
Mushoku Tensei

– Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu –

– Volume 20.5 –

~ Intermission Chapter ~

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Chapter 1

Future Plans and Cliff's Troubles

Winter gradually ended, and spring arrived.

Part 1

Collecting comrades.

I discussed that with Orsted and we came up with 3 courses of action.

The first is to construct an organization for intelligence & random duties that's focused on intelligence gathering.

For that, we'll use the Rudo Mercenary Company that Aisha and the others created.

Have it collaborate in every way with Orsted behind the scenes, then expand the organization globally.

Link them all and gather each country's information in the main office.

Even if you don't go to the main office, if you go to the branch office you'll be able to find out in detail what's happened around there.

Rather than supporting Orsted, that's more of a system that supports my actions directly.

The second is people with political power.

Or perhaps, people who seem like they'll have political power later on. And winning them over as comrades.

Orsted said that Laplace will start a war when he's revived.

Thinking about it properly, he ought to wage war on each of the human nations.

At that time, how well each country is able to respond should depend on whether or not they know that will happen.

Thus, we'll make sure that influential people are informed in advance that there will be a war, arouse their caution, lend them our meager support, and gradually set things up for 80 years in the future.

When waging war against Laplace, whether the Rudo Mercenary Company can take action effectively should depend on whether or not each country is cooperating.

The third is a group of warriors who will be focused on battle.

Tentatively speaking, they'll be focused around Orsted.

We'll gather comrades who will fight Laplace in place of Orsted.

We'll have them fight Laplace in place of Orsted.

If the curse is lifted and they work together with Orsted, it would be nice to have them accompany him in the decisive battle against Hitogami too.

Who'd be good... is something that was decided after consulting with Orsted.

"People who already had the fate of fighting Laplace, and who won't easily become Hitogami's disciples."

That was the conclusion.

People like the Ogre God and the Dwarf God, who don't have a relation to Laplace in the present era but will confront him later. ^[1]

The Water God Style and the Sword God Style don't have a relation to him in this era either, but their disciples will confront him.

Also, we plan to contact North God Karuman III and Death God Randolph who are long-lived.

There's also people who have personal grudges against Laplace.

Ruijerd is one of them.

For people whose whereabouts are unknown, the Rudo Mercenary Company searches for them, then I go there directly and use kowtow diplomacy.

Depending on the case, there's a possibility I might need to help them out and then pressure them into returning the favor.

For now, the plan is to contact every single strong-seeming person.

Now then, even when we gather those people, there's an existence which serves as a bottleneck.

Hitogami.

Knowing him, he'll probably use his disciples to interfere.

Hitogami's disciples are basically impossible to identify in advance.

According to Orsted, it seems there are people with a low or high possibility.

But in this loop, it seems like people with a low likelihood have become disciples, and it's difficult to distinguish them.

With all the actions I'll be taking, people outside of Orsted's expectations will end up becoming disciples.

As for a countermeasure against that... honestly, I couldn't come up with one.

So I'll just stop thinking about it.

In the first place, I don't know what kind of standard Hitogami uses to decide on disciples.

Orsted said, "He has a tendency to choose people with strong fates."

However, in recent times, people with weak fates have also become disciples.

To begin with, I don't really understand what determines the strength of a person's fate.

It seems like a rule that only Orsted and Hitogami know.

Even if I consult with Orsted about each and every rule, I get the feeling that I'll just gather unnecessary anxiety and that just thinking about it is pointless.

For beginners to a game, there's a way of conducting yourself suited to beginners.

For now, I'll establish the motto "Don't believe in revelations from dreams" among the guys who become our comrades.

But even so, disciples will appear.

When someone seems suspicious, check if they're a disciple, and in each case, kill them.

It's a tough job, but I'll do it to the best of my ability.

Aside from me having it tough, there's no problem with just continually increasing our numbers from now on.

After all, Hitogami only has 3 disciples.

When it comes to increasing our numbers, the more we do the more we'll be at an advantage.

For example, if we have only 5 people, and one of them becomes a disciple and betrays us, our military strength goes down 20%.

The enemy's strength also increases, and the battle becomes risky.

But if we have 10 people, or 20.

Or 100, or 1000.

We won't become unsteady if just 1 or 2 people betray us.

If 1000 people manipulated by a leader became enemies, that would be bad, but I'm basically the leader, so it's fine.

I'm a little worried about what happens after I die, but there are many people more excellent and capable than I am.

Someone capable of entrusting things to should appear.

Even now, there's Roxy and such.

Also, aside from gathering comrades, there are many things I need to do or obtain.

The first is securing a method of contacting Orsted.

In the previous incident's fight, Pax was allowed to die because of a lack of communication.

Of course, there were many causes besides a lack of communication.

But... If I'd had a secret method of contacting Orsted, I should've been able to avoid it.

I'm not thinking about completely relying on Orsted.

But from now on, I'll be taking action separately from him even more often than now.

For that reason, a method of contacting him is indispensable.

When the situation is important, there ought to be more cases where it would be better to act after consulting with someone rather than acting based on my own judgment.

If you know about the other person's dilemma, you can also rapidly take action.

Although I can't imagine a scene in which I save Orsted.

In any case, as I thought, a cell phone is essential.

Even if it's not a phone, it would be fine if it can send information one-way.

With all this in mind, I tried consulting with Orsted about it.

While explaining about the existence of something that can make phone calls, I asked if a similar thing existed or could be constructed.

"So it's a magic item that can send voices or writing."

"Even just writing would be good, but basically I was just thinking it might be good to be able to exchange information even when we're far away, or have a discussion when we're having trouble deciding something. It can't be done, right?"

I figured it would be impossible.

Society isn't that convenient.

"There are similar magic items among those of the dragon race. If those are reproduced, it would probably be possible."

That's what I'd been thinking, but Orsted's answer was unexpectedly optimistic.

"Ooh, so there are things like that."

"Yeah, you should have seen them too."

Seriously.

Where was there something like that?

If so, I should have thought "That's convenient, I want one too."

"The Seven Great World Powers stone monuments, and the adventurer guild cards."

"Ooh!"

I see.

Now that he mentions it, that's true.

The adventurer guild cards had voice input, and the Seven Great World Powers stone monuments have the same words but are scattered throughout the world.

Haah.

I see.

So the the adventurer guild card was a rip-off of the dragon race's creations.

Come to think of it, it did give off an "overtchnology" vibe...

"A bit of improvement is necessary, but I'll try making it."

"Eh? Orsted-sama will be personally making it?"

"At any rate, since you've appeared, my schedule keeps getting thrown out of order. If there's a need for it, it would be good to make it... I'll make use of it in the next loop, too."

And thus, it was decided that Orsted would be personally manufacturing it.

It was a happy miscalculation.

Since it seems like Orsted is thinking about recruiting me to be his comrade in the next loop too, I'm truly happy.

"It's possible I won't be able to make it, so keep that in mind."

"Yessir, boss!"

And so the telecommunications business was approved.

One more thing.

Looking back at the failure last time, there's something I need to create.

A method of transporting the magic armor.

Last time, the Magic Armor MK-I that we went to great lengths to bring ended up only being used for transportation.

It took a lot of time to transport it from the city to the fort.

It wasn't brought into the castle, and wasn't even made use of during the battle with the Death God Randolph.

From now on, I don't expect to fight with Death God-level people very often.

But there still ought to be a lot of enemies I can't face with the MK-II Revised.

I want to do something about it.

Of course, to resolve that, we're advancing development of the MK-III which is small and has good performance.

But it will still take a lot of time to produce the MK-III.

Zanoba is all-out collaborating on it, but it's not something that will be complete in 1 or 2 years.

And so, I came up with an idea.

Regarding whether it would be possible to summon the MK-I as-is.

According to the lessons I had with Sylvaril before, it seems like I can't summon inorganic matter, but...

Well, you know, if I just do a little more of this or that, or change my way of thinking, I get the feeling I can summon inorganic matter.

This is something I intend to personally test out a little.

If it's no good, then I'm okay with that.

Part 2

Well then, the course of action regarding gathering comrades has been set.

For the time being, we'll expand the Rudo Mercenary Company while establishing connections with each country's powerful people and making them comrades.

At present, it should be fine to act so as to make each country's powerful people into our comrades.

First of all, Cliff and Ariel.

The relative of the Pope of the Milis religious order, the next queen of the Asura Kingdom. Those two who are like half-comrades will officially be incorporated into Orsted's faction.

Which of the two will be first?

Of course, Cliff who lives close by.

If Cliff becomes a comrade, I can form a connection to the Milis religious order.

The Holy Kingdom of Milis is a strong nation.

When it comes to the war against Laplace, they'll become an extremely strong military power.

Battles are about money and numbers, after all.

When the time comes, it won't be bad to have a connection.

I could say a lot about Cliff, but let me just say that he's my true friend.

He's been cooperating regarding Orsted's curse, so it should be fine to just get a verbal commitment from him.

I can imagine him immediately saying "Okay."

Thinking that, I headed toward the apartment where Cliff lives, but unfortunately it was the usual "that".

I heard Elinalise's carnal voice and immediately turned away.

The walls of that house are thin.

What's with that "You can't, Cliff! Clive is watching!"

Then do it when Clive is sleeping, sheesh...

For now, I just left him a note saying "I'll come by in the evening."

I decided to go to Zanoba's house.

Part 3

Zanoba is no longer a prince.

He sold off his royal things to raise money and took up residence near my house.

It was a snug two-story house.

It was created so that he'd be able to manufacture dolls, so the first floor is wide open like a garage.

The living space is mostly on the second floor.

It seems like he's living there with Ginger and Julie.

It has plenty of space for three people to live in.

Although I don't know what'll happen between these three people from now on...

Maybe they'll get married or something.

Anyhow, for the time being he has savings, or rather the money he received as royalty, so he's fine,

but from now on it's just going to decrease, so we decided to pay him a salary for working on the production of the magic armor.

It's research and development costs.

Zanoba took it, but he didn't have a very pleased expression.

"I didn't make it on my own, so for me alone to receive money somehow feels wrong."

He said that with his eyebrows in the shape of a ㄥ.

It's not like I don't understand what he's saying.

The magic armor is something that myself, Zanoba, and Cliff made together.

Zanoba alone is receiving the R&D funding for it.

It doesn't seem reasonable.

But be that as it may, if he says that, the most unreasonable person is me.

I wear the magic armor, go to work, and receive compensation for it.

In other words, up until now only I've been getting money.

With the magic armor that all of us made.

The magic armor isn't something that we made to earn money.

But even so, humans are living things who kill each other for the sake of money.

If he says that we should be fair, then we should pay Cliff too.

Then again, Cliff doesn't lack money, so it's questionable if he'd accept it.

Well, enough of that.

At the very least, if someone needs money, there's enough to pay them.

There isn't anyone among my acquaintances who's greedy enough to overcharge to get an obviously excessive amount of money.

I personally also have enough flexibility when it comes to money to give it to someone who needs it.

Humans really need to treat one another well when they have enough money to comfortably do so.

Well, the magic armor is necessary, and Zanoba's figure manufacturing craft is also necessary.

You pay money for what's necessary.

That's natural.

That's the way it is, so for now you could say that Zanoba has a steady livelihood.

But when entering, I properly knock.

That's called courtesy between close friends.

"Zanoba, it's me! Open up!"

I rang the bell a few times while calling out to Zanoba.

"Ooh, Shishou. Please, please, come in."

The response was extremely quick.

But I'll be extra considerate.

"Really? It's okay to open it? I'm really opening it? If you want to stop me, now's the time? When I start to move, it's too late to stop me?"

Last time, I wasn't careful enough and it was a really close shave.

"I don't really understand, but I will not stop you, so please enter."

"Really? There's no woman changing clothes next to you or anything?"

"I'm saying that it's okay."

I believed in him.

I believed in Zanoba.

Even if the world turns upside down, I'll believe in Zanoba.

"All right, pardon my intrusion."

When I opened the door and took a step forward, I was already in Zanoba's workshop. In the spacious room, two manufacturing desks had been placed, and wooden boxes and dolls were scattered here and there.

Zanoba sat at one of the desks.

Julie was with him.

If I just say that, then it's like usual, but the atmosphere was a little different today.

Specifically, the place Julie was sitting was a problem.

Usually, Julie sits at a desk that's placed a little ways off from Zanoba, and makes figures. But today, she wasn't sitting at that desk.

"....."

Julie sat on Zanoba's lap.

While sitting on his lap, she applied color to a figure with a serious expression.

As for Zanoba, he was prudently shaving down one of the the parts of the magic armor above her.

Shaving dregs were falling onto Julie's head, but she didn't seem to mind.

"Zanoba..... When I wasn't looking, you sure got close to Julie, didn't you?"

"Fumu, is that bad?"

When you combine Julie's shortness with Zanoba's tallness, they look like brother and sister.

Well, this is in the safe zone. If it's just at the level of sitting on his lap and making dolls together...

It should be fine to conclude there's no suspicion of obscenity.

No, it's not like it's "out" if they do it, either.

There's no laws about age of consent in this world, so I won't find fault with him.

But it's kinda, you know.

I made such an effort to be considerate, so I wish they'd separated.

"No, it's endearing."

Saying that, I dragged over a stool from the corner of the workshop and sat on it.

"So, Shishou, what brings you here today?"

"Umu."

Of course, I didn't visit Zanoba just to chat with him.

I've entrusted Zanoba with the production of the magic armor, but there's one other job I'd like to entrust to him alongside that.

"Actually, Zanoba, today I came to deliver to you a notice of personnel change."

"Haah... A notice of personnel change?"

"Yes, a notice of personnel change."

While saying that, I took out a piece of paper from my chest pocket.

I held it out to Zanoba reverently with both hands.

"Oops, excuse me."

Zanoba hastily set aside Julie, brushed off the shaving dregs from his chest, and respectfully received it.

He's a man of etiquette.

"Fumu... 'Zanoba Shirone has been appointed to the position of marketing supervisor for the Ruijerd figures' is written here."

"Umu, accept it modestly."

"I'm fine with accepting it, but..... wasn't that project postponed?"

In brief, this notice signifies the start of the project to sell Ruijerd dolls that has been planned for some time.

You might ask why now, at this particular time.

But the current circumstances are exactly why we must do it.

To elaborate.

From now on, we'll be winning over powerful people from each nation, and at the same time gathering comrades to fight against Laplace.

But there are several people whose whereabouts we don't know.

For example, that's right, Ruijerd.

In the original history, he'd be in the demon continent, but in this loop he traveled together with me to the central continent.

Recently there haven't been any letters, and I don't know where he is.

Since it's him, I don't believe that the unthinkable happened to him, but he's in a situation where I can't immediately meet him and request his help.

Well, it's not like he's in hiding, so while searching around, we might find him.

But to be frank, he's the first person that I want to ask, "Please cooperate with us to defeat Laplace."

That's how I feel.

I want to do whatever it takes to find him and directly ask him.

I want to give him the chance to exact his revenge on Laplace...

That's the public half of it.

I simply want to meet Ruijerd after a long time.

It would be nice to meet him and once again work together toward the same goal.

That's the other half.

They're basically selfish reasons, but that's how I ended up deciding to begin the sale of the Ruijerd figures.

Instead of a simple search, this plan will speed things up.

And creating a better image for the Supard tribe has been the plan for some time.

I've tentatively set up other public justifications too.

For example, regarding the magic armor.

It's true that Zanoba, Cliff, and I have felt like we're at an impasse with just the three of us working on the weapon called the magic armor.

At this rate, there's a possibility that the MK-III won't be made.

Hence we'll begin large-scale figure sales.

As we scale up our business, we'll solicit help from craftsmen and train them.

Specialists who are familiar with Zanoba's and Cliff's techniques will increase, and if each one repeats trial and error, there will be a higher possibility that some innovative idea will be produced.

No matter what world you're in, it's important to cultivate your engineers.

"...So that's how it is."

I explained the above in detail to Zanoba.

"It's true that it's just something I want to do, but I also want to improve our development of the magic armor and figures from now on. I want to entrust the management to you who understands it better than anyone else."

"Fumu..."

"To support you, I'll give you members of the Rudo Mercenary Company who I've had my eye on for a while. Of course, Aisha or I will assist you with setting up the first shop..... Will you do it?"

"Yes, leave it to me."

Zanoba readily nodded and kneeled respectfully.

Julie who was watching from the side quickly went down on her knees too.

"Grandmaster! What would it be best for me to do?"

"Julie, stick with Zanoba and follow his instructions."

"Yes!"

I'll be having Julie take on a lot of work, too.

From now on, she'll be entering the mass production structure for the early line of Ruijerd figures.

Earning money for Zanoba's sake.

If she hears that, she'll probably be motivated.

"Well, we'll leave the details for a later day. That's it for today."

"Understood."

For the time being, the project has taken a step forward.

Part 4

Evening arrived as I approached Cliff's love nest.

It seems that their liaison has ended, as the apartment has fallen silent.

You know, with them doing that every day, their neighbors probably can't live in peace...

No, normally they do it in the school's laboratory, so it should be just at night.

"Hey, Rudeus....."

When I stepped into the room, a haggard Cliff greeted me.

He seemed energetic from the time she was pregnant until shortly after the child was born, but recently he always has a pale face.

I'm worried that his internal organs will fail soon.

"Ara, Rudeus. It's rare to see you."

In contrast, Elinalise was gleaming.

She offered her breast to the baby with a satisfied look on her face.

She was naked above the waist, and wore just panties below it.

It might be that they're taking a short break now, and after the feeding is over they'll continue.

"Yeah, there was just something I want to take care of."

All things considered, an oujo-sama type blonde beauty breastfeeding a baby while half-naked makes for a prettier picture than I'd imagined.

Since she's an elf, her entire body is slenderly well-proportioned.

Her usually slutty attitude, and her current Virgin Mary-like manner.

This might also be a kind of gap.

When I look at Sylphy and Roxy, I also sense a kind of gap.

Recently, I sense a gap with Eris too.

When that Eris cradles an infant, she just stands still and lets her breasts get sucked without raising her voice or punching the person sucking them.

The appearance of a woman who has become a mother is truly mysterious.

"Rudeus, would you not look at her so intently?"

"Eh? Ah, I'm sorry."

Since I was thinking about this and that, I got a warning from Cliff.

Sorry, sorry.

It's not like I was looking at her with a dirty mind.

"Lize, too. There's a guest, so at least put on some clothes."

"Ara, Cliff..... Are you jealous?"

"Yes, I am. Although Rudeus might be something like family to you....."

"I understand."

Elinalise shrugged while withdrawing to another room, still embracing the baby.

"Rudeus, you too. You have three wives, so would you not look lustfully at someone else's wife?"

"Lustfully? I....."

Wasn't doing that.

Is what I wanted to retort with, but it's true that I was watching her.

Even I don't want Sylphy and the others to be seen naked.

I'll apologize.

"No, I'm sorry. I'll be careful next time."

"Yeah....."

Cliff sighed and sunk back into the sofa.

He looks tired, but he also seems like he's kind of in a bad mood.

I wonder if there's some problem with his sex life.

"So, what's up today?"

"Right, well, I have a little favor, or maybe I should call it an invitation....."

Cliff looked at me with glazed eyes.

It feels hard to speak.

Maybe I should come again.

No, before doing that, how about I at least hear the reason.

".....Did something happen?"

"Nothing in particular....."

Cliff started to say something, then shook his head.

"No, this is a good time. Since it's something I'll have to tell you about anyway....."

That's a very profound lead-in.

It reminds me of the previous incident with Zanoba.

"The truth is, I got a letter from my grandfather in the Holy Kingdom of Milis."

The pattern's the same too.

In which case, maybe this is a trap to lure out Cliff.

Maybe another war.

Maybe another of Hitogami's traps.

No, either way, I'd been thinking of asking Cliff to be an intermediary with the Holy Kingdom of Milis.

The person himself seems to have that intention, too.

I won't tell him something half-baked like "I'll bring you back."

Of course, I certainly want him to stay in Sharia, but I'm focused on my objective.

Cliff stood up and took out a letter from a shelf.

This also gives me a strong sense of deja vu.

I'm sure that in that letter,
Cliff's grandfather talks to him about how much money has been spent raising him.
And why that money was spent.
For the sake of him aiding his family's faction.
When will you help us?
Now, right!

Something like that is probably written there.
I must read it with caution.

"Oh, it's not that serious a problem."

Cliff scratched his cheek while saying that.
He has an uncomfortable expression.

"We already talked long ago about how I'd return once I graduated. He's just concerned about the cost of travel and the journey back."

Told that, I looked at the letter.

It started off with words of concern for Cliff's body.

After that, advice about how if the travel costs are too much, to show the enclosed Milis religious order leadership insignia to the Milis church.

A stern part about how the conflict is in an unfavorable situation, and he should resolve himself if he returns, and that if he's not resolved he doesn't have to return.

Lastly, he closes with words about how although he'd written some severe things, he wants to see Cliff's face again and looks forward to his return.

Overall, it was a heartwarming letter full of concern for Cliff.

I've never met Cliff's grandfather, but he seems like a nice guy.

I wonder what part of this is a problem.

"To be honest, I'm hesitating."

When he says hesitating, I suppose he's referring to that stuff about resolving himself.

"My intention was to immediately return to Milis after graduating. I've been training for that, and up to now that was always my intention. I had the confidence that I could fight my way through the scheming within the Milis religious order and win."

"I thought so."

Cliff has always been going on and on about that.

He said that after graduating, he'd return to the Holy Kingdom of Milis, and succeed his grandfather...

Although recently, he'd appreciated how difficult it is to become the successor to the Pope, and had been steadily training as a priest.

"But....."

Cliff sat in the sofa with his head in his hands.

"I've gotten married, and have a child now."

With just that, I understood his worries.

In short, it's the same type of thing that I'm always worrying about.

"The Milis religious order readily targets the weak... the enemy's family."

"....."

"Lize is one thing. She has the ability to protect herself. But Clive can't even stand on his own feet yet. I..... don't have the confidence that I can protect him."

I understand his feelings of worry.

You always want the people who are important to you to be in a safe place.

"First of all, I haven't even told my grandfather that I've married. If it's known that the Milis Pope's grandson married an elf, an unexpected scandal might occur. He might be dragged down by that and get overthrown."

The Milis religion has strong feelings toward other races.

The elves are a people of the Great Forest, so they aren't rejected that much, but some of the radical factions persecute anyone who isn't human.

And Elinalise isn't looked upon that well by other elves, either.

"When I keep going in circles thinking about this, I no longer know whether I should return or not, and I just let Lize spoil me..... Recently, that's been repeating..... Only now do I finally understand why Zanoba acted so stubborn back then....."

Cliff himself probably wants to return, and thinks that he needs to do so.

But he'd be exposing his wife and child to danger.

Furthermore, because of his wife, his grandfather might even become in danger.

In this situation, is it okay to continue on your own path?

He doesn't know.

I don't know either.

But today, I came here to talk with him about this issue too.

The current me is capable of sending him a rescue boat.

"Cliff-senpai."

".....What?"

"Would you be willing to officially join Orsted-sama's faction?"

Cliff looked at me with a puzzled expression.

My way of phrasing it may have been poor.

But I don't want to say "become my comrade" and have him misunderstand.

It would be better to say it clearly.

"What do you mean by that?"

"If you become Orsted-sama's subordinate, Orsted-sama and I can go all-out to back you up. It would be possible to protect Elinalise and Clive while guiding Cliff-senpai's faction to victory."

Cliff furrowed his brow.

"If I receive that backup, what should I do?"

"Mainly, we'd have you prepare for Laplace's revival."

Saying that, I then spoke about the plan.

The plan 80 years later with Orsted playing the leading part.

I had already talked to Cliff about Hitogami, but I thoroughly talked about everything starting from the basics.

"....."

After finishing talking about everything, Cliff had a complicated expression.

"What do you think?"

When I asked that, Cliff was silent for a while.

He folded his arms, shut his eyes, and groaned languishingly.

"Hmmm....."

It shouldn't be a bad deal.

Cliff also knows that Orsted's radiated fear is from a curse.

Although he doesn't know the disposition of Orsted without the curse...

Even so, I won't betray Cliff.

If he doubts me, I'd be sad.

"Would you..... give me some more time?"

At the end of his pondering, Cliff squeezed out that response.

"The graduation ceremony will be happening soon. I'll decide by then."

When one decides is a personal decision, so I had no choice but to nod my head.

I wondered why he couldn't just simply agree.

But Cliff himself might not even know why he's hesitating.

"If you're so inclined, please consult with Elinalise-san too. Because there's no worry you need to bear on your own."

"Eh? Yeah, that's right. Thank you."

This time, Cliff nodded meekly, expressing a frail smile.

Elinalise heard our conversation just now.

From a while now, I've been noticing blonde hair flickering through the crack in the doorway.

If it's her, she'll be able to skillfully guide Cliff.

That result might not go the way I think it will, but.....

If so, that's fine.

"Then, I'll come again."

"Yeah. Sorry about all this."

"No, I also have times when I'm worrying or troubled."

Saying that, I left Cliff's room.

At the end, I didn't forget to wink at Elinalise.

For now, I'll hear Cliff's response at the graduation ceremony.

There are about 2 months left before the graduation ceremony.

In the meantime, how about I advance the creation of Zanoba's Ruijerd figure shop?

Chapter 2

Cliff and Zanova's Graduation

Part 1

During the next two months, Zanova and I were engaged in setting up our first store front.

In order to accomplish this, we got the support of a knowledgeable professional.

He's a member of our mercenary group.

As a former merchant, he seems to have owned a store for a short period of time.

However, he failed and lost everything...

I don't expect a lot from the advice of someone who has failed.

If you don't understand why you failed, then it's easy to repeat the same mistakes.

This is coming from me, a person who has repeated his mistakes often; it's reliable.

However, failing is an essential part of any process.

The experience of those who have repeatedly failed still has value.

In addition, a person won't grow if they simply stop when they fail.

No one needs to achieve 100% success.

The achievement rate may be around 60%, but their world will still change with a passing mark.

Successful experience will change a person.

He will surely become a splendid talent in the future if I seed him with a successful experience.

Thus, persuading myself, I set up our first store while listening to the advice from that guy.

On the outskirts of the workshop district, it's a small warehouse.

After modifying it, it has become a warehouse with a store front capable of holding our stock.

We'll be fine even if our inventory doubles and we need to expand the store.

However, at first just having a small shop is good. It would be nice to just meet our current sales target.

As long as we are making some money, it shouldn't be a problem if our stock piles up.

Well, we will decide what to do after measuring our progress in the future.

Part 2

Then it was time for the Ranoa Magic University graduation.

The graduation ceremony is held in the grand auditorium.

Lined up with the rest of the graduates is Cliff.

In fact, Zanoba is lined up in the back as well.

Even though he dropped out he has been allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony with special permission.

He is a special student, and most of their classwork is self study anyway.

It wouldn't be wrong to say that it was also because Vice Principal Jinas was very sympathetic.

Zanoba did not seem to be interested in the graduation ceremony himself.

However these kinds of ceremonies can be a meaningful transition.

It feels like a carnival.

It's the usual participants.

There are about 500 graduates, and with 200 to 300 school staffs lined up together.

Roxy appeared a little unsteady last time, but now she fits in properly.

Is it the result of becoming accustomed to it?

Even if she's the only small silhouette up there, it doesn't seem awkward.

Rather, it feels very natural.

The only students who have to attend today are the student council.

Led by Norn with that muscular faced Kiritsu, a diverse group containing Demon and Beast race members is lined up.

When Ariel was the student council president it was a group composed primarily of the Human race.

When the head of an organization changes, the people serving underneath will also vary.

I had thought that even during the entrance ceremony last year, that Norn seems to have attracted Beast and Demon race students.

I don't hear any bad rumors about her from the student body either.

She hasn't achieved the kind of infatuation Ariel inspired, but she seems to have been recognized as a dependable student council president.

As her brother, I can hold my head high.

By the way, this time I got permission from Jinas to sit down in the lowest seat under the student council.

Oh, no matter how many times I see it, the graduation ceremony is an impressive thing.

"Graduate Representative, Brooklyn von Eruzais!

I hereby grant a certificate proof of Magic Guild rank D to you!"

The Graduation Representative this time is not Cliff.

I'm sure I haven't heard the name of this representative, but it sounds familiar.

It's a name from the royalty or aristocracy of Neris Dukedom, one of the Magic Triumvirate.

It's named for the Ranoa Kingdom, but the University is financed jointly by the Magical Triumvirate.

With this kind of ceremony, prioritizing the nobility of the Magical Triumvirate may be an unspoken rule.

"We respectfully recognize Brooklyn von Eruzais!"

"May you venture on the path of magic."

Cliff, watching on, has a listless face.

In the past Cliff would have raged, "Why am I not the representative!?"

Actually, if you only look at the results, there is no one above Cliff among all of the graduates.

As for his final grades, he reached advanced rank in all four attack magics, advance rank in healing magic, advanced rank in detoxification magic, intermediate rank in barrier magic, and advanced rank in exorcism magic.

On top of all that, there is his thesis on suppressing curses.

He did not reach Saint rank in anything, but no one comes close to his achievements.

Even if you look at the history of the university, there should hardly be anyone.
As far as I know, such a great person could only be Roxy's level.
Because I only learned healing and detoxification at the university, I don't count.

In addition to that, Cliff also qualified as a Milis father.
His habit of combining with Elinalize every night had no effect on his grades.
Everything he reached for at school, he acquired it, and became an adult both physically and mentally.
He married a beautiful wife and had a child.
He became a flawless Riajuu. ^[2]

However, taking that into consideration, perhaps, he is lamenting not being the representative.
That listless face, it's troubled.
The matter from two months ago that he said he would decide on, he still hasn't told me his decision.
However, that kind of thing should be sufficient to trouble him.
Two months may not be enough time to make that kind of decision.

Part 3

After the graduation ceremony ended, I immediately joined up with Zanoba.

Ginger and Julie are dressed up with a bouquet pinned behind them.

No one else is dressed like that.

I wonder if it's a tradition of Shirone.

"Zanoba, congratulations on graduating."

"Ah! Shishou! Thank you very much!"

Zanoba is wearing the Ranoa Magic University's uniform.

Although it is designed for young people, rather than Shirone's formal wear, it suits him.

"I had turned my back on anything related to My own graduation.... So I was taken aback when a few days ago I suddenly received a letter from the University."

"It's nice isn't it, to have this kind of event to mark transitions in your life?"

As expected, having a ceremony at life's important transitions is best.

That Sylphy could not also participate in her graduation ceremony is something I regret a bit.

However, Zanoba may not recognize it as anything but a hassle.

He is royalty.

"Or perhaps you dislike this kind of thing?"

"No, I thought it would be troublesome at first, but after I've come here, it turned out to be unexpectedly not so."

While we were talking Zanoba was overlooking his surroundings.

The graduates and alumni were circling around to greet the teachers.

A heartwarming scene unfolds.

No, the person at the center of that crowd is Norn.

Holding her hand is a Demon Race boy looking guy with a blushing bright red face.

Norn's face appears troubled, and the student council officers surrounding them are grinning. I wonder if this is a confession event.

Or possibly it's something more pleasant, and that student is just there to shake the hand of the president.

Norn's handshake event.

I wonder if alot of the Norn Guards(fan club) will buy Ruijerd dolls, if I included Norn handshake tickets.

No, making money isn't my purpose for selling those dolls. Still...

A little ways off, surrounded by girls, is Roxy.

About five schoolgirls are lowering their heads to Roxy with tearful faces.

Roxy is smiling slightly, but it looks like she's holding something in. An emotional young girl, crying, throws her arms around Roxy.

With a troubled expression, Roxy pats the girl's back, pon-pon.

The crying began in earnest as it spread to the neighboring schoolgirls.

In addition, graduation events are taking place in various surrounding locations.

The graduation ceremony's particular, slightly damp, atmosphere is refreshing.

However no one came close to Zanoba and me.

I do not attend school much anymore and have few acquaintances left here; somehow it's a little lonely.

Well, that's fine.

After this, I have reservations at a tavern.

Pursena, Rinia, and my family as well.

Nanahoshi was also invited, it should be a fun banquet gathering with everyone together.

Orsted can't really attend, but received the congratulatory address.

Just because this event is lonely doesn't mean I don't have buddies.

Well, I'll just go home nice and quick.

"Rudeus-sama."

As I was thinking that a man approached me.

With blonde fluffy hair, it's a guy about 20 years old.

He kind of reminds me of something.

Where did I see this kind of person before?

"Nice to meet you, my name is Brooklyn von Eruzais."

Oh yeah, this man was the graduation representative!

I just saw him a little while ago.

"Ah, Graduation Representative, congratulations."

"Thank you very much."

When I lowered my head he also gave me a return bow gracefully.

"However I was only able to graduate at the head because of my family's influence.

In test results, I was second place to Cliff-sama the same as always."

"Again with the modesty..."

I almost break out in a cold sweat.

I wasn't thinking when I just opened my mouth.

I don't know how long these two people have been competing with their scores.

"However, thanks to my family's standing, I was able to get a victory against Cliff-sama at the very last moment. I ended up winning...."

Indeed, because he was the graduation representative, if you look at the results, it is a win. It's enough to be called a victory, even if it's not really one.

"... so, Rudeus-sama."

Brooklyn looked directly at me.

His eyes were filled with sincerity.

I wonder what this is about. Do you mean he's here to confess, maybe?

He's going to confess now that he's finally won over Cliff?

It's that kind of setup?

No stop, I have two wives and a husband^[3] and children...

"From you, I would like to request a duel."

That's different.

A duel.... ?

Recently, probably because it's become known that I am under Orsted, such fellows occasionally show up, but...

But I wonder why it is you want a duel because you won over Cliff?

"Why?"

"Yes, I was interested in how strong I was from before.

And then, over the last several years, I've understood that your strength is beyond the average level."

Well I do stand out...

But come on, that isn't even okay as a joke.

Maybe I should just give him one or two knocks on the head and then leave.

"Yes, Rudeus-sama, would it be alright to proceed?"

"...I guess so?"

"I have wanted to challenge you so much.

Ever since the time you defeated the Demon Lord Badigadi in one-hit."

Brooklyn said this while strongly clenching his fist.

"I come from a warrior family.

When I return to my home country I will inherit a position where I am responsible for my subordinates.

Then, at that time, the opportunity to test my own ability will disappear."

"When you gain that great position, you won't be able to indulge in your own convenience."

"Exactly. So now, this is my last chance; please accept my challenge!"

Brooklyn swiftly bowed.

I understand the situation.

All young men want to know the measure of their own strength.

This young man knew that he was above average.

He finds people who are stronger than him.

He can see he will probably lose, but he still wants to challenge himself.

There is just one thing I don't understand.

"How does this kind of thing spring from defeating Cliff?"

"Eh?"

When I asked him that, Mr. Brook's face went blank.

"I had heard that in order to challenge Rudeus-sama, that a person had to defeat his Six Demon Group.

Rinia-sama, Pursena-sama, and Fitts-sama graduated, and there is no longer any sign of Badigadi-sama....

Only Zanoba-sama was left to defeat..."

" "

Six Demon Group...

Come to think of it, there was something like that.

I have no idea who began saying that kind of thing.

If you do not defeat everyone, or something, you can't challenge me.

This guy, he has been dutifully obeying that...

"Then against Zanoba, you won?"

"I was able to win more than once in a mock battle, during class, yes."

"I see."

When I glanced over at Zanoba, he diverted his eyes.

... Well, in a battle of only magic, Zanoba can't be expected to win.

However Cliff held out this whole time, so this guy has come sliding up here.

I don't think that he was able to finally beat Cliff, but since graduation would rob him of his chance to try, he is asking in this way now.

I see.

It's to commemorate graduation.

"As expected, I have to defeat even those who have graduated..."

His intention is to completely honor that rule.

Even to the last distinction.

It is similar to confessing because you have nothing to lose.

"No. It's fine. Let's do it."

No matter what world it takes place in, you'll want to do something for your graduation ceremony.

" ! Thank you very much!"

When answering me, Brooklyn bowed swiftly.

"Zanoba, sorry, but I'll have you be the referee."

"I understand, Shishou."

I entrusted my jacket to Zanoba.

Things like the Magic Armor flashed into my mind for an instant, but even without it... I'll be fine.

Part 4

To start the duel off we moved to the schoolyard, for the whole thing, I thought I better allocate three hours.

The result: I won.

I have been training with a Dragon God (Orsted) and a Sword King (Eris) on a daily basis.

There was no struggle, it was like taking candy from a baby.

I've stopped going easy on others.

Brooklyn seems to have known how it was going to go as well.

He thanked me with a bright face.

Just that, should have been good enough.

Afterwards, having seen us, other graduates came to test their skills against me.

They had all kinds of reasons I didn't understand. Perhaps they won a footrace against Cliff, or an eating contest against Zanoba, whether that's the truth doesn't really matter.

Onlookers also gathered in large quantities; I'm a popular person somehow.

Then I, having no real reason to reject anyone, received everyone's challenge.

It's a graduation ceremony, and, in the first place, it wasn't me who said people had to defeat the Six Demon Group.

There was no nagging from Norn today, and she used the student council to help reduce the onlookers.

I don't really want to cause a commotion, but I can't say no to the feeling I see in these guy's faces during their graduation ceremony.

I'm sorry Ms. President.

"Phew"

After that, I dueled with about 20 people.

Because I train on a regular basis, it didn't really tire me out.

Everyone was happy.

They all left with satisfied faces.

I think that once they return home this will become a fond memory for them.

Finally, no one was left.

Because she had to stay and clean up the venue, Norn and I stayed back, everyone else was gone.

Only Zanoba and his two guests remained.

"As expected, Shishou is popular."

Zanoba seems tired after continuing to referee the matches.

Somehow, this guy has no stamina.

"I'm tired... What about Shishou? Aren't you tired as well?"

"No, I'm fine. However, before the party, it would be nice to change out of these dirty clothes."

"Hmmm... I see."

After saying that, Zanoba looked down at his own clothing.

Mud had splashed up onto him as a result of the magic, it had dried and caked.

Of course, he was in the midst of battle as well.

"Then, let's quickly go home. What about your sister?"

"Norn said she needed to participate in the cleanup. She knows the meeting place, so it should be fine if she comes back on her own."

"Is that so..."

Then, Zanoba looks away from me suddenly.

His line of sight is focused behind me and slightly upward.

Looking back, I try to follow his view with my eyes.

There.

I found it immediately.

Short dark brown hair peered out from the roof.

Beside it golden blond curls blew in the wind.

"Julie, Ginger."

"Yes."

"Can you go home ahead of me and prepare a change of clothes?"

"Of course."

Those two nodded and left.

They had decided to no longer be in a master servant relationship, but no matter how you look at it, it's still the same.

I suppose it's not something you can change immediately.

"Well then Shishou, let's go visit."

"Yeah."

I nodded at Zanoba's words and then entered the school.

Part 5

"I was watching the whole thing. Rudeus is strong."

As we entered the roof, Cliff said that looking tired.

At his side was Elinalize.

I knew she came to the graduation ceremony, because my house was asked in advance to look after Clive.

Oh, she is dressed in her uniform even though she has quit from school.

I don't know what the rules are for those uniforms at the school.

Anyway, it's the graduation ceremony today.

It shouldn't matter where she wears it.

"Is that what's expected from the 'Dragon God's Right Hand?'"

"Please don't tease me. It was like that even before the fight with Orsted."

"Yeah, that's right."

Saying that, Cliff leaned his weight against the rooftop railing.

"Cliff-senpai, why are you up here anyway?"

"I don't really have a reason, sometimes I just want to climb up to high places."

Cliff said so while looking up at the sky.

Seeking high places.

Sometimes people do that.

Because I am not very good with heights, the place I go is Paul's grave.

"Anyway, congratulations on graduation Cliff-senpai."

"Thank you."

I went up next to Cliff and pushed my weight against the railing in the same way.
I do not think that Cliff will jump off, but it comes to mind.
Zanoba also moved to the opposite side of Cliff.
Elinalize stands off to the side, just watching the three of us.

Ah, looking at us now, it's a youthful setting.
If I think about it, Cliff is in the full swing of youth.
Twenty two years old.
A parent graduating.
He seems to have a lot of troubles.

No, no.
That's a stupid thing, couldn't I have him tell me about it at the banquet today?
He doesn't know about it, it would be trouble if one of the leading men canceled at the last minute.

"Cliff-senpai, after this, what are you doing?"

Is my timing okay?
It doesn't matter if you come back with us, or if you slip home for some war time with Elinalize.
That's my intention when I asked him.

" "

Cliff answered my question with silence.
Is it hard to reply?
Perhaps, you haven't got to enjoy your uniform play with Elinalize yet?

"... I've talked it over with Lize, and considered it."

Cliff paused for a few seconds and then spoke.

"I want you to wait one year."

For a moment, I did not understand what I had been told.

The reservation at the tavern is for today.

There is no way we can wait an entire year.

"Well, until your child has grown a little more, is what you mean?"

Zanoba's words help me straighten my thoughts.

Back in January Cliff had said that he would 'give me an answer before the graduation ceremony.'

He was trying to give me that answer just now.

No, I had not forgotten.

I had thought it would be fine to hear it after today because of the graduation and banquet.

"Yeah, Clive is still pretty small. At least until he is weaned, I want to watch over him."

With a serious face, Cliff looked down over the Magic City Sharia.

When you look from up here, the entire cityscape can be easily seen.

My house stands out a bit because of the green roof...

"To go to the Holy Land of Milis from here takes two years.

However Rudeus, if I use the teleportation magic at your place, it becomes possible to shorten the travel time.

I don't know if I can do with less, but a grace period of a year should be fine at least."

It seems Cliff believes that it is absolutely necessary for him to return home two years after graduation.

It's a matter of duty.

"That magic, I can use it?"

"Of course, no matter what, you can use it."

"Thanks."

Teleportation magic is taboo.

It's not something people would use even in an emergency, Cliff may have some hesitation about employing it for a private matter.

"And then, Rudeus. About the matter of joining your company, or becoming your associate..."

Cliff seemed to be having trouble saying it.

Is this the kind of flow where I'm refused?

At least if he will listen to reason, I'm sure I can persuade him...

"About that, I'd also like you to wait."

"To wait?"

"Ah, I'm sure, with the Dragon God Orsted's backing, I can achieve a high position in the Milis religious order."

We could raise him to the top.

Orsted should be familiar with the internal workings of the Milis order.

There is a possibility that, because of his long series of loops, he knows the weaknesses of the order's leaders in this period.

"However, I feel that would be useless."

" "

"For me, my own strength has been my best asset so far. How far that strength can take me in the Milis order, it's something I would like to know as well.... A chair made for me by someone else's hands, I don't want to sit in it."

Cliff clenched his fist as he said that.

I can understand.

It's the same as the people who challenged me to a duel earlier.

It's the desire to test one's own ability.

It's the part of Cliff which is still a boy.

"As a result, once I stand at the top of the Milis order, I will become your associate."

Hmmmm.

Cliff wants to stand at the top, but in this situation it seems I won't be able to help.

Just falling from power is fine.

I should just find another inroad to the Milis Order, and Cliff, he could even just become the exclusive helmet craftsman.

I'm reluctant to put him in a position where he will be murdered.

I really don't want a dead friend.

Or, since Cliff wants to be challenged, should I just let it slide.

"And so, Cliff, you intend to go alone in a year? What about your family?"

Zanoba spoke instead of me.

If that's so, Elinalize and Clive, I wonder what they will do.

Cliff has a hard face.

Rather, it's a troubled face, it doesn't seem apologetic, but it's a face full of decision.

"I'll leave them."

"... For how long?"

"At least until I'm full-fledged."

Full-fledged.

You mean, in short, you don't know how long.

Looking over at Elinalize, she is still with her arms folded at her stomach, and her eyes are closed.

Is that acknowledgement?

But what good does that do?

Also, wouldn't it be better if Elinalize is near Cliff and can watch over and support him?

A version of Cliff's magic tool that will do more than ease her curse is still years away.

No, there is nothing for me to say here.

Cliff discussed this with Elinalize and came to this decision.

This might be a big turning point for Cliff.

"I understand."

If I respect Cliff's wishes, there is a risk.

If Cliff dies because I let him slip out of my reach, I will lose my connection to the Holy Milis Kingdom.

I will also lose the person who is best at studying curses.

But, there is also the possibility for a return.

By struggling alone, Cliff may also slightly grow.

After he joins up with us, Cliff who has grown should be someone who can be relied upon more than now.

I don't know how it weighs against the risk, but there should be a benefit.

If I think about it like that, there shouldn't be a problem.

Cliff has decided his path, Elinalize has acknowledged it.

Then, I think I should respect their opinion.

"Then, in one year, thank you."

"Ah, you're welcome."

Saying so, Cliff holds out his hand.

Grasping his hand, I nodded significantly.

However, considering nothing will happen until Cliff becomes full-fledged, it might be more than three years from now before he joins us.

Then at that time, I'll employ Cliff. I need to draw the distinction.

Yeah... First, we can go ahead and get in touch with Ariel's side.

Doll sales with Zanoba have just begun, and I must work to increase our mercenary force as well.

Speaking of which, I also want to foray into the Asura kingdom.

For one year, I think, we can work towards the capture of the Asura area and then decide on our future plans.

It'll be busy.

... But before that.

Why don't we just celebrate the graduation today?

"Alright, Cliff-senpai, let's put an end to this difficult talk. Today, let's go someplace and make merry."

"... That's right!"

In this way, the graduation ceremony of Zanoba and Cliff came to an end.

Side Story

A Country Hick Goes to the City

Part 1

"There's a letter for Nina."

That summer a letter reached Sword King Nina Farion.

The Holy Land of the Sword is a place covered by perpetual snow, where it is always cold, but that day was one that could be spent warmly, almost like spring.

The head of the dojo, Sword God Gull Farion said, "You may as well do as you like, there's no sense in training on a day like this." before decisively taking a nap.

"A letter?"

Since Nina was diligent, she was earnestly training hard, but her hand was stopped by the arriving letter.

"...Is...sol...te... Ah!"

Dripping with sweat, Nina received the letter from the deliveryman with a broad smile.

On the back of the letter was the coat of arms of the Water God Style along with a nostalgic name.

Isolte Cruel.

Several years ago she was Nina's training partner, now she is the head of the Water God Style.

She is currently working as a swordsmanship instructor in Asura Kingdom, she should have taken over as the manager of the Water God Style dojo there.

She was someone who had been Nina's friend, but neither of them had spoken since Isolte had left the Holy Land of the Sword several years ago.

And so the arrival of the letter was unusual.

"... Let's see."

Nina ripped into the envelope with joy, and took the stationary from inside of it.

However, the moment she saw the densely packed script, her expression glazed over.

"I wonder what is written here."

Nina could not read the characters.

She is just about literate enough to read the name of an acquaintance, but her skill does not extend to the point where she can read something this long.

In the Holy Land of the Sword this isn't something to be embarrassed over.

(Somebody else can read it.)

Nina was born and raised in the Holy Land of the Sword.

However, among those who live at the dojo, there are some who were brought up and properly educated.

Someone else should be able to read it.

Nina went into the back yard.

Several disciples had settled in there, and had taken to chatting leisurely in the sun.

Usually this would be the point where Nina would thunderously scold them for slacking.

Because of that, many of them rose and hastily began making excuses.

Today is an unusual day where the dojo's master personally declared a holiday.

Nina did not scold them, but instead asked if anyone could read her letter.

They each looked at one another, then one of them raised his hand.

Nina held the letter out saying, "If you can read human language." and then passed it to him to be read.

The content was concise.

It was the events of the past few years leading up to the present.

Reida had died, and somehow or another Isolte had taken over the dojo.

As a sword instructor she found herself quarreling with Ghyslaine frequently.

She had been reminiscing fondly about her time with Nina.

Nina could imagine the stuffy fastidious Isolte's face angered by Ghyslaine's blunt speech.

Then, from the last line of the letter, her face became serious.

"Soon, the coronation for Her Majesty Ariel will be completed.

One month before and after the coronation is a festival to raise the spirit of the entire country.

Therefore, at that time, please come and play no matter what."

Immediately as she heard it, Nina decided to go to the Asura Kingdom.

She did not worry for a moment.

Speedy snap judgment is the motto of the Sword God Style.

Part 2

In Asura Kingdom's capital of Arus, its thoroughfare had become packed with people. The crowd was thick enough that you would bump into someone if you stumbled one step to the side and disappear into the crowd several meters in. The density is just like a certain Obon festival's third day. It was the eve of the coronation in the capital city of the Asura Kingdom, Arus, and people had gathered from all over the world.

There are those who came to the country with the hope of glancing the next ruler of the world's most powerful nation.

To offer congratulations, there are nobles from other countries who have been dispatched as goodwill ambassadors.

Unemployed swordsmen have gathered for the chance at work in case the government services will be hiring at this time.

Predicting simple jobs with straightforward rewards, adventurers had gathered.

Bounty heads trying to escape from their pursuers taking the opportunity to hide like a tree in the forest.

The merchants who came in order to pursue a money-making scheme, selling a dubious product in a place where many people have gathered.

So on and so forth...

Every race dwelling on the Central Continent had been gathered in this country.

In addition, the White Knights of Asura were performing a parade that day.

In an attempt to catch a glimpse of the admired Knights, the townspeople had stretched out their legs into the thoroughfare.

"Whoa..."

Meanwhile, while craning her neck restlessly, Nina walked towards the center of town. This was the first time in her life she had seen such a crowd.

This girl had thought she had seen large numbers of people in many towns before, but the crowd here was beyond her imagination, she couldn't help but become confused.

"Tch, watch where you're walking!"

"Now... which one of you... where?"

The opponent she thought was selling her a fight vanished into the crowd.

This was a first for her.

She has been a Sword King for some time. With her characteristic sharp senses, never before has she failed to understand the source of abusive language.

This time, the other side was allowed to walk away with only words as a response.

Perhaps he did not even see Nina's face.

(In this city, words like that... I wonder if such a thing is like a greeting.)

In the Holy Land of the Sword, someone who approached her with a mouth like that would have been sent to the healing magician in an instant.

You must not think that someone is trying to pick a fight with you even if they are rude in this city.

"Hey, hey, pretty onee-san, why don't you come over here for a little bit?"

"I-I.. I'm pretty?"

As she was walking along in a daze, she was abruptly stopped by a person with the air of a merchant about him.

He had a small shop nearby, and seemed to be selling something.

"Yes, yes. This is the first time I've seen a woman as beautiful as you... By the way, it seems like you aren't familiar with the capitol, is this your first time visiting?"

"Yes, but how did you know?"

"It's obvious at first glance. The way you are jostled about in the crowd is proof that you are a person from another country."

To hear that her movements were obviously that of someone from the country, Nina blushed.

She had previously stretched her legs out into other cities.

But, from the point of view of this urbanite, the places Nina had thought were cities was still in the countryside.

"It's a terrible crowd of people. Are all of them here to witness the coronation?"

"Yeah, there is that, but there is also going to be a parade of the White Knights, so everyone is gathering in the street for that."

"I see..."

"There are signboards everywhere instructing people who wish to see the parade to head for the main streets. As for the people with no business there, they should keep to the back streets..."

"That's my fault, I can't really read..."

"Oh, alright alright, if you don't intend to view that parade and you don't have business here, you can go out the back here and down Sarruten Avenue, if that's what you want, alright?"

"Is that okay? There's no toll?"

"Nooo, that's free of course. Ah, that's right. If you can't read, inside I have a product that might be good for you. It's a doll which comes with a picture book. At the end of the book there is a part to help you learn the characters; it's a popular item."

"I can't afford such a thing as a book..."

"It's okay, it's okay, our book is much cheaper than a common text. Two Asura large copper coins... No, for you, I'll go as low as an Asura large copper coin and 8 copper coins. How about it?"

Before she had noticed, Nina was making her way down a less crowded street, clutching a doll and a picture book in her hand.

The contents of her purse had been reduced by exactly 1.8 Asura large copper coins.

This is the result of that man cutting off her speech and continuing to talk in rapid succession.

It had the appearance of a scam, but did not really give off that kind of feeling.

The speed at which things developed paralleled that time in which Sword God Gull Farion joined in a training session.

Nevertheless, 1.8 large copper coins.

That might be a cheap price for a book, but it is still a lot of money from the point of view of Nina.

However Nina felt that it would disgrace the name Sword King, if she did not repay him for the directions.

(Like this, it's fine.)

Thinking that, Nina began to walk.

Sarruten Avenue was about 2 meters narrower than the main thoroughfare.

It was kind of damp and there were underpasses every so often, it gave off the feeling of a local path, but just as the merchant had said, though it wasn't as wide as the main street it was comparably less crowded.

Well, it was only not crowded when compared to the previous street...

Even so, by getting away from the people coming in and out of the center of the city, Nina was able to progress more smoothly.

"This way, I'll make it to Isolte's dojo by this evening somehow."

1.8 large copper coins, is probably not such a bad trade for that information.

While thinking so, Nina looked down at the picture book and doll in her hand.

It was a doll of a Demon race with a spear; it's the same person as on the cover of the book. Perhaps, he might be a hero.

The unusual thing was, it was a Supard race.

She didn't know what kind of story it was, Nina, as a warrior, wanted to try fighting a Supard race.

According to her friend Eris's story, the Supard race is fiendishly strong.

Eris is a mad dog. Even a devil would turn his eyes away from her and cross the street when faced with her killing intent.

The Supard race that she talked about so proudly,

Nina was a little interested in it.

(Besides, if you can use this book to study like the merchant said, studying between practice might also not be a bad idea.)

As she was walking, lost in her imagination, cheers sounded out from the direction of the thoroughfare.

Apparently, the parade seems to have begun.

After hearing all that noise, Nina became a little interested.

Her original intention was to go right to Isolte, but now she kind of wanted to go toward the parade and watch.

"Eh?"

On the edge of Nina's field of vision she thought she saw something, just a glance.

It was something she had certainly seen before, a woman with red hair caught her eye.

"Eris?"

Why is that girl here?

Her eyes, hopefully, chased after the girl.

This was surely her.

Two meters above the elevation of the thoroughfare that red head suddenly appeared.

She only saw her from behind, but, based on her demeanor, Nina was convinced.

There was no doubt.

It was Eris.

"Eri-s."

She didn't understand why that person was here. A nostalgic feeling clung in her chest and her voice was arrested.

"Look, Lucy, do you see it?"

"I see! It's sparkling!"

She had suddenly stopped. The reason was a nearby little girl receiving a piggy back ride.

"Eris, I wanted to let her ride on my shoulders."

"No good, wouldn't you just lick Lucy's thigh anyway? Yesterday you did something similar to me."

"How rude! That's not something I would do to my own daughter!"

"Is that so!"

"Well if it's you I would certainly lick it clean..."

Eris was having a conversation with the man standing next to her.

He was someone familiar to Nina.

Something which had become a bit of a trauma for Nina, the Demon Lord Badigadi.

Someone had killed him with a single blow, he's that magician.

He's regarded as 'The Right Hand of the Dragon God' and, recently, he has been sighted in many different places.

It's Rudeus Greyrat.

" "

Nina received some kind of shock.

She knew that Eris went to find Rudeus.

She knew Eris went to join up with Rudeus to fight Orsted.

Because Eris did not send any letters after that, Nina assumed she was dead, and yet she had heard rumors on the wind that Eris had appeared in the Asura kingdom alongside of Rudeus.

Rudeus then became 'The Right Hand of the Dragon God', and so Nina assumed that Eris had been forced into the Dragon God's camp.

Nina thought, surely she has become stronger, stronger than in the past.

However, the Eris which can be seen right now, she was in a place far from Nina's imagination.

While arguing jokingly with a man, those two people.

That girl getting the piggyback ride, Nina wondered if she could be Eris's daughter.

Eris married and raising children, this is something she couldn't possibly have imagined. Eris, that beast, that mad dog, how could she become like that? Then the pair of them, coming sightseeing peacefully, flirting with her husband...

"... I'll go meet Isolte."

Thinking that, Nina removed herself from Eris's line of sight.

She had thought that, becoming a Sword King, she had finally leveled the field against Eris, but now she felt a tremendous sense of defeat.

By the way, though they were not visible to Nina, just on the other side of Rudeus stood Roxy and Sylphy. In the immediate vicinity, it should also be known, were two other people, Zanoba and Julie.

Part 3

After that, Nina traveled to Isolte's dojo.

There was no frivolous atmosphere here, and that combined with the smell of sweat set Nina's heart at ease.

After greeting Isolte, she was introduced to her disciples.

Everyone had a female presence, or perhaps the male presence was just more sophisticated.

(Either way, these don't feel like swordsmen...)

After having been shown around the dojo, Isolte led Nina to her home.

While she was staying in Arus, it had been arranged for Nina to be at Isolte's house.

There was space for her at the house where Isolte lives, the reason being that it contained an extra room.

Formerly it had been the room of Water God Reida. It was quite tidy.

Other than that thing with Reida, Nina was relieved to find no male presence in Isolte's home.

Water Emperor, sword instructor, knight:

she should certainly be popular.

If that Eris is married and has children, it wouldn't be weird for Isolte, who has a sparkling clear atmosphere, to have found a man.

It would not have been funny to be introduced to her husband and children upon arriving at her house.

Because she had been expecting something like that, she was relieved.

"Nina-san. By the way, at the close of the parade there is going to be a little gathering. I know you are probably tired from your long journey, but would you come along and participate? No matter what, I want to introduce a Sword King to various kinds of people."

Nina stowed her luggage, then paused and took a single breath to consider Isolte's suggestion.

"Yeah, that sounds nice."

Nina answered lightly.

She didn't really understand what this small gathering was about, but it wasn't like she had any other plans for that evening.

She could start her sightseeing tomorrow.

She thought that would be fine.

Then, in less than an hour, she came to regret her answer.

Of course, some things occurred before that.

At first she thought it was 'something funny'.

She was led by Isolte to a large mansion near the country's royal palace.

That place, despite being a small gathering, wasn't small at all.

The thought was, "She cheated."

After that, she was brought into a luxurious room where she was asked to choose a luxurious dress, which she was then forcibly stuffed into by more than one maid.

This thing, it's absolutely a noble's party or something.

The thought became, "I shouldn't have come."

Why did I agree to this so easily?

Why did I come so nonchalantly?

Why didn't I resist when I was made to change my clothes?

If it was the ordinary Nina, at any point she could have resisted and escaped from that place.

However there was one way in which this deviated from the ordinary.

This was not a battle using swords.

She was packaged in a dress she was unfamiliar with, it was hard to walk in those abominable shoes, and her swords were taken.

Her waist was lonely, her suspension was faltering.

In that state, Nina was dragged along by Isolte and introduced to people at the party venue.

There was only one slight relief for Nina.

The people who were introduced to her at the party were not only nobles.

Although there were many nobles, there were also knights and those of common birth such as the ace of the Magician's Guild from another country. These were people from the real world who Nina could understand.

Some of them were also fooled, just like Nina; these people all had puzzled looks on their faces.

Knowing that she wasn't alone, these people gave her a little peace of mind.

She calmed down; Nina is a Sword King.

Once she ascertained the other party, then it becomes possible to evaluate whether or not she can win.

Knowing the opponents around there were just small fry, her mind can become calm.

Nina finally cleared her mind.

When she did, she realized, 'I'm hungry.'

Her appetite returned.

Thinking about it, she had not eaten since noon.

Swordsmen of the Sword God Style are unanimously heavy eaters.

Even when secluding themselves in the forest for ascetic training, they will not skip a meal.

It was inevitable that the variety of food at the party venue would captivate her sight.

For a person without hesitation, after being offered great food and drink, the result is the need to be excused to the toilet; that was unavoidable.

Although she was able to arrive at the toilet with the guidance of a maid, after she was finished there was no longer a maid to help her struggle with the unfamiliar clothing. Because of this, in the mansion which was like a labyrinth, there was no way she wouldn't become lost while searching for the original venue.

(Huhm, I wonder if I've gone mad...)

While walking vaguely down a dimly lit hallway, Nina sighed from her heart.
In any case, after coming to the Asura Kingdom she was overwhelmed by the atmosphere of the place; she could not regain her condition.
The idea that being a Sword King brought her to the level of world class had been shattered to pieces.

"Like in the past, maybe I've been moving without thinking..."

After becoming Sword King, shouldn't obtaining disciples have been possible?
Or perhaps, after becoming acquainted with Eris, Nina was influenced by her personality?
Unlike the old days, it may not be possible to succeed while moving without thinking about the consequences.
At this rate, becoming a strong swordsman is something that has become distant...

"Come to think of it, that Eris, I forgot to tell Isolte about her."

If Eris was in the same town, she wanted to be able to do three man practice with her.
As soon as she thought that the scene from earlier that day came into her mind, and she shook her head to push it away.

(That isn't the Eris that I knew anymore...)

Whatever, quickly she'll go back to the venue.
Finding an appropriate place to leave, she'll return to the house.
Although it is an uncomfortable place, Asura has lots of attractions.
With Isolte as a guide... she could spend days exploring.
The town seems like a festival, so it should be quite fun.
Afterwards, it would be a good idea to visit the local Sword God Style dojo.

(Alright..... huh?)

In front of Nina's renewed determination appeared a door with light leaking from it.
The door is small, so it won't be the party hall.
However, the person inside should know the way to the venue.

It'll be fine if she just asked that person.

Mildly relieved Nina inched closer to the door...

"--Your Majesty Ariel, also would not want that thing to be exposed."

Hearing such an overt threat, she stopped.

(Her Majesty.... Ariel?)

In this country there is only one person called that, even a hick like Nina knows this.

Ariel Anemoi Asura.

In spite of being exiled for nearly 10 years in the Ranoa kingdom, she came back like a comet and won the throne, a charismatic queen.

It is no exaggeration to say that all of the revelry in the capital Arus is taking place just for her.

"... That thing? What are you talking about?"

"You don't remember?"

Nina concealed her footsteps and approached the door.

From the doors gap she peered into the middle of the room.

(.... !)

In that place were two people, a man and a woman.

Sitting in the chair was a blonde, and beside her was a man with light brown hair.

The face of the man standing beside her, it was familiar.

"I have some ideas..."

"It's --"

It was Rudeus Greyrat.

He was making a smile completely different from the smile he had worn earlier in the day with Eris. It was an obscene smile belonging to a different person, which he produced close to Ariel's face.

Nina quickly assessed the situation.

(He's pressing her for sex!)

The man named Rudeus Greyrat, in addition to Eris, had two other wives. Also she had heard rumors somewhere that he was a very lustful person.

In addition to that, she had heard the story that he had put in considerable effort behind the scenes to back Ariel into becoming Queen.

Since he is working under Orsted, he probably helped Ariel as his minion.

And, perhaps, he intends to have sex with Ariel using a story or something from that time as leverage.

(I'll cut him down.)

Nina is immediately determined.

She doesn't understand what kind of material Ariel is being blackmailed with.

She doesn't know how much stronger Rudeus is.

Right now, she doesn't even have a sword.

But, deciding not to care about such things, Nina intended to kill the man in front of her eyes.

There was no point worrying about it.

Isolte is a subordinate of Ariel.

Seeing her friend's boss being blackmailed, there can be no hesitation in cutting him down.

Although the current Nina would normally think, 'I should just wait a moment,' in the past few hours, stress had built up inside of her.

However, in that instant, from behind her, blood thirst washed over Nina in a wave.

"Ttsu!"

She rushed to look to her rear.

There, wearing a bright blood red dress, stood a demon.

"Eris!?"

Why didn't she realize this person would be here?

Eris was with Rudeus.

Here was Rudeus.

Then it wouldn't be odd for her to accompany him to this mansion.

"Nina... ?"

Eris made a puzzled expression for an instant, but then her face strained.

"You, just who do you think you are directing that blood thirst towards?"

This is bad.

Eris, in that state, does not stop.

If she notices Rudeus in the other room then there will be two opponents.

If it's two on one, Eris doesn't have a sword, but then she would be sandwiched between her and a magician.

"Oh? Eris, you came back?"

By the time Nina had thought of it, it was too late.

The door behind her opened and Rudeus came out.

Nina instantly realized she could no longer win at that point.

However she still faced that beast of the Sword God Style.

Nina pulled power to her abdomen and feet.

"Now, Rudeus-sama, just give up.

We can't leave our guest waiting."

Seeing the expression of Ariel's face as she looked at Rudeus, the power let out of Nina. She did not have the face of someone asking for help, there was no desperation there. Nina felt that something was wrong. Many times in the last few hours she had felt the same thing.

".... you aren't being threatened?"

" ?"

Ariel saw Nina crouched down with a puzzled expression.

Ariel was not acquainted with Nina.

However, Ariel regarded Nina's expression, the expression of Eris, her own conversation, and Nina's position, and instantly realized what was going on.

"No, I had asked Rudeus for a favor and was declined.

Because I wanted him to accept by any means, I prodded a weakness of Rudeus a little, but he splendidly countered me.

Hearing only the latter part, you thought I had been threatened, and were trying to help me?"

Nina nodded, her eyes swimming in bewilderment.

Ariel caught her arm quietly and helped her to stand.

"Thank you very much. This is the first time we have met. I am the Asura Kingdom's next Queen, Ariel Anemoi Asura."

"Oh, ah, eh?"

The next Queen of Asura, Ariel, is so close. Moreover she is actually introducing herself. Her understanding couldn't keep up with the situation, and so Nina found herself looking towards Eris.

She had an annoyed expression, but she sighed and decided to throw her friend a life line.

"This is Nina."

"Eris-sama, is she your acquaintance?"

"Yeah, she is Sword Saint Nina Farion. We trained together in the Holy Land of Swords."

Eris chimed in even though she didn't know why Nina was here.

"I've become a Sword King as well! The same as you!"

"... Oh yeah? Congratulations."

She said that curtly to Eris, but otherwise Nina remained silent.

It had seemed like Nina was just meaninglessly proud of being a Sword King.

However she was just correcting Eris.

"Well then, Nina-sama. The party tonight is something that was organized by myself and Rudeus-sama. I think later there will be an opportunity to share stories, but first of all, please go and enjoy yourself."

"Ah, ye-yes..."

With that, Ariel smiled gently and walked down the hallway with Rudeus.

Nina saw them off with a sigh.

Today, truly, is just a series of crazy things.

"Hey, why are you here?"

Then, she turned towards the voice of Eris behind her.

She was wearing a bright red dress with her hair up, it was quite becoming.

Accessories such as a necklace and earrings, she was also wearing them. It was like a real noble's daughter.

"... Eris... that dress, it looks good on you."

"That's because Rudeus chose it. It's only natural!"

Eris pushed out her chest and carelessly boasted, she didn't seem like that previous beast of a person at all.

(Eris, you haven't changed so much after all.)

Well.

This was probably a good chance.

"Say... listen Eris... about Isolte..."

Nina, with a sigh, started to complain to Eris.

Part 4

By the end of the day Nina still did not quite understand the purpose of the party. Rudeus came back after that and returned to the venue with Eris.

"Dragon God Orsted is your ally! If you accept now, I'll throw in this detergent. It's great. There is no contract fee, when a certain guy awakens in 80 years or so you simply have to lend forces to Dragon God Orsted. For the next 100 years and beyond Orsted Corporation is on your side. Please cast your vote accordingly!"

And, he said a lot of things which couldn't be understood but just nodded at.

It seems Rudeus was gathering allies.

That thing a little while ago was a misunderstanding, now she was ready to lend her strength to Eris's husband.

However, Nina could not think of a way to go about it.

Because the fight would take place more than 80 years in the future, it was unrealistic for Nina to try and save her power to lend to Orsted.

Others, like Nina, were also puzzled.

But, eventually everyone nodded.

Since it was being asked by Ariel, there wasn't a person in the place who could say that they were reluctant.

After the party:

On the recommendation of Eris, Nina was supposed to stay bottled up at the party venue. Isolte was also together with her.

About this mansion, apparently it was a thing that Ariel bestowed to Rudeus. Eris boastfully told them to make themselves at home.

That night there was conversation among those three people for the first time in a long while.

Isolte grumbled, that soon she too would find someone, to the Eris who wouldn't shut up about Rudeus.

To speak to these two guys in person, it made Nina remember the old days, it was downright nostalgic.

The contents of their talks had changed a little compared to then, but what had not changed was how much fun it was.

After being alone all this time, it seems like it was a good idea to come to the capital Arus.

Then, by the time the next day had dawned, that strange sense of defeat and jealousy had faded; Nina had regained herself.

Part 5

Before the end of Ariel's coronation ceremony, Nina had plenty of time to enjoy the capital city Arus.

The attractions, the crowds, the dojos, she went to all the places she had thought about going.

She wasn't alone.

While there were many days that Isolte could not be there because of work, Eris always followed along for some reason.

At first, Nina couldn't figure out why.

Every time Eris opened her mouth she would talk only about Rudeus.

There were many times when she thought it wasn't the place to talk about Rudeus at all.

But Nina finally understood Eris after they were together for a long time.

It seems that Eris wanted to entice Nina; she was soliciting for Rudeus.

Her awkward stories didn't get to the point, but she was sincere, and her desperate words moved Nina's heart.

She didn't quite understand, it seemed to be the same thing as Rudeus's speech, but it was something she should think about.

Part 6

Once the coronation ended, Nina returned to the Holy Land of the Sword.

She thought about things the entire way back.

The war in 80 years, she had agreed to join Orsted's camp.

The happy Eris, bright Eris, the unlikely energetic Eris.

That Rudeus who was next to her.

While thinking about them she rode her horse forward.

A conclusion, of course, she never reached one.

However, once she looked at the person who welcomed her to the Holy Land of the Sword, she was hooked and something suddenly clicked within Nina.

The person greeting her was her cousin.

He was a master swordsman who was always chasing behind her, but very soon he too would be a Sword King. The young man's name was Jino Britts.

Once she saw him, Nina said the first words that popped into her head.

There was no hesitation at all.

Because speedy snap judgment is the motto of the Sword God Style.

"Hey, Jino. Shouldn't we get married?"

After a few months, a married couple of Sword Kings was born, but that's another story.

Side Story

Coming of Age Ceremony

Part 1

Let's talk about my sisters.

Norn has been working hard as the Student Council President.

Recently most of the students have come to recognize her as [Student Council President, Norn Greyrat].

The number of students who recognize her is comparable to Ariel's term as Student Council President.

Norn is a popular Student Council President.

In the general student population, there are many who call her Norn-chan familiarly.

Norn seems reluctant, but it's just a nickname.

Ariel was a Student Council President to be relied upon, while Norn has a more familiar feeling.

Just, partially because of the SS (Norn Greyrat Official Fan Club), she doesn't seem to have any romantic involvements.

She also seems to have gained a position like the school mascot.

Of course, not only has she been working hard on the Student Council, but also towards her studies.

The other day, she achieved the intermediate rank in the Sword God style.

Compared to her surroundings her growth has been a little slow, but this should be considered normal.

She seems to be taking other various classes as well, and is working hard studying magic.

I don't know the details, but I've heard students say [Every time I look around I see Student Council President Norn.]

Although she didn't excel at one thing in particular, she has become well-rounded.

Aisha has been sticking to Arus-kun like glue recently.

One reason is probably that Eris is awkward with childcare, but my baby boy is cute, so I'm not bothered.

This might be favoritism.

I don't know whether this is good for my three children, but even I've been saying [Arus-kun is cute!] like a favorite phrase recently.

Of course, it's good.

But, there's also a part of me that's a little worried.

Though it could be said that I worry too much...

For instance, whenever Arus was hungry, he would puff out his chest and cry without pausing for breath.

The crying should at least pause for a moment when he breathes...

Whenever Arus is held to someone's bosom he laughs happily, Aisha doesn't know what to think about that.

But I still worry.

Whenever I see breasts, I start thinking about my children.

Well, I just worry if it's enough.

About the Rudo Mercenary Company, things are going well.

Although I declared it as the intelligence branch of the Orsted Corporation, and said we would expand it on a global scale, I don't have the human resources, the buildings, or the permissions necessary to organize a branch office in another land.

Rinia and Pursena have done well holding the reins.

Aisha has the best mind for this sort of business.

All of them are working hard.

By the way, Norn and Aisha will be 15 years old soon.

I don't think I need to go over this again, but in this world the 5th, 10th, and 15th birthdays are marked with a celebration.

The 15th birthday is especially important.

After 15 you're considered an adult, and nobles often celebrate with a large party.

It's a coming of age ceremony.

For people in this world, it could be called their most important day.

And, although I shouldn't need to say this, I think we'll hold one celebration for both of them.

That will require an even bigger celebration.

I've gotten plenty of money from Orsted,

so we can afford to rent a huge venue,

with my influential acquaintances, many people should come with gifts,

and I'll treat Norn and Aisha like they're the only princesses in the world.

I excitedly told Roxy and she said,

"Aisha aside, Norn might prefer something more subdued... Shouldn't we avoid such a big celebration?"

And with that, I was brought back to reality.^[4]

We're not nobles, so celebrating in our house would be considered enough.

After that, Roxy patted me on the head and said [Because I never got to celebrate Rudy's 15th birthday, I'm excited too.]

Although I didn't really care about my 15th birthday.

Well, because Roxy is stroking my head, I'll let myself be spoiled.

Like a cat.

At any rate, my plans might have been overkill.

I woke up thanks to Roxy.

"For the time being, let's think of a good way to have a two-person celebration as a family."

So we decided to discuss it with everyone, except Norn and Aisha.

Part 2

Late at night, we held the meeting in the basement.

The entire family, except Norn and Aisha, sat around one dimly lit candle.

"Welcome, in the darkness--"

"Excuse me, Rudy, I need a bit more light to be able to write..."

Roxy, acting as the record keeper, interrupted the greetings to complain.

The atmosphere (mood) is important.

"No, if the light leaks out, Aisha may notice."

"In the first place, why are we hiding?"

"Even if you ask why..."

I wonder if it's OK not to hide it.

For example, you'd expect to receive a gift in return for anything you gave on Valentine's Day. [5]

"Hiding the preparations will be difficult, they will enjoy the celebration all the same."

And, Lilia.

In terms of preparations, not hiding them might be easier.

Well, that's right. Rather than focusing on sneaking around, we should focus on magnificent preparations.

"Hmm..."

But, that's right.

We don't need to go out of our way to cover it up.

Thinking back, both my 5th and 10th birthdays were surprise parties.

So naturally, I thought surprise parties were the norm.

Thinking about it, both Norn and Aisha expect a celebration.

In that case, there's no reason not to tell them.

"Then, we should involve them in the preparations."

Let's do it in a big way.

That way, we won't need to worry about buying gifts.

Aisha is on good terms with all the merchants in the shopping district.

And if I'm sneaking around like this, Aisha might say something like [Oniichan isn't here, he must be out buying lovely panties!], and follow me. Of course, I don't intend to buy panties.

That's just a parable.

Well, the other day, I did go out to buy panties to have Sylphy wear, and Aisha was grinning when she saw me, so it's not really a parable.

"But, the presents should still be kept secret."

At Eris's words, everyone nodded in agreement.

"The presents may be secret, but wouldn't it be good to discuss what we plan to get them?"

Sylphy said that after Eris.

What she said was reasonable.

On that day, my two popular sisters would be getting many gifts.

Norn who's popular in the Student Council and the SS, and Aisha who's popular in the shopping district and the mercenary company.

If two random people give them the same gift then there's no helping it, but we should try to avoid that within the family at least.

"So, what does everyone think? Let's decide now."

And so, the meeting's agenda changed to the contents of their presents.

Though, everyone already seems to have decided in advance to some extent.

Lilia planned to give Norn a handkerchief, and Aisha an apron.

Sylphy planned to give Norn a book, and Aisha a quill pen.

Roxy planned to give Norn custom-made armor, and Aisha a trowel (magic tool) for gardening.

Eris planned to give Norn a sword belt, and Aisha a normal belt.

They seemed to know what gifts to get for each of them.

Everyone seems to have put in a lot of thought.

Of course, I did too.

I decided to give Norn a figurine of Paul I started production on a few days ago.

Paul loved Norn, he wanted to see her become an adult more than anyone else.

He would have shown her a heartwarming face... Well, anyway.

However, in regards to Aisha's gift, I'm at a loss.

I don't know what she would want.

Aisha seems to like cute things.

She has girly hobbies that you wouldn't expect because of her tremendous talent, she likes cute frilly clothes and cheesy glittery accessories.

That's also good though.

But, recently she's been receiving consultation fees from the Rudo Mercenary Company, so she can afford to buy whatever she wants.

"Just to be thorough, may I hear what everyone got for their own coming of age ceremonies?"

I decided to ask everyone for the time being.

Research is important.

"It was a long time ago, but I received a hair ornament from my parents. It was white and a little feminine."

Lilia said that.

I don't know what Lilia was like when she was 15 years old, but she doesn't seem like someone who would have worn accessories.

After all, she spent most of her youth training in a dojo.

"Because of the Metastasis Event I didn't have any celebration... Ah, but I did get various gifts from Ariel, like clothes and shoes..."

Sylphy received clothing.

Until she was 20, she always dressed boyishly, at least when she was in public, I wonder if those clothes were her gift.

"I didn't receive anything in particular. The Migurd Race doesn't have such a custom."

Is that the case, Roxy?

But, you liked the hat we gave you as your wedding present.

"I, Ruijerd recognized me as a warrior... and from Rudeus... 'that'!"

Eris, that's...

That's an embarrassing thing to say, Eris and I had our first time together.

It was an equal exchange.

Come to think of it, Aisha favors me.

Could it be, would she be happy to receive me?^[6]

Definitely not like 'that', Aisha isn't Eris and I won't go along with that.

But before going that far?

In a restaurant with a view of the sea, I would dedicate a toast to her eyes, going back to a room, staying with her to the end, until she falls asleep.

Treating her like Cinderella for a single night...

Even saying it is embarrassing.

I'm not a valuable enough gift.

"Umm, I haven't figured out what to give to Aisha."

"Aisha-chan would like anything as long as it's from Rudy!"

Sylphy said that with a laugh.

Maybe so, but that's why.

That's exactly why, I want to give her something especially good.

... Better yet, I could get her something expensive that she can't afford.

Like a 100,000 carat diamond.

If I ask Orsted, he should know a place.

I wouldn't even hesitate to go into the belly of a behemoth.

"My gift to Rudy was the best thing I'd ever received."

Roxy's statement was sobering.

You're right!

"I see... I'll try that..."

I got my answer, and nodded deeply.

My gift was decided.

Part 3

Then, over several meetings, preparations advanced at a steady pace.

We've planned the day and asked Aisha and Norn to keep their schedules open.

They were delighted to have a birthday party.

Although I thought Norn would say [That's too much!],

She honestly said [Thank you!] and lowered her head.

This honest attitude was rare for Norn... Come to think of it, Norn is normally distant, but that's only at school.

Because of her position at school, that may be unavoidable.

Aisha's reaction was [Great!] with an excited face.

At least that's what I expected, but her reaction was different. She had a surprised expression and muttered [I see, so I'm an adult now...] as if I only just noticed.

Because she was so clever, I wonder if she always thought of herself as an adult.

If you'd like, I can tell you that you've always been mature...

No, stop that.

I am not an adult who can call other people adults with confidence.

If I say something bossy here, I'll likely be ashamed in the future.

Anyway, they've been notified, now they just have to wait.

Part 4

The day of the event.

Norn went to school as usual.

"I'll return as soon as possible."

Norn seems to be looking forward to it.

Aisha also left for the mercenary office early that morning.

... Although, she returned before noon.

She seems to have finished most of her work ahead of time.

I thought she would come back with gifts from the employees, but she was empty handed.

"Did they give you anything?"

"I-, they congratulated me for my birthday. But the Beast Race doesn't have that kind of custom."

However, various people congratulated her, so she seems to be in a good mood.

I wonder if her acquaintances in the shopping district did anything for her.

Well, she is just a customer...

Generally, you wouldn't hold a celebration for a customer.

What's important is the spirit.

It's important to congratulate.

"Hey, Onii-san. Can I watch the preparations?"

"Oh, of course."

I went to help in the dining room, while Aisha watched our preparations come together.

Lilia and Sylphy moving between the kitchen and dining room.

Eris and Roxy bringing back mountains of ingredients.

Me putting up decorations in between helping them.

Silently, Aisha watched.

Today is her day, so she can enjoy watching; and although it's hard to tell while we're still in the middle of the preparations, everything should be done by the evening.

She's just watching.

As if to keep herself from interfering, Aisha watched expressionlessly.

Midway through, Zenith sat down next to her, and silently patted her head.

Leo also came and laid his head on Aisha's knee.

Every now and then someone would leave to tend to Arus when he cried, then return.

Lucy came and asked [Aisha-nee, want to play?], and Aisha smiled saying [I-, I'm sorry, I'm actually a little busy.]

With absolute patience, without moving, she watched.

I don't know what she's thinking about.

Maybe she's thinking about what it means to be an adult.

Or maybe she's thinking [What bad skills.]

I don't know.

Meanwhile, the afternoon became evening.

While Aisha watched, the preparations had been steadily completed.

The dining room was decorated.

In the corner of the room, presents for the two had been stacked, piled like a mountain.

On the table, food was put out to cool.

The main course will be started after Norn returns.

After that, we were only waiting for Norn to return.

I wonder if she's behind schedule.

We'll have to go get her if it gets too late.

Although I thought Norn said she would come home early.

"I'm here!"

Norn was carrying so many gifts she could barely hold them in both of her arms.
She had large bouquets in her left hand.
And she carried a wooden box, a hair ornament, some strangely shaped objects, and a broken bag in her right arm.

"I'm sorry I'm late.
I had a lot of stuff to carry back...
I was going to leave it in my dormitory, but I couldn't fit it in my closet.
While I was bringing everything home, my bag broke on the way..."

At school, she was congratulated by a lot of people, and seems to have gotten a lot of gifts.
It's only natural for so many people at school to celebrate Norn's 15th birthday.
As expected of the Student Council President.
Hopefully she didn't get anything weird.
Like hair-filled cookies...

Anyway, I welcome Norn, now we can start the celebration in full swing.

Part 5

The flow of the party was the same as the dual birthday party they had a few years ago.

I had a few opening remarks.

I gave a short speech about how after their 15th birthday the world will recognize them as adults.

I didn't think I'd ever give that sort of speech, but that's what I ended up doing.

I slipped and carelessly said something bossy.

Mostly, I talked about the [Attitude of an Adult].

You may not have to ask permission to do things from now on, but you have to be responsible, like Sylphy.

You mustn't forget to keep learning, like Roxy.

And to have a goal, like Eris.^[7]

Then Lilia talked about when Paul and Zenith were young, and when Norn and Aisha were born. When Zenith patted her on the head halfway through, she was almost on the brink of tears.

After that, we presented their gifts.

Opening her gifts, Norn smiled like a blooming flower.

She especially liked the armor Roxy had custom made for her.

Roxy had the armor modeled after Paul's old armor that's on display in Zenith's room.

Its size was adjusted to fit Norn, and the chest was altered for a woman to comfortably wear.

Together with Eris's sword belt, and Paul's beloved sword at her waist, she looked like a swordsman from head to toe.

Roxy and Eris must have remembered Norn asking about becoming an adventurer before.

The figurine I made of Paul was given last.

It's my masterpiece, standing at 30cm tall, you can even see the emotion on his face.

I had to make it from my memory, in a modern Japanese sense it might be classified as [Something I can't afford to mess up.]^[8]

This world doesn't have photographs.

Just by looking at the figurine, you couldn't help but remember Paul, Norn received him with tears in her eyes.

Then after receiving the gift, Norn said.

"For this, thank you. From now on I'm an adult, I'll continue working hard. Please continue to support me in the future."

Our chests welled up with emotion, this is good.

Lilia also burst into tears.

Norn, you've become really excellent...

Now, Norn was happy, but what about Aisha?

Aisha was also joyful.

But, watching her, I felt something was strange.

Of course, she's not blatantly frowning.

Every time doesn't have to be [Wow, amazing! Cute! Thank you!] or [Just what I wanted!] overflowing with joy.

On the surface is the usually bright Aisha, who seems to have enjoyed the party.

However, I wonder.

Something was still strange.

The Aisha reflected in my eyes seemed to have cooled down in some way.

She was acting almost like she was in a performance, with fake smiles and laughter.

I think, maybe because she was watching the preparations...

My gift to Aisha, was a pendant.

A Migurd pendant.

... This, because Ruijerd has the original, is a replica.

It's not something expensive or genuine, I handmade it.

"Aisha, this pendant, gave me the chance to grow.

Although it may not have any meaning to you,

I'm giving it to you as proof that you're an adult."

I felt happy when I received mine.

So I wanted to give it to Aisha. But, why not Norn...

I don't know why.

Just, this was something important to me, so it seemed natural.

"... Thank you."

Aisha didn't show her 'happy face'.

She had a blank expression.

And, as if thinking deeply, she stared at the pendant.

Part 6

After opening the presents, we enjoyed dinner and the cake.

There was also a surprise.

Before the night came to a close, more students stopped by with gifts for Norn.

They seem to have bought them in a hurry after hearing about Norn's 15th birthday.

Many people came.

Meeting me, some faces turned blue, but I finished things without any trouble using a shining Rudeus-brand smile.

After all, a smile is the best welcome.

... Sorry, that's a lie.

The moment they saw my smile, they tried to escape.

Sylphy caught them, and had them bring their gifts to Norn, so things ended without any trouble...

That's just rude, guys.

Probably because she got gifts from so many people, Norn's pile of gifts gradually became a mountain.

Compared to Aisha, who only had gifts from our family.

Aisha smiled at that,
a fake smile, masking her discomfort.

Other than me, nobody has noticed Aisha's forced smile.

Maybe I'm just overinterpreting, Aisha might not care.

I wonder if I should discuss it with Sylphy...

While I was thinking.

Suddenly, I heard something from the front door.

I heard a large commotion, and Leo barking.

"I wonder what it is..."

Eris grimly picks up her sword from the corner of the room.

I wonder if Orsted came.

No, there are a lot of people.

Orsted wouldn't bring so many people.

While thinking that, I went to the front door.

When I went outside, I saw a huge number of bad guys.

A huge number of hairy guys with sharp teeth were standing at the gate.

All of them wore a familiar black cloak.

It wouldn't be strange to consider them intimidating.

However, their appearance was very rough.

Some were hurt, and there were guys with their cloaks in tatters.

The two biggest delinquents in town stood at the front.

Those two had disheveled hair, as if they'd been quarreling.

"It's Rinia's fault, because she made a mistake with yesterday's work we were late nano~."

"Ah, of course Pursena would say that nya~."

"Of course. Because it was Rinia's fault nano~."

"I caught the scent of the prey, but that guy was attracted to the smell of our camp nya~. It took too long to kill because of that nya~."

"You shouldn't have done that nano~, camping out in such a place is bad."

Rinia and Pursena.

Arguing as usual.

Well, it's playful.

They're accustomed to it, they were standing next to each other with their hands on each other's backs.

"Oh, Boss nano~."

"Ah, you guys, greetings nya!"

At Rinia's order, seeing me, they all lowered their heads.

Then, I could see something behind them.

Three wooden pallets. Three piles.

"Boss! We've brought gifts nya!"

"We've been in the forest since yesterday, everyone helped out nano!"

It, it was a huge monster.

A wild boar-like monster.

One you would find living in the woods around this area.

At least until yesterday...

"... You guys, you weren't in the office today?"

"It's fine nya~. We left the minimum number of personnel nya~."

"That's right. We adjusted it so there wouldn't be much work today nano~."

That must be why Aisha returned early, because the office was empty.

When she got to the office in high spirits, nobody was there. There wasn't any work to do either.

She might have thought people would come if she waited, but nobody came as the morning passed.

Well, that would explain Aisha's mood.

"Ah, adviser nya!"

"Everyone, it's the adviser!"

I turned around, and saw Aisha.

She was looking at everyone in front of the wild boar.

"What, this..."

"Adviser! Happy birthday!"

At Pursena's words, everyone bowed in unison.

Congratulations, congratulations, their loud voices will disturb the neighborhood.

This scene looks like something from a Yakuza rally.

Then, Aisha lowered her head.

".... Aha."

Aisha laughed.

Seeing that, as if she couldn't contain it, she laughed.

"There's so much, I can't eat all of that... Wow, ahahaha!"

While saying that, in the middle of speaking, she burst into laughter.

While she was laughing,

everyone could see that she was genuinely happy.

Everyone had a relieved expression and smiled brightly.

Today I've been witnessing Norn's popularity,

but Aisha has been accepted into her own community as well.

"Hey Oniichan, can I bring everyone into the garden to eat?"

At that suggestion, when I looked at the crowd, I noticed some guys wagging their tails.

I don't know the details of the Beast Race's traditions, but they'd normally give their prey as a gift, then get to eat it during the festivities.

They're hungry, they have saliva dripping from their mouths, and growling stomachs.

"Oh, of course!"

At those words, Aisha had a full-faced smile.

Part 7

Then a feast began in the garden, Norn guided the stray students who showed up with gifts to join in.

The wild boar was put on a fire to roast,
and a liquor merchant that Aisha knew from the shopping district supplied drinks.

Norn sighed, probably because it was far from a quiet coming-of-age ceremony, and would disturb the neighbors.

For the most part Norn didn't have an unhappy face, and didn't say anything to dampen the mood.

Aisha seemed to be enjoying it from the bottom of her heart.

The feast continued for awhile, but became a party after the mercenaries ate their fill.
People left by twos and threes, until only Aisha was left, and she said.

"What it means to be an adult... I don't know, but it doesn't seem unpleasant."

Compared to Norn's self-awareness, Aisha's words sounded childish. But, it's such a thing.
Aisha to Aisha and Norn to Norn.

As for people, there are adults and there are children.

Regarding Norn and Aisha, I hope they each get closer to their ideal.

"Yeah, I don't know either."

I answered.

I think Aisha doesn't have to force herself to act like an adult.

Thus Norn and Aisha became 15 years old.

Chapter 3

Achievements and Goals

Part 1

The following year went by in the blink of an eye.

Today, it's my turn to graduate.

It's the Ranoa Magic University graduation ceremony.

It's my graduation ceremony.

My view has always been one from the side of the student council.

This time, I had to squeeze into my uniform and sit among the graduates.

Surrounded by classmates I don't really know, I listened to the principal's speech.

The principal's speech, I've heard it a few times, it's the same as ever.

Maybe he reads it off the same document every year.

A time when currently enrolled students would hear it doesn't really exist, so there's nothing to worry about.

However, it's not very stirring.

I haven't spent much time at the school itself.

I've also taken few classes, and in the end stopped coming even to homeroom.

It feels like I'm enrolled in name only.

Nevertheless, in regards to my research on the study of chant-less magic, I submitted a paper on its teaching methods and received the proof of membership of a C rank magic guild.

I guess, with that, it's just hard for me to call this a moving experience.

However, I have many fond memories.

Reuniting with Sylphy, becoming friends with Zanoba and Cliff, sexually harassing Rinia and Pursena whenever possible, talking about memories of Japan with Nanahoshi, drinking with the laughing Badigadi...

Saying farewell to this place.

I think I'm about to cry.

Oh, I do have an emotional attachment to this place?

It's deep indeed.

Part 2

Well,
I accomplished everything I had to this year.
Primarily, I laid the groundwork in the Asura area.

Staying in the Asura Kingdom for a few months, we created a subdivision of our mercenary group, a Zanoba Shop branch office, and a factory for the production of goods.
All of which we achieved with Ariel's assistance.

Thanks to Ariel, we'll smoothly be able to gain associates.
When I asked her if she would be willing to cooperate with Orsted in the future I received some reassuring words, "That was my intention from the beginning."
With that in mind Ariel gathered men from her own faction together and threw a party.
It was set up under the premise that, with my backing, they would be able to forge a connection with the 'Dragon God' of the Seven Major Powers.
Although fundamentally we only gathered people under Ariel, it was just members of her faction.
In short, it was people who have the backing of Ariel. Ten or twenty years from now they will be in key positions within the kingdom.
The majority of them were Ariel's yes men.

However, there was also a slightly different type of person there.
That is Water Emperor Isolte.
I don't understand exactly what chain of events led her to be brought along, but the Sword King Nina was also at the venue for some reason.

I'm glad that the Sword God Style and Water God Style are cooperating with Orsted.
I told Eris that I would entrust persuading Nina to her, but, in the end, I wonder how that will turn out?
It sort of seems like the three of them were playing around for a while, but I haven't heard the results.

My expectations are low, but that I was able to make a connection to a talented person like Nina through Eris is helpful.

Honestly, about the revival of Laplace in 80 years, most people don't seem to get it. So, I think some of the language in my solicitation might have been said carelessly. However, Ariel holds their reins. If that's the case it should be fine. She's our dependable Asura Branch Manager.

When I reported to Ariel that, "Eris has given birth to a boy, he's my third child." she was extremely pleased. Then she said with a mischievous face,

"That's right. In that case why don't we set up a betrothal between one of your children and a member of the Asura royal family? If we do that wouldn't our relationship become even stronger.... ?"

From her, I think that was said seriously. On reflex I thought, "Don't joke around." Although I was strongly repulsed, I'm producing a lot of children; it might be good to make a connection with powerful people through marriage. To everyone else, excluding Ariel, I appear to be Orsted's mysterious supporter; it's probably a little scary. However, it might be a relief if a member of my family were engaged to a relative of Ariel at this time. Ties of blood are deep.

However, I don't intend to use my children that way. No, I might consider it if one of the children seriously starts talking about wanting a royal wedding or wanting to become a princess.

Anyway, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that I have things in the Asura area completely within my grasp.

The nobles led by Ariel, the Water God school, and if we're lucky we might get some people from the Holy Land of the Sword.

The manufacturing facilities and the store front for the Ruijerd figure sales are also doing well.

This, when combined with the Mercenary Troupe's transportation unit, should allow the Ruijerd figures to spread throughout the Central Continent.

It's perfect.

If I'm able to, using this method, meet up with Ruijerd sooner, I'll be really happy.

The next step is to advance into the King Dragon Kingdom, and make preparations to use the Death God Randolph as a go between to form that relationship.

There isn't an existence like Ariel this next time, so it's going to be difficult to deal with.

I expect it to take at least two or three years longer.

Asura Kingdom was the tutorial stage.

From here on out is the real game.

Let's talk about the research results.

First is Zanoba.

This past year he has been occupied with directing the setup of our store's sales and marketing, so he has not been able to do any research.

There was no other way.

In the space of a year, he launched stores in both Sharia and Asura.

It's been hectic.

However, because of Ginger and the guys from the mercenary group acting as managers, and because Ariel is the brains skillfully supporting our financial affairs, the shop itself is doing well.

The dolls and picture books haven't exploded in popularity, but are steadily selling.

The table of exercises for reading and writing in the latter part of the book seem to be especially popular.

I don't understand why the bonus material is the most popular part, but the result is good.

Essentially, without the sponsorship of Ariel and Orsted, we would have had to close down immediately after we opened; there is no reason to be hasty.

Next let's talk about Cliff.

He spent this year deepening his relationship with his family and furthering the curse research.

It's all for dispelling Elinalize and Orsted's curses.

Although there was no breakthrough on that front.

He seems to have come across some tall hurdles.

He was successful in improving the effects of the magic tool, but it is still incomplete.

However, thanks to his work, Elinalize can now go more than one year without needing to be sexually active.

The person herself, however, still has an unquenchable libido.

Finally, there's me.

This time I have also reaped some results.

While moving between The Magic City Sharia and Asura Kingdom, I was thinking about a method to summon the Magic Armor.

Perugius had said that the method was nonexistent, so I went to Nanahoshi for advice.

Meanwhile, I discovered a certain law.

This regards bidirectional transfer magic circles.

What is on top of the circle when the transfer is invoked is 'exchanged'.

In other words, for two magic circles A and B, whatever is on circle B will move at the same time as circle A.

Because of the timing of transfer circles being based around the moment that things are placed on top of them, it is a very difficult law to observe, but if you think about it, it's likely.

It's a good argument, isn't it?

Still, realizing this was a huge boon, and it allowed me to hit on a groundbreaking idea.

The Magic Armor, I can place it over a bidirectional magic circle in advance.

I can then carry around a scroll with the sister transition magic circle, lay it out, and trigger the transition magic.

Then presto, the Magic Armor sitting on that circle will automatically be exchanged with whatever is on the circle I invoke.

Following this idea, I set up the Magic Armor in the basement of the office and tried it out; it was a smashing success.

As a result, it is now possible for me to summon the Magic Armor MK-I no matter where I am in the world.

It's the birth of a Gund*m! It's that kind of guy.

Nevertheless, it takes a huge scroll that has to be prepared in advance, and the weighty armor tears the scroll each time it is summoned, so each sheet is single use.

The number I can carry is limited.

Similarly, if another pair of scrolls is made, it can become a way to escape using transfer magic. This discovery has produced versatile results.

Then there is Orsted.

He is skillfully moving forward.

The telephone... He wasn't able to make it, however he did manage to produce a lithograph communication device.

It apparently uses the same construction as the "Seven Major Powers Stone Monument" which was built by Technique God.

What is drawn onto the main lithograph is then copied onto the sub lithographs, it's a mechanism like that.

If each person walks with a main and sub, then instant communication by letter is possible at any time.

However, this is also heavy, and carrying it around at all times would be rather difficult.

Moreover, it consumes quite a large amount of magical power.

Setting it into a foothold would be desirable.

It's a fixed telephone.

For now, the first pair has been installed in Orsted's office and a private room of Ariel's. Every night Ariel is down on her knees watching the shining lithograph, 'Show me the Rider's defeat by any means necessary.'^[9]

This research has that kind of feeling.

Then we should talk about the things concerning the children.

First is Lucy.

My eldest daughter is five years old.

Her birthday party was held just this last month. She received gifts from the whole family and was in a state of delight.

She has grown up quite energetically.

It feels like it was just the other day that she was toddling around and speaking with a lisp. Now she walks with firm footing and, although her speech isn't perfect, she can speak clearly.

Her favorite words are 'no' and 'stop'.

Furthermore, she is receiving special classes in black magic from Roxy and Sylphy.

Every day she practices magic in the morning, and then spends the evening with Eris swinging a stick around.

It's completely like my former life.

Lucy seems to view it as natural, but when looking from outside it appears terribly Spartan.

Because of that I might indulge her carelessly.

As a result, when she sees my figure she'll jump up with, "Papa!"

Super cute.

In addition, she became aware of her status as the older sister after having come through her five years old birthday celebration.

These days she skillfully gives Lara and Arus attention.

As for the thing where Lara and Leo are always together, she seems to view him as some kind of brother, and loves him along with Lara.

A few days ago, she took a brush and combed out Leo to unmat his fur.

It was a really heartwarming sight...

However, afterward it was discovered that the brush was Sylphy's.

It had been taken without permission and filled with dog hair; she was furiously scolded.

"But, Mama and Leo, they're both white!"

was Lucy's excuse.

Children say the damndest things, and I let a chuckle escape my mouth. This only added fuel to Sylphy's anger, and she didn't speak to me for the remainder of the day. It was only from Lucy's arbitration that I was forgiven.

"From now on I'll use Papa's brush, so forgive Papa."

Oh well.

Because of the flow of the conversation, I lost a brush, but that's a cheap price.

Then there is Lara.

The future messiah has become two years old; she still has the same sullen face which never cries.

However, that isn't to say that she lacks energy.

This girl, who can now toddle around, spends her time traveling around the house.

She doesn't stick to anyone, but instead just wanders wherever her curiosity takes her, here and there throughout the house.

This kind of independence, it's something she inherited from her mother.

It's dangerous to take your eyes off of her, she is never in the place you think she is, but she has the guard dog Leo always by her side, so that helps keep her out of dangerous things. It isn't a problem.

If she falls asleep then Leo curls up around her as if to protect her.

Lara, herself, seems to think of Leo as a convenient servant or something for her own use.

Recently we've caught her firmly clinging onto Leo's back as a method of transportation.

Once when Eris took Leo out for a walk she discovered that he was wearing some kind of backpack-like thing; that was Lara. That kind of thing is troubling.

Leo may be reliable, but that kind of thing makes me slightly anxious.

Oh, I don't know the reason, but Zenith appears to be Lara's favorite.

She just sits on Zenith's knee and looks up at her.

It's a heartwarming scene of a grandmother and grandchild, except that there isn't any conversation.

Finally there's Arus.

The eldest son has become one year old, and he loves breasts just like his father. He loves them, both large and small. Of course he loves his mother's, Eris's, but also the smaller ones of Sylphy and Roxy, all the way up to the large ones of Rinia and Pursena. While being pressed against their chests he is filled with happiness, just smiling and looking delighted.

He seems to understand that the sizes are not ranks.

However, he gets so excited that he's likely to pee a little; it makes me a tiny bit anxious about his future.

By the way, when I hold him, he cries. He also cries immediately when I pick him up. Even if he's sleeping peacefully, if I pick him up he'll become fussy. Then when he wakes up he'll cry with a, 'What the hell is this!?' kind of feeling.

He seems to exceptionally dislike the chests of men.

I might just cry too...

Ha, I am slightly lonely after all, but there is no helping it since I wasn't even there for his birth.

At the same time, I am worried about just how easily he will hand out his chastity to various women.

After he grows a little older, it might be a good idea to clearly, exactly, educate him. Yeah.

The kids leave that kind of impression.

Generally, this year was filled with achievements.

I want to say, "Let's all try and do just as well next year."

Part 3

Well, the graduation ceremony wrapped up while I was reminiscing on the past year. Of course, I wasn't the valedictorian.

Not even considering how much class I skipped, I didn't even take a final exam. It's not possible that I would be asked to be valedictorian, and even if I was I would refuse.

I tried rather hard to avoid a duel tournament after the graduation ceremony.

For some reason it feels like a girl confessing to a powerful man in order to gain social status.

I ran into vice principal Jinas at the front gates and was greeted with, "I am glad I recommended you."

In particular, with respect to Jinas, perhaps I am still being taken care of.

I want to make sure Norn can go to school, and even Lucy in however many years.

When I told him so, Jinas was so moved that he began to cry.

Then it was evening.

We all gathered together at our regular bar.

It was going to be a farewell party for Cliff.

But this also serves as my graduation present. I graduated without taking any tests and don't even get my own party.

Still, I'm happy.

So, Cliff's journey to the Sacred Country of Milis is in one month.

He's going to pick a fight.

It's his own battle.

The how and why of the fight, I don't exactly know.

I understand maybe half of it, but the other half is unclear.

For Cliff, joining the fight has been difficult until now.

In the middle of that, he took the poison fang of Elinalize.

By making full use of detoxification to change that scratch into experience and love, he's become ready to fight now.

"I'll become an executive officer in the Milis religious order by any means. Once I have, then I'll return for Lize and Clive."

With that declaration, Elinalize had been in a trance listening.

She is strong.

If it were me, and, for example, Roxy declared, 'I'm going to the Demon Continent to become a Demon King!' There is no way I would be able to calm down. ^[10]

Just trusting in success and waiting.

That's easy to say, but really believing in it and waiting for the results knowing that a terrible conclusion is lurking in the future... I don't think many people can do that.

Regarding that matter, Elinalize seems to completely trust Cliff.

Even if she doesn't place blind faith in him, to some extent she has made a clear decision.

She should have some anxiety, but she is trying to make sure that it isn't noticed by Cliff.

She hasn't reached her age by simply putting on airs.

At that time, that is what I was thinking.

"Rudeus, can I borrow you for a minute?"

It was only after the party was over that my perception changed.

Elinalize, as soon as the party ended, was calling me outside.

At that time, I was in a complete harem state.

Sylphy was asleep, using my right knee as a pillow,

Roxy was drinking, riding on my left knee,

Eris had approached and rested her head on my right shoulder.

My hands were touching soft things to both the left and the right, and, partially because of the effects of the alcohol, I was thinking, 'Perhaps tonight I will be able to have three people at once.'

"... Yeah, sure."

But, after looking into Elinalize's face, my drunkenness cooled down a little.

Her earnest expression was unbecoming at a party.

I could easily imagine what her business was.

It was obviously something you should not be speaking about when you are drunk, I knew that too.

Immediately I neutralized my intoxication with detoxification magic, stood up, and peeled the three wives off of me.

"What? Rudy is cheating? Cheating is wrong. Cheating is only okay when it's with me... nn~tsu..."

Sitting down the drunk Roxy, I silenced her with my lips.

"Mmm, Rudy's thighs, nnn, I wonder if they need to be padded..."

I placed Sylphy's head onto Roxy's lap.

"Rudeus... I, also, my second son will be a good boy."

I placed Eris's head on Roxy's shoulder.

"Well, let's go."

I came out of the tavern along with Elinalize.

"Hey Rudeus, about Cliff, there's a request I want to make."

Right away, Elinalize cut to the chase.

I had somehow knew that it would be about Cliff.

Elinalize, this entire year, has been worried.

It's expected that she would be worried.

"Although, saying these things, it might be bad for Cliff... after all I'm a little anxious about it."

Elinalize said this while exhaling white breath.

From her perspective, Cliff is still very much a child. She has taken him and loved him as a husband, but there are probably also feelings for a brother and a son inside of her.

Even if she doesn't show it, she should be anxious.

"Is it because he'll be going alone?"

"Is that okay?"

Unintentionally I asked again.

Elinalize should be respecting Cliff's decision.

"At first I thought it would be alright if I just watched over the way his decision went... Isn't it important whether this goes smoothly or not? Although Cliff is a child that can work hard no matter what, it's a hard thing to go into that circle of people...."

Like a child, bashful in front of strangers...

No, I understand.

Certainly, Cliff has such a place in his character.

After all, until graduation, he never made any friends outside of us; I can see that.

Even though it's the Sacred Country of Milis, Cliff will be alone, a black sheep; that Cliff who always makes the greatest effort will still be trying his best.

Oh, that's dangerous, some tears seem to be coming out.

"... But, I've promised not to help."

I also want Cliff to succeed.

I want him to skillfully climb to the top of the Milis order.

He doesn't have to rise all the way to the top, but I want Cliff to go as far as he can go.

Separate from collecting comrades for Orsted, I want to help him as a friend.

However, I was told not to help.

It may have come from his mouth a year ago, but I agreed to it; it's that kind of thing.

"You can't do anything?"

" "

"At least in the beginning, that's the way it has to be. There's nothing I can do, but if Cliff becomes troubled I will immediately set out, just like that."

"Hmmmmm..."

I don't intend to call such a silly thing a promise between men.

I'm also worried about Cliff.

He is strong, but there can be things which are harder.

It might be that the hardest part will be the first hurdle.

Not being able to clear that first hurdle, and then overexerting himself, Cliff could go down.

I don't want to see that.

It might be best if I lend my hand in the beginning.

Cliff might be reluctant, but even the power of your friends is still your own power.

The people who will help him in an emergency is something Cliff earned at school.

Looking at it that way, I am one of Cliff's forces.

Of course, I should not help too much.

" "

Alright.

I've let my gut decide.

But will the member collection for Orsted be alright?

While Cliff was busy in Milis, I was planning on trying to expand our activities into the King Dragon Kingdom.

I could leave it to Aisha and let her make the move.

I wonder if it would be problematic to change my next target to Milis...

Making a Zanoba shop in the Sacred Country of Milis's home turf will be difficult.

However, if we limited it to just forming a mercenary group, that shouldn't be a problem. For the time being I could just set up a mercenary group and continue to attract human resources and intelligence.

About the shop, if Cliff is successful, it would be nice to do some behind the scenes work again.

"I understand, I'll also go to Milis."

"....! Thank you, Rudeus!"

Even Elinalize, I'd want to take her.

If we entrust Clive to my house, we could go and help Cliff in the Sacred Country of Milis.

However, she has promised Cliff.

At home, raising Clive, she has to wait.

"Well, I'll use my own judgment on whether or not to aid Cliff, but thank you in advance."

"Of course I understand."

Elinalize let a sigh of relief escape her chest.

One way or another, she just wants to support her husband...

I also don't want him to be dissatisfied with his bride...

After all, he has a good woman.

Part 4

Then the farewell party was over.

I brought back my three drunken wives, then I laid each to bed.

The children were already in bed.

To be able to come home drunk even though I have young children, it's all thanks to Lilia and Aisha.

To thank them, I returned to the living room.

Because of the thing with Elinalize, I want to discuss the next branch construction with Aisha.

Once I entered the living room I was faced with a heavy atmosphere.

Norn had left the party midway.

Lilia and Aisha were house sitting.

Those three people, with difficult expressions, I met face to face.

"What's this?"

"Ah, Onii-chan.... it's about this."

In front of those three people was a single letter.

I took it up.

The name of the sender was "House of Latreia".

I remember; it's Zenith's home.

At last, all the way from the sacred country of Milis, a letter arrived.

Even though it's addressed to me, it's already been opened. Well I guess that's fine.

Looking at the body of the letter, it reads,

I have received your report.

My daughter Zenith is in a state of insanity.

As soon as possible, I want you to return Zenith to the Latreia family household.

If they are also with you, please bring Norn Greyrat and Aisha Greyrat.

~Countess of Latreia, Claire Latreia

Those are some terribly short sentences.

Or maybe it is better to say they are steady.

No, there isn't any reason to read ill intent into this letter.

It's just written commands.

"To receive this kind of letter now..."

Then, I had started to ask a question but stopped.

Thinking about it, I had sent out a letter around five years ago.

From here to the Sacred Country of Milis it is pretty far, even by horse it takes two years.

The mail in this world is not very developed.

It's not surprising if a letter gets hung up in some strange place.

If the mail carrier is attacked by a demon, there is a possibility that the letter itself will be lost.

So, getting a reply five years later, you could say that is reasonable.

"Hey? Is this all there is to the letter?"

"Yes, that's it."

Lilia answers me.

There is no concealed extras or a second letter, nothing like that.

"Is that so..."

Considering the few years it takes to send the letter here, it's pretty short.

No, that might be the reason.

The Latreia house would also know it would take a long time to travel the long distance and reach us.

Taking into consideration the fact that it may not even reach us, only what was important was included.

It is written out like an instruction manual in order to make sure the other party gets all of the information they need. It's reasonable if you consider that.

The commanding tone is just to let us know they want us to visit no matter what.

"Hah..."

".... Obaa-chan, she hasn't changed."

.... And, the reactions of the two sisters were rather different.

Norn blatantly sighed, Aisha received the letter with a cold look.

Both of them were wearing a face like her name wasn't something they wanted to hear again in their lives.

To see the reactions of these two, this person called Claire, I could see she has the kind of personality to write this kind of letter.

" "

By chance I looked toward Lilia and even she was making a troubled face.

I wonder if she's really that unpleasant of a person, this lady named Claire...

I don't know because I haven't met her.

"Danna-sama, do you intend to go to her?"

Watching Lilia, she suddenly raised her head as she said that.

My answer was already decided.

It was just, I had been looking for an excuse to go to Milis.

This is timely.

'Nice timing' is what I would call it.

"More or less, because of this letter, we have no choice but to take Mother to Milis."

" "

" "

The sisters and my step mother exchanged significant looks with one another.

Apparently I said something wrong.

I wonder if this woman named Claire is no good.

But, if you are told that your daughter is crippled with memory loss, you'll want to see her.

It's a parent thing.

I wanted to look for a way to help Zenith, they should be the same.

Zenith seems to have run away from her home, but according to Paul's story, the house of Latreia had been funding the Fedoa search team.

That is also more or less something we owe them for.

They also seem to be somewhat of a force within Milis as well, so this will be a good chance to introduce myself.

"Well, anyway, I was planning to move into Milis someday.

You can also think about it this way.

This just came about at the right moment."

"Oh, hold it, wait, Onii-chan. Weren't we planning on working into King Dragon Kingdom starting next month?"

Aisha said that in a panic.

Of course, that was my original intention.

Form a mercenary group in King Dragon Kingdom, while relying on the Death God Randolph and Princess Benedict's connection, and get a sponsor to help manage another Zanoba shop.

Aisha had been making arrangements to help me.

It was just like in the Asura kingdom, I had relied on Aisha during the launch of our mercenary branch.

Then she along with the talent she collected along the way would launch the mercenary group.

Then the hired soldier corps is brought online during the subsequent month.

Two months later, the soldier corps is ready to leave Aisha's hands and move independently.

Her skill is magical.

"Now that this letter has come, it needs to be handled quickly. Milis needs to take priority... incidentally, we'll also be able to greet Grandmother."

"Ehhhh~ "

Aisha had a blatantly unpleasant look on her face.

Even though we just celebrated her coming of age ceremony a few months ago, this part of her hasn't changed.

"... Onii-san, I do not want to go."

Norn said so.

She said it with finality.

It's fine if she doesn't go; if she doesn't want to go, she doesn't have to.

She was making the same unpleasant face as Aisha and speaking seriously.

"School is important for me right now, there is also the student council. I can't make time for this for months."

" Well, that may be."

Even though I've graduated, Norn is now a senior.

She has one year left. After those classes and the final, she'll have to graduate.

Unlike me, Norn has been through six years of actual school.

I don't want Norn's six years to be wasted.

"Well, Onii-chan. I also, ummmm... Yes, the rice! I can't go because there is a favorable harvest of Onii-chan's rice!"

That's what Aisha came up with.

I know better.

Aisha created a field on the outskirts of the mercenary land, and there is mass producing rice.

Because she has already handed over responsibility to others, Aisha herself is not needed in the field.

I know all about that.

Because I do, I can easily point that out to her.

However, Aisha is in a foul mood.

If I forcefully bring that up, it might trouble our work.

That is to say, without Aisha, I'll have trouble raising the next branch.

It probably won't work out with just me.

Ah, it's like that.

Isn't there a choice other than to go to Milis and confront this?

"I understand Aisha, if you do not want to see her, that's not an unreasonable request.

But, at least come with me to Milis.

Lilia, Mother, and I can go to Latreia and handle that, you can devote yourself towards the mercenary group work.

"... Hooray! Thank you Onii-chan!"

Aisha was suddenly smiling.

Is she really so unpleasant?

But, Lilia doesn't seem to blame Aisha either.

Her scolding fist would ordinarily answer such behavior.

"I understand Danna-sama, I'll accompany you."

Lilia was as expressionless as always, but it's very likely that she does not want to meet Claire either.

Given her position, I understand.

Zenith was a Milis adherent.

Her mother also, will surely be a Milis adherent.

In the Milis religion, I do not know how you would normally treat a person's second wife.

At the least they won't be very welcome.

"Lilia, I'm just multiplying your trouble."

"No, it's a matter of course."

By myself, I can't completely take care of Zenith.

I need Lilia or Aisha.

It would be bad if neither of them came.

"Well, Aisha. This way, I'm going to ask that you switch your target from King Dragon Kingdom to the Sacred Country of Milis."

"Alri~ght! When do we depart?"

"That's right.... Aisha, I hope to leave soon."

Better yet, we can match ourselves with Cliff.

Although there isn't a particular reason, there is some distance between the teleport location and Milis.

Rather than travel separately, it might be better to go together.

"Well, after one month."

"Roger."

Even so, about my grandmother.

I wonder what kind of person she is.

After witnessing Norn and Aisha's reactions, I'm a little afraid to meet her.

As for the wives who are drunk and asleep, I'll just tell them about this tomorrow.

Part 5

We are changing our target from the King Dragon Kingdom.

The next mercenary branch will be created in the Sacred Country of Mills.

Aisha told me to start preparing even while she complained.

In addition to the papers for King Dragon Kingdom, she started to write a stack for Milis.

Looking at it, it's probably a document about the kinds of human resources in each country.

Because we don't have direct support from the country this time, collecting talented people is going to be more time consuming.

For the time being, we are looking at about half a year.

For the time it will take to get on track, that's not really an unreasonable assessment.

Also, about Cliff, I told him at once.

By chance, this happened, that from Zenith's home I somehow received this, so let's go together.

Cliff had a wry smile and did not seem to hate it.

"That's to say, somehow, I thought you would find a way to follow me."

Is that so?

I could feel the trust behind that; his words were bathed in relief.

Unexpectedly, Cliff might have also become anxious.

With Zanoba he had said it was good that I was following along, but, this time with him, he had wanted to stick to himself.

The level of fellowship I feel from Cliff is enough to surprise me.

If only it had been that simple to begin with,

Cliff-senpai.

Now, towards Milis, there are four people going other than Cliff:

Aisha, Zenith, Lilia, and myself.

Sylphy will be staying at home because without Lilia or Aisha the number of people who can do housework has dropped.

Because of the unpleasantness surrounding the demon tribe in the Sacred Country of Milis, Roxy is staying home as well.

Eris had been prepared to go, but Lilia strongly opposed.

The wife Eris had better not go to that Latreia house, or there will definitely be a fight.

I don't really get what she means though.

However, according to Lilia's words, that person named Claire Latreia is a pretty finicky individual.

It is better for her to not meet Eris, at least I understand that.

It wouldn't be funny if Zenith's home became a source of danger.

Also that kind of journey would be difficult with young children.

For that reason, I had to give up on Eris.

Unusually, it's a situation where the wife does not come along.

... Well, sometimes things like this happen.

Then, as we were gearing up and preparing to leave. It was discovered that Sylphy was pregnant.

Chapter 4

And to Milishion...

Part 1

Sylphy became pregnant.
It's our second child together.

It's right before the departure.
If this was in the past, I would be at my wit's end as to whether or not to leave.
However, this is the fourth child I've made right before going on a long business trip.
I'm still a bit anxious, but I'm much more composed now compared to the past.

It's truly auspicious.
What should the name be?
I wonder if it's a boy or a girl.
Lucy, will you get a little brother or a little sister?
You're going to become a big sister again, aren't you?
And, I was running around the garden in glee but...

"Madam Sylphy is... W, what should I do...!?"

Lilia was panicking.
She, who was always calm, had a blue face and was hesitating on whether to go...

"My purpose is to take care of madam Zenith... But, the pregnant Madam Sylphy is the only one who can do housework... If something happens..."

She will travel with us to Milis in order to take care of Zenith.

Meanwhile Sylphy will be left with the housework.

That was the plan, before finding out Sylphy was pregnant.

Well, Roxy could help with the housework, or we could even hire a temporary maid.

Though I may think that, leaving my pregnant wife alone for several months still makes me feel slightly uneasy.

Lilia was at a loss.

She doesn't know whether she should follow and take care of Zenith or stay and help Sylphy.

When I see Lilia upset like this, I feel like I should be more concerned.

Maybe I shouldn't be innocently celebrating.

Originally, when I became Orsted's subordinate, I prepared myself for this type of situation.

But, thinking back, I assumed there would be a trusted caretaker like Aisha or Lilia there in my absence.

Perhaps, this might be bad.

I'm starting to get flustered...

"Ummm, I'm fine. It's the second time, and there's also Roxy and Eris, Grandma too."

Sylphy said that to comfort Lilia.

Certainly, this is Sylphy's second child.

She knows what to do.

There are many people she can rely on too.

Roxy would often be out of the house, so it might be best to have Elinalise check in regularly.

Even Eris should be able to help out if the need arises.

Yeah, that's right.

During Sylphy's first pregnancy, only Aisha and Norn were here to help.

Aisha has experience from taking care of three pregnant women now, but back then she was still inexperienced.

If I think about it, the current situation is better.

And this time I'll certainly be back before even a year passes.

So it's fine.

"That's right, we can manage it! I'll protect them!"

"I'll be a bit anxious because I won't be in the house during the day, but someone will always be around, so I don't think there's any danger."

Eris agreed, Roxy too.

However, there are still many reasons to be concerned.

Lilia looked down at Lara, who was standing while grasping the hem of Roxy's robe.

"However, there are other children, increasing the burden. I do not know what will happen..."

Certainly, you can't predict what children will do.

Both Lucy and Lara are actively moving.

Those two would never attack Sylphy with a malicious intent.

But, what if for example Lucy hits Sylphy with magic during practice? ^[11]

Or Lara tries to leave the house riding Leo, and Sylphy tumbles down the stairs in a panic.

... I could keep going on forever.

Anyway, kids are accidents waiting to happen.

I'm uneasy.

There's no need to say who caused Sylphy to become pregnant.

When Sylphy said [Because of my race, I may not be able to have any more kids], I responded with [We won't know until we try] and never even considered family planning.

No, it's not like I was just playing around.

We earnestly wanted another child.

But it's been 5 years since Lucy was born, so I thought Sylphy was right about not being able to make more and recently have been doing 'it' without concern...

Anyway, there's no helping it.

I am responsible.

I, when my wife is pregnant and having difficulties, must leave her side once again.
It's been like this for all three so far.
Even so, why, I wonder why there's always a pregnancy before I leave on a trip...
I wonder if this is Hitogami's curse.

Maybe I should delay the trip to Milis.

We could delay the trip for about a year, wait for Sylphy's delivery, and then depart afterwards.

But there's a chance that Roxy or Eris would get pregnant, and it would be a continuous cycle...

In any case, given the time it takes to travel to Milis, the other side shouldn't expect us for another year or two.

It was the same situation for Cliff.

However, there's Cliff's matter.

Elinalise wanted me to watch over Cliff at least for the beginning.

Cliff will go with or without us.

I think things will be OK, but he might be irreparably cornered if I left him alone for a year.

Both Sylphy and Cliff are unlikely to be in danger.

Neither case is more urgent than the other. ^[12]

I need to choose one of the two.

Cliff or Sylphy.

Work or Love.

If I think about the future, I should hurry along my plan to open a Mercenary branch office in Milis, and assist Cliff in becoming the future Pope.

That would be the best outcome for me.

But, is that alright?

If it causes Sylphy and the children to cry, then isn't it meaningless?

I have to keep in mind why I'm working for Orsted.

I can't lose sight of that reason.

"....."

While I was thinking about it...

Suddenly, Zenith moved.

"Hm? Madam Zenith?"

She suddenly moved without warning, almost like she was sleepwalking, and grabbed Lilia's hand.

She seemed to be putting in a lot of strength, since Lilia was stumbling while being dragged along.

Zenith's destination was Sylphy.

"Err... Zenith, san?"

Sylphy seemed confused.

Zenith took Lilia's hand and gently placed it on Sylphy's shoulder.

As if she were trying to ask Lilia to look after Sylphy.

As if to say she would be alright on her own, so Lilia should stay behind.

"You, madam...!"

Lilia's eyes were moist.

This is the strong will that Zenith sometimes shows.

Everyone in the family noticed how she shows it whenever her children or grandchildren are involved.

Rather than having Lilia take care of her, Zenith wants her to take care of Sylphy and the child that will be born. ^[13]

Everyone understood.

"I understand."

Lilia wiped the tears from her eyes, and nodded at Zenith.

Her face showed that she no longer wavered.

"Aisha!"

"Y-, Yes!"

Lilia called out to Aisha, whose mouth was agape.

"In my place, take care of madam Zenith, and safely escort her to the Latreia house. I will not permit selfishness!"^[14]

"..... Yes!"

Aisha was lost for a moment.

She probably doesn't want to go to the Latreia house.

But she isn't a bad child that can say 'no' in this situation.

"Rudeus-sama, for this, thank you in advance."

"... Yes, it's no trouble."

If Lilia is watching over her, Sylphy will definitely be fine.

I strongly believe that.

I can do my job in the Holy Kingdom of Milis without worry.

"Sylphy."

"... What, Rudy?"

However, there's one thing left to say.

Something very important.

"I love you."

"Yeah. I love you too."

Sylphy stood up, and gently put her arms around my back.

I buried my face in her hair and hugged her without squeezing too tightly.

"Our child's name, I'll keep thinking."

"Yeah, let me know when you return."

Sylphy laughed shyly.

Ordinarily, I would be uneasy.

However, Lilia is with Sylphy.

She's my dependable second mother.

Then, after hugging Roxy and Eris, we departed.

Part 2

We started to move.

Myself, Aisha, Zenith, and Cliff.

Only us four.

Although we carefully selected our luggage, we ended up bringing a lot.

The lithograph for communication and summoning scroll for the Magic Armor MK-I.

As usual I'm wearing the MK-IIB, so the weight is no problem.

But, even with abundant strength, I only have two hands and one back.

The size of a person doesn't change, and it's hard to move while carrying luggage larger than your body.

It's like carrying a large bundle of cardboard. ^[15]

I met up with Cliff in the suburbs while carrying that mountain of luggage.

Cliff was surprised when I told him that our traveling companions had decreased.

But, hearing about Sylphy's pregnancy, he congratulated me with a bright smile.

"From my point of view, your situation cannot be praised enough... Milis teaches [The birth of a new life is a joyous occasion in any circumstance.]"

"I thank you for your words."

"I pray to Milis that our children become good friends."

Even if the Milis religion doesn't approve of my lifestyle, they don't find fault in my children.

Well, there's a good chance my children will also have multiple partners...

Cliff probably has a sermon prepared for that.

No, I'll have to lecture them. That's right.

"By the way, Cliff-senpai, do you know anything about the Latreia house?"

"The Latreia house..."

Over the past month, my sisters and Lilia have told me various things about the Latreia house's Claire-baachan while wearing uncharacteristically unpleasant faces.

In summary, she's extremely stubborn and strict.

Norn said [My only memories of her are of her getting angry at me for not doing well enough] while looking away, and Aisha said [She got angry at me for doing better than Norn-nee] while sighing. ^[16]

Lilia only said [She's a person who values lineage and the Milis doctrine.]

In short, these three people, while they were staying at the Latreia house in Milishion, seem to have been persistently harassed about things like family and social standing and marriage.

However, regarding Claire, I didn't worry very much.

Although what I've heard makes meeting her a bit scary...

I already know someone stubborn and strict.

Although he's deceased...

Sauros Boreas Greyrat.

Eris's grandfather.

That old man had different values than Claire, but he still fits the description to a tee.

If I conducted myself civilly, he would respond accordingly.

Claire is a human being too.

If she respects blood ties, then technically I have the blood of the Greyrats and Latreia.

The part about respecting the Milis doctrine is a bit scary, so I should hide the fact that I practice polygamy.

In any case, I was able to get along in Eris's house full of loud and violent people.

If Claire is something like a female version of Sauros, then I'll probably be okay.

My sister's memories paint her as an unpleasant person, there's still a decent possibility that when I meet her she turns out to be a good person who's just a bit stubborn and hot-headed.

Ruijerd was like that too.

Anyway, I have no intention to stop a mother from reuniting with her daughter.
But just in case, I'll ask for more information.

"They are key members of the anti-Magic Race faction, and are a prominent family that has produced many excellent temple knights."

"Hmmm."

Temple Knights.

If I remember correctly, my aunt Therese was a member of the Temple Knight order.
I wonder if she's doing well.

"I was still small when I was in Milis, so I don't know many details, but Norn-kun described them as strict."

Norn seems to trust Cliff, and seems to have consulted with him when she had problems at school.

By the flow of things, she seems to have talked to him about being branded as [worthless child] by the Latreia house.

She was always compared to Aisha, and called a good-for-nothing who lost to the mistress's child.

Cliff seems to have told her something along the lines of [Do not worry about being compared to others, you must simply strive to improve your current self.]

As a result, Norn became the Student Council President.

It's something unsaid, but Norn seems to respect Cliff.

It's not at the level of 'love'.

But, if not for Elinalise, there's a chance that the two of them could have gotten together.

Ah, then the anti-Magic Race Latreia house and the pro-Magic Race Grimoire house would have a connection.

Oh, no no.

Norn is different.

She's a child of the Greyrat house.

She has nothing to do with the factional strife in the Milis religious community.

"When we return, I pray that you don't join the Latreia house and become my enemy."

"There's no way I would become Cliff-senpai's enemy."

"Of course I trust you. But sometimes there are things that can't be helped..."

Cliff said so, and smiled wryly.

If you think about it, it can certainly seem like it will lead to trouble.

The Latreia house is allied with the Order of the Temple Knights, part of the anti-Magic Race faction, and an enemy of Cliff.

It would be natural to think that I would be connected to that house.

No, I'm only connected by blood.

I am of the Greyrat house in the Magic City Sharia.

I am Orsted's subordinate, [The Right Arm of the Dragon God] Rudeus Greyrat.

I am Rudeus, Cliff's friend, that is who I am.

"I won't be actively helping Cliff-senpai, but I certainly won't become an enemy. If you think this is a lie then we could always betroth one of my daughters to Clive."

"Oh, that might be good. The engagement of your daughter and my son... Yeah, not bad..."

"Ah, please wait a minute. After all, a parent deciding their child's marriage is..."

"I know, I know. It's just a joke. Come on, let's get going."

Cliff began to walk with a smile.

It's really a joke, right?

But since both Lucy and Lara are so cute...

Surely both of them will grow up to resemble their beautiful mothers in the future.

Clive-kun would grow up watching those beautiful sisters.

Lucy would probably be his first love.

Clive-kun is Elinalise's son, he may confess and start dating her at an early age.

Rather than some person of questionable background, he's Cliff's son.

If Clive-kun insists, and lowers his head saying "Please, father-in-law", I won't oppose them going out.

Of course, I have no right to be called father-in-law by you, but--

"Oniichan, let's go."

Aisha said that, leading Zenith by the hand, and I pulled myself together.

"Oh, sorry sorry."

I'm getting ahead of myself.

While thinking that, we followed Cliff.

Part 3

I stopped by the office to greet Orsted.

Then went through the basement to use the magic teleportation circle.

We had previously established a teleportation circle near Milis.

We were teleported into the depths of a forest not far from Milishion.

We're in the basement of an abandoned mansion.

Even if I ask myself why there's an abandoned mansion in the forest, it seems that in this world villages near forests are frequently swallowed up. This is one of those villages.

It's mossy, and the mansion's basement is full of ivy.

In such a place, the magic formation glows dimly.

The mansion is neglected, but perhaps because it's supported by the trees it won't collapse soon.

Although occasionally adventurers come from neighboring towns, so I hid the room to the magic formation with a secret passageway, and I left a treasure chest in the room with the entrance to the passage.

I only left some useless magic items in the chest, but most adventurers will be satisfied with that and return. ^[17]

We're moving on foot from here.

Because Zenith is essentially disabled, traveling is slow.

There aren't any strong monsters in the vicinity of Milis, but it's still necessary to advance steadily.

Oh yeah, speaking of monsters.

When I visited this forest with Orsted to install the magic formation,

I remembered seeing a certain monster for the first time.

A goblin.

Green skin, about half the size of a human.

Lustful and belligerent, they are the world's weakest class of monster.

Living in tribes, they occasionally capture members of other races and impregnate them.

They can't be communicated with and view people as enemies, attacking on sight.

But in truth, there are those who think goblins may not be monsters but members of the demon race.

They live with a very primitive lifestyle in caves in the depths of the forest.

Living in cave-type dwellings, they survive as groups of hunters.

Although the craftsmanship is poor, they use simple tools like clubs and stone knives.

Also, although I only caught a glimpse, it looked like goblin parents show something like love for their children.

I don't think they're that different from primitive humans, they're simply treated as monsters because of their low intelligence.

If they could understand their words, things may be a little different.

But, this is Milis Continent.

Such a creature would never be acknowledged in the Holy Kingdom of Milis. ^[18]

Possibly, Goblins might immediately attack people only because of bad blood from past times.

Surely, the goblins share a history of struggle with Milis.

If I think about it Goblins are a pitiable creature.

Maybe it would be a different story if they inhabited the Central Continent.

Rather than a demon, they might have been recognized as a low-class Magic race...

While thinking that, I effortlessly eliminated any Goblins that came to attack us along our route to Milishion.

No, I'm not about to start a Goblin Welfare Organization.

I won't forgive goblins for attacking me even if they're pitiable.

After exiting the forest, we're about 7 days from Milishion.
We stopped in a village to buy a horse-drawn carriage.
Even if I said carriage, it's more like a poorly constructed cart, but it will be better than walking.
The lithograph is heavy, after all.

We followed the highway on the carriage.
The countryside has more plains than Asura Kingdom, many farmers here maintain grazing fields rather than crops.

Asura Kingdom has scenery like America's fields of wheat,
this landscape is more like a pasture in the Alps. ^[19]

Asura is green and yellow.
Milis is green and blue.
Both are consistent in terms of greenery.
The abundant plant-life is evidence of their prosperity.

We encountered a lot of monsters on the way, but that's only in terms of the Milis continent.
Compared to the Magic Continent and Northern lands, Milis Continent is lukewarm. ^[20]

And, we arrived.
The capital of Holy Milis country, Milishion.
A beautiful city surrounded by rich nature and protected by seven towers.

The city where I once reunited with Paul.

Translator's Notes and References

1. TL note: Ogre God was translated as Fierce God in chapter 76. ED: Badigadi lost to him on Onigashima, Ogre Island.
2. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=riajuu>
3. ED Note: Eris
4. Japanese expression involving a nail.
5. Cultural reference, Valentine's Day -> Girls give stuff to guys, White Day -> Guys repay gifts, hence the gifts are expected... A 15th birthday celebration is obvious. Why bother hiding it? I think.
6. Double meaning, sexually vs spending a day together.
7. Fuck Rudy, Marry... same, Kill Orsted. #InspirationalGoals
8. 「もらって困るもの」 If you know a better translation please fix.
9. TLC? Is this a reference to something?
夜な夜な、ぴかぴか光る石版に対して、アリエルが膝をついて「必ずやライダーめを倒してごらんにいれます」とかやってるのだ。
10. Calm my heart/mind down
11. When the hell do we get a Lucy chapter :<?
12. Not quite sure on these two lines. TLC would be nice.
13. Pronouns are hard in English.
14. Latreia = Zenith's family's house, Ch. 50 Part 5
15. Unsure about this one, I think it might be referring to empty cardboard boxes?
一抱えもある、空のダンボールを持っているようなものだ。
16. A little unsure about Aisha's line, 「ノルン姉を立てろって怒られた」
17. Fake end. Smart.
18. Where would a short, rape-y, green man be permitted?
19. <http://www.seiser-alm.it/images/cms/580/B-0180-almen.jpg>
20. No real danger

