

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 301 – The Eve of Houou

“According to legend, it could turn into chains. It even changed into a flail.”
(Queen)

“That’s really not that different, is it…?” (Naofumi)

I mean, they’re all blunt weapons.

The boundaries between the Seven Star weapons seem quite vague. I’m jealous.

“The greatest difference would be that the Whip can draw out the power of monsters.” (Queen)

I scene of the Queen whipping a monster and forcing it into submission floats in my mind.

Do you mean like that? The Queen in front of me… does she do that to Trash?

No, I really, *really* don’t care.

“The Hammer and Axe are similar as well.”

It’s not like there are… no differences between a set of claws and gauntlets.

“Is that so?” (Queen)

So she wasn’t questioning it at all.

Since she was taught as such from the beginning, she doesn’t find it strange at all.

For now, let’s think of the difference between claws and gauntlets.

I look over at Firo, and noticed.

I see. The gauntlets are exclusive to hands, but claws can go on feet as well. Having Firo accepted as a Hero would be troublesome, but I get the feeling that it would feel natural.

Thinking along that vein, Hammers and Axes are weapons you lower on enemies, but they have different purpose.

"I don't think I've met any of the Seven Stars besides Trash." (Naofumi)

"I heard that they will be participating in the Houou campaign, but we have been unable to make contact with them. They're also quite busy, so we hope they'll be able to arrive on time." (Queen)

"Hmm..." (Naofumi)

Will I finally see them? The Seven Star Heroes?

They were being managed by Faubley, right?

There's Trash, and this Gauntlet here, so there should be five more in this world.

"By the way, how many otherworlders are among them?" (Naofumi)

"I believe that three of them were summoned." (Queen)

That means two of them are of this world.

If I meet them, we should talk.

Like about what weapons they have, and how they strengthen them.

But perhaps only the Four Legendary Weapons adapt to strengthening.

Should I ask Trash?

... No, I'll leave him be.

I haven't seen him wield his cane.

If he does step forward, perhaps, he will be KIA.

If that happens, I guess a new Cane Hero will be selected.

As I lost myself in thought, the slaves proceeded, and finally, it was Atlas's turn.

She puts her hands on the gauntlet, and tries to pull it out, but... it doesn't move an inch.

"I was no good." (Atlas)

She easily gives up, and returns to my side.

I think she should try a little harder.

"I used my Chi to analyze it, but it appears that I am insufficient." (Atlas)

"You can find out things like that?" (Naofumi)

"Somehow." (Atlas)

"I see..." (Naofumi)

Next is Fohl.

He doesn't seem particularly interested as he approaches it.

"Hmm? ... Go for it, Onii-sama. If it's you, you'll definitely be able to pull it out!" (Atlas)

"Yeah! Gunununununu!" (Fohl) (TL: Sound of putting effort)

Suddenly overflowing with power, Fohl pulls with all his might.

As he puts his hand on the Goutlet, Atlas starts shouting.

"What was that?" (Naofumi)

It's rare for Atlas to cheer on her brother like that.

There must be a reason.

"I felt something different from when I went up to it... but it may be my imagination. I thought Onii-sama would be able to pull it out, but that was disappointing." (Atlas)

"Atlas!?" (Fohl)

How cruel. It's the carrot and the stick.

I think, as I watch over the rest of the procession, but no one could take it out.

"Heave! Ho!"

They've started grabbing onto one another, and tried to yank it out as if it were a game of tug of war.

I was supposed to be watching them, but when I wasn't paying attention, all of the slaves started working together to yank the glove from the stone. For it to remain firm despite this. I guess it won't move until it finds someone worthy.

Anyways, a new hero was not born that day.

–

Like that, the day ended.

Reinforcements from other countries poured in by the day, so our numbers are considerable.

Our luck came with the force from Silt Welt.

Their battle abilities seemed naturally high, and their movements were nice. Tomorrow's the day when Houou's seal will break.

That night.

After attending a strategy meeting, I ran into Atlas and Firo.

"What? What's up?" (Naofumi)

"What's wrong?" (Raphtalia)

After talking with Raphtalia, something started bothering me about our troop deployment.

"Why are you letting Atlas be on the vanguard as well?" (Fohl)

"I must always be with Naofumi-sama." (Atlas)

"... Fohl, do you want to be deployed with Atlas?" (Naofumi)

It will increase his motivation, and let him get a greater grasp of Atlas's strength. But I guess he doesn't want his sisters on the front lines, even if she's beside him.

Well, I'm also going to be defending on the front-most line, but also, she won't have much of a role in the back.

"Atlas, by that logic, you'll have to be sent to the very front." (Naofumi)

"Yep, that's what I want." (Atlas)

"No! Atlas needs to be deployed in a safer station." (Fohl)

"Onii-sama? Then I would just be a tag-along. Would you be satisfied if you were deployed to the rear supports?" (Atlas)

"Uu..." (Fohl)

Why is he already making the sound of defeat?

Even so, a problem with deployment, is it?

"Naofumi-sama, I've said it before, right? I want to become the Shield that protects you." (Atlas)

"Well, you see..." (Naofumi)

What do you want to do by taking my job?

And just how noisy will Fohl be if you do something like that?

"That's why I compromised, and stationed you a little behind me, but if you want to be in front of me, then there's no point in me being there.

Raphtalia-, you understand that, right?" (Naofumi)

"Yes." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia nods.

There's a time and place for everything.

And if you try and protect me, the opponent this time is too strong.

I'd like this girl to learn some restraint.

"... Understood." (Atlas)

Atlas reluctantly nods.

“Even so, I want to protect Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas)

“... I think this every time, but why are you so obstinate on trying to protect Naofumi-sama, Atlas-san? You seem strangely fixated on it.” (Raphtalia)

“I think the same. I believe... well, I don’t think I should be saying this, that unreliable guy over there, why must you try and protect him so?” (Fohl)

“Raphtalia-san and Onii-sama can’t understand it?” (Atlas)

Atlas furrows her brows in an irritated fashion.

“I can’t be spoiled by Naofumi-sama’s kindness forever. Just by imagining the sight of Naofumi-sama standing in front, and taking damage in place of everyone else... shatters my heart.” (Atlas)

I want to tell her not to deny my *raison d’être*, but a part of my heart finds affirmation in her words.

At the very least, her words don’t make me feel bad.

Even if she denies the existence of the Hero of the Shield.

“... No, I’m mincing words here. I want to be by his side, not as a party member of a Hero, but as the one next to the Human, Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas)

Not the Hero?

I don’t really get it, but it’s an Atlas-like explanation.

“What are you saying!?” (Raphtalai)

“Right Atlas!? Why this guy of all people!?” (Fohl)

Hmm? ...Wait, wasn’t that a love confession just now?

I didn’t notice.

She says something similar every time, so I let it slide.

“Naofumi-sama?” (Atlas)

“What?” (Naofumi)

“I have been drawn to your deep-rooted kind nature. I don’t want you risking your life trying to protect everyone.” (Atlas)

You’ll say something like that to someone who can do nothing but defend?

“Ah, yes, yes. I understand that. I understand what you’re trying to say, but I’m a coward, you see. I’m leaving whatever I cannot do to everyone else. So in exchange, I’ll do what I can.” (Naofumi)

“Then, Naofumi-sama, if you were granted the power to slaughter enemies with your own hands, where would you stand on the battlefield?” (Atlas)

Fumu… If I could attack like a normal person, where would I stand?

An interesting question.

… In the end, I think I would still be at the front.

Though I don’t know if I would still be relying on slaves.

If, at that time, I had offensive capabilities, I would go level by myself without buying any slaves.

“Naofumi-sama, please remember. Please don’t believe that it’s… natural for you to get hurt. Your true nature is one where you are always devoting what you have to others… but if you continue like this, who will heal you? Who will devote themselves to you?” (Atlas)

Atlas directs a sad gaze to Raphtalia.

What’s she so bitter about?

“Naofumi-sama… if in a future battle, someone were to lose their life, please don’t blame yourself for it. Those that live off your protection, those who can only take from you are miserable and rotten. They’ll merely decay to nothingness, without even realizing their own corruption. I don’t… want to feel like that again.” (Atlas)

“… That’s right.” (Naofumi)

What she's saying isn't wrong.

Last time, and the time before that, and even before, there were many that died.

I want to save whoever I can, but I don't deny what I can't do.

But if Atlas continues agreeing with whatever I say, she's sure to rot as well. If you praise my every action, you'll rot in a different way.

Is what I think, but this isn't an atmosphere where I can voice such opinions, so I stay quiet.

"Onii-sama... I don't want to be someone who does nothing but take from you anymore. Like you and Naofumi-sama, I want to protect everyone."

(Atlas)

"Atlas, do you know what you're..." (Fohl)

"Onii-sama, aren't you thinking that as long as I'm safe, it doesn't matter who gets injured?" (Atlas)

"___!?" (Fohl)

Fohl is at a loss for words.

But there are some times when I think he cares for nothing but Atlas.

"I don't want to see Onii-sama act like that. Oh... this isn't something I should be saying. I'll be on my way." (Atlas)

And Atlas departed with a sorrowful expression.

What's with this?

"I... Think of nothing but Atlas? Then the real reason I got angry whenever I saw Atlas clinging to that guy was..." (Fohl)

"What's wrong?" (Naofumi)

I wave my hand at the dumbfound Fohl, when he comes to his senses, he returns a sullen face. Maintaining the same expression the entire time, he leaves the area.

“Should I keep the troop deployment as is?” (Naofumi)

Without answering my questions… those two left.
Really, what’s with everyone?

“Naofumi-sama’s kindness…” (Raphtalia)

Even Raphtalia’s brooding over something. Is there really a problem that needs everyone’s concern

–

The Next Day.

The blue hourglass icon in my field of vision enlarged.

00:12

There’s only 12 minutes left.

It’s something I’ve experienced time and time again, but my heart beats erratically.

Just like always… no, I just have to perform better than always. I understand it, but I can’t accustom myself to this feeling.

The people have already been evacuated. Left are the Heroes and their subordinates, and the allied armies.

It’s not a sudden development like with the Spirit Turtle, so evacuations proceeded without a hitch.

We made sure to give ample warning for people to stay away from this area.

The Queen and the other strategists are in the rear, and they’re the ones giving orders.

This is the battlefield of Heroes.

… Though Trash is still in the rear.

Right, right. Perhaps they were running late, but the other Seven Stars never came.

To not make it despite having all that time... how useless.

If I ever have the chance to meet them, I'd like to offer a complaint or two.

"It's been a long time since we had a serious battle. We've done what we could. Everyone, we need to reduce casualties to a minimum, so fight to survive." (Naofumi)

I stand at the front, and give an ultimatum.

"YEAH!"

With my order, the slaves and armies let out their voices as one.

Along with them are Ren and Motoyasu, Itsuki and Rishia.

... It's been a long time.

Originally, we would constantly have to challenge these waves, but why did it take this long?

I earnestly ponder the thought as I direct my eyes to the location of Houou's seal.

Based on prior investigation, halfway up the mountain was a temple with a stone monument that fit the bill.

A dubious statue of a distorted Houou.

We confirmed that the statue radiated its own heat.

By the way, through careful examination, the researchers were able to confirm that it would awaken by the time on the hourglass.

That's where Houou will appear.

To make it easier to fight, we're challenging it on a barren plain at the base of the mountain.

We've grasped for plenty means to fight it.

Like using the Gravity Field effects from the Spirit Turtle equipment to drop the higher one.

The problem is the skill's range... It's relatively small, so we'll need to test it on Houou to see if it'll work or not.

I'll have ride Firo or Gaelion, and board that Houou to see if it does anything. And if I use a shield with Gravity Field while riding a flying opponent, it's not like I'll fly. I'll fall.

Ren, Motoyasu and Itsuki have similar weapons, but we have no idea about the extent of their effects

"Naofumi-sama?" (Raphtalia)

"What?" (Naofumi)

"Let's do our best." (Raphtalia)

"Yep, let's." (Naofumi)

I nod at Raphtalia's words.

And Atlas also called out to me.

"Around us, a blazing chi is... gathering. Naofumi-sama, please proceed with caution." (Atlas)

"I understand." (Naofumi)

The hourglass drops to three.

"This time, I'll..."

"Yes..."

"I'll definitely do it this time."

Ren, Itsuki and Motoyasu confirm their determinations, and tighten their grips on their weapons.

Ah... right. Beating Houou is just part of our job. Even if we do beat it, it's not like our future fights will get any easier.

The four heroes are combining their powers. Why don't we end this one without any death?

00:01

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 302 – Vs. Houou

Just as I thought, like the Spirit Turtle, Houou also headed for the area with the densest population. It headed straight for our vast army.

The number 『8』 floats in my field of vision.

I assume this is meant to be the 8th wave.

“You guys, don’t make a mistake and land the killing blow too early.”

(Noafumi)

“We know!” (Ren)

Ren is near the front. He faces the low altitude Houou, and begins releasing various attacks at it.

“KYUIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!”

The higher Houou starts flapping its wings at us, raining feathers and fire down at us.

「Meteor Shield」!

I used my chi to raise its defense and scope quite a bit.

With this, I can protect the entire front line, but my powers are insufficient to cover the rest.

This battle is still within expectations.

“You all understand, right?” (Naofumi)

I turn around, and find my slaves, and the army nodding.

I don’t have the confidence to protect this large of a group.

But I need to scheme to protect as many as I can.

With Atlas’s help, I used a technique that wasn’t a skill. I deploy Collect at the raining fire.

As if it were draining down a large funnel, the rain gathers, and heads towards me.

Based on how strong this attack is, I'll change the battle plans.

In that time, the Heroes began concentrating attacks on the Lower Altitude bird that rushed at us.

The rain of fire comes into contact with my shield, and stops.

It just feels like a normal rain hitting the top of an umbrella.

What I currently have equipped is a reinforced Spirit Turtle Shell.

–

Spirit Turtle Shell (Awakened) +8 70/70 SR

Ability Bonus:

...

Equipment Bonus:

Skill [S Float Shield], [Reflect Shield]

Special Ability:

Gravity Field

C Soul Recovery

C Magic Snatch

C Gravity Shot

Tenacity Enhancement

Magic Defense (Large)

Lightning Resistance

SP Drain Null

Growing Power

Proficiency Level 100

Item Enchant Level 8 Defense 10% Up

Dragon Spirit Defense 50 Fire Resistance Up

Status Enchant Magic 30+

–

Anticipating Houou's attacks, I enchanted my weapon perfectly.
With this, I can greatly reduce fire-based attacks.
My Barbarian Armor also has Flame Resistance, so normal attacks shouldn't harm me at all.

At the moment, the attacks coming down on me aren't doing anything.
However, the scale of the attack is too big, so I can't guard the entire army for long.

But that was also to be expected.

「All Zveit Resist Fire」!

The rear support forces cast Fire Resistance magic on the army.
With this, we'll be able to ignore the rain, and concentrate on attacking.

Hmm?

When the feathers Houou spread come into contact with the ground, a monster called Houou Familiar (Vassal Type) comes into being.

Just as the mural said.

The vanguard immediately rushes forward to annihilate the familiars.
Good!

“Rafu~!”

Rat's monster Mii-kun changes shape so something like a carpet. He catches all the feathers I fail to block.

He's good at changing shape, so he's useful in times like this.

“Let's go!” (Taniko)

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

Firo, Gaelion and Taniko fly towards the higher level Houou.

“Tei!”

“Kyua!”

“Yesh, let’s go!”

Let me go into an explanation of the weaknesses of Firo’s new-found flight. By flying, she sacrifices a few of her abilities.

According to the bird herself, I explained it before, but she uses magic to fly. So flying greatly diminishes her magic supply.

What’s more, she can’t put as much power into her feet as when on land, so her kicking power decreases. The power in her beak and claws also decreases.

Also, because she has to concentrate on flight, using magic like Quick and Spiral Strike is difficult.

In that aspect, Gaelion, who could fly from the beginning, doesn’t have too many weaknesses.

Breath is his basic attack, and he can use his claws fine.

Because of his leveling, he even learned how to make and shoot homing arrows of fire.

Houou is more skilled in fire, so so if Gaelion doesn’t change the attributes of his attacks, he won’t do any damage, though.

But I guess a bird of fire has to have good fire resistance.

[Wing Tornado]

Flapping her wings strongly, Firo rotates her body as she rushes at Houou. It looks like her Spiral Strike, but it isn’t nearly as fast.

“Tei!”

And after she lands on the high Houou, she delivers a strong kick to it. Ah, I guess like that, her kick power doesn’t drop.

“Gaelion, let’s do this.” (Taniko)

“Kyua!”

『I lead the power of Gaelion, and desire its incarnation. Earth Pulse, grant me power.』

『KYUAKYUAKYUA!』

「High wing Slash!」

Gaelion’s wings begin emitting light, and by flapping them, he creates blades of wind.

Those blades pierce the higher Houou.

“KYUIIIIIIII!?”

They’re fighting well.

I need to concentrate on the enemy before me as well.

“HAAH!”

I grab Houou’s foot, and create an opening for Raphtalia, Atlas and Fohl’s attacks to land.

「Bagua Karma Blade Second Stroke!」

「Tiger Break!」

“Here I come!” (Atlas)

Raphtalia’s blade pierces Houou’s shoulder, and Fohl’s fist hits its abdomen. Upon Atlas’s thrust, part of its body bursts open.

“I can’t be losing to them! 「Gravity Blade!」” (Ren)

“Yeah! I’ll work hard for Niichan! Woof! Woof!”

Ren jumps at the lower Houou’s head, and stabs it multiple times, while releasing a skill.

Kiel also turns into Kielberus, and sinks her teeth into the bird.

Oh... like a knife through butter, Ren's blade goes through Houou.
Kiel's attacks aren't to be messed with either.

However...

Houou was a being like the Spirit Turtle. A being similar to a spirit or ghost. Whenever it got injured, flames gushed out of the wounds, and the injuries healed themselves.

"Ku... what vitality!"

Even if you cut it, you can't inflict any deep wounds.

How troublesome...

But by what I've seen, it's not like it isn't taking any damage.

Just like in our simulations, even if it blows itself up, it will be able to revive as if nothing happened. We can't frivolously kill it. We'll have to use tactics here.

But we prepared for these attacks. We don't get any damage from its wings or its breath.

There's no sign that the lower one will perform any SP draining attacks like the Spirit Turtle.

But just in case, I have re-strengthened the Wrath Shield that dropped due to Gaelion's meddling. It doesn't look like I'll have to use it, though/

The Spirit Turtle's Shell has high stats, but Wrath is also catching up.

The Shell doesn't seem to be evolving soon.

But it's impossible to predict everything.

Perhaps an attack like that is coming soon...

As I grasped the lower Houou to prevent it from escaping, I turned my eyes to the higher one.

I see Motoyasu, Itsuki and Rishia, Sadina, and the Queen releasing various long range attacks at the Higher Houou.

“Firo-tan, be careful! 「Brionac」!” (Motoyasu)

「Bird Hunting」! (Itsuki)

「Tornado Throw」! (Rishia)

“Choral Magic! 「Water and Lightning Fusion」!” (Sadina)

“High Class Covenant Magic! 「Rain Storm」!” (Queen)

Motoyasu throws a spear of light at the beast.

And wait, where are his three followers?

There, I remembered. They’re cooperating with the Filo Rial squad, and fighting on this front.

Itsuki’s arrow divides, and rains down on Houou. Rishia’s tornado of thrown goods spin around it. Finally, Sadina’s pre-prepared Choral Magic lands. By the look of it, though, it’s not taking as much damage as the lower one. Firo, Gaelion, the Dragoons, and the other flying monsters… are those Gryphons? Anyways, the soldiers riding them are dealing good damage, but still, we’re dealing too much to the lower Houou.

At this rate, taking them out together will be difficult.

“Hold back a bit more. Or else, we’ll kill it first! We need to match our timings as best as possible!” (Naofumi)

“Got it!” (Ren)

“Yes!” (Raphtalia)

I caution the people on the front line, as I deploy my First and Second Float Shields to block its attacks, as I continue pinning it down.

We just have to contain our DPS, and accumulate damage on the High Altitude one.

“!? Naofumi-sama, Houou’s Stamina is recovering.” (Atlas)

“Ku… how troublesome.” (Naofumi)

“KYUIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!”

「Meteor Shield」!

The Higher Altitude Houou takes in a deep breath of air, and lets out a breath like a red laser.

Just before it hits, I deploy my Meteor Shield barrier with me at the center.

“Wah!” (Firo)

“Kyua!” (Gaelion)

The people fighting it up close barely manage to avoid it. The breath was directed at us below.

“UWAAAAAAAAAH!”

A whole unit is blown away as if they were merely toys.

Damn... it was hiding an attack like that.

“It sucked my magic! The attack the lower one just used sucked the magic of the ground squadron, and the higher one used it to power its attack!”

But he made a grave mistake.

My Spirit Turtle Shell has C Magic Snatch.

After withstanding the blast, a bullet of magic flies out of my Shield towards the lower Houou.

But... before coming into contact, the bullet vanishes.

Getting back magic from it is impossible?

And I was able to tell when I was holding it, but Gravity Field doesn't work either.

How much will you trouble me?

“Uu...”

“To those who took damage, get treated immediately! 「All Zveit Heal」! If

you die, you'll get controlled by the enemy! Rear Supports, we need assistance." (NAofumi)

On my order, the support squad runs forward, and provides relief to those that survived the impact.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 303 – An Unforgivable Flash

As always, the problem is his absorption ability.

The Spirit Turtle Shell cannot stop the drain of MP.

The Barbarian Armor has Absorb Resist (Medium), so luckily, my magic didn't fall to zero.

… I can't deny the possibility that he can absorb SP as well.

I could change to the Soul Eater Shield with Drain Null, but then my defense would drop.

It's not that I wouldn't be able to manage, but I think my Spirit Turtle Shell was just barely able to take that last attack.

I don't have to rely on Wrath yet… but I don't know what option to choose.

Hmm?

The Lower Level Houou has regenerated itself. Its damage is gone.

Oy… could it be that whenever this attack is released, its recovery hastens?

I turn my eyes to the higher one.

That one seems that it'll take a while longer before it fully recovers, but this is an annoying ability.

“Cut at it before it can heal itself!”

“Yeah!”

“I'll try.” (Itsuki)

On my orders, the attacks resume.

Everyone releases their strongest attacks, and the Houou in front of my eyes gets visibly weaker.

There's a large difference between the Spirit Turtle battle, and this one.

That one took forever, but this one doesn't seem that it'll take too long.

That troublesome attack is… dangerous, but I'll try withstanding it with my Soul Eater Shield.

I instruct the supports to cast Fire Resistance periodically.

Good, I hold down Houou, as I pop a Lucor Fruit in my mouth to recover my magic.

And I cast All Revelation Aura once more after it wore off.

“Master~” (Firo)

Firo looks upon me from above.

“I need more power~” (Firo)

“Got it, come down!” (NAofumi)

“Yeah!” (Firo)

I control the Filo Rial Familia parasiting off of my body, and toss one at Firo.

The thrown ball of fluff sticks to Firo.

And it transfers its power to Firo.

“Thank you~” (Firo)

Firo spreads out her feathers, and rushes at the Higher Houou.

… Right.

Can't I do this to the Filo Rials supporting us in the rear?

By what I've seen, Filo's followers like… Piyo, was it… are in the back casting support, so if I give them these Familia… their output should increase. But that's only if it works.

“Pii!”

As if sensing my intent, the Familia exit my body, and run towards Piyo at a high speed.

After a while, an Icon besides Firo's popped up in my vision.

Good, this one's for regulating magic.

Now it should get a little easier.

Next is… Should I use Come on, Raph?

I slowly look at Raphtalia.

“What is it, Naofumi-sama?” (Raphtalia)

“Come on Raph…” (Naofumi)

“Didn’t you already bring them with you!?” (Raphtalia)

Yeah, that’s right.

There’s no point in increasing their numbers at this point. And My SP will go down.

What’s more, I can’t have those guys get killed off for no reason.

Do I have anything to deal a finishing blow?

… yeah.

“Gaelion!” (Naofumi)

“Kyua?”

“Grab Ren, and go attack the higher altitude one.” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi, are you sure?” (Ren)

“We have enough firepower here. Go assist in weakening that one. Once you think that one’s about done for, release a skill in this direction.”

(Naofumi)

“Got it.” (Ren)

In accordance with my words, Gaelion and Taniko descend.

I hope this leads to a quicker resolution.

Its recovery is annoying, but taking care of the higher one is tougher.

The lower one has a higher recovery rate, but it’s not that strong, it seems.

Ren hops on Gaelion, and flies off.

And wait… The higher one has powerful magic, so perhaps it’s weak to physical attacks.

The Queen and Sadina’s large scale magics didn’t have much of an effect, so that’s likely the case.

In this case, there’s the chance that the one below is weaker to magic.

Perhaps she sensed that I thought of something. Shadow appears before me.

“By the Queen’s analysis, we wish to try hitting this one with covenant magic-gojaru.”

Oh? If it isn’t the one I know. Where did she go?

But I can figure that out later.

“Got it! Everyone separate from me! A large Scale Magic is headed this way.”

(Naofumi)

“What about you!?” (Atlas)

I hear Atlas’s voice, and turn to it.

“I can stand it. When the magic is over, we’ll continue attacking again.”

(Naofumi)

“But-” (Atlas)

“I’ll be fine. More importantly, hurry and get away.” (Naofumi)

“Understood. Atlas-san, let’s go.” (Raphtalia)

“... Why are you always like that?” (Atlas)

Fohl has a fed-up expression, as he drags Atlas away, with Raphtalia.

After confirming that the forces had retreated, the Queen and Sadina face me and Houou, and activate their magics.

A tornado made of water comes down on me from the sky.

Gu... I can stand it, and it doesn’t hurt or anything. But I can’t breath.

“KYUIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!?”

The high-pressurized whirlpool lasted around 30 seconds, but I wonder if Houou took any substantial damage.

It’s sorrowful that the attack wasn’t near Ren’s level of power, but it was around the level of a light barrage from Raphtalia and Fohl.

As I thought, the lower one was weak to magic.

For now, I think I can see the ending.

“KYUIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!”

The lower one changes its body to fire, and tries rushing again.
I change my shield to the Soul Eater Shield, and stop the attack.
The attack scorches bits and pieces of my body, and I feel that I'm going to lose consciousness.

It's a hard attack to take from the front.

And even with this, I have fire resistance cast on myself, so I wonder just how hot these flames are.

After the rush ends, I take a deep breath, and wait for the supports to cast recovery magic on me.

And I check whether or not the higher one is going to fire his laser.

... Yeah. It seems that if the lower one doesn't take any magic, he can't use it.

His mouth lets off a few sparks, but nothing happens.

The problem is that the lower altitude one's recovery didn't stop, though. I guess that was unrelated.

We can do this. At this rate, we should be able to kill him.

If we just whittle down the lower one, and crush them together, we'll win.

"Okay! It'll be over soon!"

It was at the same moment I declared that.

... I would never forget the events that unfolded.

-From the very back lines, a long stream of light... something pierced the greatly weakened higher Houou.

"Wha-"

We should have waited to inflict a fatal blow, I mean, the lower one had just recovered HP, so why...

I look towards the source of the light.

It was farther back than our armies extended. Way in the distance.

What the hell was that!?

Houou's hidden skill? Or perhaps...

No, now's not the time for that.

"KYUIIIIIIIIIII"

As if it had burned away to nothingness, the higher Houou vanishes, leaving nothing but its feathers.

The remaining feathers flutter in the wind, and scatter over the land.

This is bad...

The rear magicians had just finished chanting a large scale covenant magic. Even though we know the lower one is weak to magic, we can't take it out immediately.

Having regained our senses, we turn our eyes to the remaining Houou.

"KYU-"

It suddenly stopped moving altogether.

And...

Gobo...

A distorted and peculiar sound reverberated through the air.

Little by little, the Houou's form distorted onto itself, and expanded.

Magic and heat condensed around it.

"Everyone attack it at once! Quickly, we need to kill him as quickly as possible!"

We don't even have the time to retreat. It'll blow up in seconds.

We have to kill it before that, or the area will become a sea of flame.

「Meteor Sword」! 「Gravity Blade」! 「Hundred Sword」!
「Meteor Spear」! 「Brionac」! 「First Javelin」! 「Second Javelin」!
「Meteor Bow」! 「Bird Hunting」! 「Spread Arrow」!

Without even taking a breath, the heroes let out consecutive skills.

「Erst Throw」! 「Zweit Throw」! 「Dritte Throw」! 「Tornado Throw」!
「Bagua Karma Blade Consecutive Blows」! 「First Stroke」! 「Second Stroke」!
「Third Stroke」!
「Tiger Break」!
「High Quick」! 「Spiral Strike」!
“Naofumi-sama! We have to kill it quickly! Tei!”

Atlas quickly starts pricking Houou’s vital points.

We’re truly desperate! I raise Gaelion’s abilities by equipping my Wrath Shield.

Eroding my Heart? Like I care!

Giant Dragon Gaelion seems to understand the situation. He shoots a magic breath at Houou

「Prominence Dark Nova」!

With Taniko’s assistance, he immediately releases his strongest breath.

“Pierce through! 「Shield Prison」! 「Change Shield (Attack)」! 「Iron Maiden」!”

Right after Gaelion’s breath hits him, I bind him in my Shield Prison.

Of course, I strengthened it with my SP and EP, but that is only temporary. And using all of my remaining SP, I summon an Iron Maiden. It shatters the chains of my Prison, and eats Houou whole.

“Haa… hah… ha…” (Naofumi)

I take out and drink some Spirit Water just in case. I wait for the Iron Maiden to wear off.

"D-did we do it?"

"S-somehow."

Everyone is out of breath after that extreme barrage.

I even ended up using my Wrath Shield.

With this...

Snap...

Just before the Iron Maiden was about to wear off, the maiden of steel burst.

Inside was a swelling Houou, that had gotten too large to contain.

Gu... the cooldown time is...

"Damn! We can't be killed off here."

In order to prevent further casualty, I'll stain my hands with the move that I was still recovering from.

「Blutopfer」!

I immediately chant, and release my Curse Skill.

Gu... blood spouts from all over my body.

"Naofumi-sama!?" (Atlas)

"Naofumi-sama!" (Raphtalia)

Ren, Motoyasu and Itsuki didn't have the confidence to use their curse skills without getting swallowed by their curses.

They're forbidden skills we can never get used to using, and there's no time to think of something new on the fly.

Then I just have to do it myself.

I took heavy damage, as I release my Blutopfer at the expanding Houou.

Good!

From the ground, a tiger trap that resembled the mouth of a raging dragon emerged, and closed on...

“Wha!?”

With a bang, Houou burst!

Losing its target, the trap gets enveloped by the flames.

I sway back and forth, as I step in front of everyone. In order to contain the explosion, I use the skill I thought up with Atlas, Collect.

At the moment, if we get hit by this, everyone besides me will probably die. Perhaps the Heroes will be able to stand it, but the Army and the Slaves are here too.

I can't stand down.

Where Houou was standing, is now a ball of fire as brilliant as the sun.

And it's still expanding. The ground below it scorches and melts. Nothing is left in its path.

At the same time, far, far away... the flames could be seen, even from Melromark.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 304 – A Price Too Great

I step in front of the bursting Houou. To protect Raphtalia. To protect the Heroes, and the slaves, and the Allied Armies. I stand against the flames scorching the ground before me.

I have no time to worry about the damage from Blutopfer.

I can only count on the Wrath Shield's defense power.

Perhaps the Spirit Turtle Shell would work as well, but this one has higher defense at the moment.

"UWWWOOOOOOOHHH!"

I let out my voice, as I go forward, step by step, to push away the flames coming at us.

Besides the area I defend, everything is charred black.

Gu... It's gotten past my Shield's defenses, and I feel the excruciatingly hot flames eating at my flesh.

The sense of feeling in my arms disappears, along with the pain.

My instincts scream that my body is in danger.

Should I switch to the Spirit Turtle Shell?

It has high fire resistance. I imagine it changing in my mind.

And, from the Shield... I feel something screaming out.

If I change to that shield, I still won't be able to stand this.

「Change Shield」!

I change one of my Float Shields to the Spirit Turtle Shell.

... It was burned to a crisp in no time! I deploy the Shield again in front of me to buy some time.

Even with the Wrath Shield, I'm taking this much damage.

If this attack gets past me, those behind me will be reduced to nothing but cinders.

I feel the world around me slowing down.

I guess this is the sensation you get when your life is in peril. I think I read about it in a book somewhere, once. When humans sense their lives are in great danger, their thought process hastens, and time seems to pass slower. The merciless flames from Houou keep attacking me. In order to turn everything into ash.

Barely... I'm barely containing it, but I get the feeling that only 5 seconds have passed in real time.

How long will I have to do this?

I deployed Meteor Shield long ago, and it was instantly destroyed.

There's no point in using a reflecting Shield, and my Float Shields are already out.

But by deploying my floats one after the other, I'm just barely getting through this.

What do I do?

「Dreifach Resist Fire!」

Something from behind me... is it Ren? A magic that increases my fire resistance flies at me.

I guess it isn't Revelation level because there wasn't enough time.

A wise decision.

I feel that the damage I'm taking has reduced ever-so-slightly.

But that's merely delaying the inevitable.

!?

Houou's fire's output increased.

As if to tell me there was more to come, the fire power suddenly jumps up.

The flames burn through me.

The heat seeps through the cracks forming on my Shield. My shoulder is now a nicely baked entrée.

“Naofumi-sama!” (Raphtalia)

“Naofumi!” (Ren)

“Gu…”

Raphtalia and the others call out to me.

A few of them cast recovery and support magic on me. I’m impressed they were able to muster that up in this short amount of time.

But it’s still not enough to handle Houou’s inferno.

Gugu…

I frantically put all of my strength to keeping my Shield arm steady.

The force hitting me seems like it’ll blow me away at any moment. My limbs are turning into charcoal. The HP bar on my status is unsteadily teetering into the critical zone, and I guess I’ll be burned away to nothing at this rate.

I’m impressed that the past Seven Star Hero was able to take on this monster.

Looking back, isn’t this explosion more powerful than the one on the mural?

Ku…

In ten seconds or so, I’ll be blown away, won’t I?

No, there’s a single way.

If I use that, I’ll save everyone’s life.

But if I do, I’ll definitely die…

But…

“I just have to do it!”

It happened at the same time as my scream.

Next to me, a single little girl stood.

“It’s fine. I’ll protect… I’ll fulfill Naofumi-sama’s wish.” (Atlas)

“What!?”

Me and… that girl’s brother cry out.

The girl firmly nods… she holds out her hands as she jumps forwards.

I can’t let her challenge the impossible. I immediately reach out my hand to grab her.

But my outstretched hand never reached Atlas.

Having studied defense under me, that girl… uses one of the attacks we made together. 『Collect』. She directs all of the flames towards her, and collects them. She creates a Wall to redirect them, and sends them in a direction devoid of human life.

“Atlas!”

In response to my voice, the girl’s mouth forms a kind smile.

She’s letting off an immeasurable amount of sweat… the meat on her arms has been burnt to a crisp, yet still, she uses her chi to redirect the flames… And in response to her great will, the flames obeyed.

What came next was an explosive sound strong enough to destroy my ears, and a flash too loud for me to keep my eyes open.

When I open them, the smoke prevents me from seeing anything.

“Geho, Geho! Atlas!” (TL: Sound of coughing)

I wave my arm as if to brush away the smoke. I shout out.

And I turn and ask a question.

“Are you okay! Is everyone safe!?”

The smoke clears, and behind me, I see everyone standing.

It seems that we managed to change the direction of Houou’s flames, but the flames we missed came into contact with the army, and caused large

No words can come out of my mouth... what do I do? What can I do!?

"Quickly! Leave this place to us!" (Ren)

"U-understood." (Naofumi)

"Raphtalia-san, hurry and get those two out of here! Fohl, you get back too!"

(Ren)

"Y-yes! Firo!" (Raphtalia)

"Yeah!" (Firo)

In response to Ren's stern words, I was brought to the back lines. My mind was still blank.

"Ah... ah..."

I still can't form any words.

Atlas is on the verge of death.

Looking closely, it isn't just her legs that have turned to charcoal.

Everything under her stomach stomach has been burned to a crisp.

It's amazing that she's still alive.

"Hah... ha... hah..."

I leave her to rest in a temporary medical tent, and go around treating those on the verge of death with the rest of the medics.

But the most severely wounded is Atlas.

The rest are... only those that survived made it here.

In my blank mind, I look over everything I saw and heard once more.

"Atlas! Get a grip!" (Fohl)

Fohl grips Atlas's remaining arm, and desperately starts talking to her.

Atlas responds in a whisper.

Don't waver...

What I have to do now is treat the wounded.

I need to save as many lives as I can.

I'm a hero. I'm the Hero of the Shield.

Defense, Support, and Recovery. I'm perhaps the best in the world in those aspects.

... I can't concentrate.

Even so... I can't let anybody... I can't let Atlas die.

Calm down. Concentrate, and cast the highest level healing you can.

[Revelation Heal]!

The glow of my recovery magic envelops Atlas.

But... it didn't bring back her missing limbs.

"W-why!?" (Naofumi)

Healing Magic is all-purpose, right!?

Ah, right, when I got back, the magic they cast on me healed my wounds, but it didn't seem to have an effect on Atlas.

No... It's probably healing her, but her wounds are too severe...?

Then... I take out Yggdrasil medicine from my Shield, and apply it to Atlas.

It works as an ointment, and if drunk, it can save patients on the verge of death. If I use it in all ways possible, she should get better.

But...

"WHY!?"

There's no sign of Atlas healing.

I take out my anger on a nearby healer.

"Why won't she heal!?" (Naofumi)

... She's crossed the line where healing is possible."

Rat came forward, and muttered this.

"What... do you mean?" (Naofumi)

"The fact that Atlas-chan is even living is something close to a miracle. Starting with the healers, and the Marquis's magic and medicines, keeping her alive is the best we can do. Also..." (Rat)

"Rafu..."

Under Rat's arm, Mii-kun's core cried out.

"This child also had her body destroyed as he protected everyone. He did this much..." (Rat)

"Rat-san. Is there any way you can save Atlas?" (Raphtalia)

"Can't you do anything!? Can we give her life like that Mii-kun in your hands?" (Naofumi)

"Monsters and Demi-Humans are different. If we used homunculus technology, then perhaps we could get her arms and legs to move, but that girl's also burnt up most of her organs. Alchemy isn't omnipotent." (Rat)

"This can't be..." (Raphtalia)

"Even by replacing parts, it's not enough. No matter what we do, she won't be saved." (Rat)

"That's a lie!"

I won't believe it! Never! There has to be a way!

Where!? Where is the Shield that can save Atlas's life? There has to be one. What the hell is the Hero of the Shield? What the hell is with this hero that had to sacrifice a little girl to survive...

"Naofumi..... sama..." (Atlas)

I turn to Atlas.

"Did we protect everyone?" (Atlas)

"Yeah, but more importantly, you-" (Fohl)

"Onii-sama... please bring Naofumi-sama here..." (Atlas)

"... Okay." (Fohl)

Fohl grabs me, and drags me next to Atlas.

"... I know. I have no time left, right?" (Atlas)

"What are you saying? You have as much time as there's time in the world."
(Naofumi)

On my answer, Atlas, weakly shakes her head.

"Naofumi-sama... It's fine already. Don't worry about me." (Atlas)

"Of course I would worry about you!" (Naofumi)

Right. If one Yggdrasil medicine was no good, then if I use more, I should be able to save a single life.

But my supply is limited to two. But if I just get more, then definitely.

I signal the healer to come closer, and order him to bring some Yggdrasil medicine.

"Quit it already, Marquis! I just said it, but she's past the limit." (Rat)

"We won't know if it works until we try!" (Naofumi)

"And I'm telling you because we do know!" (Rat)

I ignore Rat, and apply the second vial to Atlas.

First, rub it on the wounds...

But as I touched her skin, I noticed.

The parts that had become charcoal wouldn't come off no matter what.

"Sorry, Atlas!"

I took a knife meant for medical use, and cut off the charcoal portions.

But... still, there's no sign of her healing.

"Hah... hah..."

It seems she can do nothing but breath. She puts her remaining hand on mine.

"Please... stop already." (Atlas)

"Never!" (Naofumi)

Don't say such things in front of me!

No matter what happened, I never gave up.

Even when I was betrayed by those I trusted, even when I was called a devil, even when I was almost killed, I never gave up.

Even so... I can't give up in the face of this... this unreasonable turn of events!

"Naofumi... sama. Please understand... I can't be saved anymore. I'm the one who understands that best. Every second, part of my chi, my life force leaves my body, so... I understand." (Atlas)

"But ,even so-"

Water scatters from my eyes, which I thought had withered long ago.

"With Naofumi-sama's miraculous power, I am... here talking to you. Please... calm yourself." (Atlas)

Weakly, as if her body would crumble at any second, Atlas stroked my face.

"Hah... hah..." (Atlas)

"..."

I close my mouth, and Atlas smiles. It's a smile like one a mother would give to comfort a crying child. Using her hand, she wipes away my tears.

"Naofumi-sama, I love you more than anyone else in this world. And I said this before, right? I wanted to become your shield." (Atlas)

"... Yeah." (Naofumi)

And that means you'll accept a fate like this!?

If you died because you acted as someone's shield, do you understand just what sort of emotions the person you protected would experience!?

When I was thinking that, I understood what Atlas was trying to tell me. What she did was exactly what I was trying to do.

Using Collect to gather the flames, and release them somewhere else.

If put into practice, what would happen? I was the one who understood that best.

If Atlas didn't step in front first... I would be where she is now.

"Even so.. this..." (Naofumi)

I can't muster up anything but a cracked voice from my throat.

"I am... satisfied. Like this, I was able to use the life you saved to save yours." (Atlas)

"No, you can't die. You can't die from protecting someone like me."
(Naofumi)

That was something that I should have been doing.

It's not like I wanted to die.

If it was me, I may have survived it.

"Naofumi-sama... I don't think I can... answer that request." (Atlas)

"Why!?" (Naofumi)

I know! I already know.

But can't I pray for a miracle too?

Someone. Anyone is fine. God, I pray to you.

I don't believe in anyone, but I'll pray to you!

I'm well aware that this is a selfish request.

Even if the God of this world is the Four Heroes, even if I go against myself, if you can save the girl before my eyes, then... I...

"Naofumi-sama, please... listen to my last bit of selfishness." (Atlas)

"What? What is it? I'll definitely grant it. That's why you can't do anything like dying!" (Naofumi)

"... I wished to become your Shield. That wish hasn't changed... and... I don't want to return my blood, flesh, or soul to the earth." (Atlas)

"Eh?" (Naofumi)

The hand grasping mine moved to my Shield.

"I knew from the start I could never become Naofumi-sama's number one." (Atlas)

"What are you..." (Naofumi)

"But still, I wished for it. If at least this body can be closer to yours than anyone else..." (Atlas)

I remember the Atlas that came to my room every night.

She always wanted to be by my side.

"Even if I lose my form, please let... me be with you." (Atlas)

At this girl's goal... I trembled.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 305 – The Girl Who Became a Shield

“Quit joking around!”

I understand what Atlas is trying to tell me.
And I shake my head at it.

“Do you understand the meaning behind your words!?” (Naofumi)

“Yes… I’m well aware. And still, I ask it of you.” (Atlas)

Her face isn’t one of someone telling a joke.

I look towards Fohl.

He’s… standing still, and glaring at me.

Even when I want him to speak up here, he stays silent.

He’s gripping his fists so strongly that they’re starting to bleed, but why…

“And please allow me one more bout of selfishness.” (Atlas)

“Wha-” (Naofumi)

I return my gaze to Atlas from Fohl, and see her mustering her power to get up. She gives me… A kiss on my lips.

The first kiss I ever got from a girl… tasted like blood.

As if her power supply had run out, Atlas falls to the floor.

“I always wanted this. My wish has finally been granted.” (Atlas)

“Why are you acting love-struck in a time like this…” (Naofumi)

“Raphtalia-san.” (Atlas)

“Y-yes?” (Raphtalia)

Atlas calls out to Raphtalia, who had been watching over the exchange silently the whole time.

“The battle that I promised would definitely continue forever… It seems that it’s finally over.” (Atlas)

“No, it will still… continue forever!” (Raphtalia)

“Ufufu… for Raphtalia-san of all people to say something like that, I’m kind of happy. I think you understand, but I was always envious of you. No matter how hard I tried, I could never become Naofumi-sama’s number one. I knew.” (Atlas)

“That isn’t certain yet! Your competition with me will still… go on… and on…” (Raphtalia)

Atlas smiles upon seeing Raphtalia shed large drops of tears. And she made a speech as if she had foreseen this outcome.

“You sure are kind, Raphtalia-san. I understand why he likes you, but please listen to these words.” (Atlas)

“Not just these ones, I’ll listen to whatever words you have to offer. I’m fine with yielding Naofumi-sama once or twice, so please continue.” (Raphtalia)

“Raphtalia-san, Naofumi-sama… likes girls more than you think. He’s a normal boy. That’s why it’s fine if you… watch over him a little more.” (Atlas)

“… I know. But you’re the same, aren’t you? You can’t give up here!” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia desperately pleads with her, but Atlas is already so weakened that she can’t even tell where she is anymore. She can no longer sense the chi in the air.

That’s just how little time she had left… the cold reality was approaching. Eventually, as if she just noticed something, Atlas lets out words not directed at anyone in particular.

“Ah… that was right. Perhaps it would have been nice if I could spend my time with Raphtalia-san and Naofumi-sama together. Why didn’t I realize such a simple thing? … Thinking about it, I guess I’ve gotten another wish that will never be granted.” (Atlas)

"You'll live! If it's Naofumi-sama, you can definitely be saved!" (Raphtalia)

"Thanks." (Atlas)

Atlas slowly shakes her head, more weakly than before.

"Naofumi-sama... please notice." (Atlas)

"What?" (Naofumi)

"I was always doing my best to become number one in your heart. But... that wish was never granted." (Atlas)

"What are you..." (Naofumi)

"Naofumi-sama, you yourself... probably didn't think about it due to the wounds you bore on your heart. But become aware of it. Raphtalia-san... likes you as a member of the opposite sex. Just like me." (Atlas)

"What are you saying at a time like this!" (Raphtalia)

"If it... weren't a time like this, I know that Naofumi-sama would never lend his ears. Please believe... geho." (Atlas)

I feel Atlas getting even weaker.

Ku... If I just use more Yggdrasil Medicine, and Revelation magic, then...

"Please... promise. I do nothing but ask things of you, so let this be my last request. Please... Naofumi-sama, please realize that there are people who like you. And please answer them. It's a... promise." (Atlas)

"Yeah! I understand! I get it, so don't push yourself any further!" (Naofumi)

God in heaven... please! Please save the people who believed in me.

Even from the moment I was born, I never wished for a miracle.

I never made a wish, even when Witch tricked me, and I wasn't allowed a voice in this world.

"It's a... promise. Though I already asked for quite a bit..." (Atlas)

"I get it... I'll think about it, so..." (Naofumi)

"Ufufu... for me to be this precious to Naofumi-sama... I... was... hap..." (Atlas)

Atlas goes silent.

"At... las...?"

I frantically shake her, but she doesn't move at all. Her expression is frozen in a kind smile.

"Atlas-san!" (Raphtalia)

"ATLAAAAAAAAAAAAASSSS!"

My scream... finds no answer...

I have no idea how peaceful her mind was in the end.

Raphtalia is shedding tear after tear. Fohl just continues staring at me silently.

"..."

Atlas's life is no longer here.

What's lying here is...

I mutter at Fohl.

"Hate... me." (Naofumi)

The sister he valued more than his own life died protecting me, and I couldn't even save her... He has enough reason to hate me.

But the second the words exited my mouth, Fohl grabbed my collar, and stopped his clenched fist in front of my face.

"As if I could hate you! As if I could put your mind at ease by hating you!"
(Fohl)

"Wha..." (Naofumi)

"Atlas, you see, until the end, she loved you! For your sake, she chose to sacrifice herself! Then I cannot... hate or resent you. I wasn't able to save her either. If at the time, I had just stopped her, it would have never come

to this!" (Fohl)

"But..."

Hypothetical possibilities floated in my mind.

At that time, if I stopped her, Atlas wouldn't have died.

At that time, why couldn't I answer to her feelings?

"At that time, if we had never met, Atlas... wouldn't have died." (Naofumi)

My field of vision took a 90 degree turn, and I was sent flying.

It was only after I hit the ground that I realized Fohl had hit me.

"Don't say such things, even by mistake!" (Fohl)

"But that's the truth-" (Naofumi)

"If she didn't meet you at that time, Atlas would be dead! I was never able to raise the money necessary for the medicine to prolong her life. The next time she had a spasm, she would have died! And still... the one who let us walk freely was you! I won't permit you to say things like that." (Fohl)

"Even so... something like this..." (Naofumi)

"Don't taint Atlas's pride any further!" (Fohl)

Fohl turns his back to me.

Blood drips from his hanging hands.

He hit me, and I'm supposed to be harder than steel. He should be in pain.

The blood slowly drops on the ground.

"Atlas said it. She told me to think of the kids at the village like her, and to protect them. I have to honor her will! You are... the person I would have called my brother in law! I won't let myself hate yoooooooouuuuuuuu!" (Fohl)

Fohl's outburst echoes.

That voice... I'm not sure what power it held, but a bright light flew at him from the direction of the temple, and spun around him.

For a moment, a flash strong enough to make me close my eyes lighted the

room, but it went out in an instant... On Fohl's hands were a pair of Gauntlets.

"These are..."

They were familiar pieces of equipment...

What answered Fohl's cry was the legendary weapon.

By scheme, or coincidence? The me of yesterday would have scoffed at this development.

But the current me doesn't have the heart.

It's already too late...

"I'll definitely keep my promises to Atlas! I am... I am going to protect the villagers!" (Fohl)

Fohl ran off with tears flowing from his eyes.

To protect those on the battlefield.

I am... I am...

I sooth the sobbing Raphtalia, and... I think over the will left by the young girl that loved me.

"Please leave me alone for a moment." (Naofumi)

I hold up the empty shell that was Atlas, and I... plead to Raphtalia, Rat, and the healers.

"... Understood. But don't forget that the battle rages on." (Rat)

"Yeah, I know."

Raphtalia and Rat nod, and depart.

With a dim mind, I think about my my memories with this girl.

That night when she first came to my room.

“Because I am the Hero of the Shield, The only thing this world lets me do is defend.”

I scorned my own role as I spoke to her.

“... I know. When I look at this village, I see that everyone is being protected under Naofumi-sama’s wings.”

“Wings...”

“If all you do is protect, everyone will someday leave your nest.”

“Anyone that wants to leave can leave, and still I will protect this village.”

“But then... Who will protect Naofumi-sama?”

“Wha?”

“This is what I think. If Rafatalia is Naofumi-sama’s sword, then perhaps I could become Naofumi-sama’s shield.”

“Shield... That’s not as easy as it sounds, you know.”

(TL: This is chapter 173)

That wish was granted at the cost of her life.

That means I have to honor her last will.

If I, who can do nothing but protect, can’t grant a wish as simple as this... I would never be able to forgive myself.

Right... No matter who scorns me, no matter who abuses me, I, who was unable to protect this girl will honor my promise with her...!

“.....!”

Now, I will commit a taboo.

I bought this girl’s life, exploited her, worked her to death, and now I was going to torment her even afterwards. Why must a criminal like me feel this guilt?

I gaze at Atlas's body.

This is a girl who liked someone like me.

she unconditionally accepted everything in me.

I'm going to absorb that girl into my shield.

Panic. Fear. Despair. Lamentation.

Various emotions swirl around my head.

I can't stop the shaking in my body.

Even so, it's something I must do.

If praying that much won't bring about a miracle, if he is going to see this irrationality, and turn a blind eye... then god must not exist.

No, he's an existence that can't exist.

Like I'd let him exist!

If a god that permits this exists, I'll never forgive him.

No matter what happens, I'll kill him.

I mean, isn't it strange!?

Everything was working smoothly.

I gave ample warning.

We were going to return home without any casualties!

If that light didn't exist, Atlas wouldn't have died.

To hell with Heroes.

To hell with God.

To hell with the Wave.

To hell with...

Why the hell should I... for this unreasonable world...

"Atlas... I think I kinda understand the reason you don't want to return to the earth of this world." (Naofumi)

The body of the girl who wouldn't speak again was way too light.
But I will honor my promises.
I'll never break them.
I won't let her go to the heaven or hell of this shitty world.

"Ku...!"

The girl's body disappears into my Shield.
It was the exact same light as when the Shield absorbed a monster or an object.

—

Curse Series. Wrath Shield, Blessing!

Blessed Series. You have unlocked the Shield of Compassion!

You have fulfilled the conditions to unlock the Soul Shield!

You have unlocked the Demi-Human Series! Series Completed!

You have completed the Slave User Series!

You have unlocked the Comrade Series! Series Completed!

You have dispelled the Curse of Blutopfer!

『Blessed Series』

The Blessed Series is a series granted only to those who have overcome their curses. A powerful series of weapons.

There is a default form, and it can evolve to other shapes.

The Equipment Bonuses are based on the Shield it changes to.

Bless Series

Shield of Compassion

Ability Bonus:

...

Equipment Bonus:

Skill 「Change Shield (Attack)」 「Iron Maiden」 「Meteor Wall」

Special Ability:

Benevolent Temptation

Enchant

Blessing

All Resist

Spell Support

Along with the blind girl's disappearance... the Shield of Compassion was born in my heart.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 306 – VS Houou Final

The shield was very simple but it felt as warm and tender as the sunlight. Its stats are the highest of any of my unlocked shields.

On top of that, this shield's effect has the ability to give enchantments. My defence is rising endlessly.

And... the Slave, Demi-human and Companion series have all been completely unsealed.

This includes all of their bonuses.

In other words, all of my slaves and companions had all their abilities dramatically increased.

I change to my usual Spirit Turtle Shell.

Growing Power has been activated by Growth Up!
Spirit Turtle Shell had changed!

Increasing it any further is unnecessary.

Right now I can't afford to wait and see if it grants any bonuses.

Everyone here had miraculously finished their treatment.

The Healers are all treating it like a miracle.

...But.

As I leave the tent I look to the sky, and see the pests.

"Kyuuiiiiiii!"

What an annoying pest.

Right now I don't feel like dealing with it.

But because it is still here, the fight won't end and there won't be any

peace.

Then there is only one thing I can do.

Naofumi: "Firo!"

I call Firo who was dealing with the pests with another party.

Firo: "Yes?..."

Taking a look at my face, Firo who was worried about Atlas' condition came down with a sad look.

Until now, I never realized how kind Firo was.

I wasn't sure if it was due to Atlas or the Shield of Compassion.

It wasn't just hate, there was also feelings of kindness... both emotions were conflicting within my heart.

But I don't believe what I'm feeling now is due to the shield's effect.

Naofumi: "Take me up higher than that bastard"

Firo: "Okay...I can do that"

Naofumi: "Ah, Lets hurry up and end this!"

Riding on Firo's back, we fly through the vermin while maintaining a high altitude.

Naofumi: "Firo, time this just right"

Firo: "Yes"

"Kyuuiiiiiii"

The pests notice us and come to attack us with their claws.

To remain calm and collected would be best.

To hate the enemy in front of me, would just cloud my judgement.

However I understand the pain.

I can see how unreasonable this world is.

The wounds that were suffered... and the sorrow for the lives that were lost. But even though I know this, I mustn't get angry.

Naofumi: "Too noisy"

I catch the pests by their talons and throw them towards the ground.

"Kyuiii!?"

As we gain altitude the pests turn towards to swarms us.

Naofumi: "Firo, kick them"

Firo: "Y-yes"

Following my instructions, Firo lands a hit and the pests fall straight down. It made a great noise.

Shortly after, I jump off Firo towards the pests.

Firo: "Master!?"

Naofumi: "Firo, I'm fine, but get ready to catch me when I fall"

Firo: "Y-yes"

I give Firo those instructions as I activate Gravity Field.

Before it wasn't that effective, but as it is now I can use it.

"Kyu...Kyuiii!"

The pests desperately try to remain airborne but under the new weight there was no way they could maintain altitude.

I begin to fall towards the pests that are at a lower altitude.

Naofumi: "Firo!"

I jump before I hit the ground, and was caught by Firo.

I grab two pests as I reach the battlefield and make a declaration.

Naofumi: "Everyone! Let do this!"

Fohl: "Nao-Naofumi!?"

Naofumi: "What are you doing? Lets hurry up and kill it"

Fohl: "I understand! Tiger Break!"

It was Fohl who acted first.

I expected as much.

Right now I can understand his feelings more than anyone else...as well as his thoughts.

Of course I don't know what it is like to lose a family member.

But, I knew what kind of girl Atlas was.

Naofumi: "Don't worry about me. Let us finish this as soon as possible.

Soon we will kill it!"

Everyone: "OHH!"

The Party, who was surprised at my words, stated to unleash their special attacks.

Ren: "Naofumi, how is Atlas..."

Ren came to ask me in-between attacks.

Naofumi: "..."

I look away in silence.

Right now, I don't want to think about it.

Naofumi: "Kuh..."

Though unintentional, I let out a pained voice.

Along with the power from the Sword, we strengthen the forces.

Kiel: "My body feels...so light!"

Kiel rushes out and bites through the pests.

Kiel: "Yes. It seems like my speed is different than before."

There is a visible difference in the movement of my slaves and the military forces, as well as their attacks.

It must be due to the bonuses of the completed Slave and Companion series.

I didn't check it but there must have been a huge boost.

And, it was all thanks to Atlas.

Naofumi: "Hurry. Lets end it quickly. For all of the pain and sorrow it has caused... we need to destroy it, even by a single second faster."

The two pests try to attack me but it doesn't hurt or bother me.

Their claws and bites are pointless.

If all the enemies are gathered in one place, they can all be eliminated easily.

Ren: "Gravity Sword!"

Motoyasu: "Brionac!"

Itsuki: "Bird Hunting!"

Rishia: "Tornado Throw!"

Raphtalia: "Bagua Karma Blade"

Firo: "Spiral Strike!"

The swarm of pests are hit by the sheer power of their special attacks.

"Kyuuuuuuuu!"

As one lets out its death cry, the other begins to make a strange noise. So it is going to self-destruct.

Of course, you won't have the chance to use it.

Fohl: "Tiger Rampage!"

With Fohl's deadly strike, the enemy was wiped out leaving nothing but a pile of feathers.

Everyone: "OOOOHHHHHHH!"

The roar of victory echoed throughout the area.
Feathers float down like snow and calmly settle.

Naofumi: "Atlas...we did it"

I raise up my Shield to signal our victory.
The truth is that we should have won without any sacrifices.
I will never... never forgive that guy.

Naofumi: "Ren! You understand what's next, right?"

Ren: "Ah!"

Naofumi: "Inform the Queen. I need to make that bastard pay! I can never forgive him!"

It is very likely that he was a Seven Star Hero.
I have to find out who was responsible!

I called Firo and left to look for the source of that flash of light.
Ren also came along while riding Gaelion.
But even though we searched all day, we could not find the culprit of that attack.

Naofumi: "Damn it! Where did he disappear to!"

Ren: "Looking for him anymore is pointless. Naofumi please go on ahead and rest."

Ren came and told me this.

Naofumi: "What are you saying!"

Ren: "I'll call you if I find something. So please bear with it for now."

Naofumi: "But-"

Ren: "Please..."

Before I could argue, Ren pleaded with me.

His expression was mixed with both sadness and anger.

Ren: "Naofumi, you are are not the only one who is mad. I am also filled with rage"

Naofumi: "...I see"

Ren: "Naofumi you are the only one I have told this to. Earlier I unsealed the Sword of Rage, of course I haven't used it, since at that time I was surprised at how you were behaving."

Naofumi: "..."

Ren: "I don't intent to forgive the culprit either. But, you need some time to calm down."

It true...I need time to calm down.

I was under the illusion that I was calm but in reality I was filled with anger.

What I am feeling right now...can't easily be described.

When I was betrayed by Witch, my head was filled with anger.

Right now I should rest for a bit.

I need to calm down so I can differentiate who my enemies are and who it is I should protect.

Yes, I need to calm down the feelings in heart.

Naofumi: "...I understand. I will leave the rest to you."

I sit down at the temple as the day was ending.

The search is still ongoing.

While I was resting, like Ren asked me to, I became aware of how angry I was.

By changing to the Shield of Compassion, my anger begins to fade.

But even so it was something I could not forgive.

That is because I can understand it...the unreasonable sorrow and suffering.

After the feelings of anger had calmed down, a sense of loss had filled my heart and dominated my mind.

Raphtalia stood by me before I could notice.

Raphtalia: "Atlas-san... that was unfair. I wanted to have Naofumi-sama turn around with my own power..."

Naofumi: "I see...but right now..."

Raphtalia: "I know. I understand completely...so it is okay for you to cry"

But, Raphtalia is probably the one who wants to cry the most.

The pain of losing someone, such a feeling was represented by tears.

Naofumi: "I am not going to cry"

I noticed something along my cheeks when I said that.

Is this...tears?

Since I had left the tent, I was unaware of it, but I was crying.

And...everyone else may have noticed.

I was crying.

Naofumi: "Uuh..."

Once I became aware of it, it was the only thing I could think about.

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama..."

I had unconsciously hugged Raphtalia and burst into tears.

After my duel at the castle, I decided to stop crying.

The tears won't stop.

My tears start to overflow when I try to stop.

This was the pain and sorrow of losing someone, that I knew.

It wasn't something shameful, I realize this now.

More than anything... for the feelings of the girl who became my shield...I just wanted to silently cry.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 307 – Funeral

The next day.

After we both tired ourselves out with lamentation, I slept with Raphtalia.

(TL: No, not like that)

“These are the heroes that risked their lives to win this battle… Salute!”

In front of the castle on the land where Houou was sealed, a funeral service was being held.

Those who were lost in the battle were respectfully buried.

We had to part with several people from my village as well.

I raised them to be my pawns for war… but I wanted all of them to return alive.

Should I… stop deploying them in waves?

If I’ll have to feel like this every time, then I don’t want to send them into battle.

I quietly stood in front of Atlas’s casket.

It’s empty. Her body is… inside my Shield.

I gently place a flower on top.

Fohl follows my lead, and places one as well.

“…”

For some reason, Trash also silently garnishes the casket with flowers.

His expression is dark.

He says nothing to either me or Fohl.

But I knew.

When I retreated with Atlas to the back lines, Trash stood outside the tent the entire time.

Even though he wasn't able to help at all, what does he plan to do at this point in time!?

But taking my anger out on Trash won't accomplish anything.

Getting angry is pointless. It won't bring anything.

... I couldn't do anything either.

And I learned that Trash wasn't the culprit.

He was with the Queen issuing orders when it happened. Many attested to that.

More importantly, Trash had little reason to do it.

Based on Atlas's positioning, she would have been brought into the explosion regardless, unless I did something about it.

"... I'm going to fight it. The wave." (Fohl)

Fohl declares this at me.

"Running away... will just lead to more of the villagers dying." (Fohl)

"... I see."

So that's Fohl's answer.

If I was in his position, I bet I would fight the Waves.

For everyone's sake. For Atlas's sake.

"Niichan..."

Kiel is quite worn out. She cries as she places a flower on the coffin.

"I'll... fight too!" (Kiel)

"But-" (Naofumi)

On hearing my voice, Kiel directs eyes filled with determination at me.

"Niichan always said it! That it was a fight where we could die, that it wasn't a game. Everyone was well aware of that when they chose to fight

for you! I can't just pull back because it's dangerous!" (Kiel)

"Is what she says." (Fohl)

Fohl continues after Kiel.

"Everyone in that village fought out of love for you... Aniki. They decided to fight for you. You can't stop them anymore. Take... responsibility for what you've done." (Fohl)

"... Got it." (Naofumi)

But I don't want to have them die.

Every time I remember Atlas's words, my heart shakes.

What was I making these people do?

I never thought I was the one who didn't realize it.

In order not to have any more regrets, I...

Raphtalia just silently stands in front of Atlas's coffin.

Atlas told me that Raphtalia was in love with me.

I had pushed it out of my mind. It's not that I never considered the possibility, but I deluded myself into thinking she was just a diligent child working for me.

Atlas's will tightens around my heart.

I have nothing but regrets. They won't leave me.

She once said that she might die any day.

Then... so I don't have to feel like this anymore, should I answer those that say they love me?

What did I do for Atlas?

I took away her illness, but what else did I ever do for her?

I should have been able to give her more happiness.

... I'll stop it. This train of thought.

I'll leave if for after I do what I must. For after I know the world is safe.

-

The funeral concludes, and I address the Queen.

"Though this occasion may have given rise to many sacrifices, I am thankful for your efforts towards destroying Houou, Iwatani-sama." (Queen)

"Spare me your pleasantries. I just want to see if you've identified the bastard who shot that unnecessary attack." (Naofumi)

"... No, we have heard nothing of the culprit." (Queen)

"What about the Seven Star Heroes that were supposed to come running here? They're the greatest suspects." (Naofumi)

"... I'm truly sorry, but we still have yet to get into contact with them." (Queen)

"You sure are useless!" (Naofumi)

I'm getting pissed off.

I understand the Queen has done nothing wrong, but I can't do anything about my emotions.

"Another important matter we have to attend to is the next of the four beasts. What do you think about it?" (Queen)

"Meaning?" (Naofumi)

On my question, the Queen lets out a small sound of surprise.

"Have you not heard from the other heroes about the timing of the next wave?" (Queen)

I confirm the blue hourglass in my field of vision.

... 2 Days and 18 Hours.

Short! We have no time left!

I'm at a loss for words.

Oy, oy. The next of the Four Good Omens is... Kirin, was it?

The place it's sealed... I never asked anyone!

"According to the Hero of the Sword-sama, the beast is set to appear around Faubley." (Queen)

Faubley... Are we going to drag our current forces all the way to Faubley to prepare for it?

In less than three days?

If Firo wanted to run straight without and food or rest, I think it would take two days to get to Melromark from here.

How far away is Faubley?

"And wait, where was Houou's blue Hourglass?" (Naofumi)

"It manifested in the center of the city. According to witness reports, it just glowed blue, and there was no sand, though." (Queen)

Fumu... a sand less, blue Hourglass appeared.

That sure sounds strange.

Houou gave three months of long rest, but Kirin, only three days.

Both the turtle and the Bird moved to destroy as many life-forms as possible.

... The Four Good Omens.

The only answer I can think of right now is that the amount of lives they take extends the time to the next wave.

Those beasts were supposed to bring happiness and fortune.

So looking at the world as a whole, is this extension the fortune they bring?

Sacrifices... thinking about Atlas, and the others, I want to deny the possibility.

No, I should be denying it.

It may just be that the seal was going to break now by coincidence.

But more importantly.

“What will we do about Kirin? No, I should call Ren.” (Naofumi)

I raise my voice, and call for the Sword.

After a while, Ren answers my call, and comes towards me.

“What?” (Ren)

“What sort of enemy is Kirin?” (Naofumi)

“A monster on equal footing with Houou.” (Ren)

Kirin... I believe it was a set of two beasts, like Houou. Ki and Rin.

Is the Kirin sealed in Houou the same one I know of? The ones that would appear before kings of good virtue?

But Faubley’s under that Pig King, right?

That really doesn’t seem to be the case.

Perhaps the first time it manifested, the king was coincidentally a capable one.

But with only three days to spare, what will we do with the armies?

They were equipped to travel from the beginning, but there’s no time for weapon maintenance, and war conferences.

And what’s with this time limit? There’s no time to prepare or anything!

It isn’t even a distance easily trekked in three days, and even if we wanted to warp there, Motoyasu already erased it from his saved warp locations, so we can’t.

Is the only option to travel by land?

Dammit all.

“At the very least, the heroes should set out. With three days, I’m not sure if even Firo will be able to make it, but we have to go.” (Naofumi)

As it is, it’s a powerful monster.

Even if we can’t make it, we have to go.

Fauley is this world's largest country, so its population should be massive. If a monster that hunted life appeared in such a place, what would happen?

The answer is clear.

I have to reduce the casualties as much as possible.

Perhaps... we can beat it with just the Heroes.

It doesn't matter if I'm getting full of myself. We can only try.

If that's the case, the villagers won't have to become sacrifices.

"For now, let's warp back to the village, and set out." (Naofumi)

But we took all of the Filo Rials here to assist in the Army's transportation.

Do I have to make use of the monsters I turned into Raphs?

They do have some stamina, but they're not as fast as Filo Rials.

"Who should we take?"

"The Allied Armies have suffered heavy casualties, and moving them will be difficult. Queen, what will you do?"

"... I understand. I will accompany you with my Trash. I'll negotiate cooperation with Fauley's army." (Queen)

Fumu, she really is Melty's mother.

At times like this, she takes the initiative, and steps forward.

The Queen went to talk to the other army commanders.

It ended up that the Silt Welt generals would take charge of the Armies, and have them steadily proceed towards Fauley.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 308 – Kirin

After returning to the village by Portal, we immediately set out for Faubley.

“Firo’s carriage…”

“We had to leave it. There’s no helping it.”

“Uu…”

I can’t warp while taking something of that size along.

So Firo will have to use one of the cheap carriages in the village.

One of the other Filo Rials will carry her’s back to the village later.

“Let’s do our best.”

“Yeah”

I took whoever had high combat abilities with me.

The heroes were a given, and Fohl was included in that category now.

Raphtalia, Firo, Rishia, Kiel, Sadina, Taniko, Gaelion, and that Granny, whose combat experience is high (She apparently performed quite a bit in the previous battle, but I never saw it). Motoyasu’s three, and Female Knight were also brought along.

There’s also the Queen, and Trash. I don’t care about the latter, but the Queen will be useful in negotiating with their government.

“What sort of enemy is Kirin?” (Naofumi)

“I have knowledge of it from the game, but I can’t guarantee its accuracy…” (Ren)

Right… Ren’s right.

In the Houou battle, everyone’s info differed, and the real one was also different from all of them.

“Do you know anything, Queen?” (Naofumi)

“The tales describing Kirin? I’m knowledgeable of the legends, but… was it

supposed to be in Faubley...?" (Queen)

"It wasn't?"

The Queen is a lover of legends, right? At least from what I've seen.

Why doesn't she know about it?

Perhaps the country of Faubley intentionally concealed the fact. It's possible.

It's a country made of the blood of Heroes.

There's no way they didn't know.

"Faubley's gone through a long period of political upheaval, so I can't deny the possibility of the information dying out. They also claim to be investigating the four beasts, so you may find something in their large national library." (Queen)

National Library. I believe Melty was able to remember a bit of info from a book, but what book was it?

Ah, there were a lot of Seven Stars in Faubley, right?

I may end up fighting alongside them here.

... There may be the person who caused the incident mixed in as well.

If I find them out by how they attack, I may end up killing them.

What's more, if there are Seven Star Heroes summoned from another world,

I may be able to ask it from them.

Not that I'm expecting anything great.

Our carriages proceeded at full speed, but...

The time came, and the hourglass in my vision enlarged.

This time, it displayed a 『9』.

But that doesn't really matter.

The problem is what came afterwards.

I guess it was after about an hour.

Firo was surpassing her limits, and running at breakneck speed. We were

storming down the streets of the country neighboring Faubley.

Suddenly... the number vanished.

I stopped the carriage, and called out to the Queen, and the heroes.

"What's this about?" (Naofumi)

"What happened?" (Queen)

"Yeah, the hourglass vanished. As if the beast had already been defeated."

(Naofumi)

"Naofumi, mine's gone too." (Ren)

"Fumu..." (Naofumi)

Faubley has their own heroes.

So it's not impossible.

How many of them are there right now?

Um... Trash and Fohl are Seven Stars... what about Rishia?

Unlike Fohl's, hers has settled into a translucent state.

I really don't think it's a Legendary Weapon, so what exactly is it?

Anyways, there are five more of the Seven Stars, so it's not that strange if they were able to beat Kirin.

Then why would people with that sort of power refrain from participating in the Houou battle? It's strange no matter how you look at it.

"Queen, does Faubley have all of the other Seven Star Heroes?" (Naofumi)

"I've heard that five of them mainly operate from their lands. Of course, they also visit other countries." (Queen)

So Faubley has all of the rest.

And Trash and the Four Summoned are centered in Melromark.

It appears we were equal in numbers.

There's someone among them that I can never forgive.

The enemies summoned in the wave... It's possible that someone like Glass

appeared there as well.

If that's the case, they might be trying to get the Heroes to kill each other.

But I won't stand by false charges.

I'll deliver retribution unto the true culprit.

But...

There's one large problem.

The number on the blue hourglass is gone.

No, the blue hourglass Icon itself is gone.

In its place is the normal Red Hourglass, counting down time to the next wave.

One Week.

It's certain that something defeated the wave, be it the Seven Star Heroes, or something else. Then where did Ouryuu go?

I turn my eyes to Gaelion.

"KYUA!" (Gaelion)

Taniko's cuddling with him.

I want to somehow call true Gaelion out, but...

From the start, he doesn't come out before Ren or Taniko.

... Kirin's gone. Ouryuu's left.

Even if he is set to appear, I have no idea where it'll be.

It would be troublesome if he appeared with little warning like this time.

I need to ask for the location.

"Ren, Itsuki, Motoyasu, where does Ouryuu revive?" (Naofumi)

"Over there." (Ren)

"Here." (Itsuki)

"That way, Father-in-Law." (Motoyasu)

They each point in different directions altogether.

They're all over the place...

We can't determine its location. I never expected this.

"I-it seems we don't know Ouryuu's location." (Ren)

Ren seems to be bewildered.

Yeah.

I mean, everyone's disagreeing here.

There's no choice.

We'll put Ouryuu off 'til later. I'll get what I can from Gaelion.

"I'm going to ride Gaelion, and observe Faubley's situation from the sky."
(Naofumi)

"What about Firo?" (Firo)

"You can come along if you want. Along with Gaelion." (Naofumi)

Perhaps that was a bit forced. But since Ren and Taniko are with us, we'll have to fly up high to speak.

Taniko tries to get on him, but Gaelion rejects her, and begins beating his wings.

I straddle Firo, and we lift off.

"... And? Tell me everything you know about Ouryuu." (Naofumi)

"Sorry. I know nothing." (Gaelion)

I look towards Faubley from up high.

I see something like a speck in the distance... Is that it?

I can't tell what's going down there.

"So you aren't the dragon?" (Naofumi)

"It may be an assimilation of the Dragon Emperor cores..." (Gaelion)

Fumu... because Ouryuu's seal isn't breaking, the blue hourglass didn't appear. Can I look at it like that?

-

After I conversed with Gaelion, we stopped by a small country. To easily cross Faubley's border, the Queen stopped by the castle of said country, and came out quickly.

"Iwatani-sama, I have found out what became of Kirin." (Queen)

Well, it's not like I didn't hear any gossip on the city's streets, but hearing the Queen's, and Shadow's information is for the best.

"The Heroes in Faubley led the army, and managed to subjugate it. The damage caused was 0. Absolutely none." (Queen)

"I see... that's good."

Still, the one who killed off Atlas, and our armies may be there. Just by thinking that, I feel I need to get there immediately, and make him taste the same, no an even greater pain than that he inflicted on Atlas.

"And? How many of their Seven Star Heroes participated?" (Naofumi)

"That's the strange thing. Apparently, it was only one." (Queen)

"One...?" (Naofumi)

One, is it? There seems to be a capable person among them.

But what the hell were the other heroes doing?

They didn't even go help out with Houou. They didn't fight the Kirin that appeared right next to them.

It's as if they're useless.

"We're still going to confirm the truth. For Atlas, and the other's sake as well." (Naofumi)

“I understand. I’ve already sent messengers ahead to grant us an audience with Faubley immediately.” (Queen)

On the Queen’s orders, the country we stopped in sent messengers to Faubley.

They were on flying dragons, so they shouldn’t take long.

The problem is if we’re setting out yet or not...

“Should we rush there?” (Queen)

“Fue...” (Firo)

Firo’s collapsed on her own carriage.

She’s just fought a series of battles.

Though she claims she’s fine, she must be pushing herself.

We should rest, if only for a bit.

I bet Faubley will take a while to gather their Heroes as well, so we should rest when we have the chance.

“No, let’s rest, and recover our strength.” (Naofumi)

“Understood.” (Queen)

Like that, the third of the four beasts was defeated, and the wave’s hourglass turned red once more.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 309 – Straying Off Course

We'll head to Faubley after Firo and the others rest for a night.

Right now, we're staying in an Inn of the neighboring country. Raphtalia left to bathe in the public bath.

Tomorrow, will we have a meeting with the Seven Stars?

There may only be one there, but we still need to go in protest.

The King seems to have taken a liking to me, and he should have at least enough political power to gather the Seven Star Heroes.

The Queen already sent a quick messenger, so they might be gathered by the time we get there.

The message also contained a form of my request.

He keeps sending over those disgusting videos one after the other, so I don't think he'll deny me so easily.

But... really, who is the culprit?

That one hero who defeated Kirin probably knows of the others.

I also can't deny the possibility of someone like Glass being behind the curtain. Whatever the case, we can't let the guy who tried to take out the entire continental army get away unharmed.

Even so... I need to think of Firo, and our other beasts of burden's stamina.

Even though we're only staying a night, I feel that all of my time is being wasted. I'm irritated.

Another emotion seems to have emerged in my heart. When I'm left alone in a room, I get depressed for some reason.

I guess this is what exists between the me who only plots for revenge, and the me who can do nothing but cry tears of grief.

"What's up, Aniki?"

Fohl finished his shopping, and enters the room.

… He's Atlas's brother.

We've slept in the same bed before, though.

"Fohl?" (Naofumi)

"What?" (Fohl)

"Are you going to sleep yet?" (Naofumi)

"… Let's see. I'm a bit tired, so I guess I'll turn in early." (Fohl)

"I see. Fohl? Do you like me?" (Naofumi)

"What!?" (Fohl)

Fohl raises a strange voice as he stares at me.

… I guess he doesn't.

I mean, I'm the one who couldn't protect his precious sister.

"… I don't hate you. I promised myself that I would never hate the one Atlas loved." (Fohl)

"Then… sleep here." (Naofumi)

I point to a bed.

"Really, what's with you?" (Fohl)

Fohl makes a grandiose gesture of spreading himself over the bed.

I gently sat down on the bed Fohl was lying on, and put my hand on his back.

Ah, he smells kinda like Atlas… I think.

"HII!" (Fohl)

Fohl suddenly jumps up.

"W-what the hell do you think you're doing?" (Fohl)

"I thought I would sleep with you." (Naofumi)

For some reason, I see that girl's facial features in his.
It's makes me feel as if all that never happened.

"You bastard! Wait!" (Fohl)

Fohl's face turns pale, and he runs out of the room.

"Naofumi-chan?" (Sadina)

"...What?" (Naofumi)

I'm not sure if she returned earlier, but Sadina comes into the room with a Sake bottle in one hand.

"I heard from Fohl-chan... drink this, and regain a bit of your spirit."
(Sadina)

"I'm sorry... Alcohol just doesn't do it for me." (Naofumi)

"Ah, that's right..." (Sadina)

Before her, others have come to try and cheer me up.

I guess it doesn't matter what world you're in. People will offer alcohol to you when you're depressed.

If I was able to get drunk, I think that I would be drinking right now.

"Then will you do something fun with Onee-san?" (Sadina)

"... That's right." (Naofumi)

Atlas said she wanted me to answer to those that said they loved me...
Then I need to answer this woman who always said she harbored feelings for me.

"Naofumi-chan?" (Sadina)

"Sadina, do you like me?" (Naofumi)

"Oh my, you're asking quite an embarrassing thing. That's right. I love Naofumi-chan." (Sadina)

She wriggles her body and acts embarrassed as she answers.

"I see... then change to human form, take off your loincloth, and lie there."
(Naofumi)

"... Naofumi-chan?" (Sadina)

Sadina tilts her head, as she sits on the bed.

"Hey, human form, I said." (Naofumi)

"Ah, yes." (Sadina)

Sadina dispels her transformation, and changes to her Demi-Human form.
I lower my pant, grab her shoulders, unfasten her loincloth, and...

"Wait, Naofumi-chan, STOP!" (Sadina)

I was pushed away.

"Naofumi-chan, what were you trying to do right now?" (Sadina)

"I mean, wasn't I doing what you wanted me to do?" (Naofumi)

"... Wait a second, Naofumi-chan. Sit down there." (Sadina)

"If I sit on the ground, we can't do it, you know." (Naofumi)

"That's fine, just sit down already!" (Sadina)

What?

I feel that Sadina's mood is getting worse.

"I'll ask first, but you know there's things like atmosphere and foreplay and a lot of other things you have to take care of first, right?" (Sadina)

"Yes, I know. And?" (Naofumi)

I mean, I've dabbled my hands in plenty of Eroge.

There's no way I don't know.

Honestly, I know a lot of amazing things Sadina's probably never even

heard of.

… Not that I'm trying to brag.

"Even so, you mechanically try to do it with me. Raphtalia-chan's going to get angry." (Sadina)

"… Perhaps. But Atlas wished that I answer to you." (Naofumi)

"You see, Naofumi-chan, everyone loves you a lot. But I don't think you should go around doing that." (Sadina)

"… Really?" (Naofumi)

She gives a serious answer for once.

With someone like Sadina scolding me about my actions, I was able to regain some composure, and understand what she was trying to say.

"Naofumi-chan, I'm the same. If you wish to have fun with me, and love me, then I'll accept. If you find things too sad to bear, then I'll comfort you as a woman. But the current you doesn't seem to have any of those feelings. Though I don't think you'll go after Raphtalia because of your promise with me." (Sadina)

"Um… I think I'll wait to give Raphtalia an answer." (Naofumi)

"Hmm… It seems you have some resolution there. Good. But I'm different, right? It seems you tried to do something to Fohl-chan, but you understand what I'm saying right?" (Sadina)

"Probably." (Naofumi)

"Naofumi-chan, right now, you were thinking of nothing but making children with me. Isn't there something a little different with Raphtalia?" (Sadina)

"… Different? Fohl is… well…" (Naofumi)

Was what Atlas wished for… something else?

Didn't she want the children of the Hero of the Shield… or something?

Though I think I kinda understand.

I don't have any homosexual tendencies, but Fohl seems to have slight leanings, so I tried to push him a bit.

"You see, Naofumi-chan." (Sadina)

Sadina smiles, and puts pressure on me as she grasps both of my shoulders. I think she's acting similar to Raphtalia.

They aren't related by blood, but I guess she really is a sort of sister.

"Having children is supposed to be the result of love; the result, and not the goal. The journey is important. I think I would enjoy it if me and Naofumi-chan loved each other. Perhaps if you wanted me to comfort you, I wouldn't mind if I got pregnant as a result." (Sadina)

"Fumu... now that you mention it, that makes sense." (Naofumi)

"Even if you hate it, you think that as long as you can make the other party happy, you'll offer yourself, right now, right?" (Sadina)

"... Yeah." (Naofumi)

"Truthfully... I'm quite sure Atlas-chan didn't wish for something like that. So calm yourself." (Sadina)

My head clears from her words.

Even when I haven't found my enemy, I strayed off path to make sure not to leave any regrets.

I lost myself in the ideal of... 'As long as Sadina wishes for it.'

... That's right. Sadina's a human too, for argument's sake. Just as my heart wasn't in it, as long as her heart wasn't prepared, and she didn't ask for it, it was wrong of me to make a move.

I'm more than well aware that rape is a crime.

I was going to pledge myself to her, but as I was not the usual me, she refused. I wonder what the real me wants.

Then... what... should I do?

"I understand that you'll take responsibility, but if I accepted the current Naofumi-chan, the future Naofumi-chan would only have more regrets. That's why Onee-san will reject you for now." (Sadina)

"... I see." (Naofumi)

“I’ll warn Raphtalia-chan and the other children, so think over what you have to do again. Make sure you reflect on trying to do things to me indiscriminately.” (Sadina)

“…”

By Sadina’s warning, my thoughts began wandering once more.
Right now, I’m no good… I understand that well.
Sadina warned me out of worry for my future.

So I don’t have any regrets, I can’t lay hands on those that love me.
Or the me of the future will repent.

I regretted not doing it, so she directed harsh words at me.
I could have given Atlas more happiness, and yet…
Instead of regretting not doing it, it’s better to do it and regret… no, that’s no good, right?

“Naofumi-chan, it may be impossible for you to smile now. But slowly get back on your feet… And once you have the resolve to live trying to find out Atlas’s intentions, with me, Raphtalia, or the village children… Even Fohl. You can give us your answer. Your current determination is no good at all. I love you, so being embraced by you like this would disgrace me as a woman.” (Sadina)

She gently strokes my face, and leaves the room.
… I am… Where am I right now?
Taking responsibility… resolve…
Various thoughts spin around my head.

I am… what exactly do I want to do?
Kill the one who did this to Atlas, defeat the wave, and bring peace to the world… Then what?
I have no intentions of being buried in this world.
That feeling hasn’t changed from the start

This is probably what Sadina was warning me about.
With such half-assed resolve, what's more, with the intention of
impregnating my partner... I'm scum. I didn't even wish for it myself.
Something like that won't make anyone happy.
She didn't want me to be treated like a breeding horse, I think.
When I realize just how much she was thinking about me, my mood
worsens again.

Something was wrong with me back there. There's no way Fohl is homo...
And I can never replace Atlas.
Though I'd like to think they didn't have any twisted sibling love.

"... Yeah, that's right." (Naofumi)

I can't impose my selfishness on the villagers.
I have to live up to the expectations of those that believe in me.
But for that, I have to have the resolve to carry their lives on my back.

Now, Atlas is lending me her power as my shield.
Then when I return to my world... what'll happen to her?
I don't know, but... I guess that would be good bye.

My thoughts of going back home, and my thoughts of staying with
everyone, and answering to their feelings, intersect.
Without me reaching an answer, the night came and went.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 310 – Firearms

It happened a little before we warped to the village to set out.

On the island I once used as my base when I turned strange, it awakened. It was sealed deeply underground, along with all equipment. Little by little, the machines worked on it autonomously, and as if it were a butterfly breaking out of a cocoon, it opened its eyes. It slowly dug its way up, and breathed its first breath of fresh air.

After shaking off the dirt that coated its body, it jumped into the sea, and swam out.

As if it knew where it was supposed to be... it eventually arrived at the village I knew all too well...

“We need to get to Faubley quickly! Get out the carriages!” (Naofumi)

“Eh?... Firo has to pull *this* carriage?” (Firo)

“Deal with it! Now everyone, hurry! Motoyasu, have your three pull carriages as well! Gaelion, you too!” (Naofumi)

“Yes, Father-in-Law!” (Motoyasu)

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

Upon hearing my voice, it immediately ran to my carriage...

–

The next day. (TL: I think from the story, not from the events listed above)

“Do you think we’ll be able to get an audience in Faubley today?” (Naofumi)

“Most likely.” (Queen)

Us who had been resting in the inn met up with the Queen, who was staying in the castle.

“The other side also says they’ve finished their preparations to greet us, so there shouldn’t be any problems.” (Queen)

“I see. So they managed to gather the Heroes.” (Naofumi)

By what command do they move?

Only one participated against Kirin. I don’t get how they work.

Aren’t they supposed to be fighting for the world?

The carriage bounced up and down as we proceeded forward. The roads changed to stone pavement at some point in time, but that doesn’t really matter.

“Ren, what do you think the otherworlders like us are thinking? Apparently, they didn’t participate against Kirin.” (Naofumi)

Itsuki’s silently and expressionlessly staring in the carriage, and Motoyasu only looks at birds, so conversations like this won’t get through.

So I tried asking Ren

“There are a few possibilities.” (Ren)

“Well, yeah.” (Naofumi)

“The first is that they don’t care about the wave, and that they abandoned their mission.” (Ren)

“I really sympathize with that one.” (Naofumi)

If I was only thinking about myself, then that wouldn’t be a bad move.

It isn’t strange for someone to drop out of protecting this crappy world and go into retirement.

Honestly, I also think it would be best off falling to ruin.

But thinking of it as Raptalia and Atlas’s world makes me protect it a bit more.

“Next is they thought the Hero they sent to Kirin to be capable enough, and just left the problem to him…” (Ren)

“If they can just push their problems onto that guy like that, I have a bad premonition of what’s to come.” (Naofumi)

I don’t think someone who was happily summoned to this game-like world would let an event like this go.

Is it that? They really place their faith in one single person that much?

“Hmm… there’s also the possibility that they were too focused on level-grinding to care.” (Ren)

“Ah…” (Naofumi)

I guess there are players who focus on their levels, and ignore events as well.

They seclude themselves in remote areas, or something.

If that’s the case, it would be exceedingly troublesome. For the world.

But if I look at these heroes gathered here, I guess it’s not impossible.

“Rafu~…”

Hmm?

I hear a familiar voice calling me from afar.

“Did you just hear something?” (Naofumi)

“No, nothing.” (Ren)

“Firo.” (Naofumi)

“What?” (Firo)

“Stop the carriage.” (Naofumi)

“Okay, got it.” (Firo)

We stop, and I strain my ears.

“Ta~li~”

There’s really something here.

Ah!

When I checked the bottom of the carriage, I found a single Raph holding onto the axel.

When our eyes meet, the Raph seems to give up his grip, and fall to the ground. It crept out from underneath the carriage.

I don't know why, but it was hiding.

"Did something happen?" (Raphtalia)

I hear Raphtalia dismount from the carriage.

"I heard a Raph."

"I'm surprised you could hear that. So..." (Raphtalia)

I hold up the Raph, and show it to Raphtalia.

"Did it follow us here?" (Raphtalia)

"Seems like it... wait...!?" (Naofumi)

When I was patting it, I realized.

"Who is this? He isn't one of the ones from the villiage." (Naofumi)

"You can tell them apart!?" (Raphtalia)

"Yeah, from their feel, and their cries." (Naofumi)

"When did you develop such an..." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia stares at me with a questioning expression.

Isn't it fine? They all have childish cuteness.

It's like they're a large litter of kittens born of the same mother.

If you live around them long enough, you should at least be able to tell them apart.

Anyways, the Raph looks at Raphtalia.

"Fa..."

I shut him up before he could finish.

It's not that Raphtlaia was pressuring me to or anything.

I just didn't want him to say it, okay?

"But what should we do?" (Naofumi)

"Should we portal it back?" (Raphtalia)

"Hmm..." (Naofumi)

It followed us quite a distance, so sending it back is a bit of a pain.

If we confront the Seven Stars and fail to find the culprit, we'll be going back anyways.

"Rafu?"

"It's not registered as one of my monsters either." (Naofumi)

"Rafu."

The Raph nods, and releases some sort of magic at me.

A monster seal appears on it... It arbitrarily registered itself.

There are a few things I'd like to retort right now, but I check its status anyways.

... It's surprisingly high.

Among the Raphs in my place, this one's the highest.

Specifically, it's at level 80.

What is this one?

Did a Raph venture into the wild, train itself, and choose to join me now?

It was a monster made by the strange me, so perhaps it's just easy to register them.

"Hmm?" (Firo)

Firo brings her face close to the unfamiliar Raph.

"Don't eat it." (Naofumi)

"Why does master say that whenever Firo does this?" (Firo)

"I think this is the first." (Naofumi)

"No, you said it!" (Firo)

Fumu, perhaps it was the strange me again.

"And? What's up?" (Naofumi)

"Let's see. This child is the one closest to Raphta-" (Firo)

"Rafu~."

The Raph in my hands uses its tail to block Firo's mouth.

"It's a secret?" (Firo)

"Rafu~."

"I see." (Firo)

It seems that these beasts have come to an understanding.

But... its fur feels really good.

It may be the best of all the Raphs I've held 'til now.

They're monsters based off of Raphtalia, so they feel similar to Raphtalia's tail.

But this one's feel is similar but slightly different. It's strangely nice.

... What is it? Perhaps this is my ideal-

"Naofumi-sama?" (Raphtalia)

"What?" (Naofumi)

"You appear to be forming strange ideas as you're patting it." (Raphtalia)

Fumu. I got off track there.

Now should I bring it, or not. I believe that was the predicament.

"For now, there's no problems in taking it. I mean, its abilities are relatively high." (Naofumi)

"Rafu~"

"... I see. I understand." (Raphtalia)

"Nice meeting you, small Onee-chan. Or perhaps it should be... Raph Princess?" (Firo)

"Please don't call it that. Why princess!?" (Raphtalia)

"So princess is no good. Then how about Raphtalia MKII? Or how about Raph Queen?" (Naofumi)

"Why!? What's that supposed to mean?" (Raphtalia)

"Really? Then I guess Raph-chan is fine." (Sadina)

Sadina gets off the carriage, and names it.

Raph-chan...

"Rafu~!" (Raph-chan)

"Well, I guess that's fine." (Naofumi)

"... Understood. I have gotten an insight into Firo's and Naofumi-sama's naming sense." (Raphtalia)

Her reactions a bit unexpected.

"Rafu~" (Raph-chan)

Pat. Pat. Pat.

"Make sure not to pat it too much." (Raphtalia)

"Yes, yes." (Naofumi)

"Tali~" (Raph-chan)

But what's the deal with this one?

Its cries differ from time to time.

"Riya?" (Raph-chan)

-

We get on the carriage, and I continue to pat Raph-chan. The city scenery around me grows more and more modern as we progress. The Cityscape gradually steals my attention.

Ah, by the way, the 『Chan』 isn't a suffix. It's part of his name.

I guess if you were to call him properly, it would be Raph-chan-chan.

No, no, no...

"What?"

I'm a bit curious about the city's prosperity, and... I guess you would call it Steampunk. I see various car-like things running on what looks like steam-based engines.

What's lined in the shop are... guns?

It looks like Faubley is quite a modern place.

Motoyasu said he saw a car in this world before, but the technological growth here far exceeded my imagination.

Ah, there's a genuine car. It looks old fashioned.

It gives off the feeling of one driven by a famous novel's detective, or something of the sort.

"Guns. It looks like being shot with one of those is no joke." (Naofumi)

"Does Iwatani-sama have an interest in guns?" (Queen)

"It's not like I don't... I was just thinking of how different this place was to Melromark. I think that you would lose if we waged war." (Naofumi)

"Against the guns?" (Queen)

The Queen looks over at the weapon shop, and turns her eyes back to me. What is she so curious about?

Guns are quite fatal where I come from.

"Isn't that right? I mean, won't bows lose against them?" (Naofumi)

"I don't think guns are that powerful weapons." (Queen)

"... Really?" (Naofumi)

“Yes. Quite a few summoned heroes propose them as weapons, but most of their attempts failed.” (Queen)

So some otherworld Heroes thought they would use their advanced knowledge to cheat?

Or something like that?

“Why?” (Naofumi)

“I think that Hero of the Bow-sama over there understands.” (Queen)

I call out the spaced-out Itsuki from the carriage.

“Itsuki, what do you think about guns?” (Naofumi)

“Meaning?” (Itsuki)

“The Queen is telling me that they aren’t that powerful of a weapon.”
(Naofumi)

“Let’s see… if someone of high level uses one, it would be troublesome… I think.” (Itsuki)

???

I don’t get what he’s saying.

“Naofumi-san, while this is reality, we also have something called Status, right?” (Itsuki)

… Hmm?

“The conclusion is that firearms probably aren’t as powerful as they were in the Heroes world.” (Queen)

“Bullet speed is also effected by Status, and there are various problems involving reloading, and regulating gunpowder, and the like.” (Itsuki)

The Queen nods at Itsuki’s answer.

“Yes, there’s the danger of the enemy discharging the bullets with magic, and even if you get to fire, you can’t rely too much on the firepower unless your level is high.” (Queen)

Ah, I see.

I neglected taking Status Magic into account, and simply assumed they were stronger.

According to Itsuki, the momentum of bullets is also effected by Status.

Guns are good because they’re supposed to have the same firepower regardless of the wielder.

If you take away that point, I guess they aren’t as useful as in my world.

Hmm, they’re letting people practice over there.

A child is holding a gun, and aiming at a target.

Perhaps she noticed me concentrating my attention. Firo stopped walking.

The trigger was pulled.

With a bang, the gunpowder burst, and a familiar and unique sound entered my ear. The child threw his arms up from the recoil.

… Why is the bullet so slow?

I can see it moving. Perhaps at around the same speed as an arrow. From my experience, isn’t it supposed to impact almost immediately following the shot?

“Using gunpowder, you can definitely accelerate bullets, but the damage isn’t particularly high. In comparison to a bow, its maintenance and ammunition costs are higher, so they aren’t really used outside of Faubley.” (Queen)

“So that’s how it is.” (Naofumi)

“And since fire magic can discharge the shells, if you want to attack at long distance, most would use a bow, magic, or a throwing weapon.” (Queen)

"This is based on my game knowledge, but if you train, you can get quite strong. But I wouldn't call it the strongest weapon or anything." (Itsuki)

Itsuki answers without any visible interest.

Well, in the Net Games I've played, the treatment of Guns has always been a bit strange.

Most of them have the attack power of them fall far behind the sword.

Even though this is reality, it is also a Fantasy World. I'm once again reminded of that fact.

So bows also have the merit of being easy to restock ammo.

And because of all this, gun technology doesn't improve.

"So even firearms are subject to status." (Naofumi)

"Yes, range is also... if you shoot from too far away, the output drastically drops." (Itsuki)

"Does artillery work by the same principle?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah, there is research underway towards the development of magic-firing cannons, but it would be much simpler, and quicker, to just cast the magic yourself." (Queen)

"I see." (Naofumi)

"Artillery and catapults can have quite a bit of output if they're used by people with high levels, so they're often brought forth in war, though." (Queen)

They're dependent on user ability.

So if a class-upped high-level general were to light the fuse on a cannon, its output would drastically increase.

And if Itsuki used one, would it be strong?

I think it falls under the bow category.

I don't see where Status starts and stops. What's effected by it, and what isn't?

It seems a bit complicated.

I've been participating in waves as if it were natural, but I never found it

strange.

Then Bows and other weapons also take effects from Status.

... Of course.

However the outputs of Bows and Guns don't differ greatly.

Since Itsuki's the Hero of the Bow, can he not use firearms?

He should be able to use crossbows... I'll have him try it out.

As if he sensed my intention, Itsuki nodded, and left for the Weapon Store.

With this, I hope he gets a bit stronger.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 311 – Genius

Itsuki finished his copying, and returned.

Well, it's not like he can put those weapons to use yet. He'll have to strengthen them.

As we keep the carriage on course, we slowly draw near a castle much larger than the one in Melromark.

White dove-like monsters fly in the airspace above the structure, giving it a resolute fantasy-ish feeling.

If I had been summoned here, I would have been greatly moved by this scene.

It's more grandiose than Melromark, and it seems that living here isn't too bad.

If you think about it, this world is more medieval-ish than it is medieval. In those days, large cities like this one would have terrible sanitation. I've heard that waste matter was simply dumped out windows back then. High heels were apparently created to avoid stepping in such matter, but I wonder if that's true.

Unlike that, I don't see any lack of hygiene here.

Plumbing seems to have already been perfected here.

Though I guess the villages on the edges of the country should still be rural.

This area's been made with the knowledge of different worlds.

Zeltburg seemed to have bad public order, but this one seems more like a modern metropolis, or more like...

"Now that I think about it... it seems there's less of a difference in treatment between Demi-Humans and Humans here." (Naofumi)

Because of our efforts, Melromark is currently working to rid itself of Demi-Human discrimination.

But it's not like it'll settle in immediately, and I don't feel that any of the Demi-Human adventurers or merchants in Melromark are aiming to take permanent residence there.

Of course, there are plenty of Demi-Humans in the village on my territory, but Faubley truly seems to have... no discrimination.

I rarely see Demi-Human and Human children playing together, so the sight is quite fresh.

"That's right. I'd like to follow their example." (Queen)

The Queen looks over the scene.

Because of me, the country's Demi-Human conditions are gradually improving, but Demi-Humans in my territory have started discriminating against Humans too.

Oh?

We just passed by a large church.

It had an impressive emblem displaying four weapons out front.

I guess it's a Four Hero Church.

The churches near my place also have that emblem.

Next to it is another building, with clock-like circular plate hanging over the door. Around the edge of the clock, the shapes of various weapons are carved.

"That one is a Seven Star Church." (Queen)

The Queen points to both churches.

"Its altar contains various devices from past heroes. The proof of their existence is enshrined there." (Queen)

"Was that the stuff the Three Hero Church used?" (Naofumi)

"Yes, it seems they secretly swapped out fake items, and took the real ones

from here.” (Queen)

“Hmm…” (Naofumi)

After the audience, perhaps I’ll pay a visit.

Though I might not get a chance depending on what I find out there.

“See, you can see it even from here.” (Queen)

“Eh?” (Naofumi)

Saying that, the Queen points her finger towards the stained glass above the emblem.

When I concentrate my eyes, I can make out four glass symbols above the first emblem, and seven above the second.

Each symbol glows with a strange light.

But the Seven Star stained glass is… a little strange, isn’t it?

There’s a single area that’s heavily chipped…

How should I say this? It looks like Pa○man, where only a single segment’s been chipped away.

Still, the seven symbols shine brilliantly.

“Until recently, only six of them were lit, but as the Hero of the Gauntlet was selected, the seventh one finally appeared.” (Queen)

Scholar-like people in front of the church are offering prayers as their eyes dart towards us.

They embarrassingly turn their gazes to the heroes inside of the carriage before breaking eye contact.

Motoyasu is in another vehicle, but it seems nothing’s happening to him. If the fact that we were heroes came to light, I think that these people would jostle us around, so I keep quiet.

“Heroes… Faubley has five of them, right? I’m surprised Silt Welt and the other countries permitted that.” (Naofumi)

“Strictly speaking, they don’t own them, but are merely being aided by them. So I guess you could say their allied to this area.” (Queen)

“Hmm…” (Naofumi)

“Silt Welt also has a Seven Star weapon, you know. That would be the Legendary Claw. The wielder is a Demi-Human native to this world.”

(Queen)

Three were summoned, so two of the Heroes in this country should be native to this world.

“And the Cane is Melromark’s?” (Naofumi)

“Yes.” (Queen)

The Queen pokes Trash.

He quietly nods, and looks over at me and Fohl.

I don’t sense any motivation or ambition from him.

“In the past… The previous Hero of the Cane fought to the death with Trash for the right to wield it, though.” (Queen)

“No, I don’t really care.” (Naofumi)

I have no need for Trash’s backstory.

I’ve heard more than enough about him.

“Because of Iwatani-sama, I was able to get all sorts of information about the Hero’s legends from the generals of the Silt Welt army.” (Queen)

“I see…” (Naofumi)

“First, you understand that their country worships the Hero of the Shield, right?” (Queen)

“Well, yeah…” (Naofumi)

I mean, people do come over to pay tribute to me.

I seem to be the only hero that gets that high of a treatment.

“Anyways, I heard their legends, and realized a certain something.”

(Queen)

“That being?” (Naofumi)

I know that legends are apparently this Queen’s hobby.

Melty also likes to talk of them.

And her love of Filo Rials apparently stems from the Queen telling her of their legends.

Forest of Illusions, was it? (TL: Chapter 65)

“Of the Four Heroes, the ones who were active in their country were the Bow and the Shield. Similarly, I also heard of the Seven Star Legends they knew of. Specifically, the Whip, Claw, and Hammer.” (Queen)

Hearsay, is it?

Well, the Shield and the bow do have fundamentally good compatibility. And the claw is currently residing in their country.

“What I realized from reading into their legends was that Humans rarely ever made an appearance.” (Queen)

“Well, it’s a Demi-Human country, right?” (Naofumi)

“That’s true, but the older the legends, the fewer humans, besides the summoned heroes, make an appearance.” (Queen)

The older they are?

“Then the newer stories have more human interaction?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. I think that finding the meaning behind this fact may prove to be interesting.” (queen)

Fumu… Old Demi-Human tales are devoid of Human characters.

By that same logic, perhaps old human ones don’t have Demi-Humans.

The Human side mainly has tales of the Spear and the Sword, I guess.

“A similar phenomena takes place in Melromark. Strictly speaking, in the books left by the country that would one day become Melromark. The farther in time you go back, the less you hear of Demi-Humans.” (Queen)

“Are they mostly stories of the Spear and Sword?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, the opposite of Silt Welt. Inversely, the legends we have of the Bow and Shield are few in number.” (Queen)

It truly is strange.

It's not like Melromark and Silt Welt are separated by Sea, River, or Desert.

Could it just be that they had little cultural exchange?

I mean, in truth, the country of humans, and the country of Demi-Humans have a language barrier right now.

Because of the legendary weapons, the Heroes can understand all speech, but in the past, Raphtalia was troubled because she didn't speak the language of Demi-Humans.

In my world, I heard that the language barrier during the Meiji Restoration turned out to be quite troublesome too.

Because of that, Japan was tricked into signing an unfavorable treaty, or something. At least, according to history.

Was it Middle School, or High school? Where did I learn it? I don't really remember.

“Isn't it just a difference in their cultural sphere? They didn't expand, so they never met, or something?” (Naofumi)

“That is the current established theory. Anyways, both sides appeared in this world around the same time, and lived Neolithic lifestyles constantly fearing attacking monsters. In our country, Demi-Humans were categorized as monsters, and in theirs, Humans were treated similarly.” (Queen)

Until they could come to understand one another, they each thought the other was a race of monsters. So they didn't include them in their stories. That sounds possible.

"But... the rest is just my speculation, so please wait a little bit for me to find concrete backing for it." (Queen)

"You've already made me curious. What is it?" (Naofumi)

"Even if you tell me that... just wait a while, okay?" (Queen)

I follow the Queen's eyes, and find that we're in front of the castle.
I guess we don't have the time for a long story.

"Then let's finish the entry procedures." (Naofumi)

The queen nods, and calls out to the gatekeeper.

"You're the Queen of Melromark, and the Heroes, correct? I've already heard... go ahead!"

We already declared we were coming, so the gatekeeper easily lets us through.

"...?"

Fohl looks over the scene, and tilts his head.

"What's wrong?" (Naofumi)

"No..." (Fohl)

I look back to the gatekeeper.

He's seeing us off with a smile? What's wrong with this scene?

"Is it my imagination? I sensed something was off somewhere." (Fohl)

"Really?" (Naofumi)

The keeper happily beckons us in.

I do find it suspicious, but if I'm too doubtful, I won't be able to get anything done.

The carriage enters the castle, and the gate closes behind us.

“Should we park Firo in the stables before we proceed?” (Naofumi)

“You can just leave the carriage in the courtyard.”

“I see.” (Naofumi)

We stop the carriage, and enter the interior of the palace.

Oh, it’s grander than Melromark’s, and it gives off more of a dignified feel.

The difference in the width of the passages is quite great.

It isn’t this world’s most powerful country for nothing…

A red carpet extends endlessly in every direction, and before us is a flight of stairs.

I feel we’ll get lost if we stray.

There also seems to be a path to the basement, but I guess that one’s to the dungeon.

Melromark has one too.

We’re guided as a large group as we climb the castle.

“Oh, right. What sort of people are these Seven Stars?” (Naofumi)

I may be able to tell their personalities if I meet them, but I should at least know of their rumors.

It would have been best to ask earlier, but I don’t have another chance anyways.

“Then shall I speak of the Hero of the Whip, the one who participated in the Kirin battle?” (Queen)

“Is the Whip from this world?” (Naofumi)

“Yes.” (Queen)

The Queen starts explaining as we walk.

“First, the Hero of the Whip was born into this world a rare super geniuses.” (Queen)

“Born as a genius?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, around once per generation, special people come around who greatly reform this world’s technology, commerce, magic, and many other fields.”
(Queen)

“Hmm… what a peculiar phenomenon.” (Naofumi)

“He was born into a noble family that served the Faubley royal family, and he managed to master the art of magic at the young age of three.” (Queen)

… I guess geniuses exist in every world.

So someone like that was selected as a Hero.

Wait, wasn’t Trash supposed to be some sort of master strategist in the past, or something?

Fohl is also… Among Demi-Humans, his battle prowess is top notch, and he’s a member of one of the strongest Demi-Human races.

Is that sort of strength a criterion for selection?

“And when he was five, he reformed our process of making paper, and he rapidly revived the industry for book-making in this world.” (Queen)

Five?

Well that’s something.

… Itsuki matches the Queen’s pace, and starts walking next to her.

Well Itsuki was born into an Esper world with half-assed abilities, so he may have a few things to say about a super genius.

“Because of his overwhelming talent, he was constantly surrounded by praise. At seven, it was alchemy. He absorbed the knowledge of mechanics, and various magical fields, he graduated at the top of Faubley’s best academy, and left to be an adventurer. He quickly made his name as an S Rank, he won the martial arts tournament in Shield Frieden. Finally, just before the wave hit, he was selected as the Hero of the Whip.” (Queen)

“A stereotypical genius, I guess.” (Naofumi)

“Currently, he is researching transportation, I hear.” (Queen)

The Queen points out of a window in the corridor.

Hmm? Something's flying this way.

I thought it was a dragon, or some sort of flying beast, but... is that an Airplane?

"He made that?" (Naofumi)

"Yes, a design left by past Heroes. A way to fly without using Dragons, Gryphons, or any sort of Magic. He's doing research to put that technology to practical use." (Queen)

Yep, that's a genius alright.

... What is this? For some reason, this sounds quite familiar.

But where did I hear it before?

I think it was a long time ago.

Even before I came to this world... no, that's impossible.

But still, I feel that someone told me something similar before.

Hmm...

I feel irritated, as if something were stuck in my teeth.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 312 – Stolen Power

“A genius, you say? I can’t say I like the sound of that.”

The Granny uses this opportunity to enter the conversation.

First Itsuki, and then this old woman. These people sure love listening in on other’s conversations.

But why does the Hengen Musou Granny hate geniuses?

“…Why?” (Naofumi)

“The Hengen Musou style was brought to ruin through internal discord caused by such a genius.” (Granny)

“Is that so?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. There was a certain talented individual who came under the impression that he was the one worthy of ruling the world, and our teachings forbid such ways of thought.” (Granny)

“Hmm…”

I guess you can find them everywhere.

This is a bit late, but are there any decent people in this world?

With the way things are going, I don’t have high expectations of the Whip Hero.

“It’s said that geniuses govern the prosperity and decay of civilization.

There’s always one or two present at the turning points of history. The Hero of the Whip has to shoulder everyone’s expectations and worry as he does his work.” (Queen)

And as we were talking, we reached the audience hall.

Is that pig king here?

I really don’t want to meet him, though.

Saying, ‘Oh, Hero of the Shield-san, we finally meet,’ he’d close in with his greasy body, and… I’m getting goosebumps.

... I turn my eyes to the throne, and see a young man I've never seen before sitting atop the throne. He has a crown on his head.

If I were to describe him in one word, I guess it would have to be 'Bishonen.' His face is well built. I think that his looks are in order, at least. His hair is gold, and his eyes are blue. He looks like a stereotypical foreigner, but... the impression his eyes give off is a little strange.

It's unpleasant, or should I say, they're emitting a peculiar something that I haven't felt from anyone else in this world.

He closely resembles the old Motoyasu. Under his calm and refreshing atmosphere, I sense some deep ulterior motives.

And like that, he looks down on all of us. Something's pissing me off. I don't know what, but for some reason, my mind starts to wonder whether or not he's an enemy.

His clothing consists of a rough jacket and pants.

Since the city is quite modern, it doesn't seem too out of place, but isn't something off?

Under his crown is a bandana. It doesn't fit the look at all.

His hair is cut short.

"Good job leading them here."

"Sir!"

The soldiers who led us here close the door behind us.

I'm also reminded of the old Itsuki. Is it the look in the soldier's eyes...?

"Kyua?"

Gaelion, who's wrapped in Taniko's arms, lifts his head up and looks around.

"Hmm?"

At the same time, Firo tilts her head.

“If it isn’t the Hero of the Whip, Tact-sama. Where is the king?” (Queen)

So his name’s Tact?

This is the super genius… I can’t judge him by his appearance. I thought he would look more studious, but, he’s without a doubt, a Bishonen.

“The King? Ah, that guy. Yeah, I already killed him.” (Tact)

The Hero of the Whip speaks with a nonchalant tone. Even the Queen loses her calm composure. Her face is colored with confusion.

“… Could it be that I misheard? Please repeat that.” (Queen)

“That trash had no right to live, so I had him disappear from the world. The only thing he had going for him was his craftiness, so dealing with him was a bit of a challenge.” (Tact)

On his words, everyone, including me, raises their guard.

“… An insurrection? This is the first I’m hearing of it, though.” (Queen)

“Of course it is. I ordered the people of the castle into silence. And now, Melromark’s Vixen, you’re also not needed in this world!” (Tact)

Tact’s hand lets out a strange light.

He’s going to release something!

I immediately step in front of the Queen and hold up my Shield.

「Vanzin Claw」!

Claw!?

Yes, in Tact’s hand, an ominous, black claw settles into place. And a familiar light shoots out, collides with my Shield, and… pierces straight through it.

“Wha-”

It continued in a straight line through my left shoulder, and finally, it pierces through the Queen behind me.

Immediately following, an intense pain flows through my body, and blood flows out of my wound.

“Gu…”

Everything’s happening in slow motion. I turn my eyes to my Shield… and the Queen.

It seems his attack only hit the two of us.

-I perceive everything changing around me.

The first to move are Raphtalia, Fohl, and Female Knight. They concentrate Chi in their legs and run towards their enemy.

Next is Firo, Gaelion, and the Granny.

Finally, Raph-chan, Kiel, Sadina, and Taniko make their move.

Everyone enters a fighting stance.

The Granny lowers her hips, and Fohl follows suit.

Raph-chan rushes over to me.

The ones who are late to act are Ren, Motoyasu, Itsuki, and Rishia.

No, they prepared for battle at the same time as the Granny, but… the moment they saw the weapon in Tact’s hands, they froze.

“You-! You… Atlas-”

Tact dodges Fohl’s attack… no, before that, a blue shadow appears in front of Fohl, blocking him.

Standing there is a Demi-human woman. She seems to be a cross between a human and a Blue Oriental dragon.

Her hair color is blue, and it is long. Her eyes are amber, as if they are the incarnation of the harvest moon.

“Oh, what are you trying to do to Tact-sama?”

“That’s right. What are you trying to do to our Tact?”

At the same time, in front of Raphtalia… a young girl with a fox-like tail stands with magic concentrated in both of her hands.

Her hair is black and glossy. Her clothes are that of a shrine maiden.

Her face did not lose to Raphtalia’s despite her age.

“Hakuko brat.”

“Aotatsu, move over!” (Fohl)

“Raccoon wench.”

“You’re in the way!” (Raphtalia)

“How rude are you being to the ones fighting for the world… base woman…”

Let’s go, Raphtalia! We cannot allow such wickedness!” (Female Knight)

Raphtalia and Female Knight coordinate their attacks and let loose lightning-like swordplay.

“The place reeks of dog. Let’s take them out quicky.”

“Luka race… being on dry land like this must make you want to die.”

Interrupting Kiel and Sadina’s charge is a woman in a red hood, and a sharp-eyed woman with pointed teeth and ears that looked somewhat like the fins of a fish.

“What are you trying to do to Niichan!?” (Kiel)

“Ara…” (Sadina)

Trash embraces the fallen Queen and stares blankly into space.

“Ah…”

His shaking hands are stained with blood, but they maintain a firm grip on her.

“Anyone!? Someone, please cast healing magic on my wife! Quickly!”

(Trash)

Motoyasu’s three answer his call, and Midori starts chanting healing magic for me and the Queen.

“What are you doing all of a sudden!?”

Ren unsheathes his blade, Motoyasu begins casting a skill, and Itsuki pulls back his bow.

Since the situation came so suddenly, perhaps she was acting on pure instinct, but Risha threw her weapon at the curtain behind the throne, dividing the room.

I had found my hated enemy. My bloodlust begins to surge.

Injuries? Like I care.

I’m not going to fall here anyways.

I put my strength into my left foot, and forcefully raise my broken body. I glare at the bastard.

Him… because of him, Atlas… everyone…

I’ll kill him. I’ll definitely kill him!

Wrath Shield III has evolved!

It has changed to the Wrath Shield IV!

Wrath Shield IV has evolved!

It has changed to the Wrath Shield V!

Because of the Shield of Compassion, I can’t change my Shield to Wrath, but… To hell with compassion. I’ll change it anyways!

Even if it costs me my life, I’ll take out that man.

Wrath…

W-what? System Warning?

The Shield Icon seems to be getting smaller…

Ping!

A high pitched sound rings out, and... cracks spread across the Shield. The Shield attached permanently to my arm falls to pieces.

"What!?"

Isn't the Legendary Shield impossible to break!?

But more importantly, that man succeeded in breaking through my defenses and attacking the Queen behind me.

Just who the hell is he!?

My Shield withstood even Houou's flames, but he easily pierced it!

"Ah... the Shield, is it? I really don't need it, but I guess having it is better than not." (Tact)

"What are you..."

I prevent myself from toppling over, and cast healing on myself.

[Zweit Heal!]

It starts taking effect immediately.

But, it won't recover my lost blood.

"Naofumi-sama!? Are you alright!?" (Raphtalia)

"Don't mind it! More importantly, that guy is Atlas's killer! Kill him!"

(Naofumi)

I give an order with an angry voice.

Right.

That guy. The attack he used was without a doubt, the flash that took out Houou.

Its output was quite something, and as I look behind me, I see that it burned a hole through the door and continued to precede forward.

"Understood, Niichan!"

Kiel changes to her dog form and rushes at Tact.

But Itsuki stops him.

“Wait!” (Itsuki)

Itsuki grabs her by the scruff of the neck and holds her up.

“What are you doing!?” (Kiel)

“He was able to pierce through Naofumi-san’s shield. If you attack him carelessly, you’ll be taken out immediately! And with him being the Hero of the Whip, aren’t you wondering how he pulled out the Claw!? Think before you act!” (Itsuki)

No, I know that.

I take one step forward.

But I can’t get any power into my body.

I look at my wound.

I already cast healing magic, but it’s not healing at all.

Why!?

Move. Move, and kill that guy.

“Ah, I thought you were all nothing but trash, so I thought to eliminate you all by exploding the bird, but I’m surprised you all survived. But, well, you were able to grant me some power, so I guess this outcome works too.”

(Tact)

“Cut the crap!” (Fohl)

Fohl puts the Aotatsu woman into a judo lock, kicks off of the ground, and flies at Tact.

“Oh, my. Did you think that’s enough to beat me? I sure am being underestimated here.” (Tact)

“Acho!” (Granny)

At the same time, the Granny's chi is sent flying at Tact.

He easily dodges and raises his hand. And a new enemy emerges from the curtain Rishia threw her weapon at.

The hidden women take out what seem to be assault rifles and point them here.

Oy... guns are dependent on Status, right?

「Meteor Shield」!

I swiftly deploy my useful Meteor Shield.

But nothing happens. Nothing changes.

「Hundred Sword」!

「Brionac」!

「Piercing Shot」!

「Erst Throw」!

The heroes counteract with their skills, but...

“What? Shield... Prison?”

A large cage appears around Tact and blocks everyone's attacks.

“Wha-”

「High Quick」!

「High Quick」!

A large shadow appears from behind the curtain and runs at Firo.

Something collides with her at high speed.

「Fire Breath」!

「KYUA」!

「Freeze Breath」!

Gaelion and Taniko also try casting their breath, but just as with Firo, something behind the curtain neutralizes their attack.

"I won't let you get in Tact's way."

A Gryphon shouts out in human tongue and grapples with Firo.

A woman with a dragon's tail and wings, with large breasts like Rat and a pipe in hand, comes out and opposes Gaelion and Taniko.

It appears that she's the one who used Freeze Breath earlier.

"Right. I don't like you, but I agree."

"KYUA!"

The lizard woman who spewed out a breath lets out killing intent from every pore in her body and glares at Gaelion.

"Hmm. You're also a Dragon Emperor... then I can't really let you go here."

And my hated enemy, Tact, calls out to his female army.

"Everyone, don't kill the women and children. They're just being used, you see." (Tact)

"Don't make light of us, we understand."

"Yes, if they come to know Tact, they'll understand."

"Fire———!"

The gun-toting women pull their triggers at us.

Gunshots ring through the air.

Gu... ga... uu...

"Gu... ugu..."

"Ga... agu!"

"Ow..."

My body was pierced from every angle.

Why!?

I'm supposed to have the highest defense, so why am I taking this much damage?

"How does it taste? The assault of an army with the minimum level of 250?"
(Tact)

What... 250!?

So he even knows how to break the level limit.

No wonder he was able to easily take out Kirin.

He's essentially twice me... no, he said that was the minimum.

He probably has three times my level.

Motoyasu's three stood in front of Trash and the Queen, so they didn't take any damage, but everyone else is ridden with bullet holes.

Even Ren, Itsuki and Motoyasu have taken great damage.

But as he said, the women and children... Raphtalia, Rishia, Female Knight, and Taniko, aren't that greatly injured.

You hypocrite!

You're going to slaughter the men, leave the women, and conveniently act like the gentle protagonist, aren't you.

At the moment, Fohl, Firo, Gaelion, Sadina, the Three Filo Rials, and the Granny have taken heavy gun damage.

Kiel, who's currently a dog, and who looked like a man beforehand anyways, is also included in the count.

I remember this style of fighting.

Before he became strange... I remember Motoyasu, when he had his ulterior motives clearly displayed on his face.

And everyone here's asserting themselves as if they believe their actions are in the right.

Of course, they're mainly targeting us heroes.

But perhaps that's for the best.

If everyone were dealt that sort of damage, they would have died had they not been heroes.

Even so, this is bad... we'll all die at this rate.

Is my Shield gone? Broken?

And Ren, Itsuki, and Motoyasu have four methods of strengthening here.

Normal attacks shouldn't bother them at all!

Tact looks at me and gives a broad grin.

"It's just that your levels are all way too low. Just quietly get beaten by the level 350 me." (Tact)

"N-Naofumi-sama, look!" (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia points to Tact with her shaking hand.

I lose my voice.

On Tact's arm is... a very familiar Shield.

"Ah, you'll probably hate dying with all of these questions on your mind, so I'll tell you. I have the power to steal the power of the legendary weapons."
(Tact)

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 313 – Retreat

“What!?”

The power to steal… Legendary Weapons!?

What’s with that abnormal ability?

Wait a second.

The Hero of the Whip has the Claw because… he stole it?

“Yeah, the guy who called himself the Hero of the Claw had a rotten personality, so I already sent him to hell.” (Tact)

Again, Tact said it as if it were a matter of course.

Dead?

If you kill a hero, isn’t the world supposed to be in trouble… So this is why the wave came so fast!?

No, it isn’t just the Hero of the Whip.

Perhaps the same became of all the Seven Star Heroes we can’t come into contact with.

I don’t know when they were killed, but we haven’t heard anything of them in the past two months.

So that means that the Seven Stars have been dead for a few months…

“And, all of the heroes always have totally twisted personalities, you know. They never listen to what I’m trying to say.” (Tact)

Who would want to listen to a guy like this?

I sure as hell wouldn’t!

Anger is clouding the thoughts in my head.

Each and every one of them. Are all of the bastards that get selected as heroes people like this!?

“I’m going to be saving the world here, so all you guys have to do is die and hand over your weapons.” (Tact)

“As expected of Tact-sama. You plan on saving the legendary weapons from the clutches of those vile heroes over there.”

“What!?”

Upon hearing that voice, all of my comrades let out their voices before going silent.

Even Trash.

“H-how… Why are you here!? Aren’t you supposed to be dead!?” (Naofumi)

Witch, whom we had presumed dead, showed herself from behind a pillar. She leans her body against my hated enemy and looks down at us as if she were looking down at piles of trash.

“And as you can see, I’m obviously not dead, Shield.” (Witch)

I can’t believe what I’m seeing.

She truly should have been dead.

In the frozen casket Faubley sent back, her corpse was definitely there.

And her death snuff tape couldn’t have been faked.

“On my face, and my body. I won’t forgive you for giving me these wounds. I’ll give you a slow death after making you experience a world of pain! Right, Tact-sama?” (Witch)

There is a scar on her arm, as if it had been rejoined at the joint. Over one of her eyes hangs an eyepatch.

There’s a similar mark on her leg.

If my memory serves me well, those are definitely the places the Pig King severed.

So how is she alive!?

... Alchemy?

I heard that the Hero of the Whip also partook in that.

I see. The Hero who reported Rat was probably him.

In the past, I've heard Rat speak about homunculi.

But creating a fake that is indistinguishable from the real article is ridiculously difficult. When did they have a chance to swap them out?

No, more importantly, Witch is alive. That's all I have to know.

Hero of the Whip... Genius. Head of his class. Faubley's academy. Witch's loss of virginity...

I see. So that's where he comes into play. (TL: I wonder if you all remember that)

Someone who I can't let live- Witch... And Atlas's murderer, Tact.

Even though my Shield's been stolen, an unquenchable rage sears through my body.

It's not related to the Curse of Wrath.

I just hate him. I just want to kill him.

"Yeah, the one who sent Malty to that pig must be quite a villain. If it's her fault that a lot of people died, then she'll have to make up for it with her life. But I'll make sure to put her through a world of pain first!" (Tact)

"And that's how it is, Mama. How dare you sell me to that Pig King. Now die for your sins. Papa shares the crime too." (Bitch)

"M-Malty..." (Trash)

Trash holds the Queen in his arms and stares in silence. His eyes are full of disbelief. He opens his mouth again and again, but no words come out.

Tact turns his Claws to Fohl, who was nearby, and thrusts.

"As if an attack like that will-!?" (Fohl)

He's fast!

Fohl's only become a Hero recently.

He can't follow those movements.

But Fohl emerges without a scratch.

"Hmm? If I have this shield out, my attack power disappears. How useless."

(Tact)

He makes the Shield disappear, and equips a claw on one hand and a small dagger on the other.

The dagger greatly resembles the one Rishia holds.

So that's how it is.

Rishia's mysterious weapon... No, the reason why her Seven Star Weapon is translucent is because its wielder was killed, and its powers were stolen. And the weapon itself doesn't accept Tact as its wielder.

Perhaps it selected Rishia to rebel against him.

「Erst Throw」!

With a throwing motion, Tact embeds the dagger in Ren's shoulder.

It seems that Ren won't be able to use his sword anymore.

"Gu!"

"Don't try anything funny. When you think about Heroes, it's gotta be swords, right? Hand it over already." (Tact)

We've already suffered heavy damage from gunfire. We're at an extreme disadvantage.

I can't let him take the other legendary weapons too.

My body won't move, but I strain every muscle in my body. I fill myself with killing intent

I won't let him take anything else from me!

"Go to hell!" (Naofumi)

I forcefully encircle my body with chi and magic. I use every bit of power I have left and kick the ground.

Just a second is enough.

Enough time for everyone to run…!

“Wha-”

Tact blocked the unexpected attack by materializing his stolen shield.

My fist impacts his body.

“Hah, how weak. Gufu!?” (Tact)

My magic and chi explode within his body, and he spits up blood as he’s sent flying all the way behind the throne.

“Tact!?”

The gun-toting women all turn their eyes to him, creating a large chance. And the heroes don’t miss it.

“Now! [Flashing Sword]!” (Ren)

[Shining Lance]!

[Flash Arrow]!

They let out their flashing skills to blind the remaining women.

“What are you doing!? Hurry up and shoot those guys to death!” (Bitch)

Witch screams out, but Ren had already kicked down the door.

“[Transfer Sword]! … As I thought, it’s no good.” (Ren)

[All Dreifach Heal]!

Through healing magic, the people who had been immobilized through injury somehow find the strength to escape into the castle.

Ren and Motoyasu lead the way, while Granny and Raphtalia keep the rear. Anyways, everyone got over their injuries, but that doesn't mean they recovered their energy.

The Queen's wounds are the deepest.

The clothes she was wearing have turned black from the oxidized blood covering them.

If we don't do something fast, we won't make it.

And I can say the same about myself.

My head is spinning from the pain.

I don't know why healing magic won't work on me.

It's a miracle I was even able to stand back there..

"Remillia! Stay with me!" (Trash)

Trash calls out to the Queen. He holds her on his back as he runs behind me.

"Naofumi-sama!" (Raphtalia)

"Niichan! Keep yourself together!" (Kiel)

I'm slumped over on Firo's back.

My body won't move at all.

The Shield's Icon has long since vanished from my vision.

"Naofumi-san, do you understand? Your anger is completely justified, but shall we not retreat for now?" (Itsuki)

Itsuki quietly orders me.

He's right.

If we fight in an enemy fortress where we don't know who's waiting to ambush us, the other heroes will have their weapons taken.

And what the hell is with his Cheat?

“Itsuki-sama?” (Ren)

“... Yes, let’s quickly retreat from here. Ren-san, how is it? Do you think you can at least transfer the Queen and Naofumi-san somewhere safe?”

(Itsuki)

“It’s impossible... My Transfer Sword won’t activate. Something’s interfering with it.” (Ren)

“KYUA!”

As if telling us to leave it to him, Gaelion chants magic.

It’s Dragon Sanctuary.

They’ve probably cast a magic similar to that on this castle.

In the past, Firo and Gaelion fought for turf, and when their fields clashed, they were both nullified.

『KYUAAA』!

I feel something pass through my body.

“I’m not letting you get away!”

I hear a voice from further down the hallway.

「Dragon Sanctuary」!

Ku... as I thought, that Lizard Woman was a dragon.

And she said she was an emperor like Gaelion.

“Fi...ro” (Naofumi)

I desperately let out my voice, and call out to Firo.

“Leave it to me.” (Firo)

Firo keeps running as she begins casting magic as well.

「Sanctuary」! (Firo)

“Nope, 「Bird Sanctuary」!”

Ku… the Gryphon-like one chants too.

The moment one’s nullified, another is deployed.

There’s no way we can use it.

If we do get to Portal, we’ll need to select the members to evacuate as well.

In the brief moment when the field is nullified, it’ll be hard to use the skill.

The front line is also starting to get noisy.

We’re met by soldiers ahead.

「Gravity Blade」!

「Brionac」!

「Piercing Shot」!

By the sound of it, the standard soldiers aren’t particularly strong.

It seems that only a fraction of their forces have broken the level cap.

It’s safe to assume that all the women we met in that area have received the ability to do so.

But the support fire coming at us from the rear is troublesome.

“Acho!”

“Hah!”

“Tei!”

The Granny, Raphtalia, and Fohl concentrate their chi on a single point and stop the bullets in midair. But, it seems that it drains a lot of stamina.

“Again.” (Taniko)

Taniko rides on Gaelion and assists him in casting a spell.

It seems that Sadina is helping as well.

“Uu… Woof!” (Kiel)

Kiel changes to Kielberus and bites at the soldiers up front.

But it seems the soldiers aren't to be laughed at. Or maybe it's because My Shield was stolen. Anyways, she's not able to inflict any serious injuries.

Because the Shield's gone, the Ability Correction skill isn't in effect.

And because of that, Faubley's soldiers won't fall so easily...?

No, even if there's something rotten in Faubley, it's the most powerful country. They're probably elite soldiers with relatively high levels.

We can't crush them one-sidedly.

Luckily, they're much weaker than Tact's harem.

They're at most level 100.

Of course, those women are coming at us from behind as well.

If Tact uses that skill that breached through my defenses, we won't get away unharmed.

I think it's probably on cooldown, or perhaps he doesn't want to damage his own castle too much.

"Have you dispelled their anti-teleport field yet!?" (Ren)

"I'm trying!" (Firo)

Firo impatiently answers

"Ren, don't worry about us! Anything is better than letting those fiends get their hands on another legendary weapon! Just think about yourself and run!" (Female Knight)

"As if I could do that!" (Ren)

Ren quickly refutes Female Knight's words.

Damn... If we can't teleport, I guess we get irritated.

I can't move, and my consciousness is hazy, so I can only think and observe.

“If we could just get outside, we could escape on Gaelion, but…” (Itsuki)

“They probably have something ready to intercept us.” (Ren)

“Father-in-Law!” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu runs up to my bloodstained body.

If you have time to talk to me, go fight!

We continue our escape, but soldiers block our path, and eventually, we’re led to a dead end.

「Meteor Sword」!

We break the wall, and run down the corridor beyond.

Ren’s ability to take action is worthy of praise.

“Leave the rear guard to me. Saint-sama, quickly run away!” (Granny)

Granny takes Raphtalia, Fohl, and Female Knight. In order to stop those pursuing us, they stay behind.

“No…” (Naofumi)

I reach out my hand.

That role is the one I’m supposed to be filling.

“Naofumi-sama, leave it to me!” (Raphtalia)

But as if they had expected this, the ones who kinda stood out—the red hooded woman, and the Aotatsu woman—are standing in front of us.

“As Tact-sama said, you came here.”

“Ku…”

As I look around, I see more of the people who were around the throne.

“Kyua!”

Gaelion deploys his second sanctuary.

“It’s useless.”

The enemy Dragon merely deploys her’s too.

It’ll just be an infinite loop.

Even so, we’ll have to teleport if we want any hope of escape.

The castle is crawling with enemy forces, and even if we reach the gate, this is their country… the civilians may even raise their arms against us.

If it was me, that’s what I would do.

Regardless of where we go, the Hero of the Whip is sure to follow.

Since we’ve already suffered injury and loss, we have no way to defend ourselves.

「Sanctuary」!

「Bird Sanctuary」!

“Bu-!” (Firo)

Firo stomps her foot, and impatiently cries out.

「I who… source… gufu」

I try to chant magic, but the wounds from Tact are deep, and I can’t concentrate.

That attack… no, that weapon must be cursed.

My wounds won’t heal with magic.

As if he cast a negative status effect, I can’t hold onto my conscience.

“Master!” (Firo)

Firo calls out to me, who had just failed in casting magic.

I can hear Tact shouting from the rear, where Raphtalia and the Granny are fighting.

“Just give up already, you trash.” (Tact)

“Ku… who the hell would give up! You were tempted by that Witch, you intentionally stepped into our fight with Houou, and everyone… You even killed the Seven Star Heroes!” (Ren)

Ren prepares himself to bear the brunt of Tact’s advance and declares as such.

“No matter what, the ones who handed Malty to that pig and revived the Spirit Turtle have no Justice. Just lay down quietly and die!” (Tact)

Tact readies his claw to strike, and…

“RAFU~~~~~!” (Raph-chan)

I feel the anti-teleport field dispel all at once.

Raph-chan’s tail expands greatly, and she releases magic.

“Wha-”

The unexpected development creates an opening.

They probably thought that since Firo and Gaelion had already deployed their sanctuaries, they would be safe for a while.

But Raph-chan was an anomaly. Because of him, the heroes were able to use their transfer skills.

“Now!”

Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki clench their weapons and chant their skills.

「Transfer Sword」!

「Portal Spear」!

「Transfer Bow」!

“You’re not going anywhere!” (Tact)

Tact finally takes out a whip.

And he swings it at Granny, Raphtalia, and Fohl, who were in the rear.

「Bind Whip」!

The whip expands as if it were a live snake. It thrusts forwards as if to intertwine itself around Fohl.

“I won’t let you!” (Raphtalia)

Sword meets Whip. Raphtalia halts the Whip’s advance.

“Firo, Fohl-kun, Eclair-san.” (Raphtalia)

“Aneki…” (Fohl)

“Raphtalia…” (Female Knight)

“If something happens to me… I leave Naofumi-sama to you.” (Raphtalia)

Yes, as if she was fully aware of her fate, Raphtalia speaks to Fohl. She smiles at me, who can do nothing but watch.

“Ra…ph…a”

When I try to speak, I hear an ominous sound from my lungs.

Move. Or else… I don’t want to lose anything else! Quickly, dammit!

“There’s no need for that, Saint-sama!” (Granny)

“Eh?”

The Granny kicks Raphtalia away, and sends her flying at me.

Raphtalia rolls on the ground dumbfounded.

“Run away quickly!” (Granny)

“But we don’t know if the Transfer will-” (Ren)

“If you don’t do anything, you’ll all die! Now, quickly!” (Granny)

Ren quickly nods at the Granny's words, and activates his skill.

"Saint-sama... I'm leaving the world, and everyone, to you and my disciples!" (Granny)

"W-what are..."

"My style existed to make one stronger and to punish evil. Even if my body were to crumble, as long as I know there are ones to carry it on, then my life was not wasted!" (Granny)

She declares that as she runs in the opposite direction from us.

"MASTEEEEEEER!"

Raphtalia, and Rishia, Female Knight, and Fohl's screams echoed.

After that, the scenery in front of my eyes changes, and at the same time, for me, the world gets darker and farther away.

I bet the transfer was successful.

The same goes for Motoyasu and Itsuki.

But... The Granny didn't come with us. We were only able to confirm that after we warped away...

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 314 – Will

My body's light, it feels as if I'm floating.

I shouldn't even be here. But the various events, and the actions of various people. I saw it.

Through Ren's portal, me and the Queen were sent to Melromark. And we were immediately rushed to the largest medical facility there.

Both of our wounds are serious, and our consciousness faint.

I'm hurt so seriously that if I were to merely look at myself, I wouldn't be able to bear it.

"This is terrible... a severe curse has been inflicted. Start the preparations for the ritual magic!"

A healer shouts out, and priests were called from the Four Hero Church. They're probably going to attempt everything they can.

"Please get a hold of yourself, Naofumi-sama!"

"Yeah, Aniki!"

"Master!"

"Rafu~"

Having had their wounds fully healed, the other heroes, Taniko, Sadina, and Kiel are resting in another room.

Good. Their injuries are comparatively light.

At this rate, they should be able to move around just fine.

"We'll be starting treatment now. Everyone else should rest and heal their wounds as well."

Raphtalia, Firo and Fohl kept on calling out to me until the end.

And I was once again shrouded in darkness.

What I saw next was the Queen and Trash.

Her wounds were severe, and everyone could plainly see the god of death lingering over her.

“...Goho!” (TL: Coughing sound)

Trash’s hand trembles as he grasps the Queen’s hand, and prays.

Luckily, he had escaped without injury, so he was permitted to stay with her.

“We’ll begin administering the Yggdrasil extract. We’ll simultaneously use our highest forms of healing magic, and our highest class of holy water. On top of that, ritual magic...”

The Healer gives out directions like a doctor as he begins casting healing magic on her wounds.

She’s undergoing extensive, heavy treatment.

But nothing seems to be eliciting any reaction from her.

“What a curse... It’s comparable to the one cast on the Hero of the Shield-sama over there.”

“Mirellia.” (Trash)

As if she was reacting to Trash’s words, the Queen slowly opened her eyes, and looked at him.

“Your voice... your exchange... I heard it.” (Queen)

“You can’t speak right now, Queen-sama!”

The healer warns her as he continues the treatment.

But the Queen slowly lays her head sideways, and answers.

“I know... there’s nothing you can do to prolong my life, right?” (Queen)

“T-that is...”

The healer stumbles over his words, before he glares at Trash, and stands back.

“What are you doing!? The one you’re treating is the Queen of this country! If you call yourself a healer, then you have to put your life on the line, and heal her no matter what!” (Trash)

“You can’t… give your people impossible orders, dear.” (Queen)

The Queen weakly warns him.

It feels weird for me to come to an understanding with Trash, but I could empathize with him.

The situation was similar to how I lost Atlas.

The sadness of losing one dear.

The despair felt in one’s own incompetence.

The hatred felt against the cause.

All of those mix together, and make it so you can’t think anything anymore.

“B-but…” (Trash)

“This is… perhaps it’s heavenly retribution. My ineptitude… caused me to sacrifice my own daughter. My obsession with protecting this country, the world…” (Queen)

“Wrong! That’s definitely wrong!” (Trash)

Trash desperately refutes the Queen’s words.

“… Is that true? I get the feeling that it’s all my fault. My daughter… Maly grew to be such a child, because she emulated my own incompetence. Because of my lukewarm decisions, everything… turned out like this.” (Queen)

“That is… me… my…” (Trash)

Perhaps Trash is blaming himself for the loss of the Queen. His voice shakes. But the Queen speaks to him once more.

"Likely, the Hero of the Whip... no, invaders will come and invade this country." (Queen)

"..." (Trash)

"Right now, Melromark is in a dire situation. Luckily, Iwatani-sama and the heroes, as well as their comrades are here." (Queen)

"Then, the Hero of the Shield is...!" (Trash)

"You... realize it already, don't you? Throw away your past grudges; you have to move forward." (Queen)

A trickle of tears runs down Trash's face.

He acts the same as I did when I wished, and Fohl did when he prayed.

I don't know what he's asking god for, but I felt something warm, as if I could hold it in my hand.

"Lucia... Mirellia..." (Trash)

And he lightly calls Atlas's name as well.

"If it was the Wise King of Melromark... if it was Luge Lancerose, then our hopes would be answered." (Queen)

"But... the Cane no longer answers to my call...!" (Trash)

"You're wrong. The cane lent you power, not because you were a Hero. It was because you were different from the rest. More courageous than them all, and much wiser." (Queen)

"..." (Trash)

"I believe. To turn around this disadvantageous situation... to save Melromark from its imminent collapse, we need your..." (Queen)

"I am... I am..." (Trash)

"Fufu... you have so many pieces this time around. Now what move will the Wise King make to surprise me today?" (Queen)

"... Mirellia." (Trash)

"Let me entrust this country's future to you. Please save the world... with Iwatani-sama. As the Hero of the Cane, and as my beloved..." (Queen)

Blood runs down her mouth as she smiles at Trash.

“You used your resourcefulness to make your enemies dance. You put awe into the hearts of all that opposed you… Go let the world know your name…” (Queen)

At the same time… the Queen ran out of whatever energy she had left.

“Queen-sama!”

The door slammed open, and a country leader came in.

“Faublely has declared war on the entire world! Under the creed of uniting the world as one under their flag.”

The situation… Came faster than Trash expected. And people were already pleading to him for answers.

The next time scene I saw was two days later.

“Why the hell is Faublely messing around with World Domination at a time like this!?”

Having finished treatment, Ren and the others arrived at the castle participated in an allied army meeting, and shouted out upon hearing the information.

Everyone present’s face is dark.

The country of Faublely’s military might was just that high.

And they have individuals of triple our level. We knew their power first hand. It’s not like the army didn’t want to stop them, they just didn’t have the means.

“They’ve sure done it. That cowardly Hero… When the waves going on, does he seriously believe he has the time to go around conquering the world!?” (Ren)

“... No, I actually think he does.” (Itsuki)

“He hurt Father-in-Law and Firo-tan, and on top of that, he hurt everyone else. I definitely won’t forgive him!” (Motoyasu)

The army is in agreement with the three Heroes’ words.

The events that transpired in Faubley were relayed to all.

Those from Silt Welt are also present.

That Genmu guy, and the Shusaku as well.

“Naofumi’s being treated... and we’re going to war with Faubley...” (Ren)

“Yes. Right now, Faubley is mobilizing their entire army. The first place they’ll attack is Melromark, then they’ll move on to my country. The countries on the way will be forced to submit to its might... Due to bombardments from their new weapon, the ‘Airplane’, many have already raised a white flag.”

“Is there a reason why they have admitted defeat so quickly?”

“Yes. They tried engaging them in dogfights with flying monsters, but they didn’t have the means to counterattack...”

“Meaning the people riding the planes must be of quite a high level.”

(Itsuki)

“Fuee...” (Rishia)

As Rishia lets out her speech habit, Itsuki starts patting her head.

Ren bangs his hand on the table.

“Naofumi’s wounds were severe... how is he doing?” (Ren)

“It’s not looking favorable. We’ve repeatedly tried extensive treatment on him, but...”

“Naofumi-san...” (Itauki)

“That Tact bastard, just who is he!? How does he have the ability to steal legendary weapons?” (Ren)

Just as Ren was complaining.

A soldier ran into the meeting room.

“New information! Shield Freiden has formed an alliance with Faubley!”

“What!?”

“And the Seven Star Hero, Tact Althaulan Faubley, proclaimed to his people that he was a child of god. That his possession of numerous legendary weapons proved his own divinity!”

The people taking part in the meeting stood up from their seats. There are expressions of shock all around.

It was quite a safe measure for him to take.

Showing his possession of many of the weapons of heroes would either prove that he went against god, or that god loved him.

Since Divine Weapon worship is prevalent in this world, he'll be treated as a special existence regardless.

Even if he's the one who killed the heroes.

“What's more, he stated he would be the one to save the world, the four summoned were evil imposters, and that he would use all his might to destroy them. Also, that he had already purged four of the 'Evil' Seven Star Heroes. He declared it to many of the world's nations!”

“Does he think he'll get away with spouting such nonsense!?”

“The upper echelon of Faubley's Church accepted his statements, but the ones on the outskirts of the country faced numerous rebellions. But those that received his power already went to subjugate and quell the revolts. It seems he made quite a bit of preparations beforehand.”

At the same time, a Shadow-like person appears, and whispers into the Genmu's ears.

I bet it isn't anything good.

“... My country is also divided on which side to join.” (Genmu)

The situation is... taking a bad turn.

“What does the Hero of the Gauntlet think of this?” (Genmu)

Though they weren't really acquaintances, even Fohl could understand that it had to do with his origin. That it would affect his fate.

"Should I answer as a member of the Hakuko Race? Or would you prefer me be the Hero of the Gauntlet?" (Fohl)

"You are not a pure-blood Demi-Human. I'm asking you as a subordinate of the Shield, and as a Hero. Or will you stand by my country as the descendent of Tai Ran Ga Feon?" (Genmu)

Fohl shakes his head.

And he gives words filled with certainty.

"I am the Hero of the Gauntlet, the protector of the village built by the Hero of the Shield. Lineage is of no importance to me, and I don't plan on doing anything foolish by throwing around my grandfather's name." (Fohl)

"Of course. No matter what fate awaits you, my dear, Demi-Humans will always stand by the true Hero of the Shield. Blood has nothing to do with it!" (Genmu)

The Genmu Old Man looks to Fohl with blazing eyes.

"That spirit is enough for me to ascertain your standing. It is my belief that we of Silt Welt should be lending you our power." (Genmu)

His words were continued by the Shusaku.

"Yes! The Hero-Dono shed tears at the loss of our comrades, and displayed his anger for our cause. Our pride, and our faith will not allow us to side with the one who caused the calamity that claimed the lives of many of our people. It would pollute the name of our entire race!" (Shusaku)

All the Demi-Humans present nod.

There's no way they would permit it.

He's the root of evil that killed the ones they fought alongside.

I'm not the only one wishing for vengeance.

For all that fell against Houou, there's no way we can forgive him/

That will remained in everyone's hearts

"..."

Fohl merely quietly gazed over the meeting.

According to the Genmu, his calm composure... overlapped with that of his grandfather.

"Now, what move should we make... Wise King of Melromark? We've already decided the path we must tread. How will you act on your beloved wife's dying will?" (Genmu)

"..."

Trash remains quiet, with a strained expression on his face.

"In the first place. From his personal history isn't there... isn't something off? Just how much of a genius is he? Airplanes and Bombs... it's as if he's a soldier from our world." (Ren)

Ren voices his complaints to the meeting hall.

And Itsuki quietly raises his hand.

"What's up?" (Ren)

"This is just a hypothesis, but may I continue?" (Itsuki)

"Yeah." (Ren)

"Ren-san, upon hearing his history, you didn't notice it? No, perhaps you did, but you just weren't able to piece it together." (Itsuki)

"What?" (Ren)

"What about you, Motoyasu-san?" (Itsuki)

"What could you be talking about?" (Motoyasu)

Itsuki takes a deep breath, and and continues.

“... Most likely, it exists in both of your worlds, if you search for it. It’s a common story.” (Itsuki)

Ren and Motoyasu tilt their heads.

“Naofumi-san seemed to have a vague idea, so it’s probably right.” (Itsuki)

“What is it? Just say it already.” (Ren)

Well, it’s not like I was oblivious.

But because I was sure that this wasn’t the world of Manga and Games, I didn’t want to deny the man’s personal effort.

But this incident was just too much.

Assault Rifles.

Planes.

Mastering magic at three.

All of his actions point to a single possibility.

Right, he’s...

“Yes. Most likely, that Tact, the Hero born of this world, was... reincarnated. He’s an otherworlder who was reborn into this world with his memories intact. At least, that’s my theory.” (Itsuki)

“Reincarnation... that thing? Samsara? The cycle of life?” (Ren)

“Yes. There are a few novels about that in my world.” (Itsuki)

“I really only play games, so... I may have read one or two, but I don’t really remember. The only thing I remember is that Game Over = Death, and respawn. With this being a world close to that of a game, it didn’t cross my mind.” (Ren)

“Oh, oh, me too!” (Motoyasu)

Ren and Motoyasu start thinking over the concept of Reincarnation.

I don’t know of the affairs of their worlds, but I’ve read books about that.

A reincarnated protagonist is born into a world of magic... a fantasy world just like this one.

And he becomes immersed in a world far off from the reality he knew.

This time, I'll do it right. I'll get status, and money, and women. I'll get everything.

"So I confirmed it. In books of that genre, the first things most protagonists do is learn magic at a young age, and get higher marks than other people. Also things like using modern knowledge to invent, and other stuff that stands out." (Itsuki)

"Something like that... I have a feeling I've heard about it before. One of my friends on the net spoke fervently about it." (Ren)

"Right. I don't think we'll be able to get any definite proof from the individual, but something dubious is oozing out of his story." (Itsuki)

"That means that he was summoned from another world, like us?" (Ren)

"It's a possibility, but... what he plans to do, what he's thinking. Do you think you can understand a little more of it now, Ren-san?" (Itsuki)

Ren crosses his arms, and starts thinking.

"He's thinking like I did before I broke the Spirit Turtle's seal." (Ren)

"I don't look back to the past! I'm buried in my memories of Firo-tan!" (Motoyasu)

"... Someone get Motoyasu-san out of here. He's in the way." (Itsuki)

"Yes!" (Three)

"Ah, Kuu-san, Marin-san, and Midori-san, was it? I'll leave it to you. Go keep him busy for a while, you can even go play. I'll personally explain it to Naofumi-san later." (Itsuki)

"Got it!" (Three)

"Nwah! My angels! Where do you plan on taking me!?" (Motoyasu)

And, carrying Motoyasu, the Three Filo Rials left the meeting hall. I have no idea why they were there in the first place.

"To summarize, he's thinking like the old us... that the monarchy of this world was corrupt, and had to be destroyed." (Ren)

"Yes, then things start to make sense." (Itsuki)

“Then what’s that power he has to steal legendary weapons?” (Ren)

“Perhaps it’s an ESPer ability like one from my world. A power like that wasn’t uncommon in books from my world. Something like stealing the power of others to strengthen yourself.” (Itsuki)

“I see. If Itsuki says it, then it’s a possibility.” (Ren)

“The reason his power didn’t become famous must be because he kept it hidden, and he didn’t use it in front of others. Like how I acted before.” (Itsuki)

With a bitter expression, Itsuki started explaining to Ren.

I guess that’s possible.

Even in things I’ve read, when protagonists are granted too great of a power, they usually live while hiding it.

Usually, it gets exposed due to various unfortunate incidents, but Itsuki is living proof that it’s possible.

“Having it known that he could steal legendary weapons would greatly hinder his actions. But now that the die’s already been cast, he’s using it to its full extent… I guess.” (Itsuki)

“The fact that all of his comrades are women kinda reminds me of the past Motoyasu, too. So things have come together. I see.” (Ren)

Ren nods, as if his questions were all answered.

In contrast, Itsuki seems to be lost in thought.

“What’s strange is the lack of information… it’s odd… No, we need to decode what to do now. In our fight with Faubley…” (Itsuki)

And the meeting continued.

And my dislodged conscience floated elsewhere once more.

Now I’m not anywhere. An empty space of flickering lights, looping in an endless pattern.

In that space, was me, and ____…

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 315 – Spirit

Where am I?

I understand that someone had appeared to explain why I had seen those scenes before my eyes.

But upon seeing the form of my benefactor, I was at a loss for words.

“Atlas…?” (Naofumi)

“Yes.” (Atlas)

The Dead Atlas was floating in the air in front of me.

I needed to… confirm whether she was real or not, so I hugged her.

“Ah… my ambition… my life’s goal…” (Atlas)

Yep, it’s the real one.

Even so, even death didn’t change her.

No, perhaps she’s an illusion created from my memory.

“Is this the afterlife, or something?” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-sama, hug me more.” (Atlas)

“Enough of that. Please tell me!” (Naofumi)

Maybe my soul wandered around, and saw those dialogues.

I still feel that I haven’t died, but my injuries may have rendered my brain-dead, or something.

How unpleasant. I left the world a loser.

To finally die after being beaten to this extent isn’t something I wish for.

I thought I was surely bound for hell with my lifestyle, but is this really all there is to the world of the dead?

This strange space can’t be heaven.

"About your question as to whether this is the underworld. To put it frankly, it's not." (Atlas)

Atlas smiles brightly as she answers.

Ah, so I jumped to conclusions.

If this is neither heaven nor hell, perhaps I'm deep in my own unconscious. No, it may be a space created by the legendary weapon, or something like that.

I mean, that sort of scene appeared in a manga I read a while ago.

"I see. Atlas, are you in any pain?" (Naofumi)

"Nope, I don't feel anything." (Atlas)

"And where is this?" (Naofumi)

"If I had to say, it would be the world of Naofumi-sama's Shield... no, that's wrong. I guess it's the world of the Legendary Weapons." (Atlas)

"Hmm..." (Naofumi)

Now that I think about it, all of the scenes I saw were centered around the heroes.

Ren, Motoyasu, Itsuki, Fohl, Rishia, and Trash.

Everyone was selected by their weapons.

"Can I also look at that Hero of the Whip? Though it's stolen goods, he does have my shield." (Naofumi)

"Yes, but your Shield hasn't been stolen, you know." (Atlas)

"Hah? No, I definitely saw him take it." (Naofumi)

"With just that much power, it's impossible to completely take away one of the Four Great Weapons. He can only maintain its appearance, and a minimal amount of its power. He won't be able to tap into its full potential." (Atlas)

Atlas forms a ring with her arms, and when I peer in, I see the Whip... guy calmly looking over a battlefield with a smile on his face.

He's happily conversing with Witch.

After that, another woman came and talked to him, and Witch made an unpleasant expression. But her face quickly changed to the smile that she used to scheme.

It's truly an irritating scenario.

"I don't really think I want to observe this one." (Naofumi)

"That's right." (Atlas)

"And? Why am I in a place like this?" (Naofumi)

"The Spirit of the Shield, who's been lending you power all this time, called you here." (Atlas)

"I see... from that accursed Shield." (Naofumi)

"Yes, from that accursed Shield." (Atlas)

Next to Atlas, a ball of light bobbed up and down.

Is this the spirit of the Shield?

What an unreliable appearance it has there.

As if it had read my mind, the ball's bobbing amplitude increased.

"It's making an honest apology." (Atlas)

"Oh, I see. Let me punch it." (Naofumi)

He's your retribution for summoning me randomly without consent.

The Spirit of the Shield quickly slipped behind Atlas.

It appears to be shaking.

To hide behind a little girl...

"I understand how you feel, but apart from the first generation of Heroes, Naofumi-sama is the first one to ever make it here." (Atlas)

"Ah, I see. And what does that spirit over there want with me?" (Naofumi)

"It wants Naofumi-sama to make a decision." (Atlas)

Around me, balls of light similar to the Spirit of the Shield gather.

These are likely the spirits of the other weapons.

One, two, three... Why are there twelve of them?

Among them, including the Shield, four of them are differently colored.
There are eight left.

If there are seven stars, what's the last one?

"Me?" (Naofumi)

"Yes. Honestly speaking, the Spirit of the Shield-sama has made a decision to abandon the world to its fate." (Atlas)

"... Abandon?" (Naofumi)

"Yes. So the Spirit of the Shield has called you here to ask if you want to be compensated for your services ahead of time." (Atlas)

"Compensation..." (Naofumi)

"It's a reward given to Heroes who have saved the world, or to those that overcame the wave. A reward from the Legendary Weapons." (Atlas)

After asking a few questions to the floating orbs, she speaks to me.

A reward for saving the world...

You should have started out with that line.

"The first option: a return to your original world. In this case, you can get three wishes on that side. They can be for anything." (Atlas)

"Anything, you say..." (Naofumi)

"Are you worried about the law of cause and effect in your world? That can be tampered with to some extent... you can become rich, get a good job, and live your whole life without trouble without negative consequences. But things like immortality aren't possible, he says." (Atlas)

"Hmm..." (Naofumi)

"Since he's abandoning the world anyways, he can't grant you anything that lasts forever. The most is being able to bring the girl you like with you." (Atlas)

"Atlas, what about you?" (Naofumi)

"I am always with Naofumi-sama. So I am not included in the count. I will follow you to your world." (Atlas)

Hmm... it's not bad for a reward.

I truly do wish to return to my world, and there isn't much else I want.

"You can take Raphtalia-san and return to your world, forget about the battles, and live a peaceful life. At least, the Spirit of the Shield proposes as such. Of course, he'll make it so that that nothing bad will befall her from living in your world." (Atlas)

"... Why Raphtalia?" (Naofumi)

"Am I wrong? The Spirit of the Shield asks as such." (Atlas)

"Well..." (Naofumi)

Raphtalia can come to my world, and we can live our lives together... it's not a bad option.

Of course, Raphtalia's feelings are important as well, but she did say that she loved me.

We do have a bit of an age difference, but her appearance is that of an adult, and the Spirit of the Shield said nothing bad would happen to her. Yes, as a reward for my work up 'til now... it's not bad.

"Tell me the other options." (Naofumi)

Atlas continues speaking.

"Option two: stay in this world, and be revered as a Hero for the rest of your life. Most heroes chose this options, apparently." (Atlas)

I don't really get it, but I guess a Hero who performed his duty normally would choose it.

In truth, as long as they averted their eyes from the crappy reality of the Fantasy World, it would be heaven.

"That doesn't sound like a reward to me." (Naofumi)

"Fight for the people, make your own standing, and make the world you saved with your own hands shine brilliantly. Rise up in the world. Says the

Spirit of the Shield.” (Atlas)

“And that’s supposed to sound good!?” (Naofumi)

How laid back is this Shiedl!?

For the love of god… Humans aren’t built well to be satisfied by an explanation like that.

“The third option is to be sent back to your original world, but to be given the right to return back to this one.” (Atlas)

“Is there any meaning in that?” (Naofumi)

“No idea…” (Atlas)

Ah… but if you were able to come and go as you pleased, it might be nice. Once you finish what you have to do in one world, you set up a home in the other.

It’s not like I don’t see where they’re coming from. But this world is rotten, so I refuse.

For a moment, the smiles of my villagers pop up in my mind.

I do want to return.

But…

“…There are plenty of things I want to ask.” (Naofumi)

The Spirit of the Shield bobs lightly, and conveys its will to Atlas.

“What is it?” (Atlas)

“Do I have to decide now?” (Naofumi)

“… Yes, that seems to be the case. If you wait, the Spirit won’t have the time. IF the world isn’t at peace, it can’t do anything.” (Atlas)

So I can return here.

What’s more, I can bring along Raphtalia.

I’m in the middle of treatment, and my conscience won’t return. Raphtalia is desperately calling out to me, trying to return me to the world.

“Why? Why has he come to say this now?” (Naofumi)

When I was silenced, when I went through hard times, when I was about to die, why did he never call out to me?

What meaning is there in him offering me these proposals now?

“To tell you the truth… Naofumi-sama’s life as the Shield has been crueler than any of those past, according to the spirit.” (Atlas)

The Spirit of the Shield, and the orbs of the same color begin spinning in a circle.

Well. I’m quite honored.

So I’m the only goodie-two-shoes who had the misfortune to meet a vixen like Bitch.

Though Ren and the others were deceived as well.

“By the end of this, our legendary weapons will have been so drained by the enemy’s hand, that we may be unable to fight any longer. So from this crumbling world, we need to at least save the heroes we forcefully summoned to it… The Spirits are saying as such.” (Atlas)

“Really? You’re a bit late on that one.” (Naofumi)

“The fact that you’re on the verge of death is another factor, apparently. They’ll also approach the Sword, Bow, and Spear, if they ever come this close to death, they say.” (Atlas)

“If I were to return here, the people from my village, and this country… what will happen to the world?” (Naofumi)

“It will likely… fall to ruin. Says the Spirit of the Shield.” (Atlas)

I can’t take them all.

That means in my world… there will only be Raphtalia.

If I made her abandon this world, and part with everyone, what would she say? What sort of face would she make?

And... I am...

I remember the words Atlas imparted unto me before her death.

"I... won't return yet. I'll go after I've saved the world. I'll return once I'm satisfied with the result." (Naofumi)

I truly wanted to return.

But the current me has things that I have to protect.

People I can't forgive. People that I have to defeat.

So until I'm satisfied, I have to stay.

More importantly, I don't even know if they're telling the truth.

If I said I wanted to return at once, I may achieve the, 'You're no Hero, now die!' bad end.

I've really been playing too many video games, haven't I...

I push these unnecessary thoughts to the back of my mind, and see the place the Shield was glowing brightly.

Does this mean the Shield Spirit thingy is happy?

"... Are you certain? Your decision here may spell your doom. Are you sure you won't regret it?" (Atlas)

"If you ask me if I regret it, I'm sure I will. But instead of returning, and wallowing in my regret, I'll regret while I'm here. I have too many burdens I have to carry... Unless I drop them where they're supposed to be, I cannot return." (Naofumi)

Instead of dropping out of the race, I select the good end where everyone has their own set of wheels.

Then I can load up my own emotional baggage, and drive away with ease. If I can bring Raphtalia with me, then she'll have to choose that for herself. And once I make that village happy, I'll go home.

I really have picked up too many troublesome things...

But for some reason, I don't feel bad about it.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 316 – The True Enemy

“... As expected of the Hero chosen by the Spirit of the Shield. The other spirits are praising him.” (Atlas)

“Yes, yes, that’s all fine, and dandy. Now in exchange, reimburse me with information.” (Naofumi)

I’ll bombard this spirit with all the questions that have been circling my mind.

It’s as if this world itself is intentionally hiding information from me.

“First is... right. Why was I summoned?” (Naofumi)

“That’s probably because Naofumi-sama had the qualifications to be a Hero. 『No matter the trouble, even if you’re vomiting up blood, you’ll still proceed forward. Choosing you was no mistake on my part.』 says the Spirit of the Shield in Hind-sight.” (Atlas)

The four spirits are trying to appeal to me.

And among them, the Spirit of the Shield seems to be inflating itself, and acting cocky.

“Vomiting blood... Whose fault do you think that is!?” (Naofumi)

Dammit...

Even so, the qualifications for a Hero...

Putting it that way doesn’t make me feel bad, but still, I definitely think there’s some ulterior motives here. With this mindset, am I really qualified to be a Hero?

“The Sword, Spear, and Bow spirits are complaining, 『Why the hell is it that you’re always the one to pick the best Hero candidate, you glorious bastard』.” (Atlas)

“By that phrasing, what are the others?” (Naofumi)

What do you mean best?

It's as if it was some sort of examination.

"Fumufumu... The other three have their ups and downs." (Atlas)

Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki are... still taking the test.

I can't bring this up to the humans.

And wait, the biggest problem is me being selected as the best. Are these spirits right in the head?

No, perhaps their expectations aren't that high to begin with.

And that's none of their concern, anyways.

"Even though he often summons the one with the most potential, they usually die quickly. So there's no real point in the title." (Atlas)

Oh, right. There was the possibility of me getting involved in a political struggle in Silt Welt.

I don't really have any expectations for them, and since there are some Heroes that drop dead right off the bat, I guess there's no real meaning in candidate ranking.

In that aspect, Ren did live up to this point, so perhaps they're not too bad.

"The other three have ample qualifications to be heroes, but they each have their own set of problems." (Atlas)

"Ah, I see... and?" (Naofumi)

"As an obligatory reward, they'll at least be able to escape death this time around." (Atlas)

Well, those guys did die before they came here, so I guess that condition is essential.

Even if they struggle to save this world, it's no joke if they were to die the second they got back.

"By that logic, I think I also have my share of problems." (Naofumi)

On my response, the Spirit of the Shield bobs up and down again.
What is it? For some reason, I think he's making a fool out of me.

“『There's no way the Spirit of the Shield, whose duty is to defend others, would allow any harm to come to you. Interference was out of the question.』 He says.” (Atlas)

Interference?

He's speaking as if he knows the source of this.

I need to ask that too.

“It seems you do not understand, but Naofumi-sama was specially selected to be the Hero of the Shield. You can be proud of this.” (Atlas)

“No, I get that. I have something else I need to know. Tell me.” (Naofumi)

“Anyways, the Legendary weapons don't seem to know much about things that don't pertain to their duty, but will you still ask? He says.” (Atlas)

“Yes, that's fine. What do you mean by interference?” (Naofumi)

“Interference from the enemy the Legendary Weapons are supposed to oppose.” (Atlas)

“And who's that?” (Naofumi)

“Unknown. At the very least, it's someone who's trying to destroy the world from the outside, apparently.” (Atlas)

One who's trying to bring an end to the world.

There's definitely some plotting and conspiracies at foot here.

But just who could it be?

The first one that came to mind was the woman born of the wave, Glass.

“Was it... Glass, the Human-Shaped enemy from the wave?” (Naofumi)

The Spirit of the Shield starts spinning vertically.

"It seems that that is not the case. She came to fight and fulfill a duty similar to theirs: to protect the world. She's one who brought power to this world." (Atlas)

Atlas shouldn't know about Glass.

But perhaps the Spirit of the shield taught her.

Even so, to protect the world...

That makes it harder to fight her.

"Next. What... is the wave, exactly?" (Naofumi)

"The wave is _____..." (Atlas)

(TL: ____, we meet again, my little friend)

What!? ... The Spirit of the Shield's words, translated through Atlas, put me at a loss for words.

"I-is that true? It's not a misunderstanding, or something like that?"

(Naofumi)

"There's been no mistake." (Atlas)

How could this be.

So that's why... The Four Legendary Weapons... that's why people came to call and revere them as such.

Perhaps this is the theory the Queen was going to present.

There, I remembered the conversation between Glass and Raphtalia.

Glass... despite being an enemy, she was surprisingly honest.

So this is why.

(TL: This is chapter 52)

"I apologize, but you can't be any more incorrect about her being my companion." (Naoflashbackumi)

"Doesn't matter, what you are doing is unjust." (Glass)

"Speaking of unjust, this bitch has done far crueller acts. I have quite a

grudge.” (Naofumi)

“Master is like a villain~” (Firo)

“Shut up.” (Naofumi)

“I do not have an argument to offer to an enemy…” (Raphtalia)

Why was Raphtalia able to understand Glass’s words?

I was able to because my Shield acted as a translator.

But Raphtalia’s different.

We’ve already proven that languages differ across worlds.

Raphtalia can’t even understand the language of Silt Welt.

But she could understand that woman just fine.

That means that what the Spirit of the Shield is saying isn’t wrong.

… Why is such a thing happening?

This is definitely related to the one causing interference.

“The enemies you’ve fought so far have been but the vanguard. The Heroes of the past used the technology of those long gone, and to make sure these powers would fade away one day, someone schemed. Time was meaningless to them. They kept on sending enemies, no matter how many decades, or centuries…” (Atlas)

As I thought.

In this world, geniuses are the apostles of social growth and decay, but in truth, someone was actually reincarnating people from another world, and controlling them. To take away the means to fight against the wave.

I did find it strange.

The way to fight Houou and the Spirit Turtle. How to break the Level Cap.

The destruction of the Hengen Musou School.

Also, various pieces of information were conveniently eaten away by the ages.

Thinking back, the uselessness of the information Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki brought to this world all lead back to that.

That means, our true 『Enemy』 is…

“Next question. My Shield is gone. What should I do?” (Naofumi)

“There is no problem. The only thing he managed to take was the outer layer.” (Atlas)

“I see…” (Naofumi)

The Spirit of the Shield sways back and forth in the air.

“His last attack was able to incapacitate you for a while, but if you were to wish for it… the Spirit of the shield would be able to answer to your resolve. An attack like that would be no problem. No, a small fry like him wouldn’t be able to lay a hand on you.” (Atlas)

“Even if you tell me that…” (Naofumi)

In front of the Spirit of the Shield, another Spirit asserted its presence.

“Naofumi-sama, in regards to that fake, do you want to deal with him personally?” (Atlas)

“Well, if it’s within my ability.” (Naofumi)

“This spirit says that it wishes to lend you its power temporarily. In that case, the Spirit of the Shield’s functions will be put on hold until you call for it again.” (Atlas)

“Meaning… I can fight with a weapon apart from the Shield?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, but you can call back the Shield when you wish. Until then, as long as Naofumi-sama has the permission of the Wielder, you should be able to use any of the Seven Star Weapons.” (Atlas)

“It’s just that in order to use their full power, you’ll have to retrieve the stolen portions from that thief.”

The eight other balls of light begin shining brightly, and one of them flies at me.

After being enveloped by its power, I was able to understand what sort of weapon it was.

And that Hero of the Whip... no.

That foreign invader. I know how I can defeat him.

I see. So this is how I can beat him head-on.

Yep, I can win with this.

No, it was because the loss of Atlas had blinded me that I was unable to do anything before.

But now...

"It's asking you to 『Get its Wielder back on track』." (Atlas)

"... I know. But I'll only be able to do it my way. Don't expect anything great." (Naofumi)

"They are no longer the Four Divine, and the Seven Stars. Please release their five brethren from the clutches of that small fry." (Atlas)

"I understand. And I know how. Last is... what is the Four Holy Weapons Manual I read before I was transported to this world?" (Naofumi)

"A vague record of a predicted future, and the gateway to another world, apparently. Though it seems its predictions were quite off the mark."
(Atlas)

Atlas starts rising into the air with the Spirits. She smiles.

"Remember that I am always with you, Naofumi-sama." (Atlas)

"Atlas... I couldn't protect you." (Naofumi)

"It's alright. I'm always with Naofumi-sama. And Onii-sama, and Raphtalia-san, and everyone in the village. Please hold them all dear." (Atlas)

"Sure." (Naofumi)

I hold up my hand... and our fingers wrap around each other.

Upon feeling her skin, tears start forming in my eyes. I'm not even sad, so why?

“Will we meet again?” (Naofumi)

“We’ve never parted.” (Atlas)

“... That’s right.” (Naofumi)

Atlas’s body changes into light, and disperses.

I watch over the scene, and head off to reality.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 317 – The Hero of the Cane

“Gu…” (Naofumi)

As soon as I awoke, waves of pain shot around my body.

“Naofumi-sama!” (Raphtalia)

I open my eyes, and raise my body. Raphtalia, who had been asleep in a chair by my side, sprung to life.

“I’m fine.” (Naofumi)

It’s likely that if I didn’t have the Shield, I would be unable to hold a conversation, but the Shield is… even if it isn’t with me in form, it’s still lending me power.

I overcome my pain, and stand up.

I feel the throbbing sensation in my body stabilize a bit.

“Are Ren and the others in the middle of a meeting?” (Naofumi)

“Yes… after that, we were able to escape, but master was…” (Raphtalia)

“I know.” (Naofumi)

“Rafu~” (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan appears from under the bed, and leaps at me.

I started patting him, and offering him sweet words.

“Good boy. It’s because of you we were able to get out.” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-sama?” (Raphtalia)

“Even when my consciousness was gone, I was able to perceive the outside world through my weapon. I have a general grasp of the situation. The Queen is… already… right?” (Naofumi)

“… Yes. Two days after we left Faubley… the treatment bore no fruits.” (Raphtalia)

"I see." (Naofumi)

"Right now, Melty-chan and Firo-chan are performing the funeral services."

(Raphtalia)

"..." (Naofumi)

"What will you do now?" (Raphtalia)

"I'll awaken the last Hero The Star who refuses to open his eyes."

(Naofumi)

In the country-wide funeral, the populace shed their tears.

Of course, it's impossible to tell whether those tears were genuine, or not.

But during the events of the past half year, the Queen's been conducting large scale reform.

From her work, some gained, and some lost.

After the funeral... a single figure stood quietly in front of the equally quiet Queen's casket.

Behind him, Melty is looking down with red eyes. She's holding Firo's hand.

"Melty." (Naofumi)

"Ah, Naofumi!" (Melty)

Melty rushes over to me with teary eyes.

"Mother was... she...!" (Melty)

"I'm sorry... I couldn't protect her." (Naofumi)

"No... don't worry about it. Naofumi risked his life to try and protect mother.

Firo-chan, Raphtalia-san... a lot of people told me that. And I also saw the extent of your wounds." (Melty)

"Even so, I failed." (Naofumi)

Right, I couldn't protect her.

The Queen put all of her efforts into assisting me.

Without any deception, she lent me her power. She moved the country for my cause.

"Melty, you don't have to hold back. Since I couldn't do anything... it's alright if you hate me." (Naofumi)

"U-UWAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!" (Melty)

Large teardrops fall from Melty's eyes, as she begins punching me.

I don't have the Shield's protection, so it kinda hurts.

But this is a feeling I have to accept.

Lured in by Melty's tears, Firo also begins crying.

After a while, I'm able to pacify the two.

"I'm sorry, Naofumi." (Melty)

"It's fine. If this made you feel a little better, then I'm fine with it."

(Naofumi)

"... Thank you." (Melty)

Melty stands up, and moves to leave the church.

"Are you sure you don't have to stay?" (Naofumi)

"I've already finished saying farewell to mother. Right now, I need to help make preparations for war." (Melty)

"I see... You sure are strong." (Naofumi)

"Firo-chan!" (Melty)

"Yeah!" (Firo)

Melty boarded Firo, and they ran off. They're probably going to attend the meeting Ren, and the other Heroes, are at.

"Now then..." (Naofumi)

I approach the one frozen in front of the Queen's coffin... I approach Trash.

The Queen's face sure is beautiful.

It's as if she would wake up at any second.

Trash silently stares at the empty shell that was once his wife. Despite their differences, he loved her. The Legendary Weapon showed me that.

Perhaps he noticed my approach, but he continued to stare at the Queen.

“... Did you come to laugh at me? I, the fool Trash who couldn't protect anything dear to me?” (Trash)

“No.” (Naofumi)

I place a flower in the Queen's coffin.

Even though it's such a simple action, sad feeling flow through my heart.

The Queen would always lend me power.

And that's why I answered her requests to some extent.

If she hadn't been there, I would have crossed over to Silt Welt, and instigated them to go to war with Melromark.

But because of the Queen's continued efforts, Melromark and Silt Welt never went to war.

Now, I understand.

I understand just how hard that must have been.

The nobles of the country, and the religion seems to hate me by principle.

Various negotiations must have been carried out when I wasn't watching.

Or else, I would have never been able to live the peaceful life I had in that village.

She worked so hard for this country, for the world. But her work was left unrequited.

She tried again, and again to correct her daughter's behavior. I bet a lot happened even before I got here.

But her daughter's heart never opened. She should simply continue to kick people to the ground, and laugh at their disgrace.

I understand why she was so desperate to curry my favor, before letting

me deal with her family.

If at that time, I were to order their deaths, rumors would have spread across the world, and I would never have gotten to where I am now.

But none of that good will ever came back to her.

Her daughter trampled on her maternal love, and even went as far as to take her life.

Her husband, Trash, was only able to watch as she committed such acts of brutality.

“Hero of the shield. Take care of this country… I cannot fight.” (Trash)

I angrily grab at Trash’s collar.

“Did your wife tell you to leave the country to me!? What the hell did you think she said!? You can’t even understand something as simple as that!?” (Naofumi)

Upon my questions, Trash displayed an expression of anger for a brief moment.

But that quickly vanished, and he averted his gaze.

“Then what do you expect me to do? I am…” (Trash)

“If you stand there moping, will the Queen come back to life? If I keep on praying, will Atlas return? If we all keep wishing for a miracle, do you think the world will be at peace!?” (Naofumi)

“Shut up! What… what do you under-” (Trash)

Trash exposes his anger, and aims a blow.

I easily dodge it, and he glares at me. As if he had found someone to take his anger out on.

“Do you think I’m completely oblivious?” (Naofumi)

“…” (Trash)

I... quietly bring a picture of Atlas up in my mind.

Inside my shield, the girl who constantly clung to me exists. She's no longer in this world.

In order to protect us, she sacrificed her body.

"I will take revenge for Atlas. I plan to execute your Bitch of a Daughter while I'm at it. She'll definitely bring harm to this country if we let her go."
(Naofumi)

I'll just give it to him frankly. See my acting at work.

Spirit of the Cane, if this doesn't work, I'm abandoning him.

"If that happens, Melromark will become mine. No, even Faubley will fall into my possession, and the world will be mine." (Naofumi)

"What!?" (Trash)

"Silt Welt is a country that equates the Hero of the Shield to a god. I'll bet they'll happily submit to my rule. Melromark is already mine for the taking, and next is Faubley... I'll gain control of all the biggest countries, shall I not? Hahaha, this is the establishment of a new empire." (Naofumi)

"Ku..." (Trash)

"If that happens, Trash, your execution is the first thing on the menu. As a useless Hero. Perhaps I'll make Melty next. She seems to be under the misinterpretation that I'm some sort of good person, so I think I'll be able to see quite a scene. Perhaps I'll even keep her around as a sex slave, just as your wife wished." (Naofumi)

If Melty heard that, I think she would kill me.

Since I don't have my Shield, her magic should hurt quite a bit. It's a good thing she left.

But with this much, Trash should snap.

"I won't let you do such a thing!" (Trash)

Trash clenches his teeth, and thrusts his fist at me.

I... peacefully take the blow.

I don't know just how high his level is supposed to be.

Maybe he's weakened with the passage of time, but I never asked, nor do I care.

Anyways, since the Shield was in hibernation, I began to taste blood in my mouth.

"I am... the one who will protect the Melromark that Mirellia loved! As if I'd let it get taken away by the likes of you!" (Trash)

"... That's right. This is how it should be. You can do it if you try."

(Naofumi)

"Wha..." (Trash)

Trash falls silent at my reply.

"Let me ask you once more. Did your wife tell you to leave the country to me? The answer is no. She left it to you! The Hero of the Cane, and the King of Wisdom! You... need to honor the will of the woman you loved more than anything!" (Naofumi)

Trash opens his eyes wide, and takes a step back.

And he wipes away his tears.

"That's right... my eyes had been clouded. I lost myself, and refused to open my eyes, under the pretense of drowning in the grief caused by the loss of a loved one. And you, Shield... Iwatani-dono, I forced my old grudges onto you." (Trash)

In Trash's eyes, I see the spark he had when he opposed me before the Queen came... no, something even greater has been born.

“My wife left this country to me. Then my duty is to uphold her will. I won’t ask you to forgive me. But will you fight with me to protect this country? No, please help me fight!” (Trash)

Trash bows down, and pleads to me.

“Raise your head. There’s no need for that now… I’m going to honor my own promise to the Queen. I have no idea what comes after that.”
(Naofumi)

The Queen asked me to lend her power to protect the country.

For that purpose, I’ll assist with what I can.

For the Queen, who protected this land to her death, I’ll have to work a bit myself.

Fauley’s become a nest of the garbage of this world. In order to sweep out the true trash, I’ll work with the Trash before me.

“I won’t raise it! When I remember all I’ve done to Iwatani-dono, I know there’s no way that I will be forgiven. By my own incompetence, my wife… There’s no way I can compensate for her loss!” (Trash)

“… That’s right. Even in a situation like this, when I remember what you’ve put me through, I can’t forgive you… but…” (Naofumi)

Like Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki changed, and like I changed myself, this man can change as well.

Even if it’s something he can never be forgiven for, he can still redeem himself.

For the Queen’s sake, I’ll at least offer him an opportunity.

“You’re going to change from here on out, right? Then not in words, show it through your actions.” (Naofumi)

“Understood.” (Trash)

“Then what are you doing? Get off your ass, and go save this country!”

(Naofumi)

"Yes!" (Trash)

Trash stands up, and with a stiff expression, he saluted.

As if in response to my orders, a shining rod manifested before Trash.

"This is..." (Trash)

"So you finally get it." (Naofumi)

Yes, the Seven Star Cane was waiting for this moment.

For this rotten Trash... no, for Aultcray Melromark to open his eyes.

Trash grips the cane.

And the light around it fades. He was selected as a Hero once more.

Spirit of the Cane.

I've upheld my side of the bargain

"... Let us go, Iwatani-dono." (Trash)

"Yes, Wise King of Melromark." (Naofumi)

"No, I was unable to do anything to protect my beloved. For a fool like me, there is no name more appropriate than Trash." (Trash)

"..." (Naofumi)

"I am Trash. Everything that has befallen me has been the result of my own actions. Please continue calling me Trash from now on." (Trash)

It's as if he's a completely different person.

It's been said that nothing good comes out of a guy who calls himself a genius, but what will come out of a man who calls himself Trash?

At the very least, he's more decent than he was before.

"... Got it. Trash, I leave the plan to you. I have some expectations for the Wise King inside of your head." (Naofumi)

"Leave it to me. I'll completely slaughter the enemy with the minimum amount of casualties." (Trash)

We turned our backs to the Queen's coffin, and quietly... started walking forward.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 318 – Strategy Meeting

We came all the way to the inside of the castle. To the room where Ren and the others were holding a meeting.

On the way, Motoyasu, Who was playing with his three, joined us.

“My, my. It’s the Hero of the Shield, and…”

Following me was Raphtalia and Trash, whose aura had changed beyond recognition.

The soldiers of the castle seemed to sense this too, and they swallow their spit.

For everyone to realize it so easily, I’m beginning to wonder if he’s truly the same person.

He definitely seems like someone else.

I felt it the first time I met him. This sort of… overwhelming Charisma circling around him.

“King-sama.”

The soldier carefully chooses his words as he speaks.

“Yes, I want to speak with the Heroes, and the Allied Forces. Won’t you open the way?” (Trash)

“Yes Sir!”

The soldiers salute as they open the door.

And like that, we entered the conference room.

“Naofumi!” (Ren)

Ren sees, me, and stands up from his seat. He runs over.

"Are your wounds alright?" (Ren)

"For now." (Naofumi)

It's not like I'm in enough pain to knock me out, and I'm gradually recovering.

I have the blessing of the Shield, and I should recover enough by the time I confront that bastard.

"Next is..." (Ren)

Ren looks at Trash, and hangs his mouth open.

"Hey, is that..." (Ren)

"Yeah, it's the same person. Even I was surprised." (Naofumi)

Trash looks over the ones in attendance with an intelligent smile. He displays the cane in his hand.

Who the hell is he?

"Hmm... so Melromark's Hero of the Cane has finally gotten the motivation to fight. Are you sure you aren't too late?" (Genmu)

The Genmu Grampa begins provoking Trash.

The Shusaku has a similar expression, and they're giving off an irritating impression.

"That's right. My eyes had been clouded, but now it's different. My wife... The Queen's will will be upheld. I must protect this country." (Trash)

The past Trash would have been enraged by those words. He would have been driven out of the room after throwing it into disorder.

But the current one honestly admits his shortcomings.

"Melly." (Trash)

"Y-yes?" (Melly)

Trash points at Melty, and she suddenly straightens her back.

To her, this man should be her father, but her face clearly shows that something is off.

“Won’t you continue the meeting? Iwatani-dono and I wish to partake in it.”
(Trash)

“Understood.” (Melty)

Trash pulls back a chair for me, and sits down in the one next to it.

For some reason, with that simple action, everyone takes a deep breath.

The others must think that he’s completely forgotten his past grudges. He’s even treating me with respect.

Even I find it amazing.

He had an extremely diligent expression as he pulled a chair for me, but something feels really wrong.

Is it that?

When someone who acted as a fool shows his mettle, the gap makes him seem exceedingly cool?

Now let’s see just how far he exceeds our low expectations.

“What are you doing? Hurry and start it up again. We don’t have much time remaining, correct?” (Trash)

“U-understood!” (Melty)

Melty takes out a document, and sticks them onto a board fastened to the wall.

‘According to the Heroes, Tact is also an Otherworlder’ Is written on the front.

The evidence is his personal history, and his inventions.

And the battle looks hopeless.

It seems that Tact is proceeding directly from Faubley to Melromark in a straight line.

He's making all of the countries along the way surrender, and he gains control of their land as he progresses. His progress is way too fast. In a few days, his army will reach Melromark.

The enemy's new weapon... no, it's not really new, but the Airplane has been implemented for practical usage. Its dramatic appearance on the battle field spelled the defeat of a few nations already. That's how the situation looks.

"It seems that the Heroes of the Sword, Spear, and Bow won't be put on the defensive line." (Trash)

Trash asks.

Melty and the Genmu raise their hands, and respond.

"It's due to Faubley's hero's miraculous ability. As long as he's there, we can't carelessly deploy them, even if it means putting them on standby." (Melty)

"Fumu... a prudent decision. Airplanes... I have a vague idea of the kind of weapon they are, but are they truly that formidable?" (Trash)

"Yes. The one acting as their main base deploys soldiers by parachute, and it mows down all that approach it by machine gun. The high-leveled dragoons of the other countries have tried challenging their planes to dogfights, but it appears that their pilots levels exceed ours by too great of a margin..." (Melty)

Because of the large level gap, it's impossible to approach.

It's a simple advantage, but its simplicity makes for a firm groundwork. Dropping the planes with long-range magic and weapons seems possible, but their high levels buffer defense and speed. I'm not sure if we'll be able to hit them.

"What numbers are they coming in?" (Naofumi)

"They're attacking with only five planes. They board and stock away from

the battlefield, and subjugate countries by raining soldiers down on their cities from above.” (Melty)

It’s likely that those five pilots are high leveled, and the rest are standard soldiers.

I don’t know about Tact’s Harem, but their general soldiers didn’t seem to be too high leveled.

That means they’re focusing their plans around their limited supply of pilots.

“… Hero-samas, I’d like to hear whatever information you have about Airplanes.” (Trash)

“Even if you ask that, I’m pretty sure we only have general knowledge. We may be able to implement one, but it’ll just barely be able to fly.” (Ren)

“In your worlds, by what concept did they move, and how were they handled in war? Also, what sort of functions did they hold?” (Trash)

“Is that stuff really important?” (Ren)

“Yes, if I don’t get whatever information we have, I can’t formulate a plan.” (Trash)

And Trash thoroughly absorbed whatever information we knew pertaining to planes. I wonder if most of it was actually necessary.

Also about firearms… in that field, Itsuki proved to be quite knowledgeable. He even explained the part names, and their applications.

You’re telling me that he not only not only comes from an ESPer world, he’s also a military otaku?

But he was useful, anyways, so I didn’t say anything.

Well, thinking about it, someone with 『Accuracy』 as an ability would need projectiles like guns and bows for battle, so perhaps it was inevitable.

“…It’s still not enough.” (Trash)

“Hah?”

“There’s still something bothering me.” (Trash)

Even after his incessant, inquisition, he still presses us for more information. At first, we looked at him with dubious eyes, but the military heads of the other countries, particularly the ones closer in age to Trash, looked on the scene in silence. They had confident smiles on their faces.

“Oy, do you know anything about that?” (Naofumi)

“That’s proof that the Wise King has revived. He’ll continue searching for information until he has enough of it to put together. But the answer he comes to is always correct. By doing that, he was able to make all of us taste defeat. He’s nothing less than reliable.”

“I see…” (Naofumi)

“Since he hasn’t settled on a plan yet, that means that he hasn’t been given the necessary information yet. Please cooperate with him.”

I don’t know where this trust is coming from, but this is the first time I’ve seen Trash like that.

“Iwatani-dono.” (Trash)

“W-what?” (Naofumi)

It’s already strange that he’s stopped calling me, ‘Shield’.

And his eyes are shimmering. I feel that I might get sucked into his pace, and start speaking everything.

“About their… Hero. I’ll leave him to Iwatani-dono. Is that alright with you?” (Trash)

“Yes, I’ll knock him off his high horse.” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi, are you sure? Didn’t you have your Shield taken?” (Ren)

“It’s fine. Ah, right…” (Naofumi)

At the same time I remembered my meeting with the Spirits.

The weapons of the other Heroes in the area began emitting a faint light. Light seeps out of the Sword, Spear, Bow, and the place my Shield used to be. And flows towards Trash and Fohl’s weapons.

“What? Convert...?”

“Strengthening method unlocked?”

They let out such words, as they seemed to be reading an invisible screen with their eyes.

And Trash held out his cane to me.

“The Cane has suggested that it be offered to you temporarily as a special case. It wants to lend you power. Please take it.” (Trash)

“... Will you be fine?” (Naofumi)

“My focus is on strategy. It’s not that essential.” (Trash)

“I see.” (Naofumi)

I grasp Trash’s cane.

A similar Icon to the one I saw when I had the Shield appeared.

As an exception, the use of this weapon by the Hero of the Shield has been permitted!

Special Weapon Unlocked!

You have completed the conditions to unlock the Fenrir Rod!

(TL: Fenrir is a wolf, and Loki’s son. He kills Odin at Ragnarok.)

–

Fenrir Rod 0/90 C

Awakening Impossible

...

Equipment Bonus:

Fenrir Force

Ability Bonus:

Gleipnir Rope

Rebellion Against God

Proficiency Level: 0

–

(TL: Gleipnir is the Red Thread used to bind Fenrir. It will snap during Ragnarok)

A status message appeared, and I checked my stats.

Comparing it to the Stats I had before, Quite a bit has changed.

I guess I'll have to change how I fight to match.

The cane changed shape to that of a staff with a wolf ornament on top. The wolf's mouth was biting down on the body of the staff.

There are chains wrapped around the base, and it's a bit hard to hold.

Looking at the weapon book, quite a few weapons have been unlocked.

The method the Seven Stars used to unlock weapons probably converted, and appeared in a form friendly to the Four Summoned.

With just this, my abilities have risen by a bit.

But... the numbers are lower than the ones I'm familiar with.

Is this because the Seven Star weapons are ranked lower than the four?

I open the screen to strengthen the staff.

"Fohl, read out the strengthening methods written in your Help Screen.

We'll also tell you ours, and then, we'll apply them." (Naofumi)

"S-sure." (Fohl)

"Ren, Motoyasu, Itsuki, you understand, right? Strengthening is all about belief. Believe in the strengthening method from Fohl Gauntlets, and from Trash's cane." (Naofumi)

"Got it!" (Ren)

"Understood!" (Motoyasu)

"Yes." (Itsuki)

And we shared the strengthening methods in our help screens.

“Wait a second, that strengthening method. Isn’t that what we tried before, but failed in?” (Ren)

“It was used in one of the Seven Star Weapons. Unless the Heroes cooperate, I don’t think it’ll work.” (Naofumi)

“… At this point, that just sounds like a pain.” (Ren)

Ren complains. I agree.

But his complaints are on the mark.

Most likely, the enemy from the wave did some sort of interference… no, that doesn’t sound right…

But despite the differences between the Cane and the Gauntlet, their strengthening methods were the same. How ironic.

I immediately strengthened the Fenrir rod in various ways.

My Status improved greatly.

Even so, it doesn’t compare to the Spirit Turtle Shell.

No, that one received a boost from the Shield of Compassion Atlas unlocked, so it would be rude to compare them.

“I managed to awaken it, but I can’t get any equipment bonuses.” (Fohl)

Fohl reports as such to me.

“We don’t have much time, but go do it. You can get materials from around the country, and you can take whatever you want from my ware house.”

(Naofumi)

“Got it.” (Fohl)

“Have the Heroes finished their discussion Then let’s get back to planning.”

(Trash)

Trash sits down again, and restarts the meeting.

After that, Trash wrung us dry of all the information we had of our world.

So much that I think he would be able to make some groundbreaking

technological progress here. By the time I noticed it, the sun had already sunk.

“Is there still anything more you need?” (Naofumi)

“... I’ll need to revise it a bit, but I guess this is enough information for one day.” (Trash)

Trash began scribbling away on the board.

And the soldiers of the Castle copied down his words.

Apparently, the Genmu ordered them to do so.

After seeing the content, we nodded. He figured out how to possibly turn their weapon against them. How frightening.

What does this man plan to start with the information we gave him?

“Now then, does this sound fine for a draft of the plan?” (Trash)

There are proposals numbered one through twenty. Trash orders his soldiers to make the initial preparations for each one.

“Y-yeah.” (Naofumi)

“I’ll have the Heroes work individually in their own squadrons.” (Trash)

“I understand that, but...” (Naofumi)

I look at Trash’s writing, and see the date he put for the day Tact was going to attack.

“Is the attack really coming on that day?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. Faubley’s hero will choose this day without a doubt. If I were on his side, I would choose it as well.” (Trash)

Yes, I truly would be at a disadvantage if he chose that day.

Right... the day the wave would come.

This truly was the most effective day for them.

Us Heroes are registered at Melromark's Dragon Hourglass.

According to Ren, and the others, the last one they registered at was Melromark's as well.

"How are the other countries dealing with the wave?" (Naofumi)

"The waves appear to be centered mostly around Melromark. The others still have time to prepare." (Trash)

"I see..." (Naofumi)

This is exceedingly troublesome.

We'll get called to some far off location when we're in the middle of the war with Faubley.

Even so, it's not as if we can neglect the wave.

That means we'll have to split our forces.

"And so, Heroes, please make preparations beforehand. If possible, act as swiftly as you can with your fastest Filo Rial." (Trash)

"Understood! Now, let us be off, my angels!" (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu randomly runs off atop his three.

Where the hell does he think he's going!?

"Then I'll assign the Hero of the Spear-sama to this brigade." (Trash)

And so, we were assigned our positions.

"Right, Trash. There's someone I'd like to introduce as a source of information." (Naofumi)

"Understood. Who is this individual?" (Trash)

(TL: I'd like to remind you all that Japanese Pronouns are gender Neutral)

It's quite a simple source

She does have quite a grudge, so I'm sure she'll assist me.

What's more, she's my slave. So she doesn't have the right to refuse. The other one, no, that... it would be quicker to just bring him there. Trash's probably seen her before, but he shouldn't know about her ability.

"Getting them here now is... impossible. Come with me." (Naofumi)

I walked away to introduce her to Trash.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 319 - Glamour vs. Loli

The sun's already set, but time is precious, so I ended up showing Trash my village's situation... specifically the ones there that would make for good manpower.

For argument's sake, he was with the Queen when we challenged Houou, so he should know, but I don't think he has a definite grasp of my forces.

"Ah, Niichan." (Kiel)

We used Ren's portal to return, and Kiel found us.

"Are you already okay?" (Kiel)

"Well, yeah. More importantly, have there been any problems on your side?" (Naofumi)

"None. By the way, I believe that person was the one who was always next to Queen-sama." (Kiel)

"Yeah." (Naofumi)

"This is the first time we've spoken. My name is known throughout the country, so I think you've at least heard it, though." (Trash)

"I think it was..." (Kiel)

Kiel hesitates in giving her answer.

I mean, when I changed his name, there was a national uproar. It's become a bit of a famous story.

"Hey, try saying my name." (Trash)

"Niichan, are you sure it's alright?" (Kiel)

"The individual wishes for it, so go ahead." (Naofumi)

What sort of torture is this. Stop taking away our time.

Isn't this kinda rude?

Did Trash act docile in order to accomplish this?

But the guy's face is quite serious.

"Um... King-sama?" (Kiel)

"I'm Trash. Remember the name." (Trash)

"Um..." (Kiel)

"Don't act so troubled!" (Naofumi)

IS he a masochist?

Do all the Heroes turn out like this?

"I also think this is harassment." (Ren)

No, it feels like the amount of Rens has merely multiplied.

But I don't really feel like scolding him.

(TL: As in, Trash's change was similar to Ren's)

"I agree... Why did it turn out like this?" (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia's carrying her head in her hands.

I think so as well, but Trash himself accepts the name, so there's no helping it.

It was fun to use it to harass him, but when he says it with such a serious face, I'm the one that feels offended.

"What's wrong, Iwatani-dono? Hurry and tell me your forces." (Trash)

If he were just acting, it would be fine, but the current Trash is being 100% genuine.

If you wonder why I understand this, it's because my intuition has been sharpened from being in this world.

I'm especially good at seeing through merchants.

Anyways, my senses are telling me that Trash isn't lying. His personality is just twisted.

But for him to force the Demi-Humans who he looked down upon to call him Trash...

If he tries pledging loyalty to me, then I won't mind it, but I feel that's not happening.

"Kiel, don't think too hard about it... Just say it as if it's a foreigner's name."
(Naofumi)

"Got it, Niichan. Good luck, Trash-san." (Kiel)

"Yes!" (Trash)

...

This Trash seems to be more enervating than ever before.

Motoyasu doesn't listen to a word you say, so you can say anything. Trash listens to all arguments, and incorporates them into his own.

It's dangerous to mess around with him.

"Then... come with me. Ren, go give an explanation to the villagers."
(Naofumi)

"Understood." (Ren)

I bring Trash over to the place of the one I wanted to introduce him to.

"Ara? Marquis, are your wounds healed?"

"For the most part." (Naofumi)

I dragged Trash to Rat's lab.

Inside of a large culture tank... something is floating.

It looks like a carriage.

"Where's Mii-kun?" (Naofumi)

"In order to repair the body you made when you were out of it, he went off hunting." (Rat)

"Hunting?" (Naofumi)

"He spread out his body to cover everyone from Houou's self-destruction,

so much of it was blown away. In order to regenerate, he'll have to supplement those lost parts." (Rat)

"... Supplement." (Naofumi)

"Fumu... I hypothesize that it's something similar to the theory of how Slimes grow. Am I correct?" (Trash)

"Yes, correct. He'll hunt monsters, and absorb their parts until he had enough matter to regenerate." (Rat)

I want to block my ears.

Just what sort of dangerous lifeform did I make!?

He seems likely to appear in some B Class Horror Film.

"Well, it'll take a while for him to completely regrow. Restructuring the genetic construction of his prey is quite a difficult task." (Rat)

"Yes, yes, I get it... Rat, you understand the relation between the previous incident, and the war, right?" (Naofumi)

"Right... that Seven Star Hero in Faubley was the one who gave you those severe wounds, right?" (Rat)

"Was he the one who exiled you?" (Naofumi)

"Yes, with the support of my rival Alchemist. Our areas of study clashed, so it was quite a trial." (Rat)

I've heard something similar before.

I heard a lot that time, but I never thought they would become enemies.

But it's beneficial for someone with information on the enemy to be an ally.

And it would be a poor move to ignore someone with skills similar to Rat.

"So there's an alchemist there too?" (Naofumi)

"Yes. One with the appearance of a child." (Rat)

"Is he specialized in mechanics?" (Naofumi)

"No, that's the Hero? Anyways, I thought she had died, but they managed to revive this country's former princess, right? It's definitely that girl's work. She's good at making Homunculus that imitate others. It's difficult to tell them apart from the real thing." (Rat)

"I see." (Naofumi)

"From my perspective, she's an exceedingly normal Alchemist. She's a bit more knowledgeable on artificial life than most, but not on my level.

Though I do happen to specialize in monsters." (Rat)

An alchemist with the body of a child, and an alchemist with the body of a slutty onee-san.

Now, legendary Hero, who will you choose?

And in the end, that Hero chose the Loli.

I do get the feeling that there were several little kids around him.

That man was a Lolicon... He;s a complete criminal.

No... I'm also a bit past that line.

Despite Raphtalia's appearance, she's a child in age.

And there's also Atlas, so I can't really complain about him.

"Did you not get along with her?" (Naofumi)

"If I were to choose, I'd have to say that the Hero drove me out because his research and mine contradicted one another. Airplanes, was it? I remember objecting to his ideas, and asking why he couldn't just use Flying Beasts, or Gryphons." (Rat)

"I think there was also something called a 'Tank' on Faubley's front line."
(Trash)

"Hmm..." (Naofumi)

And Here, Rat has a similar Carriage-type Monster.

This monster should have some long distance magic capabilities.

Their research areas truly do overlap.

Here, we have lifeforms, and there, they have machines.

It's uncertain how large of a gap this will create, but how about looking at it from Level?

The machines are based on the driver's level. Their flaw is that if they get too damaged, they'll have to be changed out.

With Monsters, you can simply cast healing magic on them, so prolonged fighting is possible.

For reasons such as this, Tact may have driven his theoretic rival out of Faubley.

"That woman always had a strange set of priorities. Even now, I find it irritating. She got smitten with that fool, and thus fell behind me in research!" (Rat)

Perhaps when Tact couldn't get Rat to fall for him, he got rid of her. Because for Rat, Mii-kun is the most important.

"This is?" (Naofumi)

I point at the cairage-like thing inside of the tank.

"It's something I set up before we set off to fight Houou. It's the monster the Marquis designed. I tried to make it." (Rat)

"We'll soon be drawn into war. Do you think you'll make it?" (Naofumi)

"Just barely. I plan to have Mii-kun ride it as its core, we'll probably have to go ahead without any practice, so I don't really want to deploy it." (Rat)

That's quite a bit of progress for a few days.

"I need to thank you for the versatility of the body you made." (Rat)

"So that's it..." (Naofumi)

A function of the body that version of me made.

"I see. If we were able to use this in battle, it would decrease the danger of the plan." (Trash)

Trash nods to himself, as he begins asking Rat various questions.

“Can it take in magic from the outside, and release it similar to the theory of Ritual Magic?” (Trash)

“An interesting thought. I’ll test it out, but I ask you not to expect too much.” (Rat)

On Trash’s proposition, Rat takes out a diagram.

I’ll have to pray that this will increase our forces however much it may…

“Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

Oh? Raph-chan found me, and ran over.

Why can I tell? His voice is the one most similar to Raphtalia’s.

Though it’s a bit more childish.

I guess it’s like the voice of Raphtalia when I got her long ago.

“Ta~li~?” (Raph-chan)

He seems to be worried about my injuries.

“I’m fine. Don’t worry about it. You’re the one who set up the barrier magic, so I thank you.” (Naofumi)

“Li~ya!” (Raph-chan)

“… Naofumi-sama… please don’t play around too much.” (Raphtalia)

As I began petting Raph-chan all over, Raphtalia cautions me with an embarrassed expression.

Her reaction is interesting, so I want to continue, but since Raphtalia’s saying it, I really should stop.

“Ah, right. Trash, This is one of the things I wanted to show you. Do you think you can use it?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, my wife told me it was a monster you created.” (Trash)

“It’s called a Raph. When I was possessed by a cursed Shield, I created it

as a completely new breed of monster.” (Naofumi)

“I’ve seen it on the previous battlefield, There are a few variations of it, right?” (Trash)

“Yeah, the monsters of my village personally asked for modifications. They became new sorts of Raphs.” (Naofumi)

“I see…” (Trash)

“Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

“He also wants to be used in battle. If you’re lacking manpower, go ahead and make use of them.” (Naofumi)

Honestly, the levels of Melromark’s soldiers are low in comparison to Faubley’s.

In close quarters, they would be at quite a disadvantage.

Of course, I intend to take applicants from my village as well, but we definitely don’t have large enough numbers.

So I think it’s time to deploy a new kind of monster.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 320 - Raph-chan

“Then what sort of ability do these children possess?” (Trash)

I turn my eyes to Rat.

“Their individual powers are all over the place. But… each one specializes in Illusion Magic.” (Rat)

Well they were modeled after Raphtalia.

And her specialty is illusions.

The specific category is apparently light and darkness, but she can become invisible, and affect enemy perception to lead them astray.

Raphtalia herself doesn't use magic too much, though. She mainly focuses on sword skills.

“Users of Illusion Magic… I think I'll be able to use them. And it looks like I can also depend on their strength.” (Trash)

“By the way, Marquis, about this child.” (Rat)

“What about him?” (Naofumi)

She speaks while pointing to Raph-chan.

“From what I see, that one seems a little different from the rest, but do you know anything about that?” (Rat)

“I'm not that knowledgeable either. He was hidden on the bottom of my carriage when we were going to Faubley. His level is also quite high.”

(Naofumi)

I look over his stats again.

… Why has it risen? It's 90 now.

"Can I give it a quick examination? I don't think it'll let me hold it." (Rat)

"Sure. Stay still for a bit." (Naofumi)

"Rafu~?" (Raph-chan)

Rat begins performing light palpations on Raph-chan.

"Its fur, and its reaction to magic is different than the rest. I guess I should compare it to a Filo Rial's mutation to royalty." (Rat)

"Mutation, like Firo." (Naofumi)

So something influenced one of the Raphs I knew, and caused it to undergo a drastic change?

"What exactly is he?" (Naofumi)

"No idea..." (Rat)

"Hey, where did you come from?" (Naofumi)

"Rafu~." (Raph-chan)

He points in the direction of the sea.

In that direction is Sadina's secret base.

No, I understand that that's where you were made, but...

"It gives a proper response when asked. It seems quite smart." (Rat)

"Can you understand what it's trying to tell us?" (Naofumi)

"I can understand Mii-kun, and a portion of the monsters, but the Raphs you made purely from scratch are incomprehensible to me." (Rat)

"Rafu~." (Raph)

Raph-chan's making various gestures to illustrate its origin, but I don't believe the message is getting through.

However, I do hope that he never learns to speak like the Filo Rials.

"Well, it doesn't really matter. Can you do anything special? Are you the same as the rest? Is there a reason that you could use barrier magic back there?" (Naofumi)

I try asking.

Raph-chan tilts its head to one side, and begins thinking. He stands up on his hind legs, and crosses his front ones.

Uwah. That pose is cute.

Unlike a certain bird, he's not showing an excess amount of pushiness.

"Rafu~." (Raph-chan)

For some reason, Raph-chan points to Raphtalia, and starts walking towards her.

"Me?" (Raphtalia)

As he approaches, he swells his tail, and begins activating a skill.

All of the fur on its body stands on end...

With a poof... he transformed.

"Wha-"

Standing there, was a Raphtalia, much like she was when I first met her.

How nostalgic.

I had forgotten that she looked like this.

"Rafu~!" (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan raises both of his arms, as if to ask me to praise him...

But that's not the problem.

"Why are you naked!?" (Naofumi)

I avert my gaze.

"Is this a form of illusion magic?" (Rat)

Rat covers Raph-chan's body with her lab-coat. Raphtalia begins calming her down.

"For now, learn how to wear clothes, and how to walk around in them."

(Naofumi)

"Rafu~?" (Raph-chan)

Smoke surrounds her body, and clothes much like the ones Raphtalia is currently wearing appear.

Is this also an illusion?

Rat tries touching Raph-chan's face.

"Let's see. Is this an illusion so advanced that it can even deceive the sense of touch?" (Rat)

"Rafu~..." (Raph-chan)

As Rat continually pokes her body, Raph-chan lets out a sound indicating her dislike of it.

"Amazing. It's as if she's really there." (Rat)

"Rafu~!" (Raph-chan)

The mystery has deepened!

Just who is Raph-chan supposed to be?

His specs are much higher than any of the Raphs I know.

Rat may be correct in saying he's a special variant like Firo.

"Ara? The quality of the clothing illusion isn't that high. It's as if I'm touching his skin." (Rat)

"Rafu~." (Raph-chan)

It looks like it tickles. Raph-chan in Raphtalia (Little Girl) form runs, and hides behind me.

“Arara, he ran away.” (Rat)

“Rafu~.” (Raph-chan)

“Do you have any other abilities?” (Naofumi)

Raph-chan looks at Raphtalia again.

“I don’t know why, but I’m getting a bad feeling about this…” (Raphtalia)

“Rafu~.” (Raph-chan)

This time, she transforms to be identical to Raphtalia.

Amazing. His height and posture are identical to hers.

“Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

I get the feeling that Raph-chan’s form is a bit less defined than hers.

Well, Tanukis are supposed to be good at transforming, so perhaps this is supposed to be normal.

But I don’t really like him taking on human form.

As if he had read my mind, Raph-chan changes back to Raph form.

Good boy. Unlike a certain bird over there, he can read the mood.

“So you can change into various things?” (Naofumi)

“Rafu~.” (Raph-chan)

He gives a firm nod.

“I bet he’s making it look like that with magic.” (Rat)

Raph-chan turns his head, as if to deny the claim.

“Eh? Then you can actually transform?” (Naofumi)

Raph-chan shakes his head up and down.

Ku… that’s right. The other me conducted strange experiments to try to

reproduce Raphtalia.

So Raph-chan might actually have the ability to become her.

If he also got the ability to talk, it would be the birth of a new type of Filo Rial.

… What is it? I have a really bad premonition.

I get the feeling that they're going to be revered as divine beasts in the future.

"Rafu~." (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan sticks out his chest with pride, but I really hope he continues speaking like that.

"Anything else?" (Naofumi)

"Rafu~?" (Raph-chan)

On my request, Raph-chan begins thinking again.

"Can you grow like Mii-kun?" (Rat)

"Don't put in impossible requests." (Naofumi)

"Rafu~!" (Raph-chan)

On Rat's inquiry, Raph-chan transformed.

Oy… he turned into a bear-like Raph.

I think I saw a Raph like that in the village.

"Rafu~." (Raph-chan)

To put it clearly, he did not have any slime-like functions like Mii-kun. Raph-chan continued to gesture.

"Hmm…" (Naofumi)

I feel that I would be able to ride his back.

I actually like this one better.

If Firo stopped talking, I feel that I would be able to lean on her, and take a nice nap. Now this one can take that role.

This form looks like your friendly neighborhood youkai. (TL: Specifically, a certain Totoro)

At least, he gives off a feeling like that.

"How versatile." (Rat)

"Right." (Naofumi)

"Rafu~." (Raph-chan)

"..." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia has a strange expression, and she hangs her head.

I mean, this monster was modelled after her, and heavily modified.

I kinda understand her feelings, but I don't hate this Raph.

"It seems he has quite a few abilities." (Trash)

Trash, who had been quiet up until now, spoke up.

"Yep." (Naofumi)

"Then would he be able to do something like this as well?" (Trash)

Trash offers a proposal to Raph-chan. I was also in agreement with the contents.

If all goes well, Raphtalia and Raph-chan will become significant players in this battle.

The problem is that that Raphtalia's expression seemed doubtful on hearing the plan.

If I were to be put in Raphtalia's place, I think I would feel the same.

No, since Raph-chan is good with illusions, perhaps I *can* take her place.

“Are we really doing that?” (Raphtalia)

“If we succeed, won’t it be useful?” (Naofumi)

“Well, that’s true.” (Raphtalia)

“Rafu~.” (Raph-can)

This Raph doesn’t seem to call Rahtalia a fake.

Though he sometimes seem to come close to saying it.

After we practiced executing the plan, and managed to pull it off easily, Raphtalia’s expression became even more depressed.

If we had just done it without practice, it probably would have been fine.

“Next is my village’s fighting power. If you need anything built for the war, my Lemos should be able to make them.” (Naofumi)

I would put in a request to Imya and her uncle.

They’re skillful, and they’re trustful of me.

“If we get them to work with those at the castle… understood. Iwatani-dono, your forces will be taken into account.” (Trash)

“That helps. We’re all counting on your strategy.” (Naofumi)

“Leave it to me. Then after seeing your available combatants, let’s go to the castle once more, and put our ideas together.” (Trash)

“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

Like that, Trash began selecting forces from my village to participate in the war.

Since we would be fighting humans, Trash said that there were quite a few people who shouldn’t participate even if they wanted to.

Since they did wish it, I went through some trouble calming them down.

But just as Trash said, many of their hands shook when it came down to it. They’re fine with fighting monsters, but many people understood that they didn’t have it in them to commit murder.

And I once again had to sooth the ones who couldn’t go to war.

Looking at statistics, a large portion of our forces were unable to participate. The ratio of women in our village was high to begin with.

And while the night was drawing on, we used Ren to return to the castle.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 321 - Jealousy

"Ah, Naofumi-chan. Are your wounds healed already?"

I left today's work to Trash, and went to rest early due to my recent injuries. But as I was back to my place, Sadina appeared from the ocean.

Why is that the first line everyone says when they see me?

I don't really know myself, but were my wounds really that serious?

I was incapacitated for a few days, so I guess there's no helping it.

"For the most part. And? Did you have some business with me?" (Naofumi)

"We're going to war, right? This Onee-san wanted to make herself a bit more useful, so I went out to raise my level." (Sadina)

"I see." (Naofumi)

In the sea, she's unmatched.

And when it comes down to war, she'll make for excellent manpower.

What's more, she seems to have anti-personnel battle experience, so I have a bit of confidence in her.

"So what level have you reached?" (Naofumi)

"95. I was able to venture deep into foreign, untamed regions!" (Sadina)

"Ah, yes, yes." (Naofumi)

"And so..." (Sadina)

Sadina playfully approaches me, and speaks in my ear so Raphtalia won't hear.

Why must she do something to purposely irritate her?

Well, she was kinda that sort of person anyways.

"Have your doubts cleared a bit?" (Sadina)

"... A little." (Naofumi)

"I see. Ah, also, there's something I'd like to report." (Sadina)

“What”

“We’ll have to go to my secret island base. Oh, and bring a Lemo along.”

(Sadina)

Ah, right… Raph-chan did indicate that direction.

I’m a bit curious.

That structure named the Castle Plant…

It would be troublesome if it began acting on its own.

I’ll need to check it just in case.

“Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

“Got it. There’s little time to spare, so lead the way.” (Naofumi)

“Then, Naofumi-chan.” (Sadina)

Sadina looks in Raphtalia’s direction, and gives a hand signal to me.

“Go on a date with me.” (Sadina)

By the way, the sky is already pitch black.

Raphtalia’s mostly oblivious of the content of our conversation.

This is bound to spring up some misunderstandings…

“Where do you plan on taking him?” (Raphtalia)

“Oh, my… What are you trying to make me say, Raphtalia-chan?” (Sadina)

“Naofumi-sama!” (Raphtalia)

Fumu… Raphtalia’s behavior is… jealousy… right?

It’s strange how that fact can make her actions seem kinda cute.

From the start, I did accept the fact that she was a bishojo, but I mean this in a different way.

The fact that I find teasing her like this fun may be because she’s like my daughter.

“That’s right. Ah, can you go ask Imya if she wants to join us?” (Naofumi)

The conversation follows Sadina's flow.

... For some reason, this pattern seems nostalgic.

Before I came to this world, I remember that I would often hop on board when other people were messing around.

Thinking back now, I wonder what I was trying to accomplish.

Haha... I can't laugh at the past Motoyasu anymore.

"Naofumi-sama!?" (Raphtalia)

"What?" (Naofumi)

"No... um... Where do you plan on going with Sadina-oneesan?" (Raphtalia)

Now how should I answer?

Just a month ago, I would have simply tilted my head, and answered, 'The Island'.

But now, I have a vague grasp of Raphtalia's feelings.

Since I have a bit of leeway, let's show a bit of appeal.

"On a date, right?" (Naofumi)

"Ara? You're taking me and Imya-chan out at the same time?" (Sadina)

"Yeah, let's bring Raph-chan along too." (Naofumi)

"Oh my. This sure is turning out to be quite the banquet of lust." (Sadina)

There's no end to this train.

Raphtalia firmly grasps my shoulder, starts releasing killing intent, and gives off a dangerous smile.

So I'm the one who's at fault here?

"Naofumi-sama? Can we have a little talk?" (Raphtalia)

"Well..." (Naofumi)

I'm not oblivious of her female heart.

But since Raphtalia became jealous, there were a few things that I wanted to test out.

I admit that it did feel mean.

"Raphtalia." (Naofumi)

"What could it be?" (Raphtalia)

"You... once the world is at peace, what will you do?" (Naofumi)

"Meaning?" (Raphtalia)

"You see, when I was on the line between life and death, I met some people. I met Atlas, and one who claimed to be the Spirit of my Shield."
(Naofumi)

I summed up my experiences before I regained consciousness to those present.

I was a bit embarrassed about my reason for deciding to stay, so I omitted it.

"So, when I return to my own world, I can take someone from herewith me." (Naofumi)

"I-is that true?" (Raphtalia)

Water is welling up in Raphtalia's eyes.

As I thought.

I don't know too much about the Legends of the past Heroes, but I bet there were a few that went to their home worlds.

I'm no exception. When I feel it's time to leave, I'll take her if she wants to go.

"So Raphtalia, what do you want to do?" (Naofumi)

"Ara..." (Sadina)

Sadina's eyes are showing clear signs of happiness.

She's having fun watching this scene.

The past me would have gotten angry at her. Definitely.

"Well... Um..." (Raphtalia)

"Will you stay in this world, and spend your days in peace here?" (Naofumi)

"..." (Raphtalia)

"Or will you follow me to my world, and live in a completely foreign land? I just wanted to ask that." (Naofumi)

"So the only option for Naofumi-chan is to return." (Sadina)

"Yeah. But if I left something unfinished, it would leave a bad taste in my mouth." (Naofumi)

"I..." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia puts her hand on her chest, and takes a step forward.

"I believe that I want to stay by Naofumi-sama's side for however long I can." (Raphtalia)

"... I see." (Naofumi)

Raphtalia musters her courage, and answers.

"Understood." (Naofumi)

"Thank you." (Raphtalia)

"Then you can't really say anything against my outing with Sadina." (Naofumi)

"...?" (Raphtalia)

"I mean, isn't that right? What's the legal age in this world?" (Naofumi)

"What?" (Raphtalia)

"Sadina, do you know?" (Naofumi)

"As soon as your parents or guardians recognize you as an adult, you will be treated as such. It also varies by the country, but Naofumi-chan's the lord here. What do you want to do with the village's law?" (Sadina)

"I banned love, but I'll loosen the regulations a bit." (Naofumi)

"Ara, how nice." (Sadina)

"And so, Raphtalia!" (Naofumi)

"Y-yes?" (Raphtalia)

"In my world, the legal age is 18 for men, and 16 for women. If you plan on coming to my world, you have to keep that in mind. Or else I'll get arrested." (Naofumi)

"...?" (Raphtalia)

It seems that it didn't hit home with her.

I guess the differences in worlds is like this. I went through some trouble when I came here too.

But if Raphtalia wants to accompany me to my world, she'll experience many things like this.

We'll need to practice beforehand.

"And in my world, I'm no Hero. Just a civilian. Life will be difficult, and I think we'll go through quite a few trials before we can establish a stable home and income." (Naofumi)

"N-Naofumi-sama?" (Raphtalia)

"In that place, getting permission to marry a minor, and building a family will be difficult." (Naofumi)

Raphtalia's face is getting paler by the minute.

But remember this. This is really important.

First and foremost, Raphtalia doesn't have any family register documents, and I have no idea what to do about her ears and tail.

I can't have her hide them with magic forever, so it'll be quite a task.

Even if the Shield adapts the world a bit, that won't do anything to affect her actual age.

Though we may be able to use its power to make life a bit easier.

"To summarize, Raphtalia, your age is a hurdle if you want to marry me in my world." (Naofumi)

"T-that can't be!" (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia loses her words, and takes a step back.

Even if she looks like an adult Bishojo, she really is a kid.

But if I subtract from her estimated age, she'll only have to wait for 5-6 years.

If it's just that much, I'll wait for her.

I also want to see her wearing a school uniform.

I'll bet the Shield will grant at least this much.

"But for those that aren't coming to my world, they're already treated as adults here. It's 100% legal for me to date them, and I also have Atlas's will. I've started to believe that I'll have to answer their feelings a bit. Thinking about the future, this isn't the same as what the Queen wanted, but it isn't bad, is it?" (Naofumi)

If she gives birth to the child of the Hero, the country will guarantee her at least the most basic of rights.

That's something the people who said they liked me will have to consider down the road.

I'm not ecstatic about it, but I don't have the discomfort I felt before.

"B-but..." (Raphtalia)

"And so, Naofumi-chan is everyone's. I'm going to go on a date, and then do some fun things with him." (Sadina)

"N-no... Naofumi-sama!" (Raphtalia)

I guess I'll leave it at this.

Raphtalia looks like she's about to cry, and her hand is shaking as she extends it towards me.

"By the way, that was a joke." (Naofumi)

"... What?" (Raphtalia)

"It seems Sadina found something on her secret base, so we're taking Imya and Raph-chan to investigate it." (Naofumi)

Yes. I think I've gained a greater understanding of the psychology of popular boys.

Those three idiots that got stuck up in the fact that they were heroes. I think I understand their thoughts a bit more.

But even though I said such things to Raphtalia, I don't think she's enjoying

it.

I had quite a bit of fun, though.

I mean, for the sake of the people in the village, doing something like this might make for a better result down the road.

I stroke Raphtalia's face.

"But you need to be conscious of it as well, Raphtalia. It really is difficult to live in my world... no. If you compare it to this world, holding onto your life is but a simple task. But there are so many systems and institutions that there's little room to breathe. So many that a large majority of the Heroes chose to live their lives in this world. You may regret it, you know."

(Naofumi)

"... Even so, I want to live with you." (Raphtalia)

"Yeah. I've always told you that I don't intend on staying in this world."

(Naofumi)

It's not as if I don't have any attachment, but my will to return is strong. If Raphtalia were to stay by my side, I would be able to return to my world without hesitation.

"Yes, I've a good understanding of the extent of Naofumi-sama's resolve."

(Raphtalia)

"And so, I need to think of all the ones in the village we'll leave behind. What I have to do, you understand right? Though this time, it was a joke."

(Naofumi)

"... Yes. I thought I had already understood it from Atlas-san's words."

(Raphtalia)

"So please be a little open-minded. The time will come someday."

(Naofumi)

"Understood. By the way, is it true that there's a problem with my age?"

(Raphtalia)

"That's right. Until it actually comes down to it, I'm not really sure. The Shield might make accommodations for it." (Naofumi)

On my answer, Raphtalia gives an expression of relief, and she drops her hand from her chest.

“Raphtalia, if you’re bothered by it, do you want to follow us here?”

(Naofumi)

“I wouldn’t recommend it, Naofumi-chan, I mean, we’ll be doing something fun afterwards.” (Sadina)

I drive Sadina away by flicking my hand, and ask Raphtalia once more.

“Yes, let’s go.” (Raphtalia)

“Got it.” (Naofumi)

Raphtalia prepares herself, and I go to get Imya.

We walk to the small boat anchored at the coast.

“Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

I continue thinking as I rub Raph-chan.

He can change shape to be identical to Raphtalia, right?

In the future, will I be doing various indecent things with Raphtalia?

What should I do if she tells me I’m no good at it? I pause my hand on Raph-chan’s head.

Should I… gain experience with the villagers?

Just thinking it makes me want to kill myself.

“Ta~li~?” (Raph-chan)

In that respect, an identical model may make for a good test subject.

Raphtalia’s weak points are…

“… Naofumi-sama? What are you thinking as you pat Raph-chan?”

(Raphtalia)

Raphtalia grabs my shoulder.

The top half of her face is covered in shadows for some reason. My spine is giving way. The muscles in my body turn to ice.

“Rafuu…” (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan has both of his hands on his face. He looks down in embarrassment.

Are my thoughts really that easy to read?

Well, they were usually quite vile, so there’s no helping if she gets angry with me.

Anyways, we reached the island.

As always the sight of the ruins I built is poison to my eyes.

Honestly, the island’s unrecognizable from the time I first came here.

Sadina leads us to a hilly area.

“Here is it.” (Sadina)

What was there, was a small hole… but it was strangely deep.

It’s size is around…

“Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

Yep, just enough to fit Raph-chan, and its depth is.. it’s too dark to tell.

“Raphtalia.” (Naofumi)

“Ah, yes.” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia creates a light with magic, and drops it down the hole.

… I saw a portion of the tunnel, but it extends much further.

Just how far does it go?

I see, so this is why we needed a Lemo.

Normally, I would have ignored this, but this might be the result of the

other me's research.

I can't have some strange creature popping up, and causing havoc.

"Rafu~?" (Raph-chan)

"Imya, can you dig around for a bit?" (Naofumi)

"Y-yes!" (Imya)

Imya responds twice to my question, and nods. She begins casting magic.

『I, who has understood the origin of power command. Let the truth be read forth once more. Grant me the power to rend the earth.』

「Earth Blow」

Magic solidifies around the nails on both of Imya's hands.

"Then I'll be going." (Imya)

She starts digging out the ground.

"The more magic I put in, the easier it is to dig." (Imya)

Imya seems proud as she digs.

Amazing. The earth is breaking like pudding before her.

As expected, you should call a specialist for a special job. I was right to ask a mole-like Demi-Human

After a bit of digging, Imya popped out of the hole.

"Um, something seems to be buried really deep down." (Imya)

"Can you bring it up?" (Naofumi)

"It's too big... and it seems its of plant origin, so it's already decaying."
(Imya)

"I see." (Naofumi)

So it was made of Bioplant.

Do we have any hints as to its use?

“Ah, but I picked up the magical device that seemed to be its core.” (Imya)

Imya hands me a fragment of a stone.

This is… part of a stone tablet, right?

I remember the one Rat tapped on.

“Thanks.” (Naofumi)

I praise Imya as she gets out of the hole, and brushes the dirt off of her body. Imya scratches her head in embarrassment.

“No, it wasn’t much.” (Imya)

“Imya, is there anyone you like?” (Naofumi)

“Eh? N-no…” (Imya)

“I see.” (Naofumi)

I’ll have to circle the village, and ask slowly.

“Ta~li~?” (Raph-chan)

“So where did you come from?” (Naofumi)

I ask Raph-chan once more.

… He’s pointing to the hole. But it was quite obvious.

“I guess this is all we’ll find out today.” (Naofumi)

In a few days, we’ll be fighting.

This may be a… waste of time, but I’ll have Rat investigate it. We may find something useful.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 322 – The Eighth Generation

I immediately returned to the village with the Cane's portal, and went to Rat, who was busy constructing her Carriage-type body for Mii-kun. It would be nice if I got some good info out of this.

"There is a strange stone embedded in it. Do you understand anything about it, Marquis?" (Rat)

"I can't understand anything about the time I turned strange." (Naofumi)

Apparently, I was really smart, but that doesn't matter.

And wait, if I was able to grasp something about this, it would actually be amazing.

"Rafu~?" (Raph-chan)

"Do you know anything?" (Naofumi)

I ask Raph-chan, but there's no way he'll give an answer.

Is what I thought, but he let out a meek voice, and nodded.

"Rafu~." (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan jumps on top of the tablet we were analyzing, and beckons Raphtalia to come closer.

"This again... Why do I have such a bad premonition..." (Raphtalia)

"Even if you say that, it's best if we investigated it, right?" (Naofumi)

"Understood." (Raphtalia)

Raph-chan makes Raphtalia touch the tablet, and the rock around the stone begins to recede. The stone is on its way out.

The scene was quite Sci-fi.

"Oh."

With his tail held high, Raph-chan puts his hands in the newly-made hole, and begins decoding something, but after a while, a large X mark popped up, and it seems that he can't make any more progress with it.

"To get it out, we may need Raptalia-san's DNA. Next is... the part Raph-chan managed to decrypt himself." (Rat)

To see what Raph-chan was stuck on, Rat started violently tapping on the keyboard.

"Ara. It's asking for a password. What's more, its protecting the most vital information." (Rat)

Password... I never thought I would hear such a word in this Fantasy Parallel World.

But will we be able to crack the code?

It would be nice if there was a hint somewhere...

"Do you think you can crack it?" (Naofumi)

"I think it would be simple if Mii-kun returned. You did make him so he was able to freely alter things like this." (Rat)

"Rafu~." (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan shakes his head left and right.

"He says it won't work." (Naofumi)

"Really... Ah, I see the system Mii-kun's equipped with installed here. This is an artificial lifeform in the shape of a stone tablet. I guess it won't work."

(Rat)

"That so?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah. It's something made of the same design as Mii-kun. A conscious Fire-Wall system." (Rat)

Net terms are starting to pop up in this Fantasy. And it's of the same type as mii-kun... I guess we're out of our area of expertise.

"If we engaged it and won, that would be nice, but it may be designed to self-destruct upon death." (Rat)

"So force won't work..." (Naofumi)

After getting all the way here, going any further is impossible...

For it to be protected this carefully, it must be hiding something extremely important.

"You get three tries at the password. Marquis is the one who made it, so do you have any ideas?" (Rat)

"Even if you ask me... Wouldn't it just be 'Raphtalia', or something?" (Naofumi)

"It would be nice if it was something simple like that." (Rat)

Rat enters Raphtalia's name into the tablet.

The board beeps, and gives a warning sound.

"Yes, first try failed." (Rat)

"What should we do..." (Naofumi)

"We have two left." (Rat)

We'll give do all or nothing bet, and have Mii-kun try to access it anyways when we're down to one.

Now about the strange me... He made this when he thought Raphtalia was dead.

If I looked from that perspective...

Until recently, I was quite dense.

I thought of Raphtalia as my daughter, so perhaps that Password's in that direction.

"Try inputting, 'To my beloved daughter'." (Naofumi)

"What's with that phrase!? Who is whose father!?" (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia's retort was on the mark.

But that's what came to mind, so there's no helping it.

"... It worked..." (Rat)

"Naofumi-sama..." (Raphtalia)

"Nope, not my fault." (Naofumi)

Daughter... she is my skillful right hand man, and she doesn't have any parents, so sometimes I do think I'm acting as their replacement.

There's no mistake.

Looking at the information that was displayed, Rat nodded.

"Fumufumu... It seems you had the Bioplant continue the research for the Eighth Generation of Raphs. You prepared it just in case you were to perish."

(Rat)

"Rafu?" (Raph-chan)

"This child's existence in itself is a sort of black box. His directive is unknown." (Rat)

"You weren't able to decode it?" (Naofumi)

"You need a higher authority than Mii-kun to control this one. If we tried to touch the stone, it would have fallen to pieces. It seems this child knew that." (Rat)

"And? Just what is he?" (Naofumi)

"A completed sample of the Eighth Generation. The Raphtalia that you were trying to bring to this world. Or perhaps he would be the threshold between Raphtalia and Raph." (Rat)

"Rafu~!" (Raph-chan)

As if he's saying, 'What do 'ya think about me now?' Raph-chan sticks out his chest with pride.

Ah, yes, yes.

I know that you're amazing.

There's no helping it, so I start patting his head.

"The Eighth Generation..." (Raphtalia)

"His specs are in a different dimension from the Seventh Generation." (Rat)

"Really?" (Naofumi)

"The time it took you to make the first through the seventh generations was only a week, you know. If this plant were to continue that research without rest for all this time... what do you think would happen?" (Rat)

Let's see. I was defeated at Raphtalia's hands, and about two and a half weeks passed before I met Raph-chan...

"Though the continuation was conducted by AI, it had quite a bit of success. It also seems that if the Raphs naturally carried on the cycle of life, one like this would be born someday." (Rat)

It somehow... sounds like a manga I read a while ago.

A researcher was killed by his own test subject, but a computer continued to finish his research.

Anyways, regardless of the outcome, an Eighth Generation would have been born...

"Uwah..." (Rat)

"What's up?" (Naofumi)

"It looks like all of the Raphs are connected. When greater power is required, they can pool their abilities, and the EXP they get is redistributed to this one... you're also included in that EXP pool, Marquis." (Rat)

Is it that?

When the curse was taking away my gained EXP, it was flowing to Raph-chan along with the other Raphs?

The reason Raph-chan's level was so high, and why it arbitrarily continued to rise, was because he was getting EXP from the other Raphs.

"If he wanted to speak human tongue, I think he could. I mean, with these specs, it's more than possible." (Rat)

"Rafu?" (Raph-chan)

"Can you speak?" (Rat)

"Rafu~?" (Raph-chan)

He's tilting his head.

Is he playing dumb...? No, it doesn't seem that way.

"It appears to understand your situation... does it really not have speech capability?" (Rat)

Since he sensed that I don't really like talking monsters, he decided not to develop speech?

The reason he fit a lot of my preferences was this?

"So if I taught him, he could?" (Naofumi)

"It's a possibility." (Rat)

Rat continues to read off the deciphered information.

"It seems you spliced some Filo Rial data into here too. You used their shape changing function as reference." (Rat)

"Ah, so that's why he can change form." (Naofumi)

"Yes, him changing form to Raphtalia was something like that. And that was your goal in the first place, so it goes without saying." (Rat)

Well, I did have a vague idea that it was something like that.

I mean, the research was intended to replicate and revive her.

"... Why did I take such a roundabout path, without making a Homunculus?" (Naofumi)

"That's a mystery. But as a fellow alchemist, it's not like I don't understand what you were trying to do." (Rat)

"How so?" (Naofumi)

"I told you why I stopped considering remaking Mii-kun as a Homunculus, right? By that Marquis's logic, a Homunculus is but a Homunculus. He

wanted to make the real one, so he couldn't do that." (Rat)

"And so... Isn't this the same thing?" (Naofumi)

"Then let's do an experiment. Raph-chan, where did you first meet the count? 1. Near this village, 2. Somewhere else." (Rat)

Rat randomly picks up some stones, and lines them into a row of 1, and a row of 2.

Raph-chan goes and sits down by Row 2.

"Well... that's true." (Naofumi)

I mean, he's right.

"You probably continued to correct your research as you strove to create the real one. This should have led him to have some fabricated memories and experiences in his body." (Rat)

"That Naofumi-sama... thought about it that much." (Raphtalia)

"..." (Naofumi)

I have no idea what I was thinking back then, but I guess that's true.

And wait, just how much did I like Raphtaila?

Did I plan to take the organism I created myself, and make it my girlfriend?

Even so, the password was, 'To my beloved daughter'.

"It's good that Raph-chan understands, but if handled poorly, there was a chance he could have swapped places with the original." (Rat)

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 323 - Change Raph

“Eh…” (Raphtalia)

Ah, Raphtalia’s smile became stiff.

Well it would be eerie if a creature that looked exactly like you were to put on a pretense and take your place.

It’s that. It’s similar to a doppelgänger.

When I think about it like that, it seems like a creepy being so it’s quite bizarre.

However there’s a distinction. They feel different.

Somehow the real Raphtalia differs a little from my ideal, and it feels better to pet Raph-chan.

In the end, there’s a gap between my ideal and the real Raphtalia.

“I can tell them apart when I pet them though.” (Naofumi)

“To pet Raphtalia enough to distinguish between them, you say~ even Onee-san is getting embarrassed~” (Sadina)

“That’s right… the reason I can tell the difference is because I’ve been travelling with Raphtalia until now.” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-sama, that conversation is getting…” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia’s face turned red.

As usual, it seems that she’s not good with this subject.

“Then Raph-chan can become Raphtalia-chan’s body double, right~”
(Sadina)

Sadina said some unnecessary… well, it might be good to consider that.

To even reproduce Raphtalia’s memories… certainly, that may be more advanced than just making a homunculus.

That route is wrong though.

“Rafu~” (Raph-chan)

“Geh.. she’s even compatible with Mii-kun’s body. The affinity is the worst… she can possess Mii-kun.” (Rat) [T/N: I’m going with female because Raph-chan is Raphtalia’s clone.. kinda]

“Don’t you dare hurt her.” (Naofumi)

“I won’t. However, I won’t let it go if she does possess Mii-kun.” (Rat)

“Ria~” (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan nodded once, as if she understood Rat's threat.

Somehow she seems to have good perceptiveness.

"On that note, I'm having you finish making that carriage-type body, but she seems to be helpful. (Naofumi)

"Yes, she can even activate the cells so the efficiency of my work should be increased." (Rat)

"That's good. Even if it's just that, it's productive." (Naofumi)

"Ah, Marquis, if you're going to raise that child then you should Class her up properly. She should almost be at her limit." (Rat)

"Got it." (Naofumi)

Nevertheless, to Class Up at Level 90, huh.

I originally thought this in Gaelion's case as well, but what's the principle behind transcending the Class Up limit?

...What comes to mind is that it's because the one being leeches off has had a Class Up maybe? [T/N: Wrath dragon stole Firo's exp and levels but Gaelion didn't Class Up until afterwards]

Like this, Raph-chan's identity was established.

So she's the legacy of the crazy me.

I didn't expect anything other than combat.

By the way, this is something I learned later, but the Raphs with a higher ranked position have power, just like the Filorials. [T/N: Raph Queens (/Kings)]

It looks like the low ranked Raph obey them.

"Ah, I discovered an interesting project." (Rat)

"What is it?" (Naofumi)

"Marquis, you had Filorial familiars if I'm not mistaken." (Rat)

"Yeah, they come out even though I don't call them." (Naofumi)

""Pii!"" (Filorial Familiars)

They appeared as if they were called.

"Try giving one to Raph-chan." (Rat)

"Hm?" (Naofumi)

When I transfer one over, Raph-chan held the little Filorial with both hands.

Just like a raccoon.

“Rafu~” (Raph-chan)

…..What the hell?

“Pii.” (Filorial familiar)

And then a short while later it turned into a little Raph.

…Huh?

“Let’s see…” (Rat)

Familiar: Raph was learnt.

Mode Change: Raph was learnt.

Familiar Change was learnt.

“As I expected, it looks like it worked.” (Rat)

"What is this?" (Naofumi)

"Rafu!" (Familiar)

The little Raph started dancing with the Filorial familiar.

It's slightly bigger than the familiar.

"To summarise, this is the Expanding the Marquis's Abilities Plan? It seems there's a variety of things that are possible like the Filorials." (Rat)

"Ah.. I see." (Naofumi)

"If you wanted to restore it... it seems like you can use something to change it back but do you know, Marquis?" (Rat)

"For the time being."

I try using Familiar Change.

The familiar that turned into a Raph became a Filorial.

I see, so Raphs can also change into Filorials depending on the situation it's used in...

It's quite elaborate.

I haven't finished analysing it but it's something like this." (Rat)

“What kind of creature Raph-chan is…. I’ve also learnt a lot.” (Naofumi)

“Rafu~” (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan bows her head.

Is that slate your instruction manual or something.

“What’s the danger of a second or third Raph-chan being born?” (Naofumi)

“There’s none here but….” (Rat)

It’s not safe…. while thinking that, I leave the laboratory with Raphtalia.

Ah, Sadina and Raph-chan are also with us.

After this is…. there’s someone I need to speak to alone.

“Come to think of it, Granny’s son… where is he?” (Naofumi)

“He’s training with everyone.”

Right, Granny had a son.

He had been captivated by Granny’s fancy movements.

However, I mustn't forget.

Granny's death is unconfirmed at present... but the party formation is already...

"I want to speak to him alone. Please don't follow me." (Naofumi)

"Understood." (Raphtalia)

I suppose Raphtalia, the Female Knight and Fohl have conversed with him.

It's getting considerably late. It's time for the villagers to finish training and head to bed.

At this time of day, many of the older slaves, like Sadina, and the soldiers staying in the village would be having a drink in the Dining Hall.

I make my way to the Dining hall, if he wasn't there then I'd head to the house I assigned to Granny.

Luckily, Granny's son was drinking alcohol.

"Is this taken?" (Naofumi)

I point to the seat beside the Granny's son.

"...Go ahead." (Son)

Granny's son nodded so I sat down.

"....."

Silence rules the surroundings.

"I'm sorry I couldn't protect your mother." (Naofumi)

I break the silence and apologise.

When I do, Granny's son puts down his glass and looks downward, absorbed in thought.

"No..." (Son)

Granny's son sinks into silence.

The silence is heavy.

"I heard from Raptalia and the others. I think mother would be satisfied."
(Son)

"But.."
(Naofumi)

Before I could reply, Granny's son intercepts me with a gentle smile.

"My mother didn't originally plan to leave behind the Hengen Musou style. Apparently a lot of things happened when she was younger."
(Son)

"I also heard about that."
(Naofumi)

"However... she wanted to personally help with the Hero of the Shield-sama's efforts and made the decision to let someone succeed the school that she didn't even teach me."
(Son)

"Come to think of it... I didn't see you fighting that much."
(Naofumi)

He's dressed like what might not be normally understood as a soldier.

At first, I had thought he was a villager.

"Yeah... and I didn't even know that my mother was such a famous person."
(Son)

"Speaking of which... what about your father?"
(Naofumi)

From what I've seen, Granny and her son look as distant as grandmother and grandson, rather than parent and child.

"I'm an orphan. So I'm not related to my mother by blood." (Son)

"I see..." (Naofumi)

"Hero of the Shield-sama." (Son)

"What is it?" (Naofumi)

"The Hero of the Shield-sama saved my mother's life. And so she said she wouldn't have any regrets no matter when she was to die, because the Hero of the Shield-sama bestowed her time."

This is... tough.

Fohl is also the same, but I never thought there would be times where I'd consider it better to be hated.

"Because she met the Hero of the Shield-sama, my mother shined the brightest I've ever seen. That's why I only feel gratitude towards the Hero of the Shield-sama. If my mother sacrificed herself to let everyone escape and so the Hero of the Shield-sama could live, then..." (Son)

"....." (Naofumi)

"We spent all our savings to purchase Yggdrasil medicine to extend her life but... if it was just me, I'm sure mother wouldn't have been able to live as

long as she did. The time was increased, I was taught to fight and got stronger because of the Hero of the Shield-sama's miracle." (Son)

Fohl also said something similar.

Yggdrasil medicine, that medicine... it gave me a bitter duty.

It's karma.

"Hengen Musou is a style that exists for weak people to destroy the evil. My mother didn't die in vain. Hero of the Shield-sama, please, my mother's will... let us succeed it. So if you're troubled, take a step forward, you don't have to worry about me." (Son)

"But..." (Naofumi)

"I have a dream. The part of the Hengen Musou style that was lost when my mother was lost, that part... I believe it will be resurrected if it's here. So, Hero-sama... Please let me join you in fighting to protect the world. For my mother's sake as well." (Son)

"...I understand. I don't know when you might die though? Are you still fine with that?" (Naofumi)

"The Hengen Musou style will live on through this village. Even if I end up dying, it won't be a complete death." (Son)

"Is that so, you're strong." (Naofumi)

In that case, I will live up to her wishes.

I will defeat Tact with the Hengen Musou style.

After that, I exchanged a few drinks with Granny's son and then retired to bed.

In a few days, the war and wave will come.

The preparations are complete. I've done all that I need to.

And thus, the war began.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 324 - The King of Wisdom

“Are the preparations in order?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, Iwatani-dono.” (Trash)

The wave is coming... and at the same time, Faubley will attack. I’m speaking to Trash in the castle.

“You sure are good at thinking up plans.” (Naofumo)

From the day after the meeting, we’ve been meeting with Trash, and preparing for his operations.

Of course, we also train ourselves when we’re free.

Even if Heroes have no level limit, it’s impossible for us to overtake the level 350 Tact in the time we have.

But we have our own trump card.

Using the knowledge I gained, Trash, and Fohl’s Seven Star weapon, we’ve put our final plan together.

The country’s Dragon Hourglass is almost empty.

If you look over the walls of Melromark’s castle town, you can see Faubley’s army encroaching from the distance.

Yesterday, one of Melromark’s forts fell into their hands.

It’s likely that they’re using it as their base of operations right now.

But that was within Trash’s predictions.

Me, Ren, Motoyasu and Itsuki memorized the plan, and practiced to adapt it depending on the situation.

By the way, the ones who will be confronting Tact’s army are me and Ren.

The other two will deal with the wave.

Trash is responsible for giving orders for the battles on both fronts.

Ah, Fohl's with my team.

Rishia is going off with Itsuki.

The Heroes have divided in half to combat two forces.

Raphtalia and Firo, Raph-chan, Gaelion, and Sadina are going to go with my team.

Kiel and the other villagers are participating too. Those who can't bring themselves to combat human being are going to the wave.

The Filo Rials have been distributed as needed.

The Raph Squad will be moving as a detached corp.

The rest is up to you, Trash.

I can only pray that the measures in the sky will go well

"Iwatani-dono, at most, this will..." (Trash)

"I know." (Naofumi)

I had made light of Trash, but with this much, I can go into battle with some confidence.

At the very least, the success rate is a bit higher than my estimate.

It's best to leave this planning to those specialized in it.

As long as everyone does their part, I can at least say the result won't be a bad one.

No, I won't let us reach a bad ending.

"It's almost time." (Trash)

"Yeah..." (Naofumi)

With the meeting over, I lightly swing the cane in my hand. And I proceeded forward.

—

A few hours later.

Tact looked down on Melromark from a terrace on the fort he had captured. A black smoke was rising above the castle town.

“Status Update!” (Soldier)

He was surrounded by women, as he looked upon the battlefield.

His expression completely portrayed his foreseen victory.

He knew that the status report would be in his favor. And in reality, it was.

“Through the application of Tact-sama’s new weapon, and plan, Melromark’s capital has successfully been occupied by our soldiers. Their command structure is in chaos. It appears that all of their heroes were transported away to fight a wave. A few of them abandoned the wave, and desperately rushed back, and they are engaging with your forces, but they are severely outnumbered. It’s only a matter of time before this war draws to its conclusion.” (Soldier)

“Fufufu, as I thought. This formation has yet to see failure. They’re no exception: this is their limit.” (Tact)

“As expected of Tact-sama!”

“Amazing!” (Bitch)

“There’s no army in this world that can withstand that fusillade!”

“They cannot raise a hand to the aerial bombardment and troop deployment that Tact-sama proposed.”

“Don’t praise me so much. This is also for the world; for the people. Let’s end this war swiftly, and bring an end to that country governed by nothing but Trash.” (Tact)

A slight smile surfaces on Tact’s face as he declares this.

“Yes, I want to see those Heroes’ executions already.” (Bitch)

“I understand, Malty. There’s no way I’d let the people who put you through such horrors live in this world.” (Tact)

“Ah, Tact-sama.” (Bitch)

“But it’s not interesting if everything goes this smoothly. I guess there’s fun

to be found in a certain victory too. Especially if it was based on my plan.”

(Tact)

“Yes.”

“Exactly.” (Bitch)

“Hahahaha!” (Tact)

His loud laugh echoed through the empty halls.

“... Oh, right. That was a lie.” (Soldier)

“What?” (Tact)

Tact halts his laughter, and turns to the soldiers that came to report... no, he turns to us.

His security... was a joke.

To be more specific, we had already registered this building as a destination for our portal.

We easily infiltrated, and got all the way here by simply pretending to be scouts.

We got a few sets of Faublely Scout uniforms from our connections to the Dark Guild.

Faublely's a country with a bit of history, so goods like that circulate easily.

“Are you an idiot? Do you think messengers come in groups like this?”

(Naofumi)

Tact is taken aback as we remove the illusion surrounding us.

Firo, Gaelion and Sadina are already in their battle forms.

Raph-chan... is as he is.

He managed to hide us with magic easily.

He's riding hidden on Raphtalia's back.

With Raphtalia and Raph-chan working together, they were able to cast illusion magic strong enough to even mask scent.

Illusions aren't just something of the eyes.

And it seems that Tact's sharp nosed Harem Members didn't even sense us.

"You seem to be laughing quite happily. I'm sorry, but that smoke you see over there is the result of your plane being turned into a ball of fire."

(Naofumi)

"That can't be! What about Lurina!?" (Tact)

Right, by Trash's idea, Tact's deployed airplanes should have been shot down.

I mean, I'm just saying what Trash told me to say here. I had no time to check Melromark.

Anyways, the report turned from fortune to disaster.

No... it's our fortune.

Right now, the planes should be colliding with the large collection of Graweick ore Trash set above Melromark's airspace.

(TL: See Chapter 292)

An early airplane's demerit is that it can't make sudden turns.

So with those in place, the bombarding became impossible.

Rocks that fly in this world aren't exactly rare, so they were probably trained to avoid them. But that's where the Raphs came in.

Their ability to conceal things is unusually high.

Using something like Choral Magic, they amplified their abilities, and made it so that nothing could be seen in Melromark's skies.

Luckily, today's weather is nice.

At a glance, it looks like the perfect day for a flight.

If only there weren't any giant invisible rocks floating everywhere.

Of course, there's plans for if that's not enough to stop them.

If they still try dropping soldiers from the ore, we have all of Melromark's mages ready with wind and Gravity magic.

Because Parachutes are as the look.

If the unfolded part gets damaged beyond use, you fall, and die.

They probably do implement a form of wind magic to slow their descent, but the gravity magic increases their terminal velocity beyond a controllable point.

What's more, our side is still bombarding them with magic and arrows, so even if they do survive, they won't get off unharmed.

The factor we were worried about, the flying Demi-Humans... and Tact's Gryphon. They're all here.

Which means that there are few troublesome opponents on Trash's side. The easy victories we let him face on Melromark territory made him negligent.

For once, the wind is blowing in our favor.

"H-how!?" (Tact)

"I have no intentions of explaining my plan to you. If I had to say, then it's because you forgot about our renowned King of Wisdom." (Naofumi)

"Damn!" (Tact)

Tact's followers take out guns, and prepare themselves.

"According to that king, your plan was the lowest of the low. Your decisions were also the worst." (Naofumi)

Apparently, this right here was the most foolish thought on Tact's part.

The idea that we would never make it this far... he said.

The most dangerous possibility I saw was Tact himself standing at the vanguard of his forces but Trash said it would also be poorly planned out.

Well, our plan was to use the Heroes to round up all their dangerous ones at once, so it's not anything amazing.

And before the battle started, Trash said as such:

『He's chosen the most foolish choice of the ones I surmised... It's as if he's just asking you to take his important pieces. Is he trying to lure us in? No, perhaps he's just perhaps he's underestimating us... okay, if it turns out to be a trap, then pretend to be caught, and observe his attitude. If it's not, then it'll end with this move.』 (Trash)

Or something like that, but I wonder if that move will show its effects soon. But that's fine.

I just have to do what I've been assigned to do.

I'll entrust the rest of the battlefield to Trash.

Since we've come this far, then at the very least, we won't go down without a fight.

TATE NO YUUSHA NO NARIAGARI

Chapter 325 - Provocation

Now then, if you're wondering how we got here so fast, we left the matter of the wave completely to Motoyasu and Itsuki. The other Heroes went and registered at Zeltburg's hourglass.

Their dragon hourglass is managed by the country, but with Itsuki's membership in the Dark Guild, and the Slave Dealer's connections, we managed to get through.

And Heroes get a free pass to things like this.

The Hero in Zeltburg was killed a while ago, and the upper echelon of their government had their pride, so they happily cooperated.

The country's mercenary guild was also happy to help, and talking them over was too easy.

Apparently the murder of their hero was like smearing dirt on the name of mercenaries everywhere.

I guess that's what you get from the Hero of the land of Hired Swords.

I must offer my thanks to the late Hero of Zeltburg.

If you have money, you can make any sort of contract. That's where Tact's world domination plot falls short.

My side had the Slave Dealer from the start, and even the influential Accessory Merchant.

I also met the Swindler after a long time, and he seems to be raking in quite a bit.

Also, the noble Elena Haven-sama (lol) was led by her father to help Trash in the battlefield.

The individual herself seemed really reluctant, but if she does well, she'll get promoted, and she'll get more money. (TL: The lol is in the original text)

『If I get promoted, you're just going to push more troublesome matters onto me, so I refuse.』

Is what she said.

I'm not doing troublesome things like being a Hero or a Lord because I like it.

But as a merchant, Elena is supporting the country, so if the country comes out on top, the amount of troublesome work for her will increase.

Not that I care about her...

Anyways, this is the limit of suppression by force... Tact never had the resolve to set forth alongside death.

Right now, I have my doubts, but that's what I was doing.

My villagers are participating in this war, and those from Silt Welt as well. But it seems they have their own matters to settle, and some bad blood with Shield Freiden.

They're applying numerous tactics.

The Gramps who was commanding Silt Welt's army had a strange smile on his face as he saw Trash at work.

『I never even dreamed that my sworn enemy, the King of Wisdom, would become my ally. We truly were fighting quite a monster.』

He muttered to himself.

By the way, their forces are great at close quarters.

Due to the danger of an information leak, Trash didn't reveal much of his planning.

He said something about using a special system of communications to command the battle.

All we have to do is focus on taking down the enemy general.

If you beat Tact earlier than expected, go off and reinforce the Anti-Wave force, or so I was told.

I'm not sure if he's looking down on his enemy, or he knows something I

don't.

For all further questions, go ask Trash's brain.

Is he supposed to be some sort of literary genius tactician?

When things go this well, I'm wondering if he's some sort of Esper.

"Then all I have to do is step on the battlefield, and slaughter everyone."

(Tact)

"Oh, I can't have you forgetting about us." (Naofumi)

Tact pulls out the Claw. It seems he'll rush off at any moment

I'll stop him. I'm here to defeat him in the first place.

And an army without orders is nothing more than a useless gathering.

For Trash to be able to do this much... Well, I haven't actually looked at the war situation, so I don't know about that.

"Do you think that people of your caliber will be able to do anything against me?" (Tact)

"Isn't it obvious? This is the Bad End Event that your life's led you to. All that's left is for you to contemplate which selection you made wrong as you wait for your Game Over." (Naofumi)

He appears to be acting calm, but it's become interesting seeing just how warped his expression is.

It's not like we came here with no plan at all.

We're here because we have an ample chance of victory.

"What are you saying? How splendid. You all came here in order to give your powers to me, right? I'll at least play with you." (Tact)

A clicking sound rings out as Tact's harems point and load their guns at us.

"And? You're going to do something as unfair as weakening us with a firing brigade before you go in for the kill?" (Naofumi)

That line was Trash's proposal.

Tact seems offended as he furrows his brow.

"It may sound nice if you label it as something like resourcefulness, but it's cowardliness in its essence." (Naofumi)

It's not like I don't have countermeasures for it, though.

"... Very well. I'm more than enough for people of your level. The level 350 me." (Tact)

Fumu. The provocation worked.

It seems he has a sense of fairness like an average person.

Or perhaps he's just an idiot with a large amount of pride.

This is my enemy, so I'll be the one to slay them! It seems he would say something like that.

Being the Hero of the Shield, it's a line that I'd usually never be able to say.

But today is different.

Anyways, Trash's Anti-Tact plan went into phase 2.

This part is up to me. Trash won't have any input.

It would be laughable if I were to fall here of all places.

"Hmm? That should be my line. Why do you think it was that we didn't initiate a cowardly sneak attack like you? Do you understand?" (Naofumi)

"Because such things won't work on me." (Tact)

"I wonder. I'm merely fighting you head on, so I can destroy every last thing you've built up for yourself." (Naofumi)

The reason I didn't end this from the start was because of Granny's will.

The will of Hengen Musou, and my personal grudge.

I wanted verification of those.

“There was an old woman who fought to let us escape, right?” (Naofumi)
“Ah, her? Though she was just a weakling, she went on a rampage like an idiot. It took an unexpectedly long time to kill her.” (Tact)
“... Then that person will be the one to drag you into your grave.”
(Naofumi)

Now then, enough with this nonsense.

“Fake Hero, I’m more than enough for someone of your level.” (Naofumi)
“Aniki!?” (Fohl)
“I’m sorry, Fohl. Bear with it.” (Naofumi)
“But...!” (Fohl)

I ignore Fohl, take a step forward, and put my cane over my shoulder to show it off to Tact.

“My... that cane is...” (Tact)
“Yeah, it’s one of the Seven Star Weapons you desire. Right now, I’m its wielder.” (Naofumi)
“Then luck is upon me. I’ll just have to take another weapon from you, like I did with your Shield.” (Tact)
“If you can, then try it.” (Naofumi)

Tact and I glare at each other.

While that was happening, a few women step forward, and offer proposals to Tact.

“Tact-sama.”

“There is an opponent here I would like to engage.”

We’ve encountered these ones before. It’s the Kitsune-like one that fought Raphtalia, and the Aotatsu Woman that fought Fohl Also the fish-like onewoman who opposed Sadina

The other two... There’s the lizard woman, and a woman with wings on her

back like Firo.

They each lock eyes with Firo and Gaelion

"Tulna, Nellisen, Shatte, Lurdia, and Ashiel. I got it. It would be more effective than if you just watched. Let's show them the difference in our power. The real Hero will be the one to come out on top." (Tact)

"What do you mean by real!? You perpetrated a farce like this, and only listen to that Witch's words. There's no way that you're a Hero!" (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia shouts out and the Kitsune woman responds. Her name seems to be Tulna.

"It seems that this even this Raccoon wench's heart is covered in mud. I've lived hundreds of years, and you say that the one I chose to follow isn't a Hero? Are your eyes rotten?" (Tulna)

"You're Atlas's murderer!" (Fohl)

"Wait right there, Hakuko Brat! I'll show you just how amazing a person you're making an enemy of. It's because they followed the Hero of the Shield that the Hakuko, and the whole of Silt Welt is declining!"

"Move, mob character!" (Fohl)

"Fohl." (Naofumi)

"What?" (Fohl)

"Once you beat her, you can participate in my fight with Tact. That is if I haven't beaten him up yet." (Naofumi)

"... Got it. I'll be over in a jiffy, Aniki! I'll leave him to you for now!" (Fohl)

Fohl and the Aotatsu... Nellisen lock eyes.

It's not time for Fohl to jump into my battle yet.

"Then are you the one this Onee-san will fight?" (Sadina)

"Luka woman... you're still alive. I won't forgive you!"

The mermaid-like woman transformed.

She's now a fish-like Beastman.

"Are you a mix blood of the Noid and Kusha race? What grudge do you have with me?" (Sadina)

"How shameless! You Luka are always looking down at the lot of us!"

"Um, I don't really know what you're talking about, but if you want to fight, then I'll accept." (Sadina)

So there are people that carry grudges within races.

It's of no concern to me.

But it seems Sadina is troubled with having a grudge she has no knowledge about stuck on her.

And wait, I'm pretty sure Sadina isn't even a Luka.

"You're one who possesses a fragment of the dragon emperor, I see. To personally come out to see me, are you just asking to be stolen away?"

"KYUA!"

"Fu... I'll teach a brittle fragment the true power of a Dragon Emperor."

A snapping sound echoes as the lizard woman changes shape to that of a Dragon.

She's really big. Even bigger than Adult Gaelion.

The pressure she releases is overwhelming.

I wonder what it is. I feel something from that dragon reminiscent of the Spirit Turtle and Houou.

Honestly, to defeat Tact, I don't understand why I had to take Ren along as well.

But Trash said he had a bad premonition, so he grouped me and Ren together just in case.

This may have been the reason.

The next woman, the one with wings, also changes.

She becomes a Gryphon.

"Miniscule fragment. Tact said to spare the women, so you're a different matter."

"Oh, I can't have you forgetting about me." (Ren)

Ren stands next to Gaelion with his sword drawn.

"Naofumi, who should I be fighting?" (Ren)

"The Dragon seems to be the stronger of the two. Work with Gaelion to beat her." (Naofumi)

"Got it." (Ren)

Ren nods, and jumps aboard Gaelion, who had grown to full size.

How ironic is it... for him to be fighting atop the Dragon, whose life he cut short himself?

But that's a line for Adult Gaelion to say.

"Did you think that the Four Heroes were enough to take us on!?"

"Reldia, do you think you can beat a Hero?" (Tact)

"Who do you think I am, Tact. If you leave it to me, I won't let a single soul past." (Reldia)

And Firo ends up dealing with the Gryphon.

"Filo Rial. My old enemy, cursed to grawl atop the earth. I will be the one to choke the life out of that accursed Queen's descendents."

"Wah, are you a bird? A cat? Whichever, Firo will beat you." (Firo)

And, as always, she seems relaxed.

For argument's sake, she should be much higher than Firo in level, but... Firo keeps her composure.

"Now then, let's start this bad play. The battle to bring an end to this farce."
(Naofumi)

When I say as such, Tact completely falls for my provocations.

“Of course! Let’s start the battle we were certain to win from the start!”
(Tact)

And everyone started their own battles.