bags filled with money.

"For each of the heroes."

I looked at the bags.

I see, just for monthly living expenses we would require at least 500 silver coins.

500 coins... would not be enough for preparation costs.

"Good job."

Raphtalia smiled while facing me.

"Ahh."

What should I buy with the money?

Maybe some weapon for Raphtalia would be for the best? Or maybe strong armor this time around?

Ahh, it's also about time to buy some new tools for mixing medicine. The truth is, the shield reacted to my current tools, so I'm curious what would happen if they were absorbed.

I fantasize about what to buy while hearing the coins clinking inside the bags.

I receive the bag and check its contents.

One, two, three... yup, 500 pieces.

"For completing requests and in expectation for Motoyasu-dono's other great deeds, we award 4,000 coins."

Oi!

I stare dumbfounded at the heavy looking bag that Motoyasu was holding.

I feel like I'll be endlessly complaining if I start now, so I hold it in, clenching my fists.

"Next is Ren-dono, for displaying similar bravery during the wave and completing requests, we award 3,800 coins."

You too!?

Ren coolly received the bag while making a face as if annoyed that he lost to Motoyasu. Even cursing silently, "All because the princess favors you..."

"Itsuki-dono... Your heroism echoes throughout the country. For your great work in times of strife, we award 3,800 coins."

Itsuki acts as if this much was to be expected while looking at Motoyasu enviously.

What are these 'requests'?

"Hmm... Shield needs to work harder, you only get living expenses."

That's my name! Who's 'Shield'?!

I felt like a blood vessel would soon burst.

Even after going through all that bullshit from yesterday!?

"Um, Sire?"

Raphtalia raises her hand.

"What is it, demi-human?"

"... That is, what are requests?"

Raphtalia was also curious. Ignoring how little we received, we should at least investigate the reason.

"Requests are assigned to heroes to resolve problems that occur in the kingdom."

"... Why did Naofumi-sama not receive any requests? This is the first we've heard of this."

"Ha! What can Shield do?"

Asshole!

The audience snickered.

Ahh, not good. I feel like I'm going to start rampaging.

Is what I thought until I feel Raphtalia grasp my hand as she whispered to let it go. I suppressed my anger while still trembling.

... It's fine, I can bear it.

"Be thankful for even receiving this much!"

"It's not like you helped us out at all."

"Right. I didn't see you during the wave at all, what were you even doing?"

"You're an embarrassment to us heroes. Completely useless."

My irritation had peaked. I spat out a sarcastic retort.

"Great heroes, abandoning the lives of the villagers to fight the boss sure was heroic."

"Ha! Just leave that stuff to the knights."

"The knights are useless, leaving it to them would have resulted in a massacre. You bastards who only aimed for the boss wouldn't understand that."

Motoyasu, Itsuki, and Ren all look towards the leader of the knights.

That bastard just nods back at them.

"Don't get ahead of yourself. Without the heroes dealing with the source of the wave, the casualties would have been far greater."

This bastard... how can you say that?

Acting all haughty while relaxing back at the castle.

Anyways, I'm also a hero. Or are you implying that the Shield Hero isn't one?

"Yeah, yeah. I'm busy with lots of stuff, so if there's nothing else we're leaving."

There's no point in arguing here. Let's just leave it at that and go.

"Wait, Shield."

"Hah? What. I'm busy unlike you assholes."

"You have been a disappointment; that money is our way of washing our hands of you."

Wha!?

So for all future waves I will get nothing. That's what you mean, right?

"That's great, Naofumi-sama!"

Raphtalia replied with a wide smile.

"... Eh?"

"You don't need to waste your time coming here anymore. Instead of dawdling, you can now focus on more important things."

"O... Oh."

It feels like Raphtalia has become really reliable.

She tightly held my hand while calming me down.

"We will be taking our leave now."



Cheerily, she pulled me along and we turned to leave.

"The whining of a loser."

Motoyasu said while Ren and Itsuki just shrug.

... Yeah. Rather than an uncomfortable partnership, this was much better.

"Now then, let's head over to the slave tent and redo the curse."

"Eh?"

Leaving the castle, Raphtalia said while turning to me.

"Otherwise, Naofumi-sama will not be able to trust me completely."

"Well... Not really..."

I recall her words from yesterday.

With those words I felt that I could trust Raphtalia.

"It's... fine if you aren't a slave anymore."

"No."

"What?"

"You shouldn't lie. Naofumi-sama doesn't trust anyone other than a slave."

... Maybe I raised her wrong.

Well, even though it's true that I only trust slaves, Raphtalia is an exception.
Yeah.

"Um... Raphtalia."

"What is it?"

"It's fine even without the curse."

"No, I want it."

... Why is she so adamant about this?

"I also want something to prove that I trust you, Naofumi-sama."

"Haaa..."

First, what a weird person... that thought came to mind.

Second, I was reminded of Mein and got annoyed.

Why? I don't know why, but it's not like I'm angry at Raphtalia.

Normally I would feel... something else? What a strange feeling.

"So let's go."

"Fine."

If she insists, then I won't stop her.

To handle this matter, we headed back to the slave tent.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 24 – Egg Gacha

"Oh, if it isn't Hero-sama. How may I be of service today?"

The gentle owner of the slave shop appeared flourishingly to welcome us.

"Oh?"

Surprised, he looked at Raphtalia curiously.

"What a surprising change. I did not think you would grow so well."

He said in a disappointed voice while slumping.

"... What?"

"I thought you would be more like us, how unfortunate."

What does he mean? But I'll just keep that question to myself.

"Real slave traders would raise high quality slaves by keeping them half dead."

He casually continued.

"Then the slaves you know of were discarded after being used, right?"

"N-Naofumi-sama?"

Raphtalia looked up at me concerned.

I've become a lot more confident now.

My current situation is much better than last time.

"Fufufu... Is that so, how exciting."

The slave owner, perhaps amused by my reply, let out a laugh.

"Then, looking at her condition... she has grown quite well. For a non-virgin... how about 7 gold coins?"

"Why are you talking like I'm going to be sold! Also, I am still pure!"

Shocked at Raphtalia's words, the slave owner let out a gasp.

"Oh my! Then how about 15 gold coins? May I confirm if she is a virgin?"

"Naofumi-sama!"

15 gold coins for Raphtalia!?

"Naofumi-sama! Hey, please say something?"

15 gold coins would be enough to buy the Level 75 male wolf!

While I was having those thoughts, Raphtalia tightly grabbed my shoulder with a scary look on her face.

"Naofumi-sama... If you keep playing around, I'll get mad."

"What's wrong? You have a scary look on your face."

"You're not defending me at all even though I might be sold."

"I'm just playing along."

--That's how I'll have to play it off as. Although I did think it over, Raphtalia saw right through me.

I shouldn't pretend to consider selling the one person in this world who believed in me.

"15 gold coins...."

Her grip became stronger when I murmured this.

"Ow, ouch!"

Raphtalia's offensive strength... had become greater than my defense.

This was reliable in a combat sense.

"... I'll run away, you know."

"It's a joke. I was just thinking of how amazing and beautiful you've become."

"T-that... Oh, Naofumi-sama..."

For some reason, Raphtalia became bashful all of a sudden.

It's kinda irritating.

... Is what I thought, but why? What did I say?

"Well, she's not for sale."

"I see... that's too bad. So how may I help you?"

"Ah, didn't you hear about the commotion at the castle?"

The slave trader grinned at my question.

"I have. The slave curse was removed, no?"

"If you understand already, then this will be simple... Don't ask in the first place if you know beforehand."

Since I'm already tired from dealing with Raphtalia.

Good grief...

"Of course, you know, despite what the king declared, the slave system will still exist."

"Hmm, I thought the nobles didn't buy slaves?"

"No, not at all. There are many slaves owned by the wealthy. After all, they are quite useful, of course."

"That trash king, saying those things while supporting Motoyasu, the Spear Hero... Won't the nobles become rebellious? I would if I were them."

It'd be quite funny if that happened.

Although it'd be quite bad for the kingdom.

"Well, there are many factions within the kingdom. If they did rebel, the ones who will end up losing would be the nobles themselves. Yes."

"That bearded old man has that much influence?"

Was it because this kingdom was a complete dictatorship?

Then maybe the kingdom will eventually collapse due to an uprising.

Since the kingdom currently had a trash king who will be succeeded by a bitch princess.

"Actually, in this country, rather than the king--"

"Um... back to the matter of the slave curse..."

"Ah, yes."

We've digressed. Now that I think about it, I don't care what will happen to that trash king.

"So, you've come to reapply the curse, yes?"

"Yeah, is that possible?"

"Whenever you wish."

With a snap of his fingers, an assistant appeared with the same jar used when we first marked her.

An embarrassed Raphtalia took off her armor and exposed her chest.

"H-how is it?"

"How is what?"

"... Haa..."

?

Why is she acting so embarrassed?

Even sighing afterwards.

Did I do something?

Just like last time, I added my blood to the ink and the mix was coated on Raphtalia where the old mark used to be.

"Although the mark was erased, it is possible to restore it."

"Ohh--"

The erased mark began to reappear as Raphtalia's chest glowed.

"Ngh..."

As expected, it seemed to hurt. Raphtalia tried to bear the pain.

The mark was restored before my eyes.

I need to check the reaction from disobeying orders.

... It should be fine to go easy this time.

Raphtalia became a slave again to gain my trust. So I should trust her now as well.

"Now then."

While thinking about what to do, I noticed that there's some ink left on the plate.

"Hey, can I have some of that ink? I can pay for it."

"Sure, go ahead."

I spread the remaining ink from the plate onto my shield.

Suu- my shield absorbed the ink.

-The requirement for Slaver's Shield has been unsealed.

-The requirement for Slaver's Shield 2 has been unsealed.

Slaver's Shield.

True power sealed... Equipment Bonus: Slave growth+ (S)

Slaver's Shield 2.

True power sealed... Equipment Bonus: Slave condition+ (S)

Slaver's Shield... well, that's somewhat expected.

Something new appeared in the tree, branching from Small Shield series. It was not that strong.

However, the equipment bonus caught my attention

Improved growth.

But two items were unlocked from just a little bit of ink?

I carefully look at Raphtalia.

"What is it?"

That reminds me that the shield absorbed her hair before. 'Racoon Shield' was unlocked at that time, but maybe that also fulfilled some of other conditions.

That was probably for Slaver's Shield 2. With those conditions fulfilled, two shields were unlocked.

I logically reasoned.

In that case...

"Raphtalia, give me a bit of your blood."

"What, why?"

"There's something I want to test."

Puzzled, Raphtalia makes a little cut on her fingertip and spreads some blood onto the plate. I drip it onto my shield.

-The requirement for Slaver's Shield 3 has been unsealed.

Slaver's Shield 3.

True power sealed... Equipment Bonus: Slave growth+ (M)

Yes! As expected!

"Naofumi-sama? You seem like you're having fun."

"Ahh, an interesting shield appeared."

"That's great."

I change my shield to the Slaver's Shield and waited for it to unlock.

"Now then... Hmm?"

We've finished our business here and began to leave, but a wooden box filled with eggs caught my eye.

I don't remember seeing these last time. I was curious.

"What is that?"

I ask the slave trader.

"Ahh, that is what we sell as our business front."

"What business is that?"

"A monster shop."

For some reason he answered excitedly.

"Monsters? In that case, are there also monster tamers?"

"How perceptive, was Hero-sama not aware of this?"

"I don't think I've seen any..."

"Naofumi-sama."

Raphtalia raised her hand.

"What?"

"Filo Rial are monsters raised by a tamer."

The name of a monster I've never heard of. I have no idea what she meant.

"What is that?"

"It's a bird used to pull carriages instead of horses within the city."

"Oh, those things."

Those birds that looked like chocobos.

I thought those were just animals unique to this world, but I guess they were monsters.

"In the village I lived in, there were also people who raised monsters. They were raised for their meat in many of the farms."

"Ohh..."

Is that how it was? In this world it seems people who worked on farms also count as monster tamers.

"So then, those eggs are..?"

"It's difficult for people to handle monsters otherwise. This way is easier to do business."

"Is that so."

"Would you like to see the cages with fully raised monsters?"

If I showed interest he would try selling them to me. The slave trader was a businessman.

"No, it's fine."

I have other matters to attend to.

"So what's that sign on top of the box filled with eggs?"

Although I don't know what's written there, I saw an arrow pointing to the box and characters which looked like numbers.

"One try for 100 silver coins, a monster egg lottery!"

"100 coins is pretty high."

We currently have 508 silver coins. That was a hefty price.

"Because they are expensive monsters."

"Just making sure about Filo Rials, how much are they normally?"

"Starting at 200 coins for a grown one. They also provide lots of byproducts like feathers. Yes."

"So chicks are cheaper than adults? So this is the price of a Filo Rial egg... but there's also the cost of raising one?"

"No no, we also have other types of eggs in there."

"I see... since it's a lottery."

So he's saying there are losers and winners.

So a loss is worth less while a win is more than the attempt.

"So there's probably no winners in there, right?"

"What! Hero-sama thinks that we would pull such a scam!?"

"Am I wrong?"

"We have pride in our business! Although we do like to trick our customers, we would never misrepresent our products."

"You like to deceive, but won't lie..."

What kind of logic is that. I wonder dumbfounded.

"So? What is the winning prize?"

"An easy way to explain it to you would be a Kiryuu."

Kiryuu? That's maybe... a dragon that a knight commander would ride?

"A horse-like dragon?"

"These are the flying types. They are quite popular... so nobles often vie for them."

Flying dragons... like in dreams.

"Naofumi-sama?"

"The market price for one of these winners is about 20 gold coins."

"What are the chances? Just for the Kiryuu."

"Right now there are 250 eggs in the lottery. Among those, one."

So 1/250.

"Strong magic has been cast so you can't tell from the look or the weight. Only after customers acknowledge they may not win do we allow them to play."

"What a good business."

"Yes, if one wins we make sure to get their name. And from the publicity we get many participants."

"Of course, it's just luck..."

"If one buys 10 attempts then we allow them to pick another one from the box. Yes."

"But, how about excluding the Kiryuu?"

"Yes. Nevertheless, there are ones worth 300 silver coins."

Hearing that made me smile.

Wait a second... Isn't this just CompuGacha? Hey!

It's easy to reap huge profits with something like this.

I was nearly tricked again.

"Hmm..."

Still, I ended up seeing something interesting here.

Thinking about it, I feel somewhat vulnerable with just Raphtalia.

So which would be better, buying another slave or raising a monster?

It would be interesting to try out the new Slave Shield. Raphtalia's level has already gone up, so it would be difficult to get the benefits of Slave Growth+.

However, I was reminded of Motoyasu.

That guy sure was annoying about freeing slaves... Although, maybe it was just because Raphtalia was a pretty girl.

There were also many times when Raphtalia was in a lot of trouble.

Additionally, I would have to buy equipment for the slave. This would be a problem for my penniless self.

"Okay, then I will buy a single try."

"Thank you very much! This time I will also throw in the slave ceremony for free."

"Oh, how generous. I like that."

"Naofumi-sama!?"

"What's the matter?"

"Are you going to buy a monster egg?"

"Ah, I was thinking that our last battle was tough with just Raptalia. Equipment for another slave would be expensive, so I thought raising a monster would be interesting."

"Haa... But monsters can also be troublesome."

"I know that. Don't you want a pet though?"

"... But aren't you aiming for a dragon?"

"Even a crappy Usapiru is fine."

It's not like I hate animals, even MMOs have pet taming features. Hopefully it's the same to raise and just as relaxing. Either way, as long as it's able to obey orders like a slave, then it should have a higher attack than me.

I notice that since I have a bit of extra money now, I'm starting to be reckless with my spending. However, this should be a good investment.

Anyways, with the Slaver's Shield it makes sense to own a monster.

"Selling it off after raising it won't be as painful like with a slave."

"Ah, I see. That makes sense."

Although we may end up becoming attached to it, we have no money so we'll just have to bear it should that happen.

Since a slave is another person, having to sell them would be very sad. If for some reason I need to sell a slave whom I've become close with like Raphtalia, I'm not sure I would be able to do it.

However, monsters aren't able to talk, so no matter what it'll just be slightly painful.

Leaving them behind with a 'I hope you meet a good master'.

"So you also provide those services?"

"I'm excited by how insightful Hero-sama is! Yes!"

This slave owner gets really enthusiastic.

Let's just look at the eggs for now.

He said something about there being no way to search through them.

Well, I guess just randomly picking one is fine.

"This one then."

Using my intuition, I pick one out from near the right.

"Please mark this seal with your blood to remember which one you chose."

Like he instructed, I smeared my blood onto the design on the egg.

A bright red light shined as an icon representing the monster tamer appeared.

I guess this is the same as restricting what slaves can do.

... Setting a punishment for it if my orders are ignored. I'll make it more severe than the one on Raphtalia.

It's a monster after all. Since it can't understand my words, then it would be better for the punishment to be harsh.

Though it hasn't even hatched yet.

While grinning, the slave owner opened an incubator-like machine.

"If for some reason it doesn't hatch, I'm going to ask for compensation."

"How admirable! For the Hero-sama who won't take a failure lying down."

I take note of the slave owner's mood and attitude. Geez, isn't this guy a bit of a masochist?

Although I don't get off on verbally abusing other guys... well, I do want to see the suffering faces of those shitty heroes.

"Even though it's just words now, I really will come. I'll unleash my violent slave on you."

"What are you going to make me do!"

"Duly noted."

The slave owner was seriously in a good mood.

"Around when will it hatch?"

I ask the slave owner after handing over 100 silver coins.

"It is written on the incubator."

"Hmmm..."

The number-like characters were changing.

"Raphtalia can you read?"

"Um, Just a bit... it says around tomorrow."

"So fast. Well that's good."

"We will await your next arrival."

In the end we left the tent with our egg.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 25 – Gift of Life

Now then, what's next?

I remember the leftover potions from the wave.

Even though I had them prepared beforehand, I never used them in the end. It might be better to just sell them to a medicine shop.

"Let's go to the medicine shop and then, the blacksmith."

"Naofumi-sama, we won't be receiving any more aid so we need to be more careful with our money. We should refrain from what we've been doing up until now."

"Understood."

"Right now, we'll be fine with our current equipment. Let's consider buying them only when we really need them."

"..."

Fumu, that is a good idea.

However, we only have cheap goods compared to the equipment of the other Heroes.

I think it would be a good idea to get Raphtalia a better weapon when we start fighting stronger enemies.

"It has only been a few days since we got new weapons. Imagine what Oyaji would think."

"Yeah..."

The Oyaji from the weapon shop has given us various services. Although he allows us to trade in our equipment, we won't be able to afford better gear with our current funds...

"Alright, let's save up then."

"Yes!"

Well it wasn't a bad idea to be frugal with your money.

"Then, let's go to the medicine shop."

And so, we went to the medicine shop. The owner had a friendly smile when he saw us.

"What? What's going on?"

Normally, he had a sour look on his face when he saw us, so seeing him smile sent a shiver down my spine.

"Nothing much. I just wanted to thank you if you came."

"Huh?"

We were both confused.

"I heard that you guys saved my relatives in Riyuuto Village. They told me to help you out if possible."

"Oh... I see."

When the wave ended, everyone from Riyuuto Village got together to thank us. It seems like his relatives were among them.

"So, thank you for that."

The shop owner retrieved a book from a closet and handed it to me.

"What's this?"

"You've been making beginner level medicines, this book has a bunch of recipes for mid-level medicines. This will be a good time for you try them out."

"..."

I gently opened the book of mid-level recipes. The binding was in bad shape, but the letters were printed clearly.

Yup. Can't read it.

"T-thanks. I'll try them out."

I should show him some gratitude for helping us out.

Recipes for medicines with higher sale value should probably be found in here.

"I'm happy to hear that."

I felt pressured because I might not be able to answer his goodwill.

I already gave up reading the language of this world... but it might be a good idea to learn.

"The owner of the magic shop also told you to drop by."

"Magic shop?"

"Naofumi-sama, it's the shop that sells magic books."

"Oh, I see."

I thought it was just a bookstore... but now that I think about it, they had things like crystal balls at the back.

"Where is that?"

"The big store along the main road."

... Ahh. One of the biggest bookstores in town.

"So, how may I help you today?"

"Ah, today's--"

I sold my potions for higher than the usual amount.

I also bought new tools using that money before heading to the magic shop.

"Oh, you're the Shield Hero. You've been a great help to my grandchild."

"Uh..."

I had no idea who she was talking about, but it was probably someone from the village. The old lady at the magic shop politely greeted us.

The old lady was a bit plump and wore witch-like clothing.

"So what do you need?"

I looked around the magic shop that I thought was just a bookstore.

There were rows of stale books and lots of crystals placed behind the counter.

Along with stuff like staffs, it definitely felt like a magic shop.

Anyway, how do you use magic in this world?

"Is that young lady over there your companion?"

"Hmm? Ah."

I nod at Raphtalia.

"Please wait a moment."

The old lady said and retrieved a crystal ball from behind the counter, then she began to chant some sort of spell.

"Okay, now then Shield Hero-sama. Can you take a look at the crystal ball?"

"Ah, sure."

What's going on?

Is what I thought as I gazed into the crystal ball.

... It was shining a bit but I didn't notice anything else.

"Hmm... it seems that Shield Hero-sama is suitable for support and healing magic."

"Eh?"

I'm suited for magic!?

Hurry up and teach me then... well I can't really complain since I wouldn't understand.

"Next is the young lady there."

"Ah, okay."

I step to the side as Raphtalia looked into the crystal ball next.

"Hmm. As expected, the young lady of the Raccoon race is suited for light and dark magic."

"As expected', as in that's normal?"

"Yes... her race is skilled at illusions using light distortion and darkness concealment."

I see. So the Raccoon race is similar to Tanukis. It seems that even in Japan, Tanukis are a sort of creature that can transform into humans.

"So what now?"

"Here, just something from this old lady at the magic shop."

The old lady then handed us three books.

Books again! Even though I said I couldn't read, why were you also giving us books?

"I actually wanted to give you a crystal ball, but this old lady's livelihood would be endangered if I did."

"What do you mean?"

"Doesn't Shield Hero-sama know that you can learn a spell by releasing compatible magic from a crystal ball?"

What!? That means that I can use magic even though I can't read?

"The country recently made a large order... of crystal balls for the Heroes. A lot of them were delivered, does Shield Hero-sama not know?"

"I had no idea."

Because of that trash king. They were probably given to the other heroes. Geez, they left me out to die.

"Although magic books are a bother, one could learn 10 spells in a single month with dedicated studying."

So, 1 spell with the crystal ball and around 3 spells per magic book; though I still can't read it yet. No, since she said a month maybe there's something more to it.

"My apologies."

"No no, these magic books are more than enough."

Raphtalia answered while smiling. I nod along.

"So how much magic will we be able to use?"

"These are all beginner level. For higher level... please buy them."

"Ah- Ah."

It is a shop. So we shouldn't be ungrateful since she was hurting her own business by giving these books away.

"Thank you."

It was hard to express but we accepted the magic books from her.

"Ha..."

I let out a sigh.

I don't really like studying. What could someone with low grades like me do with these?

Fine. I'll definitely decipher the recipes and spells in these books.

Is what I want to say.

I kind of wish my shield had a 'written language translation' ability.

There's a high chance that my shield has recipes for various medicines. I should be able to use them if I try.

However, I wonder which option would be better, spending the effort to search through the branches of my shield or learning the language to understand the medicine recipes from the books?

With the latter, I would have to deal with costs and other problems.

Still... just thinking about the possibility of my shield having a way to translate this world's written language made me lose my willpower.

"Let's learn magic together."

Raphtalia happily said to me.

"But I can't read the language of this world..."

"Eh, that's why we should learn it together."

"Well... I guess that's fine."

Well, it doesn't hurt to study while making medicine.

"Anyways, when is the next wave?"

"Hm? Ah, one moment."

I looked at the icon in the corner of my vision and check the menu for the next scheduled wave.

Next: 45 days and 14 hours.

"In 45 days."

Wasn't it every month!?

Hmm, well looking back, it has only been around 2 months since I was summoned here.

In that case, maybe the time limit is longer this time around.

It had only been a few days between Raphtalia becoming a slave and then meeting me.

A month is... a long time then.

"Well, having a lot of time is also good."

It's possible that there isn't much we can accomplish in that period.

"For now, have we finished all we needed to do here?"

"Hmm... we have reapplied the curse and sold the medicines. We have also received the books. I think that's it."

Raphtalia confirmed.

Since coming back here because we forgot something would be a waste of time.

"Let's get some food then grind some levels afterwards."

"Okay."

Today's breakfast surprised me. Because my sense of taste had returned.

I can now say that something tastes delicious.

Requirements for Mortar Shield has been unsealed. (note: mortar as in pestle & mortar)

Requirements for Beaker Shield has been unsealed. (note: beaker as in beaker & flask)

Requirements for Yagen Shield has been unsealed. (note: does this have an english name? it's pretty much the same as pestle & mortar)

Mortar Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Novice Mixing

Beaker Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Liquid solutions bonus

Yagen Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Harvesting skill 2

After eating, we left the town and headed in the direction of Riyuuto Village.

Nearby was a place with a moderate amount of monsters.

I don't know the grinding spots of the other Heroes. Because the only way to find these spots was either by asking the locals or searching for them yourself.

Finding a decent hunting spot just from looking at a map was pretty difficult; enough to be called a challenge.

Although it was not like we were competing, it was slightly frustrating to fall behind the other heroes. It was just that fighting new monsters and letting my shield evolve doesn't sound too bad.

While I've left out many details, a lot of shields have been unlocked. Although my abilities have risen, that was also a small problem on its own. Because of my shield, my defense had increased a lot. My other stats such as agility, stamina, magic power and SP have all risen. Everything other than attack.

For that reason, during the last wave I didn't really receive any injuries. While we were en route...

"... By the way, can I absorb any monsters from the wave?"

I completely forgot about it after returning from the invasion, but I want to see if my shield will react to them.

So near Riyuuto Village, we found the mob corpses from the wave.

Requirements for Netherworld Locust Shield has been unsealed.

Requirements for Netherworld Bee Shield has been unsealed.

Requirements for Netherworld Corpse Eater Demon Shield has been unsealed.

Netherworld Locust Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Defense +6

Netherworld Bee Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Agility +6

Netherworld Corpse Eater Demon Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Decay Prevention (S)

Next I checked to see if any other shields would be unlocked from these.

However, the requirements for this shield series were not fulfilled and only one of them was unsealed.

Requirements for Bee Needle Shield has been unsealed.

Bee Needle Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Attack +1

Special Effect: Shield of Needles (S) Bee's Poison (Paralysis)

With this we continued onward. The villagers were in the middle of disposing the Chimera corpse.

"Sup."

"Ah, Shield Hero-sama."

Because of our efforts the other day, the villagers warmly welcomed us.

"Is that the boss of the wave?"

I grumble while looking at the Chimera corpse.

I closely look at the thing called a Chimera, but for some reason... it doesn't quite look like the monsters in this world.

Maybe it's the color or something, but I can't pinpoint why.

"What a fearsome thing."

"... Yeah."

The villagers and I agree.

I wonder if the other heroes or knight brigade already harvested it. What's left of the meat and fur are carved up.

"Can I take some of it as well?"

"Please go ahead, we're having trouble disposing of it anyways. Do you need us to help process and prepare the parts?"

"That doesn't sound too bad... but there doesn't seem to be much I can use."

The fur was carved up so it isn't possible to make something like armor. So, all that are left are... the meat and bones... and the snake tail.

The heads have been removed and taken. Looking at it, it seemed that it had 3 heads.

Well whatever, Raphtalia and I cut apart the corpse and let my shield absorb the pieces.

Requirements for Chimera Meat Shield has been unsealed.

Requirements for Chimera Bone Shield has been unsealed.

Requirements for Chimera Leather Shield has been unsealed.

Requirements for Chimera Viper Shield has been unsealed.

Chimera Meat Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Cooking Skill+

Chimera Bone Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Darkness Resistance (M)

Chimera Leather Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Defense +10

Chimera Viper Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: [Change Shield] skill, Antidote Mixing+, Poison Resistance (M)

Special Effect: Poisonous Snake Fang (M), Hook

The last one seemed to come with lots of useful bonuses. The defense increase was pretty high too.

However, using the shield requires a high level and unlocking more of the Chimera Series.

It should be fine to do this later, but there's a big chance it could be important for the next wave.

"What about the rest?"

I ask the villagers.

"We were going to bury it anyways, so take whatever you need."

"Okay..."

Although it was a bit of a waste, all that was left were mostly just meat and bones.

I guess we can hold onto the bones, but I think we can use the meat for jerky.

There was no way it would be edible though.

So it was like that. I felt like it could be used for ingredients in some magic potions.

... But I'm not sure if anyone would ever buy it... Plus, it'd be bad if the remains went rotten. It would also be scary if it somehow regenerated from not being preserved properly.

About the bones, I think they should be fine.

However, even then we should probably be careful.

"Then I'll take as much as possible."

"Um, but it will be quite heavy."

"Can I have the village look after the rest?"

"Eh? If Shield Hero-sama asks..."

"Just take the meat and dry it, but leave a bit and see if there's anyone who would want to buy some. That should help with the reconstruction. There should be people who would buy the meat of the wave monsters in order to research it."

"Yes, there should be."

The villagers seemed interested in the reconstruction fund so they accept my suggestion.

I dealt with the innards and other easily decayed parts by absorbing them into my shield. The sun has set by the time we finally reach Riyuuto Village. The village was half-destroyed, but the survivors all stayed together in the remaining, intact houses.

We received a room in a safe inn and quietly spent the rest of the day resting.

"... Although I do want to help out with the reconstruction, we don't have the luxury to worry about others right now."

Today, we were taken care of by the people of Riyuuto Village.

They were grateful for our help with the chimera parts, but for us to receive a free meal and room might have been overdoing it.

"You're right. But it would be great if we could do something that would be mutually beneficial."

A villager who could read and write had provided us with a chart of this world's alphabet.

In other words, the Hiragana table. Or the alphabet table in English.

Afterwards, since Raphtalia could read a bit, I had her point out characters and teach me the pronunciation until I slowly deciphered the table.

With this, maybe even words can be formed, but figuring it all out would be difficult.

For now I don't need to rush to learn the letters.

In between making medicine, I worked hard at memorizing the characters.