
HOW NOT TO SUMMON A DEMON LORD
VOLUME 9
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"Who wants to go first? Or do you wanna fight me all at once? I'm good either way!"
The girl spoke with the same tone she might use to chat with a friend on the street corner, but despite that, she seemed the most menacing she'd ever been.


Rem whispered into his ear.
"...This is all your fault, you know..."
Shera nodded.
"That's right, it's all your fault, Diablo."


Diablo once again focused his will on his hands and let magical energy flow through them just like when he was casting spells.
"Mm... Nnn... Master, that's good. Master's magical energy is...flowing in... Haa... It's wonderful... Aaah, Ahn."

CHARACTERS



Diablo

A top player of a game very similar to this world. He is in fact socially inept, and can't communicate without acting the part of his in-game character. AKA: "The Demon Lord from Another World"



Rem Galleu

A pantherian summoner. The Demon Lord Krebskulm was sealed in her body, but she finally removed her after much hardship. Serious to a fault.



Shera L Greenwood

Princess of the Elves. Choosing Diablo as the king of her country, she finally became queen. Claims to be a summoner, but is a much more skilled archer. Speaks in a light, easygoing fashion.

登場人物紹介



Edelgard

A Fallen who endeavoured to revive Klem. Works at a bakery to finance her Demon Lord's biscuit-guzzling ways.



Klem

The Demon Lord Krebskulm who was sealed within Rem's body. Surprisingly took the form of a young, biscuit-loving girl upon revival. Lives in Faltra, pretending to be a member of the races.



Sylvie

Guildmaster of Faltra's Adventurer's Guild. Being a Grasswalker may give her the appearance of a child, but she's an experienced veteran.

Faltra's Governor. A Human soldier, and a war hero who participated in the war against the Demon Lord's Army thirty years ago.



Chester Ray Galford



Sasara Graham

The Thirteenth Swordmaster. Has such unprecedented talent that she made her predecessor go mad with envy. Her hobby is making soba noodles.

c o n t e n t s

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The story so far— In the MMORPG *Cross Reverie*, Takuma Sakamoto was overwhelmingly powerful, and was able to role play so well that his performances were more boss-like than the actual bosses of the game. For this reason, he came to be known as the "Demon Lord."

By defeating the Demon Lord of the Mind, Enkvaros, faster than anyone else, he obtained the super rare item, the Demon Lord's Ring. It was one of the ultimate pieces of equipment in the game, able to reflect all types of magic.

Then, one day, Takuma found himself summoned to a world that looked exactly like *Cross Reverie*! Having performed the ritual magic at the same time, the Pantherian, Rem, and the Elf, Shera, fought over which one of them was his Summoner: "...I am the one who summoned him. Your magic was a failure."

"You're wrong! He's mine!"

But thanks to the Demon Lord's Ring he wore, the magic was reflected, so the Enslavement Collar meant for him had clamped onto the two girls instead!

Faced with Rem and Shera arguing, Takuma was at a loss of what to do. While he may have been a superior player back in the game, he couldn't talk with other people if his life depended on it. After struggling over what to say, the words that came out of his mouth were from the Demon Lord role play he had used in the game: "Cease your pointless squabbling. You are in the presence of Diablo."

The three of them have since made the town of Faltra their home base. As it turned out, Rem held a great secret: Within her body was sealed the soul of the Demon Lord Krebskulm. Trembling with fear deep down, Diablo's Demon Lord role playing led him to promise he would find a solution to her plight.

Diablo soon after found himself foiling an invasion of one hundred Fallen, led by a Fallen named Edelgard, as well as an attack from within itself at the hands

of the Fallen, Gregore. Diablo then later found himself the recipient of a quest from the governor of Faltra, Galford. Prince Keera of the elven kingdom of Greenwood had demanded Shera be returned to him, threatening open war with Faltra against the country of elves should compliance fail. The details of Galford's quest were simply to find a way to avoid the war. The bespectacled, straight-and-narrow Imperial Knight Alicia was assigned to the group as an observer to watch over their actions.

Using the Marionette's Flute, Keera manipulated Shera and unleashed a forbidden Summon called the Force Hydra—yet Diablo still managed to rescue her.

Prince Keera was eventually killed by Galford, and his remains were returned to the elven kingdom by Celsior, an elite elven warrior, and his cohorts.

After her rescue, the group set off to resurrect the Demon Lord Krebskulm trapped inside Rem. But, in the process, Krebskulm had lost a portion of her memories as a Demon Lord, being reduced to a biscuit-loving young girl, who was then nicknamed "Klem."

Peaceful days passed by...

Suddenly, Alicia betrayed the group! Now awakened as a true Demon Lord, Klem went into a destructive frenzy. But thanks to one of Diablo's ultimate spells and the sound of Rem's and Shera's voices, Klem was subdued and reverted to her biscuit-loving form. To ensure Klem would never go berserk again, Diablo bound her with the same enslavement magic afflicted upon Shera and Rem.

Through a string of coincidences, or perhaps God's own guidance, Diablo found himself rescuing Lumachina, a holy woman, from the Paladin Gewalt. Being a High Priest, Lumachina was the highest ranking member of the church. However, due to her attempts at ridding the church of corruption and avarice, she was nearly assassinated. Still seeking to reform the corrupt church, Lumachina sought the help of the Paladin Captain Batutta, setting out to meet him in Zircon Tower.

Located in the perilous expanse of the former Demon Lord's domain, Diablo's group of Adventurers accompanied her as bodyguards. After a long journey,

they arrived at their destination, and were greeted by Batutta.

While there, Diablo claimed back his own dungeon, gained many pieces of helpful equipment and items, and fought off the new Demon Lord's army, gaining new allies in the process: the grasswalker, Horn, and the magimatic maid, Rose.

Diablo and his group then made their way to the Royal Capital, where they stormed the Grand Cathedral and faced off against the Cardinal Authority and the paladins. Lumachina's unshakable faith made Diablo's plans go off course, but they had still somehow cleared the church of its corruption.

Shortly after, Horn decided to change classes and study to become a sorcerer, leaving for the magic academy.

The group, minus Horn and Lumachina, then headed for the dark elves' village, seeking to remove what remained of the Demon Lord's soul within Rem's body. After some hardship within the dark elves' secluded dwelling, they got the chief, Rafflesia, to join their side. Thus they successfully removed the Demon Lord's vestiges from Rem's body.

But they could not celebrate, however. Having been informed that the elven king, Shera's father, had passed away, the four traveled to her homeland where Shera was already engaged to a pig-faced elf called Drango (for the sake of the country, of course). Diablo attempted to prevent the wedding, but it was all interrupted by Rafflesia, whose body had been subjugated by the Demon Lord of the Heart, Kardia.

Forced into combat with not just Kardia, but the servants of the Demon Overlord Modinaram, Diablo just barely achieved victory. These battles forced Diablo to recognize that he would need to level up to face the challenges ahead, so he declared: "I think I'll try my hand at becoming a warrior."

Returning to Faltra for the first time in a long while, Diablo and his group reunite with Klem, who has taken a great liking to the races' cuisine. Right away, they join her in stomping out a mafia that had been extorting Faltra's eateries, and doing so earns Klem the townspeople's gratitude.

Afterward, to prepare for his upcoming battle with the Demon Overlord Modinaram, Diablo set out to meet the legendary swordmaster and level up as

a warrior, only to find (to his great surprise) that the current swordmaster and heir to the previous is none other than a dwarven girl called Sasara.

The previous swordmaster, revealed to be Sasara's stepfather, Graham, sought to master the blade with such zeal that he transformed his body into that of an Oni. But, despite his efforts, Sasara struck down Graham, proving once and for all her overwhelming prowess.

The following day, with hardly any time for rest, the news broke about how the Demon Lord's army had appeared in Faltra.

On this 24th day, year 164, 12th month, of the Lyferian calendar...

The Demon Overlord's expedition, led by the Demon Overlord Modinaram, had invaded the races' territories, appearing right before the citadel city of Faltra.

Prologue

His feet touched down on the ground with a wobble. As the light of the teleportation spell dispersed, he felt like he was about to topple over, but he braced all his strength into his abdomen and kept his feet firmly on the ground.

Diablo was a Demon Lord...or at least, that was the role he was acting out. No matter the situation, he couldn't be seen crawling on the ground pathetically.

"Hmph..."

Scoffing with feigned confidence, Diablo looked around. The place was surrounded by walls that looked like eerie animal entrails, with a magnificent throne reigning over the room.

"Ugh!" The black-haired pantherian girl that clung to his right arm, Rem Galleu, covered her mouth with her hands. "I... I really do...hate teleportation."

She was bad when it came to traveling by methods that didn't involve walking on her own legs and was incredibly susceptible to motion sickness. Though, she seemed to be fine with large ships that hardly shook or carriages that moved slowly.

"Whoa, this place is kinda nostalgic," said the elven girl, Shera L. Greenwood, hugging Diablo's left arm snugly.

The Demon Lord's Labyrinth... This was a place Diablo had designed in the MMORPG *Cross Reverie*, and where he'd faced off against many challengers.

That was all in the game, but, by some odd consequences, the dungeon was pulled into this other world just as Diablo was. Would he ever learn the reason as to why he was sent here?

The last time Shera and Rem had visited Diablo's self-made dungeon was nearly six months ago, around the middle of the seventh month. Of course, there was no guarantee this world's calendar operated on twelve months, but whenever anyone discussed the date, it was translated into numbers and terms Diablo could understand. The same held true for units of distance and weight; the people of Lyferia most likely used whatever units of measurement this

world employed, but in Diablo's mind the numbers were converted to meters and grams. The logic behind it all wasn't entirely clear to him.

I can understand what they're saying, but can't read their language. This half-assed translation mechanic just makes it feel all the more unnatural...

Whatever the case, this self-made dungeon felt like home to Diablo. It felt like he'd finally come back to his humble abode.

"Whoaaa... This place is very...unique..." The third girl with them, Swordmaster Sasara Graham, looked around nervously. She had a tufty tail and triangular dog ears. She was a dwarf, and as such was granted short height and a plentiful bosom. She had a longsword sheathed at her waist, as well as another sword and a spear strapped to her back.

"Amazing, ain't it?" Shera boasted proudly, puffing up her chest. "Diablo made this place!"

"Huuuh?!"

While hiding the embarrassment he felt at Sasara's shocked gaze, Diablo spoke confidently. "Something this simple is child's play for a Demon Lord such as myself..."

In reality, he'd just fiddled with the game's map editor to make this place. Not to mention that, in this world, he was hardly capable of digging a hole in the ground, much less making a massive dungeon.

"Um, this place seems rather dangerous... What did you make it for?" Sasara asked.

"This is my base of operations."

"Your base of... You mean, this is your house?"

"Aye."

"But it's so creepy...?"

Agh?! I think it looks cool...

Shera laughed. "It is creepy, huh. But I got used to it."

"...It's disgusting." Rem nodded, still holding her mouth.

Argh?! Diablo flinched internally.

If he'd have been talking as his true self, the shock of their words would've surely caused him to shut himself out even further. That said, this dungeon was made based on his Demon Lord role play, so it was supposed to look scary and ominous. It was perfectly acceptable as it was.

They can say whatever they want because this isn't actually me! This is fine*!*

"Heh..." Diablo's lips curled upward. "I am a Demon Lord, after all! A symbol of death, destruction incarnate, annihilation made flesh... 'Tis only natural for all that lives to feel awe and terror at the sight of me!"

"Aah?!" Sasara made a terrified expression.

It was a cute reaction. Rem and Shera, on the other hand, seemed perfectly used to him by now, and were walking to the other side of the room on their own.

"Let's go! Everyone's waiting for us."

"...We should hurry, Diablo."

"Y-Yes."

He was feeling rather mixed about this, but...

I suppose it's better than them still acting frightened of me after all this time...

And they really were in a hurry. They'd been informed the Demon Overlord Modinaram was on his way to Faltra. Every second counted. But Modinaram wasn't an opponent Diablo could rush at without ample preparation; if he lost, all would be for naught.

The Demon Lord's Labyrinth contained the many items and pieces of equipment Diablo had gathered in the game. But he had another important objective in coming here...

Shera opened the inner door leading to the treasure vault, only to be met with a blade an inch away from her nose.

"Bah?!" Her easygoing smile froze over with shock.

A girl in a maid uniform appeared on the other side of the door, a double-

edged sword in her hands.

“All those who dare rob Master’s vault will be met with the most gruesome of deaths imaginable.”

With her emerald eyes shining ominously, the girl swung the blade toward Shera.

“Aaaaaah, w-wait, wait, Rose, it’s me, it’s Shera!”

“What of it?”

“Aren’t we friends?!”

“Rose has no friends,” Rose asserted.

Rem shrugged her shoulders. “Not even Diablo?”

“A shameless implication. Master is a subject of worship for Rose. Master is a precious presence to be guarded and protected.”

“There you have it. Say something to pacify this troublesome maid of yours, won’t you?”

With the situation now in his hands, Diablo nodded gravely. “I’ve kept you waiting, Rose. Now, put your sword away.”

“Ah!” The murderous intent directed at Shera dissipated with the blink of an eye, along with Rose’s double-edged sword.

“Welcome home, Master.” Rose gave a perfect bow. “There were zero intruders until today. However, three have been detected just now.”

Rem and Shera grimaced at Rose’s words, and Sasara pointed at herself quizzically, wondering if she was counted among them.

“I’m not an intruder though...?”

“...At times... No, more often than not, Rose can be rather unreasonable,” Rem explained. “She obeys Diablo’s orders without question, though, so she’s harmless so long as you’re careful.”

“Huh? So she might not be harmless if I’m not careful...? How scary...”

Rose glared at Sasara as the dwarf girl cowered. Diablo suddenly realized that

this was these two's first meeting. Diablo gave Rose a slight push on the back to make her step forward.

"She's the swordmaster. Her name is Sasara, a level 200 warrior."

"Level 200?! I-Is that right..."

Perhaps owing to her nature as a magimatic, or maybe it was the influence of her role as a maid, Rose's feelings rarely came across from her expression. Right now, however, she was visibly depressed by Diablo's words.

"What's the matter, Rose?"

"Rose has... Last time Rose fought, Rose was shamed in her failure to beat a Fallen."

"Yes, that was a tough one for sure."

Diablo thought the Fallen to be a small-fry at first, but they were given magical energy by the Demon Overlord and were surprisingly hard to beat. This Fallen was actually the reason Diablo decided to level up as a warrior. If he couldn't even see his enemy's attacks coming, it didn't matter what powerful magic he cast—he'd still lose. During that same battle, Rose had damaged her right arm, and came to the Labyrinth for repairs.

"Is your arm better now?"

"Thanks to Master's magical energy, it has been completely restored."

"Hm."

"However...Rose is now unnecessary, no?"

"What?"

"If there is a level 200 warrior present...then Rose is outdated hardware. Dismissed. Out with the oversized garbage on the third Friday of the month."

"No, no, no... Ahem! What are you saying? I am a Demon Lord. Having a large host of servants is only natural for me!"

"I-In that case...R-Rose still has a place at Master's side...?"

"Of course you do! Would I have come all the way here to call for you if you didn't?"

“Rose thought Master came to inform Rose of Rose’s disposal...”

I wouldn’t do something that awful!

But saying it kindly wasn’t very Demon Lord-ly.

“Whatever happens, you are forever my belonging!” Diablo declared haughtily. “I will not allow you to speak of disposal or worthlessness any longer!”

Rose returned to her usual, expressionless face, characteristic of magimatic maids.

“Rose’s apologies, Master. Rose will etch Master’s venerated words into Rose’s non-volatile memory and replay them every morning for the rest of Rose’s continued existence.”

Talk about heavy...

But, if nothing else, Rose seemed to be over her bad mood.



“Rose, it is true my objective in coming here was to regroup with you. Though, I did have something else in mind as well...”

“Speak and it will be done, Master.”

“I plan to face the Demon Overlord Modinaram in battle, and intend to use my anti-Demon Lord equipment.”

“By Master’s will.”

Guided by the magimatic maid, they made their way into the treasure vault. This space contained all the items and equipment Diablo had gathered and upgraded in *Cross Reverie*. Despite being underground, the Labyrinth extended like a void with no end in sight. Countless pedestals filled the place, holding every item Diablo ever stored there, down to the most mundane and useless ones. If he were to look through all this on his own, it would take him days to find what he needed.

Thankfully, Rose was here to handle this for him and showed him the right way to what he needed. These were the pieces of equipment and items Diablo had used in *Cross Reverie* when facing raid bosses. Incidentally, raid bosses, as the name implied, were powerful enemies that required the cooperation of groups of players to beat. In other words, they were extra powerful boss monsters built around the premise of fighting a larger than usual group of players.

I faced them all on my own though.

Joining a single party was too much for Diablo, so fighting alongside several was an impossibility stacked on top of a paradox...

“...Diablo, is this all rare equipment?” Rem asked curiously.

“Half of them are. The other half are the sort of things people in the city probably have.”

There were some low rarity items that could be found quite handily in this other world as well.

“Huh?” Rem seemed surprised. “But...isn’t this equipment for fighting Demon Lords?”

“When it comes to fighting Demon Lords, compatibility is more important than a subtle difference in stats.”

“Compatibility... You mean elements like earth, water, fire, wind, light, and darkness?”

“Not *just* those.”

Explaining strategy and tactics like this was something Diablo had never experienced, even in the game, and he hadn’t had any chances to do so since coming to this world. It was the first time he had to change his gear to accommodate for a powerful enemy.

Explaining his plans felt more nerve-wracking than facing the Demon Overlord. He wanted to find a good way to cut the conversation before he ran his mouth and let slip something dumb.

Right, come to think of it, there’s one more item I needed to take...

He figured he may as well take it and knew exactly where it was without needing Rose to lead him there...

Having changed his equipment, Diablo used Teleportation again and hurried to Faltra with an extra fighter in tow.

Chapter 1: Invasion of the Demon Overlord's Army

"My name is Emile Bichelberger! Faltra's greatest superhuman warrior, boasting a level of 99!" a man introduced himself grandly.

This man was a warrior clad in golden full-body armor. Despite being human, his form was as staunch as a male pantherian's, and he carried a crimson greatsword on his back. He was on his way to Faltra from another distant town when he happened upon a toppled carriage, and a dwarf who seemed to be in the prime of their life.

"An adventurer...? H-Help us, please!"

"If it's aid you seek..." Emile turned his gaze to the enemy before him.

What had toppled the carriage over and was currently stomping on it was a monster; a massive, pitch-black bird called a giant crow. It had the appearance of a raven, except it was massive enough to swallow an adult member of the races whole, and had a sharp beak with a length that dwarfed even a longsword. It was a beast that had descended from the Fallen—a magical beast.

Rumors were abound that the Demon Lord in the west had revived, and it was common knowledge that a Demon Lord's revival meant the magical beasts would increase in number. They were stronger, more aggressive, and more dangerous than the normal beasts and monsters found in the fields or mountains.

"Please do something, master warrior!" the dwarf cried out. "My daughter is still inside the carriage!"

"Your daughter, you say?!"

Emile's eyes widened. He pulled out the sword on his back, and the magical energy contained in the blade turned to flames, scorching his surroundings. He held the sword in an overhead stance as he declared:

"I put women above all!"

“Wha...?!”

The sudden realization of “I just asked an idiot for help” floated up somewhere in the dwarf’s mind. Emile didn’t seem to notice, though.

“I will say it once more! I love women above all else! Emile Bichelberger is guardian to all women!”

It didn’t matter how many exasperated, puzzled gazes were directed his way; that was trivial in the face of this man’s lofty goal of protecting women.

“Have at thee, damnable bird!” Emile shouted as he charged at the giant crow.

...But the giant crow simply spread out its wings and flapped itself upward, taking off from the carriage.

Is it fleeing?!

Seemingly not, as after flying up, it dived back down toward Emile. The races had many means of fighting, but they were based around the premise of the opponent being on the ground. An airborne opponent was hard to hit, and the giant crow was picking up momentum as it dove. This made its attack equal in strength to the blow of a giant hammer descending from above.

“Craaaaaaaaaaaaaaaw!” The monster opened its mouth wide and screeched.

“Too slow!”

Emile leapt. Now, he was clad in armor that weighed at least as much as he did. A normal person would struggle to even stand up straight under such weight, and a well-trained warrior would at most be able to keep up a nice jog. But Emile had jumped, reaching above the head of the giant crow bearing down on him with a nimbleness that put even the agile grasswalkers to shame.

“Take that!!” He brought his burning greatsword down upon the magical beast.

Seemingly never expecting to be attacked from above, the giant crow froze in surprise. The sound of bones breaking rang out, and the magical beast’s head was quickly split in half. A living beast would usually spout blood, but magical beasts instead dispersed into particles of light upon death.

A single slash from Emile had destroyed the creature. He landed on the ground with a thud, his lips curling into a smile.

“Heh... Has another woman fallen for me over my overwhelming strength?”

Emile turned around to the carriage, where the dwarf and his daughter would bare looks of gratitude toward him...

But they were gone. No one was there. Emile checked inside the carriage to be safe, but couldn’t find so much as a stray kitten inside. The two had fled while he was fighting.

Heaving a sigh, Emile felt his lips slacken.

“My oh my, you bashful little girl, you.” He ran his fingers through his forelocks. “To think you’d be too shy to show your face to the man you fell for.”

Emile was overwhelmingly positive, as usual..

By the time the noon bell had rung out, Emile had crossed Faltra’s gates. The atmosphere in the city was overbearingly heavy. There were usually stalls bustling with shoppers along the main street, but right now, there wasn’t a single resident in sight. The majority of businesses were closed, with only inns and weapons stores still operating. Instead of civilians, there were many soldiers walking about. Many of them were clad in armor, heavily equipped. Some of them glared at Emile suspiciously, but he simply raised an hand toward them in that easygoing fashion of his.

“Howdy, are there some sort of festivities today?”

“Emile?! You’re alive, you crazy dog! I haven’t seen you in ages!” A small group of soldiers had gathered around him.

Emile was something of a local celebrity in Faltra. He may have been an adventurer, but he was well-known among the soldiers as a dependable warrior. He had many friends in this regard as well.

“‘Alive,’ you say? Of course I am! This is *the* Emile Bichelberger you’re talking about here! So long as there are women to defend in this world, I will never fall!”

“You never change... But I guess having that sort of personality is why you

came back at a time like this, huh.”

While the soldiers seemed happy to be reunited with an old friend, there was tragic sorrow to their expressions. Were things really that bad?

“How are things in the west?”

“We decided to abandon the Ulug Bridge. The Demon Lord’s army apparently reached the Man-Eating Forest. According to reports, they have large numbers, and large-class magical beasts, too.”

“Ohh... My sword arm throbs in excitement.”

Emile’s words prompted the soldiers to exchange gazes.

“I wish I could have some of that bottomless optimism of yours. Faltra might be done for this time...”

Another soldier nodded gravely. “Even with a barrier that repels the Fallen... There’s no way we’d last more than a few years, closed up in the city.”

“It’ll be fine!” Emile placed encouraging hands on their shoulders.

“Huh? What, do you have some sort of secret plan? Or are reinforcements from the capital coming?!”

“I don’t have any plans, and I doubt any reinforcements would come. It’s the king of Lyferia, he wouldn’t weaken his own defenses now that the Demon Lord’s awakened.”

“Then there’s nothing fine about this...”

“But it *will* be fine! Have faith, if in nothing else but me!”

“Huh?”

“I primarily defend women, but I’ll protect you lot while I’m at it! So, for as far as your swords reach, make sure to keep women safe!”

“Ahaha, while you’re at it, huh...” The soldiers exchanged exasperated smiles. “I feel dumb for being depressed over this when I look at you.”

“Being depressed is indeed foolish, but if there’s one fact that will never change...it’s that we, my friends, are guardians to all women!”

“You got that right!” The soldier nodded along.

“Damn it all!” Another soldier seemed to be fired up. “Let’s do this!”

That zeal was seemingly spreading to everyone around them.

†

That same day, at 11 in the morning—

“...Come on, Boris,” the man’s friend, Massa, whispered in a thin voice. “Will we really be fine here?”

“Should be. Keep your head down, though, no matter what. And I’m begging you, don’t make *any* noises if something happens.”

“I know, I know... That’s why we picked the two quietest horses we could find.”

The men’s horses were tied in the shadow of a barn a short distance away. It was a position that couldn’t be seen from the other side of the river. Boris and Massa themselves were crawling against the ground, hiding from view.

Ulug Bridge... Boris had volunteered to scout out his former station, which meant only he and his childhood friend Massa stayed behind while everyone else retreated. Their job was to keep an eye on the Demon Lord’s army’s movements. They’d be forced to fight once the Fallen marched on the city, but knowing of the enemy’s numbers and war potential could give them some advantage...or, at the very least, help them prepare themselves mentally for what was to come. It would relieve the soldiers from the fear and stress of not knowing what was coming and when it might appear. Information was crucial in these times.

Gathering this information, however, also meant coming within visible range of the Demon Lord’s army. It was an exceptionally dangerous prospect.

“They’re coming!” Boris clasped a hand over Massa’s mouth, who was just about to scream. Boris’s fingers reached to Massa’s nose, and he seemed to be tearing up. But now wasn’t the time to deal with that.

Boris’s eyes widened.

The Demon Lord’s army!

The figures that appeared on the other side of the river were without a doubt the Demon Lord's forces. The first thing that entered their field of view were giant magical beasts in the shape of turtles, known as grand turtles. They were essentially mobile fortresses. Riding on their backs were the deformed forms of the Fallen.

Other Fallen were walking around them, seeming exceptionally small in comparison to the grand turtles, despite the fact that the Fallen were several times the size a member of the races. There were also other, medium-type magical beasts prowling about, going at whatever pace they wished, without any semblance of order or discipline.

What's that? Boris asked himself. *A box?*

Chained to the top of the shell of the leading grand turtle was what looked like a square, four-sided die. It was secured with something akin to the chains used to anchor ships. The box was black, and there were letters carved onto its surface that made Boris's stomach squirm just by looking at them. The races harbored a certain instinctive sense of disgust from the very sight of the grotesque Fallen, but this was even stronger than that...

"Ugh..." Massa shivered next to Boris. "I feel sick..."

"You shouldn't look."

"...Th-This should be enough... Let's go back, Boris."

"Not yet. Just look away and think about your girlfriend in the city or something."

"...But I don't have one."

"Think of your mother, then."

Using the precious telescope he'd borrowed from his captain, Boris peered out into the distance. Someone was standing in front of the box. Their commander, perhaps? Was that the Demon Overlord Modinaram...?

He looks like...an owl?

†

The box sat affixed to the grand turtle's back. The thick shell was treated like

a ship's deck, with thick stakes thrust into it. Chains were connected to those stakes and extended toward the box, binding it in place. With every one of the grand turtle's sluggish steps, the chains creaked and squeaked.

The box was large enough to contain a noble's house. If the grand turtle was to be likened to a moving castle, the box was like its inner citadel.

Standing before the box was a Fallen with an owl's head. His body had limbs, like the races, and had thick, developed muscles.

"It's in sight! The territory of the races!"

There were a few other Fallen kneeling near him. One of them was clad in a loose cloth and an oval hat rimmed with golden embroidery. They had the head of a frog, and while their robust body wasn't unusual among the Fallen, the fact that their gut was sticking out certainly was.

"Commander Eulerex, the Ulug Bridge is in sight. The races' armies could very well be there."

"We press forward!" The owl-headed Fallen responded by sticking out a hand. "And we crush them! The complete extermination of the races is the will of the Demon Overlord Modinaram!"

"By your will..." The frog-headed Fallen rolled up his round belly uncomfortably and bowed.

The Fallen Priest, Lazpuras. In the past, he'd served as an advisor to the dragon-eyed Fallen, Edelgard, but she had since lost her standing due to her failures. He now served as Eulerex's staff officer.

Lazpuras turned his gaze to the girl standing next to him, Manuela. She was half the height of the other Fallen who had Eulerex's physique, putting her at roughly the races' size. Her limbs and torso were thin like twigs, and were so delicate it seemed as, if one were to apply pressure to them, they'd snap...like a skeleton.

While Manuela was lacking in physical prowess, she was a skilled magical beast user. She, too, once served another master. She was once an officer and wife to Varakness, a vampire-type Fallen. Varakness once held the position of commander-in-chief of the army, but...in what the Fallen might call

“regrettable,” he was beaten by a demon sorcerer.

Manuela was currently under Eulerex’s command and helped lead the army alongside Lazpuras. It was, in fact, her magic that had subjugated the magical beasts, which wouldn’t normally even obey a Demon Lord, and had them bolster the army’s forces.

“How despicable...” Eulerex murmured as if mouthing a curse. “How many years have we longed to cross this puny, accursed bridge...”

“This bridge was once half-destroyed, was it not?” Lazpuras cast a gaze toward the stone bridge.

“Hmm... Edelgard faced a sorcerer of the races here, and he cast a White Nova spell.”

“So I heard... But I do find it hard to believe. One of the measly races being able to cast such an advanced spell...”

“All the more despicable. He goes by Diablo...and with his magical prowess, it stands to reason.”

“Diablo?!” Manuela, who’d silently manipulated the magical beasts by their side until now, suddenly screeched. “Aaaaaah! Diaaaaablooooooo!”

He was the man who’d killed her former master, come to think of it.

“Calm yourself,” Lazpuras told her. “Concentrate on your magic... All will be well. Master Modinaram will destroy everything.”

“Aaah... Aaah... Aaah...” Manuela gave a shaky nod, her teeth clicking and squeaking nervously.

It’d be different this time around. They couldn’t possibly lose. They had eight grand turtles and an army of 1,000 magical beasts and Fallen, all given power by the Demon Overlord.

They crossed the river; a body of water of this depth couldn’t stand in the grand turtles’ way. They passed the stone bridge as if the structure wasn’t even there as they walked through the plains, crushing the bridge in their wake.

Eulerex smirked. “Heheheheh... Behold the overwhelming might of our army!”

The sound of the wind being cut suddenly resounded around them. Another Fallen descended on the grand turtle's back, flapping their dragon-like wings. They were a slender, well-proportioned girl who wore a china-dress-like outfit that was open from below her bosom and down to her navel. Her long hair was tied at the back. She had a Chinese longsword hanging from her waist.

"Wasn't that just one of the races' fortresses we crushed? Where are they?!" The scaly tail growing from this beautiful girl's backside swung to and fro excitedly.

"There was no presence of the races." Eulerex's neck rotated horizontally. "An empty fortress, I reckon."

"Huuuh? The hell's that mean?!"

"I would wager the races have caught wind of our advance and abandoned it."

"So it was just a pile of pebbles? An-noy-ing!"

"Lady Ryoka, calm yourself..." Lazpuras remonstrated the girl. "We are in the presence of the Demon Overlord."

"Mmm... F-Fine, I get it. But when do we get to fight?! Can't this stupid turtle go any faster? If this thing goes any slower, I'll dry up and turn into a dragon fossil before we get there."

"...Stupid...turtle?" Annoyance began filling up Manuela's expression.

Magical beast users tended to become attached to their magical beasts. Ryoka, on the other hand, was a Fallen who used weapons, and only showed affection for her sword.

The Fallen were inherently aggressive. As Lazpuras was racking his brain as to how to arbitrate the two of them, Ryoka suddenly shifted her glare to the road ahead. A single horse was galloping down the road, with a lone soldier on its back.

"The races?!"

No sooner than she said that, and before the officer Lazpuras or even the commander-in-chief Eulerex said a word, Ryoka took off like an arrow after it.

“...It’s a decoy,” Lazpuras said, looking ahead.

Ryoka caught up to the horse running down the road and swung down her Chinese longsword. Her slash cut through both the soldier and the horse, splitting them in half and carving into the ground beneath them. Blood and viscera spilled over the road.

†

The Peace of Mind Inn - Twilight.

The inn’s poster girl, Mei, was mopping up the dining hall that was completely vacant of customers. It was two o’clock, about the time when the place would be full of people.

“Hah...” The pantherian girl, with her brown, shoulder-length hair, sighed with a moody expression on her face.

The front door swung open and the bell installed next to it jingled, prompting Mei to smile broadly in an amicable gesture.

“Welcome to the Peace of Mind Inn! I’m the inn’s idol, little Mei!”

“Ahaha... Sorry.” The one who entered the place with a bitter smile on her lips was the Adventurer’s Guild’s guildmaster, Sylvie. She was dressed in a revealing outfit that didn’t so much count as clothes as it was just a few pieces of fabric. She had the appearance of a young girl, but that was attributed to her being a grasswalker, a race that didn’t change its appearance with age. She was actually a seasoned veteran.

“Oh, you’re not a customer,” Mei said, her eyes narrowing.

“I’m a guildmaster, all things considered. I did my rounds around town to make sure everything’s in order.”

“If you’re looking for Diablo, he’s not back yet.” Mei shrugged at Sylvie’s apologetic words.

“I see...” At times, Sylvie pretended to be on patrol so she could come check on the Peace of Mind Inn. A certain sorcerer who was one of the inn’s regular customers was apparently exceedingly powerful. Mei never saw him fight, but word did get around.

“Are things really that bad in town?” Mei asked.

“Well, not really, but...” Sylvie replied cheerfully, but that just made Mei more anxious.

“You wouldn’t be coming to check if he was here if you didn’t need his help...”

“Ahaha... It’s fine, really. Faltra has the Fallen-repelling barrier, after all. Forget the Fallen or magical beasts, even the Demon Lord can’t get past that.”

The citadel city of Faltra was surrounded by impressive stone walls, with stone towers erected among them. These towers functioned as amplifiers for the barrier, which was maintained by the magical energy of the Mage’s Guild’s guildmaster, Celestine Baudelaire. So long as Celes remained in the city, the Mage’s Guild’s tower would continue producing the barrier, and the walls would amplify it, keeping the Fallen and all those aligned with them out of Faltra.

“Are the soldiers going out to fight?” Mei was concerned despite knowing all that.

“I don’t know much about what the military’s going to do, y’know? The troops stationed in Faltra are like the governor’s personal guard. Galford will be the one to decide that.”

“What about the adventurers, then?”

“Everyone’s fired up. We’ll all protect this city, so you can rest easy!”

Mei pursed her lips in concern. “Mrow... I know a ton of the adventurers. I’m worried.”

“I appreciate your concern. But it’s our job to keep the races safe from the Demon Lord.”

Sylvie turned around, saying she should get going to the next place on her patrol. Opening the door, she said one last time before leaving:

“If Diablo shows up, let him know we’re looking for him at the Adventurer’s Guild.”

“Mew got it. But I won’t be saying it for free.”

“Huh?”

“When you drive away the Demon Lord, you all have to come here and have our delicious sausages!” Mei gave Sylvie a thumbs up.

“Heheh... It’s a promise. Bye then.”

Sylvie left the inn, closing the door behind her, and silence filled the place once more.

†

At the Citadel city of Faltra’s western gate—

“The gate! Open the gate!” a man riding on horseback shouted to the top of the walls. They were a human male. He didn’t look to be a soldier, as he wasn’t clad in armor nor carried any weapons, but the gate guards did recognize him.

“It’s Boris! Open up!” They gave the orders to open the gate swiftly.

The gates at the end of the bridge had a steel door that was opened by pulling back a chain. Boris appeared on a single horse, with someone else riding on the back—Massa, who looked outright exhausted.

“It’s good to see you back!” The soldiers surrounded them as soon as they entered the walls. “How did it go?!”

“We saw the Demon Lord’s army!”

Everyone around them gave a surprised “Oooh!”

“It’s great you made it back from that.”

“No... We had to sacrifice one of our horses and my gear to make a decoy.”

They’d taken a doll made of straw and put Boris’s armor on it, then rushed the horse down the road. Had it gotten away, they would have simply galloped down the road, too...but a winged Fallen cut down the decoy soon after. Had it found them, they’d surely have been killed. While the Fallen was distracted by the horse on the highway, Boris and Massa rode the other one together through a forest near the road to make it back to Faltra.

“Ugh...” Massa covered his mouth with his hands, his face pallid. “I feel sick, Boris...”

“A-Are you all right? You can get off now. I’ll handle the report.”

“Yeah, thanks... The lieutenant general’s scary... Uuugh...”

Massa was quite weak to motion sickness. The other soldiers thanked him for his service.

“Don’t worry about the horse and the armor.” An officer took the reins to Boris’s horse. “More importantly, the lieutenant general is waiting for your report.”

“Yes, sir!”

Going north along the walls of the western gate led Boris to the military’s garrison. It had its own stables, barracks, a training ground, an armory, a granary, and, of course, a headquarters. It was a brick building only officers were usually allowed to enter.

“I’ve returned from the bridge of Ulug!” Boris referred to the sentries with a salute. “I have a report for the lieutenant general!”

“Enter!” The sentries saluted back, inviting Boris inside.

He walked down the hallway to the furthest door. After repeating the same words multiple times, he was finally before Faltra’s governor, Lieutenant General Chester Ray Galford.

Inside the headquarters—

A large desk stood in the front, belonging to the lieutenant general, surrounded on both sides by other desks which were manned by staff officers and filled to the brim with paperwork. The scent of sweat, ink, and steel filled the room.

Boris hadn’t seen Galford since the first directive of the year, which was nearly a year ago. In that single year, the lieutenant general Boris remembered felt entirely different from the sullen man standing here now. His creases had grown deeper, his skin gained a more earthy color, and streaks of white began running through his hair. But the glint in his eyes remained sharp as he glared at Boris.

“You say you saw the Demon Lord’s army...?”

“Yes! They had eight grand turtles, all carrying countless Fallen on their backs! They also had medium-class magical beasts, and they overall numbered roughly a thousand troops. They’re advancing at sprinting speed, and crossed Ulug Bridge at around eleven o’clock today!”

“A thousand Fallen and magical beasts?!” the staff officers murmured in a panic. Just a hundred was already a despair-inducing figure. In all recorded history, there was no skirmish between the Demon Lord Army counting 1,000 troops and the races.

“Do you have proof you’ve actually seen that?!” An aged, thin-haired staff officer rose to his feet.

“...At that speed, they should reach Faltra around nightfall.”

“Nng.”

“Sprinting speed, you say?” another staff officer asked. “In that case, we should be able to outrun them on horseback.”

“Maybe the grand turtles. But I... No, we were nearly attacked by a winged Fallen. It flew faster than a horse and cleaved through both a suit of armor and a horse with one strike.”

“Unbelievable...”

The Demon Lord’s army’s objective was the extermination of the races; there was no negotiating peace or surrender to them. What were they to do? The staff office continued their discussion.

“What of the Demon Lord?” Galford asked. “Did you see the Demon Overlord Modinaram?”

“I can’t say for certain.” Boris shook his head. “On top of the large-class magical beast leading the force was a Fallen that looked like an owl. He looked like he was important...”

“So you saw Eulerex. A senior Fallen.”

“That’s...”

“Did you see anything else?”

Boris told Galford about the female Fallen with a dragon's wings and tail, as well as of the frog-headed Fallen.

"Ah, and there was a box, too."

"A box?"

"It was chained to the grand turtle's back, and it had some...creepy pattern on its surface."

Just remembering it made him cover his mouth from the nausea.

"Hmm." Galford crossed his arms pensively.

The door behind Boris then opened noisily, and a woman's voice filled the room.

"You're still tripping over yourselves here? You folk have a far longer fuse than We gave you credit for."

"Lady Laminitus?!" one of the staff officers called out.

The former governor of Zircon Tower: Fanis Laminitus.

It was the first time Boris had laid eyes on her. She was dressed in a red uniform and had a bosom so large it was hard to believe she was human. Her hair was a brilliant shade of crimson. Her eyelashes were long, her lips glossy, and she carried herself about with an alluring air that didn't seem to fit this occasion much. Boris found himself stupefied at the sight of her.



Laminitus was an accomplished commander who once pushed back the Demon Lord's army. But, after learning the Demon Lord had been revived, she judged she wouldn't be able to defend Zircon Tower and abandoned the position, now taking refuge in Faltra.

"Does it matter if there are a thousand or two thousand Fallen out there?" she asked the staff officer, as if she herself was the commander. "They can gather as many small fry as they wish and it won't change things in the long run."

"Those aren't small fry, Lady Laminitus... They're Fallen! Fallen, I tell you!"

"Hah! You're as terrified as a maiden on her first night!"

"Wha?!"

"Don't fret. If we just defeat their commander, the Demon Lord's army will crumble. Their individual power may be high, but they're nothing more than a disorderly mob. There's nothing to fear."

"The one leading that 'disorderly' army of Fallen is the Demon Overlord Modinaram," Galford spoke up. "If we just defeat him, this fight will end with a victory for the races... That much is clear."

"Then it's a simple story. We must gather our strongest forces and face the Demon Overlord. There are no other options, correct?"

"We've already sent a request for aid to the royal capital."

"Hmph!" Laminitus scoffed haughtily. "As if that coward would ever weaken the capital's defenses!"

"His Majesty is a wise gentleman."

"If the king truly was the wise, brave ruler you make him out to be, he'd have dispatched his heroes to destroy the Demon Overlord, just as you once did. How many days have passed since Zircon Tower was attacked?!"

"I'm sure he has his plans."

"You've gone soft, Galford!"

"Then let me tell you: If the races are to combat the Demon Overlord, we

must stand united as one. No matter what they think, soldiers of the military must never suspect the king."

"If we obey too blindly, the races will surely be decimated!"

"Nonsense. Discord and infighting are what will drive the races to destruction."

"Tch..." Laminitus clicked her tongue. "Well, there's nowhere to fall back to, so there's no choice but to fight. We share your opinion that we're better off not expecting reinforcements from the royal capital. Arguing over the king's stupidity wouldn't do us any good, anyway."

"Do you not see how blasphemous it is to mouth such things before the staff officers?"

"The Demon Lord's army is said to arrive this evening, correct? Let us prepare for battle, then. There's you and Us... Is there anyone else that can be of use?"

Galford fell silent. Faltra was an important strategic point between the races' territories and the Demon Lord's domain. The forces stationed there were all elites, but none of them broke the limit of the races. Those teeming with that sort of quick-wittedness had all been summoned to the capital. And while Galford was pleased to see his subordinates develop and reach greatness, the truth was that the front lines lacked such capable troops.

"Is Diablo not here yet?" Laminitus inquired.

"According to my reconnaissance, he headed to the swordmaster's village in Sormas."

The governor had set Diablo as a target for observation, and had soldiers skilled in espionage follow him. Those orders applied just the same even outside Faltra, and that was how Galford had kept track of Diablo's activities at Zircon Tower and the capital.

"Sormas? Why did he go there?"

"I've no idea as to what his intentions are...but he apparently bought manure and climbed up a mountain."

"Don't tell Us he's decided to start working the fields?"

“He’s a mere adventurer after all... There’s little point in depending on him.”

“We don’t much like admitting it, but...this battle could very well hinge on his presence here.”

Galford shrugged. “News of the invasion is already out. Though I can’t say if he will act on it or not.”

Laminitus sighed in response.

Diablo’s amazing, Boris thought. If these two impressive individuals spoke like this about the importance of his presence, Diablo had to be. Boris prayed from the bottom of his heart for Diablo to return as fast as possible.

Boris turned his gaze to the west, out the window. The sun began slowly tipping below the horizon, and as it did, his anxiety only grew heavier...

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The same day, at five in the evening— It was believed the invasion would commence after sundown, but the lookout on the walls raised their voice before dusk. Like his comrades from the Ulug bridge, Boris was admitted into Faltra’s garrisoned forces, and was assigned to a lookout tower—which also doubled as an amplifier for the barrier—located slightly to the north of the western gate.

“They’re coming!” Boris pointed to the west.

“Uuu... Already?!” Massa’s lips shivered in terror.

Several others raised their voices in fear of the attack. Even trained soldiers stationed on the front lines couldn’t maintain their cool in the face of an invasion from the Demon Lord’s army.

The massive grand turtles appeared with the western sun at their backs, as if they’d oozed out of the encroaching darkness of night. The stench of beasts and blood could be taken in even from afar. They were like the personification of all that struck fear into the hearts of men.

Alarm bells rang out, alerting of an encroaching enemy attack. Countless soldiers looked up the western gate. Would the lieutenant general take to the battlefield? Or would he stay in his fortifications?

Galford was a hero of the last great war, and had proactively mobilized his forces when the elven army marched on Faltra, as well as on other occasions. And indeed, heavily armored soldiers were deployed at the western gate this time around.

But there were no movements. The trumpet signaling the opening of the western gate wasn't sounded.

"...He isn't coming," someone whispered.

The lieutenant general had naturally judged that there was no winning a direct fight against this evil.

"So we can't win..." someone else said in a disheartened voice.

There was the faint hope that maybe, just maybe, the hero of the great war would have a way of stopping the Demon Lord's army's invasion. But reality was colder than the darkest depths of the sea and devoid of all innocent mercy.

There was absolutely no one capable of standing against an army of one thousand Fallen...

"We hold our position!" an officer, who'd predicted, or perhaps knew, it would come to this, shouted. "We have our barrier, and the Fallen aren't smart enough to prepare provisions. Not to mention the cruel winter is on our side! We can win this fight!"

The soldiers' faces lit up in understanding. Even if Faltra was in a warm area, 'twas the season. The forest's trees had shed all their leaves, and fruit and animals were scarce. It was the period when farming was halted. Since the Fallen required food, they probably required large amounts just to maintain those massive bodies of theirs. It would be nigh impossible for them to procure enough food to maintain one thousand Fallen.

Holding the keep during a siege depended on the opponent not having provisions. And while Faltra's walls were damaged by a mysterious explosion some time ago, they had since been fixed.

"We have enough provisions to maintain 200,000 people for six months! And we've taken the refugees from the Demon Lord's domain into account! There's nothing to fear!"

Just what one might expect of Lieutenant General Galford, some had said. But Boris looked to the west, anxiety greatly weighing on his mind.

“What’s wrong, Boris? You’re pale,” Massa asked, prompting a nervous reply from Boris.

“...Do you remember when one hundred Fallen attacked the Bridge of Ulug?”

“Yeah, that definitely happened... I thought we were done for back then.”

“A Fallen had infiltrated Faltra trying to kill Lady Celestine, right?”

“Right, right. I think it called itself Gregore? That adventurer Emile beat him, didn’t he?”

“...So they say, sure.”

Boris saw Diablo’s deeds at the Bridge of Ulug, and also heard what the demon sorcerer had said:

“I shall test my Return magic.”

That was what Diablo shouted before disappearing in a flash of light. While the adventurers had claimed it was Emile who beat Gregore, Boris suspected that wasn’t entirely true.

“No, that isn’t the issue right now... My point is, even back then, the Fallen were trying to find a way to remove the barrier.”

“Right.”

“And now they’re bringing ten times the number they brought before—they even have that damn Demon Overlord with them. We’re idiots thinking they didn’t plan for the barrier...”

“So then...they’re still after Lady Celestine?!”

“Of course, I do think the lieutenant general is wary of that.”

They cast their glances toward the center of the city. There wasn’t a disturbance at the Mage’s Guild, was there? But as they looked at the peculiarly-shaped tower, sticking out like a lance toward the sky, nothing seemed out of the ordinary.

†

The citadel city of Faltra was before their very eyes.

“All forces, stop.” Eulerex spread out his hands.

Lazpuras repeated his commander’s words, beckoning the magical beast user Manuela to stop as well. Her magic made the grand turtles slow down to a halt. However, their forces weren’t as orderly as the races’. Some of the Fallen roared in complaint, rushing forward to attack on their own accord.

“That’s the Vahl faction, I believe.”

They were Fallen who only operated on the single desire to slaughter the races. They were the type that often fought among themselves and had lesser intelligence than that of the beasts.

Eulerex turned his back to them. “Cast them away. The fools followed us despite no one calling for them... All they’re good for is being disposable pawns.”

“As you say, sir.”

“Open the box!” Eulerex cried out, spreading his arms.

The Fallen standing behind him began hustling about. Lazpuras escorted Manuela, motioning to get off the grand turtle.

“Come, we must hurry.”

“Wait.”

“Make it quick.”

“...I’m sorry...” Manuela patted the armor around the grand turtle’s legs regretfully. The chains were then severed by clashes of axes, releasing it from its bonds.

“We haven’t the time.” Lazpuras picked Manuela up by her armpits.

“Ah...”

He flew off the shell with a nimbleness one wouldn’t expect from his fat stomach, landing behind the grand turtle. There was no time to spare.

“Chains, cut!” the Fallen holding the axe called out.

As that happened, Eulerex was flying in the skies above, the owl wings on his back flapping loudly.

“’Tis time to open the box! Unleash the seal!”

“Seal, unleash!” Several other demons repeated his words. They reached out to the front of the box, some poking it with the blades of their weapons...

Then, it opened.

Pure, dense magical energy spilled out. Solidified magical energy rolled forth from the box like black slime, touching the Fallen standing around it who shouted in pain as they crumbled into particles of light instantly.

Annihilation... The magical energy was so potent it destroyed the Fallen with a single touch.

Looking down on that sight, Eulerex called out, “Demon Overlord cannon—fire!”

The magical energy surged forth from the box. Turning into a flash of light, it lit its surroundings as if the sun had descended upon the earth with blinding ferocity...

Any who looked at it directly had the light burnt into their eyes. The Fallen may be able to withstand it, but the races would only go blind. Those who stood on Faltra’s walls, without a means to block the light, had instantly lost their eyesight.

The light turned into heat. The grand turtle’s head was the first to evaporate. The front half of its body was unable to withstand the heat emanating from the box. Next were the Vahl faction Fallen, who ran on ahead, being quickly consumed by the conflagration and disappearing without a trace.

The lump of massive heat was quickly approaching Faltra’s walls. The barrier screeched in anticipation. Ever since the city was created, it had faced multiple wars between Demon Lords and the races, but never had so much power been brought to bear against the barrier. The magical power was so intense that, had it not been for the barrier, the city would have surely been wiped off the map.

Soldiers screamed atop the wall, the citizens of the city in a frenzy at the

maddening sounds. As the screeching sound of the magical forces clashing thundered around them, the ground shook and the air shivered against the buildings in the city.

But the barrier wouldn't break. Its trait of blocking off "all ilk of the Fallen" was absolute.

The barrier stood its ground. The light died down along with the intense heat...

Boris sat on his hands and knees atop the walls, his legs shaking uncontrollably as thick beads of sweat dripped from his forehead.

I was dead for sure... I know I was...

He'd all but accepted that he'd be swallowed by the light and blown away.

"Haah, haah! Hahah! Amazing... We're alive!"

The barrier had fought true. But when Boris raised his head, he heard a scream coming from the western gate.

"Fall back!"

"Huh?" he couldn't help but stupidly utter.

The light released by the Demon Lord's army had completely died down, but the shouts and screams only seemed to be getting louder. Shortly after, the ground began quaking.

"What's going on?!" Boris stood up, placing his hands on the wall's edge and looking ahead.

I-It can't be!

The ground around the western gate was completely gone. The barrier extended to the ground as well, but it was gone as if something had shaved it off around the rims. Faltra was surrounded by a moat full of flowing water, but it had all evaporated into white steam.

"Fall back! Fall baaack!"

Soldiers ran away from the western gate. The place Boris was stationed began noticeably shaking.

“Wh-What’s going on?!”

This would naturally be what happened when a large structure lost the ground that supported it. The western gates toppled to the side like they were made of building blocks, creating fissures in the ground around the walls as they fell. With the walls structured to support each other, it didn’t take long for the one Boris and his group were on to fall apart as well.

“Fall back!” the officer cried out.

But those who had their wits about them had already begun running off before the order.

“Aaah!” Their foothold crumbled, and Massa had tripped. “Aaah, the Fallen, they have me by the leg! Help meee!”

“Calm down, you just tripped!” Boris grabbed Massa’s hand and pulled him up, urging him to continue running.

Thankfully, the walls only lurched to the side. Finally reaching safe ground, Boris turned around and was shocked beyond words. His knees shook and he couldn’t catch his breath, for something that should have been there was now gone.

A watch tower that acted as one of the Fallen-repelling barrier’s amplifiers had toppled over, along with the walls. It was reduced to nothing but a pile of rubble.

“Th-The barrier...” Boris’s own voice felt awfully distant to him. “I-It’s gone?!”

†

“Gaaahaaa!” Several Fallen and magical beasts rushed upon the collapsed western gate.

The citadel city of Faltra was on the verge of collapse itself. Some of the soldiers who were caught up in the gate’s collapse fell into panic. Some were running around; others stood stupefied and shocked. It was times like these that an adventurer usually made his appearance!

Emile stepped into the the western gate’s square, shouldering his longsword. The once magnificent walls of the western gate now lay utterly crumbled.

“My, my, they did quite a number on us.”

There was no barrier to ward off the attacking Fallen, leaving the city completely exposed. Emile could hear his comrades calling for him.

“E-Emile, what can we do against them...?!” screamed Turon, a friend of Emile’s who was a healer clad in a white robe. There was also Eristoff, an enhancer sorcerer skilled at enchanting and reinforcing weapons. All four of his party members were present there.

“What can we do, you ask? Why, we win! What else is there?” Emile proclaimed, pumping a fist. “The barrier is gone, which means this town and its countless women are under threat from the Fallen. By my name, Emile Bichelberger, I will protect all of the women from harm!”

“Heheh...” The healer boy, Turon, curled his lips into a smile. “Traveling the countries really polished up your stupidity, hasn’t it?”

“I’m not stupid!”

Eristoff, the enchanter, shrugged. “I don’t think it’s the smartest choice, but we have to do this... Sitting on my ass and waiting for death just isn’t my style.”

He swung his staff, and just like that, the whole party’s equipment was buffed with magic, tripling their attack and defense.

“All right!” Grutas, a warrior who carried a shield in place of a weapon, stood in front of everyone. “Let’s do this! We’re the heroes of the new era!” He was another comrade in their party, belonging to the blocker class.

“That’s right! We’re gonna defend this city!” Yuan, the party’s archer, was getting fired up too.

Emile stepped over the rubble and looked out at the city. The ground was still scorching hot, and even through his leather boots Emile felt his legs sizzle.

“Hmph... So there were some adventurers who didn’t run away...” Another group appeared from behind them.

“Hmm?” Emile turned around. The ones who appeared were more than one hundred regional knights, led by the governor himself, Galford.

“Oh, it’s you... Your name was...”

Two months ago, Emile had tutored under Galford to learn the ways of the blade. Though he was more of an intruding student than an apprentice...

“Heh... My name is...”

“...Emile Bichelberger, I believe. Have you been to the swordmaster?”

He remembered Emile’s name?! The other adventurers were magnificently stunned.

“Of course!” Emile puffed up his chest. “I’ve experienced the swordmaster’s full-blown slash on my very flesh. Thanks to that, I’ve been reborn!”

“Hmm... We see you’ve grown in number as well.”

The row of regional knights parted to the sides, making way for a beautiful woman teeming with allure. Her crimson hair was tied back, and she was clad in bright red armor.

“Step aside... If you get in Our way, We may have to shoot through you, you know?”

Fanis Laminitus had taken to the scene, a massive magi gun in hand. Its muzzle was pointed directly at Emile.

“Wh-What are you planning?!”

“We said, step aside. They’re already in my range.”

“What?!”

The Demon Lord’s army’s Fallen were attacking. They weren’t close enough to make out the features of their vanguard, but if Laminitus said they were in her range, it must have been true. She was well known for her skill as an accomplished Magi Gunner; very few wouldn’t know of her.

Emile’s group moved away from her path as she pulled the trigger. The next moment, a series of bangs shook the air. Emile doubted even a massive magi gun could shoot from this distance. She may be able to shoot one or two of them, but that would achieve little...

Suddenly, a massive explosion transpired.

“What?!”

The black smoke towered over the walls. Several Fallen lost all semblance of their original shapes in the blast, turning to particles of light before hitting the ground. Not to mention the explosions happened in three different spots.

The shock waves reached the soldiers a few moments later. It happened so quickly; the explosions took place in a position that would take ten minutes or so to walk to.

Emile's fellow adventurers mumbled in surprise.

"Wh-What was that?!" "Impossible!" "She just killed thirty of them!"

"Did you set something up in advance?" To Emile's eyes, it looked less like the bullets exploded and more like something in the ground had blown up.

"Heheh... You have quite the pair on you. Perhaps what one might expect from a man Galford set his own eyes on."

Galford shook his head unpleasantly. "I expect *nothing* from an adventurer."

"Even after you trained him every day?"

"I merely swatted him away when he got in the way of my morning training."

"Personally, without ordering your troops, and with a blunt sword meant for training?"

Laminitus continued shooting her gun while teasing a man thirty years her elder. Another explosion occurred.

"Emile, was it...? As you've speculated, We've rigged the area near the western gate," Laminitus explained, her magi gun still in hand. "Their logic works the same as a magi gun's bullet."

"You can do that?!"

"The methods of warfare will someday change. But this just now was merely a bluff."

Galford nodded. "A battle with the Demon Lord's army hinges on whether we can beat the Demon Lord itself."

"Hmph... the Demon Lord's army doesn't have that many pawns to sacrifice. If they can't break through easily, they'll send their stronger troops to face us

soon.”

As the two spoke, the Fallen heading for the western gate stopped, and everything suddenly fell silent. The sound of the wind rang in everyone’s ears. Something was walking toward the gate...

†

At first they thought the girl was one of the races, until they noticed her dragon-like wings. She had horns on her head, and carried her large Chinese longsword on her shoulder. Her tail swung left and right. The girl walked up to the mountain of rubble and stopped, standing roughly a dozen steps away from the soldiers.

“Heheh♪ I thought the Demon Overlord cannon would blow your whole city away... You’re surprisingly tenacious,” she said in a high-pitched, girly voice. “As a reward, I’ll toy with you a ton before slaughtering you!”

“Demon Overlord cannon?” Emile asked. “That’s what you call that bright light from earlier?”

“That’s right. I don’t really get it myself, but the box fires this magical energy the Demon Overlord stuffs inside it for a long, long time. I think Eulerex said it’s one of the Demon Lord of the Eye’s abilities? Or was it the Demon Lord of the Hand?”

The Demon Lord of Madness, Modinaram, had absorbed the other Demon Lords and assumed the title of Demon Overlord. Apparently, that attack from earlier was an attack of one of the absorbed Demon Lords. But they doubted this girl would just come up to and tell them this information...

“How many Demon Lords has the Demon Overlord absorbed?”

The Fallen girl tried counting on her fingers, but apparently didn’t have enough on both hands.

“...A bunch, okay?! And I, Ryoka, got him three of them! Aren’t I the best?”

“So, it’s at least ten then.”

“As a reward, he gave me power tenfold! There isn’t anyone left in the Demon Lord’s army I can fight at full strength against... But maybe you’ll put up

a better fight?!”

The Fallen girl called Ryoka smirked sadistically, murderous intent emanating from her body. Emile gulped nervously at the sight. It felt like something cold had slithered down his spine.

“Uuu...” Eristoff the enchanter had trouble standing, shaking at the knees. “The image of her running her sword through me keeps flashing in my mind...”

“Snap out of it!” Emile placed a hand on his shoulder.

“Part of what you just said doesn’t make any sense...” Galford stepped forward, speaking in a taciturn tone. “Do you mean to say you Fallen gathered ten pieces of the Demon Lord in such a short period of time? How inconceivable...”

It truly was odd. Despite the annoyed expression on her face, though, Ryoka was as talkative as ever.

“The Demon Overlord found them. Demon Lords have this ability to sense other Demon Lords. They just never use it because it’s useless for butchering the races.”

This was shocking information for the others, but Galford seemed convinced.

“Did he gather all the pieces then?”

“No, there’s still some in the Fallen’s territories. And there’s the one that got away, too.”

“One that got away...?”

“But that wasn’t my screw up! That Demon Lord was on the verge of awakening and refused to be absorbed, so he ran away.”

“Another Demon Lord...? Pray tell, where might it be?”

Just as she was about to answer, another Fallen ran up to her. It had three tails and a fox’s face with a body slightly larger than the races’. It brought its long mouth up to Ryoka’s ear.

“Lady Ryoka, Lady Ryoka...”

“Hm?”

“An order from Lord Eulerex. He says to kill them quickly. And also to not say anything needlessly.”

“Huh?! But earlier he told me to listen to what others say until they’re finished! Does that owl-head have feathers for brains?!”

Ryoka pursed her lips in displeasure and glared at Emile’s group. “Fine, whatevs. I’m itching to fight, anyway.”

Ryoka spun her Chinese longsword in one hand. She handled this massive hunk of metal with her slim, twig-like limbs so easily; she truly did have power far removed from that of the races. She then spoke to the group with the same unenthused, chatty tone as earlier.

“Who wants to go first? Or do you wanna fight me all at once? I’m good either way!”

The girl spoke with the same tone she might use to chat with a friend on the street corner, but despite that, she seemed the most menacing she’d ever been.

“Kuh... This is bad...” Emile shivered.

“True enough, its level is much higher than the other Fallen.” Turon the healer nodded.

“Yes, with cuteness on a different level. And they’re a female, too.”

“What?! Emile, it’s a Fallen!”

“A *female* Fallen.”

“The Fallen don’t have genders!”

As Emile and Turon continued their bickering on the topic of Fallen gender identities, Galford stepped forward.

“Cover me.”

“Oh, may I?” Laminitus asked quizzically, the surprise evident on her face. “We would think you’d insist upon a one-on-one to maintain chivalry or some sort of other masculine pride.”

“...This isn’t the sort of battle one can win while clinging to such notions.”

†

The place where the western gate once proudly stood had completely changed now. The square on the inner side of the gate, where the regional knights now stood, was riddled with cracks. The knights were quite trained by the standards of the races, but weren't even an option when it came to fighting powerful Fallen and large-type magical beasts.

Laminitus stood before them, armed with her magi gun, her sights fixed on the enemy. Emile and his fellow adventurers were near the gate where rubble littered the ground beneath them. Protecting Laminitus at their back, they kept a path open for her magi gun.

Lastly, before the western gate was the hole blown open by the Demon Overlord cannon. The rubble of what was once the gate filled the place, leaving not a single trace of the beautifully maintained highway leading up to the entrance to the city. At the center of that site of ruin was Galford's battlefield; a sight where he had yet to pull out the sword sheathed at his waist.

Galford silently surveyed the gap between them. *Ten steps.*

"Hmm, looks like you'll be fun♪" Ryoka, who stood opposite him, narrowed her eyes.

"...I cannot say I agree... I have never once found battle to be enjoyable."

"Well that's 'cuz you're weak, ain't it? You better not let me down!"

Vigorously calling out those words, Ryoka kicked the ground, charging in Galford's direction. She was moving slower than expected, however.

Did I train too much? Emile pondered as he looked on.

Galford had thought he wouldn't be able to match this powerful Fallen head-on, but somehow, she didn't seem all that quick.

"Yah!"

Ryoka swung down her Chinese longsword. There was still some distance between them, but her blade suddenly shined. The slash connected, a single step's distance earlier than it should have.

A surprise attack?!

“Raaah!” Galford yelled out as he unsheathed his sword.

Emile’s eyes widened. Galford’s speed was in a completely different dimension than when Emile had trained with him.

I knew he was taking it easy on me, but I didn’t think he’d be that fast!

Galford’s sword deflected Ryoka’s slash. The air quivered as metal clanged against metal, and another blow soon followed. It was a combo of two swings from Galford, so rapid Emile could hardly follow it with his eyes.

Blood burst from the back of Ryoka’s right hand. Her eyes widened.

“I’m cut?!”

“Hm.” Galford looked down at his blade. The tip of his sword had been cracked.

“Heheheh... Not bad.” Ryoka’s wound disappeared quickly. “Let’s speed this up a bit!”

She attacked again, this time noticeably faster than before. She stepped forward, with Galford definitely entering the range of her Chinese longsword.

“Nng... Aaah!”

Galford deflected her sword. He then shifted around her in a fluid, circular motion, slashing and cutting into her upper arm. It looked like a deep wound, but didn’t quite sever it. Her left hand drooped down powerlessly.

“How?! I’m faster than you!”

It was simply a gap in technique. Being a Fallen, Ryoka had the advantage when it came to physical strength and endurance, but there was a fatal difference in the level of their swordsmanship. Galford’s swordplay was a mix of defense and offense; there was no difference or transition between an attack and a guard. Whenever you thought he deflected a blow, his movements flowed like water and naturally shifted into a counterattack. It was beautiful swordsmanship one wouldn’t expect from his strict features.

But since the blade didn’t cut through bone, Ryoka’s left arm had regenerated in the blink of an eye.

Is she immortal?

“Looks like you’re not some loser small fry!” Ryoka said, her lips curling upward in an ecstatic smile. “This is what battle is all about!”

She slashed again. Did she think the counterattack earlier was a fluke? It was the same type of attack as before. Galford easily staved it off once more, his counterattack cutting through Ryoka’s left shoulder this time around.

The Fallen’s attacks gained momentum, and Galford hastened his slashes to adjust to the change. Their slashes clashed time and time again, the sound of metal striking itself booming around them like a cacophony.

Their fight was on a different level. The sounds were no light clicks; rather, they were heavy, resounding gongs and bangs. With each exchange, Galford’s sword was being chipped away. Ryoka’s Chinese longsword, by contrast, was enchanted and didn’t have so much as a scratch. He was beating her when it came to swordplay, but there was a difference between their weapons. Was there anything Emile could do to help?

“Tch...” Ryoka suddenly backed away.

“Hm?” Galford, staying cautiously on guard, didn’t chase her down.

“I give up.” Ryoka lowered her Chinese longsword.

“Hmph... If you’re leaving, the races have no interest in detaining you.”

“You’re not fighting me seriously, are you?”

“What makes you say that?”

“You’re keeping track with me, always topping off at just the right speed. And when I leave an opening, you don’t try to break through.”

“...I’m a cautious man. I only see overly obvious openings as traps.”

“Is that right... I guess I’ll have to make you play for keeps then.”

Ryoka shifted her gaze behind Galford, fixing it on Emile and his group.

Wh-What?!

Of course, they weren’t caught completely off guard. They were exceptionally cautious, or so they thought... Ryoka’s eyes glittered dangerously at them.

“Dodge!” Laminitus cried out.

“Gah?!” Eristoff the enchanter coughed up blood. A hole opened up his left breast, and he toppled face down to the ground.

“Eristoff!” Emile kneeled beside him, calling out his name as though in pain.

“Gragh...” In response, what came out of his mouth wasn’t words, but more blood.

“E-Eristoff!” Turon the healer waved his staff over the injured enchanter, offering up his prayers to God. A faint light enveloped Eristoff, who simply lay there in silence.

“God! Your mercy be upon us!”

Only silence...

“Heal his wounds, God! Please, God!”

Turon weaved his healing spell earnestly, but Eristoff didn’t move. The man’s breath wouldn’t return.

“Uuu... Kuh...” Turon fell to his knees.

“H... He’s dead?!” Emile couldn’t recognize his own voice as those words escaped his lips. His comrade had just passed before his very eyes.

“Well?” Ryoka asked, her lips contorting into a heartless smile. “If you don’t get serious with me, I’ll kill you one. By. One. You races hate that, don’t you? Seeing your friends die.”

“Don’t do anything foolish!” Galford gravely warned Emile— But the grieving soldier had already broken into a sprint.

†

“Daaaaaamn yooooooou!”

Emile’s blood was boiling in his veins. He rushed at Ryoka, his broadsword swung upward.

“Idiot...” Laminitus clicked her tongue and fired her magi gun.

“Ah?!” Ryoka recoiled backward as the shot thundered in everyone’s ears.

She hit her! Didn't she evade it?! Couldn't she respond in time?! Or maybe she was just careless! No matter, this is my chance!

"Sword Smite III!" Emile rushed her, using the warrior-class martial art to close the gap between them in one bound.

"Don't get close to her so carelessly!" Galford shouted.

But Emile's mind was too stained in wrath to care. Ryoka, whose stance had been disturbed, swung her Chinese longsword over her head with one hand. Their swords clashed ferociously.

Then, Ryoka's massive blade approached Emile's eyes.

"Hah!" He'd deflected the Chinese longsword with his broadsword. He then interrupted his horizontal slash in mid rush and shifted to another martial art.

"Quad Slash!"

This was a martial art that purportedly required one to be a warrior of level 80 or higher. It was a skill that unleashed four concurrent slashes that came from a superhuman warrior capable of handling a broadsword with ease. Ryoka blocked one of the slashes, but the remaining three had hit their mark and sent her flying.

"Kah?! You cheeky little small fry!"

"I'm not through with you!"

It was the effect of his long training. Ryoka was far stronger than Gregore, the Fallen that had attacked Faltra last time, but here Emile was, pushing back such a mighty opponent in this heated battle.

Now, some of the credit went to Eristoff's enchantments. Emile's magically-enhanced broadsword didn't crack from clashing against the Chinese longsword, nor did it fracture from striking against Ryoka's tough body.

I will avenge you, Eristoff!

His broadsword struck against the Fallen's flank, and her body bent in an unnatural direction. Had she been one of the races, she would have been severed in half.

I can win this!

Emile took a stance with his broadsword aiming upward: the martial art, Alps Fall III. It packed exceptional power, but took a long time to fire off. In most situations, trying to use it would just result in you getting hit first. When Emile fought Diablo once before, he'd been punched before he could activate his martial art and was blown backward into a wall.

But Emile believed with all his heart that this supposedly useless martial art was the most suited for him. For that reason alone, he even extended his mastery to the special skill "Instantaneous Activation" which shortened its build-up time. Thus, when used against a staggered opponent, Alps Fall III would connect in time.

"Take thiiiiiis!"

Ryoka's face entered his line of sight. She had horns as well as a dragon's wings and tail. She was a Fallen, with the blood of the races on her hands. But her face...was that of a woman.

My name is Emile Bichelberger. Protector of all women!

"Kuh!" Against his will, Emile hesitated for but a moment.

Ryoka quickly bore her fangs. "You're a letdown, small fry!"

The broadsword crashing down on Ryoka's head was shattered by a blow from her Chinese longsword.

"What?!"

A pitch black aura that could only be described as repugnant flames had erupted from his enemy's blade. Even as she was showered with attacks, Ryoka kept her strongest ace hidden. Was she going easy on them?

"Second kill!" The Chinese longsword enveloped with black flames bore down on Emile, who'd now lost his broadsword.

"Emiiiiiile!" Someone cut between the two of them, blocking the Fallen's Chinese longsword with his massive shield.

...Or at least, attempted to block it.

“Gaaah?!” Grutas the blocker was summarily cut in half along with his shield.

“Gru... Aaah...?!” Emile’s vision was painted red.

Despite cleaving through a thick shield and the massive man holding it, Ryoka’s sword still swung down with terrifying momentum, tearing through Emile’s armor. It felt as if a rod of hot metal had been pressed against his chest. It wasn’t so much painful as it was horrifyingly hot.

“Aaaaaaaaahh?!”

Emile fell to the ground. The pain alone had sapped his body of all his strength.

“Looks like my second kill was some other small fry,” Ryoka said, looking down on Emile like an insect. “Well, whatevs. Whaddaya say now? Still feel like holding back on me?”

She no longer considered Emile’s existence. Her interest shifted back to Galford.

“...Ignoring orders to attack blindly, eventually going out of commission...” He sighed in response to her question. “I knew adventurers could not be relied upon. You weren’t even useful for buying us time.”

Buying them time... Galford was waiting—waiting for someone who could turn this fight around. But judging by his words, he’d decided to give up on that unfounded hope. He threw his worn out sword aside.

“I didn’t intend on using this until I fought the Demon Lord, but you’ve left me no choice...”

†

“Whaaat?” Ryoka tilted her head. “You’re throwing away your weapon...? Don’t tell me you’re thinking of surrendering. Like, we’re gonna massacre you all. Just saying.”

“So I’d expect... But let me say this: You fallen should expect no mercy from me.

Galford didn’t have a sword in hand. Despite that setback, he assumed a stance as if he were holding a sword at his waist.

“This...isn’t a bluff.” Ryoka’s expression turned all the more dubious.

Galford didn’t budge a muscle, but sweat began dripping down his face. His pulse was increasing, and his breath came out in shorter bursts. He stood at the ready, his muscles bulging out.

Martial arts consumed the stamina running through your body, known as SP. If used in an internal fashion, they could elevate your physical capabilities to their utmost limit. But when mastered, it unlocked another use for your SP.

“Haaaaaaaaah!”

Your SP could be concentrated outside your body and materialized.

Galford swung his arms as if drawing something out, then a shining sword materialized in his hand.

It was the Sword of Light.

“You’re finally taking this seriously.” The sides of Ryoka’s lips curled up as she grinned excitedly. “And to think I was almost about to butcher you like the useless sack of meat you are.”

Ryoka kicked the ground, taking off at a speed unlike anything she’d exhibited before. Emile knew she was holding back on him, but she’d still cut him down and took the lives of his friends, leaving him to crawl pathetically on the ground.

A monster...

Ryoka was on a level of her own, even among the Fallen. If a hero of the war like Galford were to unveil his ultimate technique, the races stood no chance against such a foe—so Emile believed.

“Show me your serious fighting technique!” Ryoka was the first to swing down. “Put a smile on my face, human!”

“Argh!” Twisting his body, Galford deflected the slash. Surprisingly, the Sword of Light was crushed, crackling away into fragments of light.

“Hiyaaaaaah!” Ryoka screeched in peculiar, high-pitched laughter.

“Cut!” Galford swung his left hand into the open air. At that moment, two Swords of Light were generated at his left. Blood sprayed through the air as

both of Ryoka's arms were severed.

"Wha?! How...?!" Her Chinese longsword fell to the ground loudly, her two wrists still gripping it.

"I won't let you get away!" Galford glared at her with bloodshot eyes.

By the time he finished his shout, his left hand had already swung the Sword of Light. Ryoka's head parted from her neck, flying high into the air before bumbling to the ground.

"It can't be?! How did I...?!" Having been reduced to nothing but her head, Ryoka's eyes widened so much her eyeballs looked propped to roll out. Seeing her speak as a severed head drove home how detached her existence was from that of mere mortals.

"What is it?" Galford was the one to look down on her this time. "Go on, laugh... Weren't you speaking of how joyful and fun battle is?"

"Gah! You insignificant, little..."

"Your wounds healing as fast as they do makes your senses of fear and caution slacken, reducing your defense. Thanks to that, you lost your weapon."

"You had two swords! You tricked me, you coward!"

"Coward, eh...? No compliment could ever taste as sweet."

"How can you enjoy yourself when you fight like that?!"

"I've already told you before: not once, not ever have I found battle to be enjoyable."

Galford thrust his Sword of Light down through Ryoka's head.

†

Sitting on the back of a massive magical beast, Lazpuras surveyed the battle. The first magical beast he rode was reduced to particles of light by the power of the Demon Overlord cannon, so he was now atop another grand turtle. At his side was the magical beast user Manuela, and the commander-in-chief of the army, Eulerex, was also nearby.

"A battle worthy of the hero of the glittering blade, Chester Ray Galford. To

think Ryoka would perish after being strengthened past her limits...”

They were surprised, but this was all within their calculations. The commander-in-chief thought Ryoka to be an eyesore, after all. She was young, uninhibited, and had a nasty tendency to ignore orders. She was formerly of the Edelgard faction, and was obviously trying to elevate her position. Eulerex would have had to nip that talent in the bud eventually just to solidify the position he’d built up for himself. He likely let Ryoka fight on her own accord, anticipating she’d be defeated in the process.

Was this sly Fallen a shrewd tactician? Or perhaps a weakling occupied with his own self-importance? Lazpuras’s evaluation of him was balanced between these two impressions, but...no matter the case, Eulerex’s position was what held the army together. His leadership and resolve were absolutely necessary.

Lazpuras shifted his gaze to the box lying on the ground.

The Demon Overlord Modinaram is no longer in a state where he is worthy to be called our lord.

“Lord Eulerex, we must close the box.”

“’Tis too late.”

“What are you saying?!”

“It seems they’ve piqued the Demon Overlord’s interest.”

“I-Is that...acceptable?” Lazpuras spoke, putting his doubts into words. “Yet another town could be completely wiped out.”

It took a great amount of food to maintain the Demon Lord’s army, especially now that it had grown as large as it had. They had no provisions and needed to raid the races’ towns for food.

“Once we pass through Faltra, many human positions will lie exposed before us,” Eulerex said, his neck rotating horizontally. “For now, we will let the Demon Overlord show us his great power.”

“I see...”

“The enemy was wrong to stir up the Demon Overlord’s desire to fight. An act of foolishness, indeed. Their insistence on fighting has only wrought them this

conclusion.”

Perhaps that, too, was part of Eulerex’s calculations. He let Ryoka meet her demise so her fight would draw the Demon Overlord’s attention. Plus, with Faltra reduced to ashes, the western side of Lyferia would easily fall under their control.

Truly cunning...

“To think they would have to fight the Demon Overlord...” Lazpuras looked toward Faltra. “I may be a Fallen, but I feel somewhat piteous for them.”

“You are far too naïve, Priest!”

Perhaps it was so. But he couldn’t help it; the Demon Overlord’s power was far too overwhelming...

Chapter 2: Fighting the Demon Overlord

A scream caused the ground to tremor.

What stood before the box that emitted the flash of light was a creature with a black goat's head. It had a pair of bat-like wings on its back, and was twice the size of the races, putting it at half that of a large-type Fallen. It was hardly muscular, and gave off more of a thin, even gangly impression.

Despite that, its menacing aura was greater than any of the others. Hearing its voice made even Emile's body shrink in fright.

"Wh-What is...that...?!"

"That's...the Demon Overlord," Galford said, a shiver creeping on his words.

"Uuu, this can't be..." Yuan moaned, falling to his knees. "Fighting that thing... It's impossible..."

"We can't give up." Turon the healer brandished his staff. Applying his healing spell repeatedly, he eventually closed up all of Emile's wounds.

Emile took a long sword in hand. His broadsword had been crushed by Ryoka, so it was someone else's gear: the deceased Grutas's sword.

"I'll be borrowing this, Grutas..." He rose up, the bloodied longsword in hand.

Before them was an unbelievable opponent that defied all imagination. If Emile had to describe it...he would say it was a sense of despair that surpassed even the terror of being told to jump off a large, bottomless precipice.

Still, he gripped his sword tightly.

"I will never fall!"

"Hmph... If nothing else, I commend your courage for not running away."

Galford's body was then enveloped by magic. There were apparently healers among the regional knights behind them. His wounds were gradually disappearing, but his previously consumed SP wasn't recovering.

"I'd never run!" Emile declared. "This time, my sword and I will protect all

women!”

“...I won’t pry into your past, but I’ll at least trust in your aptitude to struggle. Though, I am quite aware of how poor your ability is...”

“Oooooh!!!”

Standing so far away they couldn’t tell its expression, the Demon Overlord Modinaram howled, turning to face them.

Galford stood guard. “It’s coming!”

The enemy kicked the ground, forming a massive cloud of dust in the wake of its explosive leap. In the space of a short moment that seemed to render the very concept of distance meaningless, Modinaram was upon them. Emile immediately swung his sword. There was no time to wait and see; he’d have to unleash his martial arts at full force right at the start.

“Quad Slash!”

A longsword moved more quickly than a broadsword, so his attack was unleashed faster than before. Four slashes were released at essentially the same moment, landing on the Demon Overlord with perfect timing. But Emile was perfectly prepared, not at all expecting this to be a simple opponent to fight.

Yet he still wouldn’t have been able to predict what was to come. The Demon Overlord Modinaram caught the blade of the sword swung down upon it with its teeth.

“Wh-What?! I-It’s... It’s eating the sword?!”

The sword broke all too easily.

But this is a high-class sword we got in the capital!

“Geheheheh!” Emile thought he saw the black goat head laugh at him.

Its thin, scrawny arms clenched into a fist. Its physique, at the very least, wasn’t very different from the races’.

I can dodge it!

But just as he thought he did, the Demon Overlord’s fist approached his face.

Did he predict my dodge?!

Just as the fist connected with Emile's face, a blade of light cut into Modinaram's flank.

"Raaah!"

"Gaaaaaagaaaaaah!"

Its roar didn't sound like anything a living creature could emit. It was like a cacophony of broken musical instruments.

Galford had delivered the slash, and it seemed to have hit its mark.. But just as that thought crossed through Emile's mind, Galford clicked his tongue.

"Is that...Rampart?!" A martial art capable of nullifying incoming damage...

Still screaming, Modinaram swung its fist again. Galford tried to create some distance between them, but while the fist didn't seem to be traveling that quickly, his own movements seemed sluggish instead...as if Galford was being drawn into the fist.

A snapping sound, like a piece of dry wood had just been crushed, rang out.

"Guh?!" Galford's expression distorted. His right arm, which took the attack, bent in an unnatural direction.

A high level warrior like Galford had his arm broken that easily?! Emile couldn't believe what he was seeing.

"Aaah... It's strong... *Too* strong!"

"Not yet! Even if he takes my right arm...I can't...retreat!"

Galford formed another Sword of Light in his left hand, which was enveloped with red flames from the effects of the martial art Heat Sonic. He swiftly moved into a spectacular combo of eight slashes, but Modinaram evaded all of them with unnatural speed, instead biting into Galford's left arm. A wet, vile sound clashed against Emile's ears, and crimson blood spilled to the ground.

"Gah!" Galford cried out in agony, jumping back. Horrifyingly, his left arm was missing from the elbow down. Modinaram held his left hand, still dripping with blood, in its mouth.

It bit off his arm?!

Emile couldn't help but shiver. What he saw now was sheer terror. When he was facing Ryoka, he could feel she was strong, and was stronger than he ever imagined when they did trade blows. But Modinaram was different.

At that moment, Emile realized, *We have no way of dealing damage to Modinaram. And we have no means of blocking its attacks, either. Whatever's happening here, it's no mere battle, but rather...*

†

"A massacre!" Eulerex proclaimed, a dark smile on his lips as he overlooked the battle.

"Indeed, as if it were swatting away powerless flies..." Lazpuras nodded.

"Heheh... The Demon Overlord has absorbed many of the Demon Lords!" Eulerex said with an ecstatic, elated tone. "It fights with the martial art Rampart constantly activated, its fists are granted a Sure Hit, and its fangs have the power to Sure Kill!"

One couldn't help but stand in awe.

"It is overwhelming. The races require years upon years of training to achieve such abilities momentarily, but the Demon Overlord fights with them at the ready, constantly activated."

"Our victory is assured!"

"Indeed."

Lazpuras was internally relieved, for the Demon Overlord hadn't blasted them with a wide range spell. If it did, the majority of the food would be reduced to ash. If utilized in melee combat, the city of Faltra would most likely be reduced to rubble. The races would be butchered sooner or later, but they had to get their hands on those provisions. Lazpuras hoped this battle would be decided swiftly.

"...The races ought to cease their pointless struggling and accept their destruction. That would ease their suffering, at least."

"Heheheheh... Yes, trying to oppose the Demon Overlord is useless."

“Quite true. There exists no one in this land who can cause harm to...”

In that moment, the Demon Overlord Modinaram was blown away spectacularly.

““Whaaaaaat?!”” Lazpuras and Eulerex exclaimed together.

†

A young girl lorded over them, her arms folded.

“Heheheh... You’ve gotten quite tough if you’re able to endure this Demon Lord’s kick, Madness.”

Having climbed up to a high spot—a remainder of the walls that hadn’t yet crumbled—the young girl bore down on Modinaram with a spinning kick. She had two long horns and a tail, which was split at its end. Her bright golden hair danced in the wind. Brushing it aside, she placed her hands on her hips and puffed up her meager chest so much it seemed like she might fall backward.

“This Demon Lord makes her entrance!”



“Klem?!” Emile’s eyes widened in surprise.

“Nnn!” Galford moaned, cold sweat sliding down his forehead. His left arm was gone from the elbow down, and his right was bent in an unbelievable direction, dangling powerlessly. “Guh... The child...that Demon brought...kicked Modinaram away...?! Impossible!”

Galford was about to collapse, but was caught and supported by a red-headed woman: Laminitus. She didn’t have her magi gun in hand anymore. She probably decided it wouldn’t be of any use against the Demon Overlord.

“Stand back, Sir Galford! We never expected the Demon Overlord to be this much of a monster. We don’t know who she is, but we’ve got no choice but to let her handle this!”

“Kuh... She said...she’s a Demon Lord.”

“Wh-What?”

“I thought it...to be nonsense...”

Emile knew the truth. He’d seen it once before, when the Demon Lord Krebskulm awakened in Faltra. That young girl, Klem, was the Demon Lord Krebskulm.

Stepping in front of Emile was the unusual figure of a girl in a waitress outfit, holding a spear in her hands.

“Getting in, Demon Lord’s way? In the way! Move, human!”

There was something off about her eyes and skin...like she wasn’t of the races.

“Y-You’re a Fallen...?!” Emile realized, startled.

“So...what?” The waitress glared at him harshly.

It was a different type of pressure from what he felt from Ryoka and the Demon Overlord. What she was didn’t actually matter.

“...You’re beautiful.”

He intended to do his usual greeting, but the tip of her spear poked at his feet.

“Edelgard, said to, move!”

“Aaah, yes, yes!”

Sadly, it was as she said. Galford and Laminitus were powerless before the Demon Overlord. All Emile could do was clench his teeth.

Modinaram, who’d been kicked away, stood up. It growled loudly like a wolf, despite having a goat’s head.

“I see you’ve remembered quite a bit after gathering the other Demon Lords...” Klem scoffed, her hands still on her hips. “But it’s useless if you can’t put it all to use, Madness.”

Right now, Modinaram called itself the Demon Overlord, but it was originally called the Demon Lord of Madness. It roared loudly and closed the distance between them at once, launching its fist forward. Its arm was scrawny and thin, but packed enough strength to crush Galford’s arm. And, oddly enough, it was unavoidable.

“Too slow!” Klem called out, unleashing another kick.

It was a crude attack that amounted to nothing more than her swinging her leg forward, but Emile’s eyes couldn’t even follow what she was doing. It was like time stopped for everyone but her. Modinaram was blown back again, its goat head smashed by the kick with a crunching sound.

“Hmph...” Klem scoffed. “The rumors said you were several times stronger than a Demon Lord, but this? You’re weak. Are you holding back against this Demon Lord, you fool?”

Modinaram growled, baring its teeth as it writhed.

“Hah!” Klem exclaimed. “You can’t exhibit your true strength, can you? You have too much power and you’re being overwhelmed by it. Pathetic.”

She drew closer to him. This time, Modinaram didn’t unleash any large attacks, but a series of sharp thrusts, in small movements reminiscent of a fencer. Even so, the strength of those thrusts was unimaginably great. Klem was capable of blocking them, but couldn’t counterattack.

“Aaah, this is bad...” Emile moaned. “Klem’s faster, but Modinaram’s

stronger. He's got an advantage in terms of reach."

Edelgard, who'd stepped forward as if to block Emile from view, turned around to face him.

"Surprised..." she said, seemingly impressed. "One of the races can, see it?"

"Of course. I'm a warrior, after all."

"Oh... Really surprised. You're, completely wrong."

"What?!"

"Demon Lord, is, Demon Lord! Not, pushed back," she stated with a proud expression.

Klem deflected Modinaram's attacks one after the other, not a single hit landing on her.

"What is this...?" Klem spoke, an indomitable smile on her lips. "I thought you'd do something more interesting than this after fusing with that many Demon Lords, but all you can do is punch? I'm bored with you."

She swung her leg forward and landed another kick on Modinaram's face, an ominous snapping sound echoing from its neck. Its goat head slanted unnaturally as Klem clenched her right hand. Light began emanating from her fist.

"My master ordered this Demon Lord to defend this city. That's why...I'll beat you!"

"Gaah... Guuagh..."

"If you destroy the races' cities, I won't be able to eat biscuits anymore!"

That's your reason?! Emile shouted in his mind.

The next moment, Klem brandished her right fist. "Infinity Detonation!"

"Gah... Gaaagaaaaagaaah?!"

A flash of light enveloped Modinaram.

"Heheheheh!" Klem laughed, showing her fangs. "I see your body's protected by damage nullification, but it's pointless! A Demon Lord's attack ignores all

manner of defenses!”

It was so transcendental Emile’s mind couldn’t follow the logic of it at all. He’d somehow realized Modinaram was using a damage nullification martial art called Rampart, so it didn’t look like Galford’s slashes or Klem’s kicks had much of an effect. There were those among the races who could use Rampart, but only for a brief moment (nullifying damage continually felt all too unfair, after all). But Klem’s attack seemed even more like cheating, because it had penetrated Rampart.

A sequence of explosions rocked the area. Eventually, the sound of something breaking reached Emile’s ears.

“Gagaaaaaah?!” Modinaram howled.

It was the sound of Rampart having been pierced. The powerful attack bore deep into Modinaram’s left side, its left arm being eaten from the shoulder and all the way into its chest. It coughed up black blood.

“Guh... Gahgah... Sur...prised...unforeseen, power?!”

“Oh?” Klem’s eyes narrowed. “So you *can* talk. And I thought you’d degraded to a mere beast.”

Modinaram’s lips, which had only let out growls and roars until now, began speaking in the tongue of the races.

“I ask you, Demon Lord of the Soul, Krebskulm...what reason have you for siding with the races?”

“Because biscuits are tasty!”

“...Bis...?”

“I’ll have you answer *me* now. Why are you trying to kill the races?”

“Foolish question. A Demon Lord is a being that brings ruin to the races. What other purpose would I need?”

“Hah! For all the Demon Lords you’ve taken in, you’re completely mindless! In that case, I’ll give you the meaningless conclusion a fool that fights thoughtlessly deserves!”

Light began gathering in Klem's right fist again.

"Demon Lord of the Soul, Krebskulm..." Modinaram's goat head exhaled softly. *"Said to be the strongest of all Demon Lords... You are not an opponent I can match without removing my seal."*

†

Modinaram's body started changing. His limbs suddenly increased in mass, and his missing left half regenerated rapidly. His torso also grew in size, matching his now-swollen limbs. He'd gotten a whole head taller, but his body had become a mass of menacing musculature. The only thing that remained unchanged was its black goat head.

"Guh, guh... Never did I expect to release it before I reached the races' capital."

"Fool. You think getting a little bigger means you are a match to this Demon Lo—ah?!" Klem jumped away in a hurry, the confident smile gone from her lips.

Emile didn't understand the enemy's transformation. Its body had definitely gotten bigger, but that wasn't all there was to it.

"Uuu... Can't be...?!" Edelgard took a frightened step back.

"What's wrong?"

"...D-Demon Lords... So many... Many Demon Lords? There!" she answered Emile's question with a shaking voice.

"Is it because it's the Demon Overlord?!"

"Danger...ous..." Edelgard was scared stiff.

"How do you like the taste of despair?" Modinaram asked, now beefed up.

"Kuh... So this is your...full power."

"Krebskulm... As you said, the accumulated power of the Demon Lords is too great. Using it spells the destruction of this body. Self-destruction. Reduction to nothing but ashes."

Modinaram spread out its arms, showing the tips of its fingers slowly turning to sand. Given time, Modinaram would surely crumble away entirely.

Klem stood poised, her right fist still shining with light. “H-Hmph... Did absorbing the Demon Lords’ powers make you this prone to chattering away? This Demon Lord doesn’t know any talkative Demon Lords.”

“Affirmative. Wisdom, too, is a form of power.”

“That manner of speaking... It’s like the Demon Lord of the Throat, Biotros. That one truly was a weakling who didn’t know when to shut up.

“A fragment is but that: a fragment. A lacking existence. When all are gathered, I shall achieve it. I shall become the complete and undefeatable Primeval Demon Lord!”

“Nonsense. What’s the point of becoming complete and invincible if all you can think of is killing the races?”

“Nay. The meaning to it all is clear.”

“Oh?”

“It is the exertion of power in and of itself that has endless value.”

“...This Demon Lord has no idea what you just said. It sounds like you’re going on a rampage just because you can. You’re nothing more than an animal.”

“As a result...this world will continue to exist.”

“What’s the point of existing if there are no biscuits?!”

“Join me, and we shall become a complete existence.” Modinaram raised both hands.

“I refuse!” Klem stuck out her tongue. “If I join you, this Demon Lord won’t be this Demon Lord anymore.”

“There is no value in an incomplete individual!”

“This Demon Lord is already complete, perfect and invincible!”

“Krebskulm... Unawakened as you are, you will never best me.”

Modinaram activated its magic. A shining sphere appeared in its hands, which were held toward the sky. The area was awash with blinding light, as if the ball were a small sun. Modinaram swung down its arms. It was Falling Skies, a spell the Demon Lord of the Heart, Kardia, once used. It was like the sun was

descending on them from the heavens.

Klem clenched her teeth. “Disappear!”

Klem brandished her fist, unleashing a second Infinity Detonation at the ball of light bearing down on her. The two powerful spells clashed, the air burning, the ground trembling.

“You are feeble, Krebskulm.” Modinaram’s goat-like eyes narrowed.

“Wh-What?!”

“Know the might of my magic!”

“Ngh?!”

Modinaram weaved more magic as the two spells clashed. For Demon Lords, magic constantly welled up from within them; they could never run out of magical energy. But there was a limit to how much they could emit at any given moment. Modinaram’s capacity was especially beyond measuring—several times that of Krebskulm’s.

Klem was being pushed back easily, the light from the enemy’s spell consuming her.

“Aaaaaah?!” she screamed as searing pain burned through her limbs.

An explosion. Emile took cover behind the rubble, but a few unfortunate regional knights were caught in the blast and blown away. The shock waves alone were that powerful. The wind blew away the smoke, revealing Klem, lying down on the charred earth.

“Aaah... Guh... Uuu...”

Cracks ran across her body. Her normally fair, soft, and supple skin looked like a fractured egg. Modinaram stood beside her.

“This is all the Demon Lord of the Soul, Krebskulm, the one sung as the strongest, can achieve when unawakened.”

“He ordered...this Demon Lord... He entrusted this to me!”

“Hmm...?”

“I can’t...lose!”

Punching into the ground, she leapt up and unleashed a kick that grazed against the ground; she aimed at her enemy's legs. Her kick connected, but it was tough. She didn't even break its posture.

"You realize you cannot defeat me in magic, so you turn to physical combat...? Then know, dear Krebskulm, the power of the Demon Lord of the Hand, Hattjabul."

As it spoke, it delivered a kick to Klem's flank, who was squatting close to the ground.

"Gyah?!"

The speed of the kick seemed like it would blow her back, but Klem surprisingly stayed in one place, as if she'd been sown into the ground. Modinaram delivered another strike, this time using its hand with its straight fingers sinking into Klem's stomach. Modinaram's spear-like digits were dug beside Klem's navel.

"Aaaaaah?!"

"All too brittle."

"Gaah... Uuu... Ugh..."

Klem grabbed Modinaram's arm with both hands, trying to pull out its fingers —but they didn't budge.

"The awakened Krebskulm is protected by the armor of Wings of Light. I crave it...the ability of your body."

"Uu... Guh... Fool... This Demon Lord will not submit!"

"Your will matters not."

Modinaram fired magic from its fingers, still stabbed into Klem's stomach. Entrails burst out of Klem's back with a popping sound.

"Gah!" Klem collapsed to the ground powerlessly, red spreading out beneath her, a fist-sized hole in her stomach.

†

"Demon Looord!" Edelgard rushed forward, her horseback spear in hand, with

a speed that put Ryoka to shame.

“Oh.” Modinaram cut the tip of the approaching spear between two of its fingers. That alone rendered Edelgard immobile as if she’d stabbed it into a brick wall. She tried pulling and pushing it with all her might, but to no avail.

“Uuu... Won’t move... Hah?!”

“A Fallen opposing the Demon Overlord? Impudence.”

“Edelgard swore, fealty? Fealty! To Krebskulm!”

“Very well then.” Modinaram brandished its other hand upward. A pitch black sword appeared in its light. It was similar to the Sword of Light Galford used earlier, but it was different not just in color, but in size. It was a deep black broadsword.

“The Godslayer Sword?!” Edelgard said through shivering lips, looking up at the blade swung aloft.

“If self-sacrifice is your wish...” The sword swung down on Edelgard.

But the moment before—a sword crashed against Modinaram’s flank.

“I will defend! All women!”

In Emile’s hands was a Sword of Light he’d borrowed from Galford. He slashed again. He didn’t think it’d do anything, but he couldn’t stand by and do nothing. He could at least buy Edelgard time to escape.

“Lightning Shot Magnum!” Laminitus provided him with covering fire.

The bullets all hit their mark, but for Modinaram it was all as if a light breeze had brushed against him. He swung his pitch black longsword horizontally.

“Death to the races!”

The broadsword, Godslayer, transformed into several projectiles, each one of them powerful and deadly accurate. Emile took one to his right shoulder, his golden armor having been penetrated easily, and a burning pain ran through his body.

“Gaaah...?!” He fell to his knees. A large amount of blood sprayed from the joints of his armor. He couldn’t feel his right shoulder; he didn’t even know if his

arm was still attached.

“Not yet!” Emile gripped the sword that had dropped from his right hand with his left. As he tried rising up, his right leg was cut completely through.

“Kah?!”

Everything below his knee was gone. All he could do was crawl on the ground. Even if he could numb the pain with sheer resolve, there was no way he could stand with his leg gone.

It was cold. He was vividly aware of his body temperature dropping rapidly; he was losing too much blood.

“Guuh... Healing...Turon!”

Picking up his body with his left hand, Emile shouted behind him. But upon turning around, he was met with the sight of a healer lying against the rubble, struck by one of the Demon Overlord’s projectiles.

What about Edelgard?!

She stood with her hand spread out, shielding Klem from the projectiles. Even after being hit by a few attacks, she was still on her feet. She was as strong as one might expect of a high-ranking Fallen.

“Haa, haa...” But her breaths proclaimed she had no strength left to fight.

Klem, who lay behind Edelgard, wasn’t completely demolished, but was nonetheless in a state where it was hard to tell if she was even conscious. Did Demon Lords turn into particles of light when they were defeated, like the Fallen? Or did they leave behind corpses, like the races? Emile didn’t know. There was also the chance Klem was already long dead.

We’re wiped out...

The thought scratched at his heart. The fighting spirit that had kept him standing up every time, even when he was knocked down, was dying with his teammates.

“Did I...fail to protect...again?” Emile’s body shivered.

Just like that, he fell face first onto the ground...

Im! Possible! I won't forgive myself for this!

"Oooooh!"

Stabbing his sword into the ground, he rose up with the strength of his one arm. Blood spurted from his wounds, but the pain was all gone. His eyesight was clouded over.

"Demon Overlooooooord!"

Someone stood before it.

"I will never...fall!" Emile shouted.

His left hand pulled the sword from the ground. He slashed at his opponent even as it fell forward. But the swing was far too weak...

Someone's hands reached out to Emile.

Why am I...so weak?!

Those big hands hugged his shoulders. Large, strong, bold hands.

An ally?!

A presence Emile was all too familiar with...



“Is that goat-headed gorilla Modinaram?” the figure asked with a tone that was far too calm for this battlefield.

Hearing this voice, Emile’s whited-out eyes cleared, revealing the face of the one standing before him.

“I’ve waited for you, my bosom friend...”

†

It looks completely different from the game, Diablo thought as he gazed at the enemy standing before him. The Demon Lord of Madness, Modinaram, that had appeared in *Cross Reverie* had a skinny body with a goat’s head. After defeating its first form, it transformed and its torso became like that of a black squid’s. But the Modinaram here had the torso of a muscular gorilla and seemed adept at melee combat.

“Use the potions I gave you earlier.” Diablo left Emile to Shera, while staying vigilant of the enemy.

“Y-Yeah!”

“Take care of the others, too.”

“Right, I’m on it!” Shera nodded deeply. She took a few tubes from her pouch —HP potions. They were SR rarity items, but they should be able to heal even those who were critically wounded.

Rem, on the other hand, was headed in Klem and Edelgard’s direction.

Did we make it in time?

Edelgard hadn’t been slain yet, so they should be fine. But what about Klem? What happened to Demon Lords when they died? In *Cross Reverie*, they just crumbled away slowly. In that case, the fact that Klem still maintained her shape meant she was still alive. He’d have to believe that for now.

Diablo turned his attention toward the enemy that was, in all likelihood, Modinaram.

“Hmph... You ran quite wild in my absence, didn’t you?”

“And who are you?” It tilted its black goat head.

In-game, Modinaram had a lanky torso and limbs...but absorbing the other Demon Lords had apparently changed his appearance. It was four meters tall right now, and had a gorilla's muscular body with a black goat's head. Diablo couldn't spot any damage on it.

It fought not only Galford and Emile, but Klem, too, and took basically no damage...

It was unmistakably a formidable foe. But Diablo was acting out the part of a Demon Lord. His true self couldn't hope to stand up to such a scary monster, and would probably run away from the fight, shutting himself away at home.

But now I'm a Demon Lord! A Demon Lord of overwhelming power! And that's why...

"Modinaram, I will grant you a punishment worthy of your foolish disrespect! Know the judgment of the true Demon Lord!"

"The Demon Overlord, showing disrespect... True *Demon Lord?"*

"Heheheh... You claim the title of Demon Overlord yet do not know of me? Your ignorance knows no bounds!"

It was natural it wouldn't know of Diablo, since he was only of the races *claiming* to be a Demon Lord...but this bravado was also part of his role play.

"What manner of being are you?" Modinaram inquired.

"Ahahaha! I am Diablo, a Demon Lord from another world!"

"Nay..." Modinaram shook his head. *"You are no Demon Lord."*

"You are simply incapable of gauging my being! Learn the true extent of my power, on your very flesh!"

Diablo transformed his staff into a sword—the Tonnerre Empereur: Libre. It had an effect that multiplied attacks by seven, which applied to melee combat as well. However, it made Diablo's MP consumption skyrocket.

Rem and Shera had already distanced themselves and the injured from Diablo and Modinaram. It appeared this was all the time he'd need to buy by talking. He took the initiative.

“White Nova!” He fired a grand spell he’d prepared ahead of time.

From how badly battered the terrain was, Modinaram didn’t have any magic reflection ability. It may have had a magic damage reduction ability, but just confirming that much was enough. After all, if he could just force Modinaram to counterattack with a powerful spell of its own, Diablo would be able to deflect it and take control of the situation.

The flashes of the White Nova spell disappeared. As always, it caused massive damage to the terrain, carving out the ground. Modinaram’s form was changing once more. Black, raven-like wings burst from its back, which were folded inward to block the spell.

But it wasn’t unharmed. Modinaram’s wings were tattered and torn. Cracks ran across its solid body.

Yes! I can damage it with magic!

Diablo’s lips curled up.

“Such magical power...” The black goat head’s eyes widened.

“Heh... Surprisingly soft, aren’t you, Modinaram?”

“Diablo... Oh, Diablo... How I crave it, that magical power!”

Modinaram’s eyes widened so much it seemed its eyeballs, which glared in crimson, might roll out of their sockets. Unleashing an animalistic roar, Modinaram rushed at Diablo.

It’s fast...

The Demon Overlord moved so fast it was impossible to follow its motions. It then extended its spear-like fingers to pierce Diablo’s abdomen...or they would have, had Diablo not recently leveled up.

“You really are quick!” Diablo just barely evaded the charge.

It wasn’t a speed Diablo couldn’t keep up with as he was now. However, Modinaram’s hand had bent at an unnatural angle, still flying in Diablo’s direction.

“You shan’t escape!”

“What?!”

A slash brushed away Modinaram’s extended fingers. Sasara had stepped in between them, wielding a katana with the symbol of the crescent moon etched into its pommel.

It was the martial art, Crushing Claw. Four of Modinaram’s fingers fell to the ground.

“An injury, upon my flesh?!”

A true display of a swordmaster’s strength. Sasara stood at Diablo’s side.

“Be careful, Diablo... It feels like its fists have the effects of the martial art Sure Hit on them.”

There was no sign of it using a martial art, though. In which case, was it perpetually active?

“Hmm... Come to think of it, the Demon Lord of the Hand, Hattjabul, had the martial arts Sure Hit and Sure Kill perpetually activated.”

“Martial arts can remain activated?!”

“And it had Rampart, too... But seeing as both swords and magic work on Modinaram, I’m guessing that’s already been broken. His damage reduction is limited to a certain number of uses, after all.”

“To know this much, you...” Modinaram narrowed its eyes. *“Nay... You are no Demon Lord. Who are you?”*

“Hmph...”

Just your ordinary, socially-inept gamer!

“I am the *true* Demon Lord!”

Just then, Rose the magimatic maid stepped forward, her double-headed sword at the ready.

“Judging the strength of Master’s subordinates, it is evident that Master is superior to you.”

Rose was equal to a level 150 warrior, and Sasara, who was standing beside Diablo, was level 200.

“Ah, erm...I’m not his subordinate, but rather his teacher... Ah, n-no, never mind...” Sasara looked slightly displeased.

The Fallen Modinaram had led to this battlefield were all observing the current battle from the sidelines. Eulerex was there as well, but still took on the form of a giant owl. Ryoka was gone, someone Diablo was cautious of since she seemed both strong and aggressive. But had someone beat her already...? Whatever the case, no Fallen interfered in Diablo’s battle with Modinaram.

It felt odd. Diablo had always fought alone, but now he had companions by his side. His subordinates, companions, teacher... Diablo wasn’t sure how to define them, but whatever they were, he could depend on them.

I’m not used to this yet, but...it doesn’t feel too bad.

Now he could focus on weaving his spells. Diablo drank an MP potion, as those seven castings of White Nova earlier had consumed most of his magical energy.

†

“Klem, you have to come to!” Rem cried out.

Taking their distance from where Diablo and the others were fighting, they retreated back to the city’s gate. To be exact, it was the western gate, which was now reduced to a pile of rubble. Rem did feel pathetic for being too weak to fight alongside Diablo, but this wasn’t the time to occupy herself with such concerns.

Lying around them were grievously wounded allies, as well as some who’d already stopped moving. Rem and Shera were likely the only ones around who were unharmed.

We have to save as many of them as possible!

There were multiple cracks running across Klem’s body. Just picking her up gave Rem the impression she might crumble at any second. There was also the hole piercing through her stomach. The state she was in was so grave Rem had to question despairingly if she might already be dead.

“...Rem...” Klem’s small eyelids fluttered open sluggishly.

“Klem! You’re alive!”

“No... This Demon Lord was...beaten. I cannot be...restored.”

“No! No, that can’t be! See, I have an HP potion Diablo gave me!”

Rem tiled the tube, pouring the liquid through Klem’s small lips. Her mouth slackened, and cracks ran across her lips.

“There’s no use...the potions of the races...do not work on a Demon Lord. The very sight, or sound...of a miracle of God...is despicable...”

“But...”

“A Demon Lord is a solitary existence... We can only be healed...by our own magical energy...”

“Then you should hurry and heal yourself, please! Magical energy wells up from within the Demon Lords, does it not?!”

“...Too much...of my magical energy...was plundered. It’s no longer gushing out... Not enough remains in my...body anymore.” Her voice was becoming thinner and thinner.

“Klem?!”

“Aaah... If only I could eat...one more...biscuit...”

Rem could feel some heat building up in the corner of her eyes. It was like her heart was being squeezed. At this rate, Klem would be destroyed. Klem was the Demon Lord Krebskulm, which Rem had once wished to destroy even if it cost her her life. But now, Klem was like family to her.

“Klem, I... I don’t want to lose you.”

She pulled a transparent crystal out of her pouch which had black flames flickering within it. It was a Divinity Crystal which held the remnants of Krebskulm that Rafflesia, the chief of the dark elves, had extracted from Rem’s body.

If I give this back to her, she might turn into Krebskulm...

Klem only became a sweet, biscuit-loving girl because she didn’t have her memories. A Demon Lord was always intent on killing the races, but she never

had the urge to do so; she likely would have fought them otherwise. The memories Klem was lacking were likely sealed in the Divinity Crystal, along with the urge to destroy the races...but it also contained magical energy. That magical energy was what Klem needed to be saved...

Rem looked at her. Klem looked like she might crumble into sand at any moment. It could very well be too late already... There was no time to spare.

“Ah!”

She brought the Divinity Crystal to Klem’s body, placing it into the hole in her stomach. The transparent orb shattered, and the flame inside it intensified.

“Klem!”

...But nothing changed. This Demon Lord lay still, her body still riddled with cracks.

Was I too late?!

Rem’s hands were shaking. The memory of Klem, eating biscuits with a smile, flashed in Rem’s mind. The memory of her rounding up villains who bothered the townspeople...of her singing songs happily...of her eating a steak, or a cake, or pasta... It was mostly memories of her eating.

Her tears flowed freely.

“I’m... I’m so...sorry...” Rem crouched down, powerlessly. “I wavered so much and now...now you’re...” She covered her face with both hands and wailed openly.

“Rem...?! Wh-What’s wrong?!” Shera placed a hand on Rem’s shoulder.

“Klem is... It’s all my fault! It’s all my fauuult! Aaah!”

“Huh?! Klem...?!”

“It’s because of my indecisiveness! I was too late... Argh! I didn’t make it in time! Aaaaaah!”

“What?!”

“You didn’t make it, Klem?!”

“I didn’t...?! I don’t really understand, Rem, but don’t cry... Here, have a

biscuit. That makes everything better.”

Rem’s breath clogged her throat.

Huh?!

She lifted her face, only to be met with Klem’s astonished expression. Her shoulders shivered.

“Oh, you stopped crying. Good girl. Now, have a biscuit. It’s a bit crumbly, though.”

Klem’s lips held a smile. In her small, extended hand was a broken biscuit. The skin on her hand was still cracked, but it seemed to be healing.

“I’m so glad you’re alive.” Shera patted Klem’s small head. “I’m so relieved...”

“Heheh! But of course!”

“Klem...you’re...alive...?” Rem was shocked.

“What are you saying? Was it not you who gave me magical energy?”

“Th-That’s right, but I...thought I didn’t make it in time...”

“Heheheh, this Demon Lord is tough!” Klem puffed up her chest. Then she turned around, remembering something. “I should heal Edelgard now.”

The Fallen girl was on the verge of disappearing, with several holes in her body. But in just a moment, she’d been healed. Edelgard hopped to her feet in a hurry.

“Demooon Looooooord! Is all right...?! All right! So happy!”

“Don’t cry... Aren’t you a Fallen? Embarrassing thing, you.”

“Aaaaaah...”

When they first met, Edelgard was as expressionless as a doll, and quite terrifying to boot... But her emotions overtook her whenever the Demon Lord was involved. She looked almost adorable now.

“I’m happy you’re fine, too, Edelgard,” Shera said with tears in her eyes.

Her tear glands were as loose as her thoughts. Following Shera’s example, Rem teared up as well.

But she healed a Fallen on the verge of death in an instant. It's a good thing she isn't an enemy of the races...

Then it hit her— "Klem, what about your memories?!"

"Hm? Oh, I remembered a whole bunch of things. All thanks to you, Rem."

"...What did you remember?"

"Heheheh... A Demon Lord is a being that annihilates the races, of course!"

"N-No!" Rem flinched back.

"...But this Demon Lord loves biscuits."

"...Huh?"

"And living in this city with you is fun. There's probably a ton of tasty things I haven't eaten yet."

"...Really? But, your memories..."

"Rem, you wanted to defeat the Demon Lord Krebskulm, right?"

"Y-Yes... I won't deny that. It was my greatest wish."

"And now...?

Rem shook her head. "If I still wanted that, I wouldn't have given you your magical energy back."

"Then it's the same for this Demon Lord! I remembered I once had the urge to slaughter the races, but memories are all just stuff in the past!"

"Kleeem!" Shera hugged the little Demon Lord snugly.

"What are you doing, Shera, it's stuffyyyy!"

"I looooooove yooouuu!"

"Hmm... Yes, I can see that. Now let gooo."

Even as she acted bothered, Klem wore a big smile.

"There truly was meaning...to the peaceful days we spent in this city," Rem said, wiping away her tears.

Now they had to win, to protect the life they'd led. And so, their gazes

returned to the battle at hand. Sasara and Rose were locked in melee combat against Modinaram.

It's all happening so fast... Her eyes couldn't keep up with the battle.

Diablo then entered a stance for casting multiple spells, one he'd never used when traveling with Rem and Shera since the opponents were always so close...

†

Diablo turned his Tonnerre Empereur back into its staff form and aimed it at Modinaram, commencing his Multiplex Magic. It was a challenging feat that involved compressing three grand spells into one. The amount of buildup time it required was obscenely long, so it was a trick he couldn't pull off against such an agile opponent as a solo player.

Multiplex Magic was a special skill, and as such couldn't be used multiple times. Even if he were to mess it up, he wouldn't be able to cast it a second time during this battle. It was risky, but it'd guarantee massive damage if it worked.

Diablo recited the first of the three grand spells: "Darkness blacker than black, born from the gloom of the underworld, congregate and form into an arc... Dark Arc Seek!"

A bow, dyed black from top to bottom, extended from the tip of Diablo's staff. Modinaram didn't sit quietly at the sight of the spell; if it had the knowledge of multiple Demon Lords, it surely knew the power behind this spell.

"You shan't fire that spell!" it called out. It charged forward, but was intercepted by Rose.

"You will not lay a finger on Master! Crius!"

Massive hands appeared in the air behind her. They looked like they were clad in armor, with mechanical components residing within them. Pipes that looked like blood vessels were attached to them, etched with magic symbols. The symbols shone, running from the tips onto the hands' fingertips.

These massive hands, the Magimatic Sol, held the same double-edged sword Rose held in her hands, except the size and scale of the weapon was entirely

different. Just one of the blades was as tall as Rose.

The massive sword crashed down on Modinaram, who generated a black broadsword from its right hand to block it.

That's the Demon Lord of the Eye, Iankaroz's Godslayer Sword!

Diablo then realized that the Flames of Ruination had toppled Faltra's walls. It was an ability said to have the greatest firepower in the game. When he challenged Iankaroz, it would fire this attack and reduce all character players in sight to a mountain of corpses. The message boards gave it different names like "Curtain Raiser Destruction," "Eyebeam," and "Wave Motion Cannon"... How one called it pretty much showed how old they were.

Rose's Magimatic Sol clashed with Iankaroz's black broadsword. But they only matched one another for a second before she was pushed back.

"Rose's Magimatic Sol lost...?!" Rose exclaimed in surprise.

The large hands creaked, and cracks began forming in the large double-edged sword. Rose matched a level 150 warrior, but she wasn't capable of matching Modinaram face to face.

Just then, Sasara unleashed an attack in the nick of time: the martial art, Boundless! The slash ignored the concept of distance, cutting Modinaram at the wrist.

"Are you mocking me?!"

Sasara then used the martial art Flash Thrust to close the distance rapidly, as if switching places with Rose, before unleashing the martial art Thousand Hands to simultaneously unleash several dozens of slashes at once. But as she was slashing Modinaram, it swung its sword at her.

"Gyah?!" Not evading in time, Sasara took the blow to her stomach. She was blown away, but rose to her feet immediately. She had the ability to take no damage from an attack one time per day. It felt like a cheat skill to Diablo, but...there wouldn't be any other second chances here. The next time she took that kind of hit, it'd cut her in half. Even a level 200 warrior was inferior to Modinaram in a one-on-one fight.

Diablo recited his second grand spell.

“Void that swallows all of creation, come to me... Black Hole Arrow!”

The tip of Diablo’s staff was consumed by a black sphere clad in electricity—a hole that swallowed everything it came in contact with.

Rose and Sasara attacked Modinaram simultaneously from both sides. But Modinaram simply generated a second black broadsword, effectively blocking their attacks from both sides and pushing them away. Even with one hand, its arm’s strength exceeded that of Sasara’s total strength. Worst of all, wielding two Godslayers was something Iankaroz never did in the game. Was it because of Modinaram’s influence of absorbing it to become the Demon Overlord? Or perhaps it was just an action that was never implemented in *Cross Reverie*? Whatever the case, Diablo would have to be cautious. Assuming everything would be the same as the game could be his undoing.

Diablo focused on his third grand spell and recited, “Arrow of the void, pierce through and wedge between the boundary of heaven and earth! Gravity Abyss!”

A black arrow formed by magic fired toward Modinaram with a velocity exceeding that of a magi gun. It was fired at close range, and before Diablo could even pray that it’d hit, the attack met its mark, digging into his opponent’s left breast.

The air trembled as the Multiplex Magic that bound the three great magics together activated. The hole in Modinaram’s chest began swirling, drawing its armor-like skin inward.

“O-Oooooh...?!”

It was a spell powerful enough to consume the majority of a massive magical beast like a sand whale. An opponent that was merely twice the size of the races would be consumed by it in no time.

“I am the Demon Overlord,” Modinaram roared, “destroyer of the races!”

It slashed at its own body with the longswords in its hands. It used the one in its left to cut itself below its left shoulder, and the right one to cut into its left flank. That would no doubt be a fatal injury for the races, but the Demon

Overlord withstood it. The Gravity Abyss spell only consumed part of Modinaram's body: the upper-left side and its left arm.

†

It would normally be a fatal wound. Not only the races, but even the Fallen wouldn't be able to live with half of their upper body missing.

I guess that's a Demon Lord for you...

Diablo smirked indomitably, but was panicking inside. In the game, no matter how much damage you inflicted on the enemy, it was hardly ever physically represented on their sprites. The grotesque sight of Modinaram's cross section here was sickening.

"Hmph... You've only gotten more disgusting, Modinaram. Cease your resistance and you'll at least spare yourself from further indignity."

"Guuugh... Unforgivable... Such injuries, upon my flesh!" Blood spurted from its body as it spoke.

Sasara and Rose returned to stand in front of Diablo. They'd both leapt away just as he unleashed his magic, so as to not be caught by the Gravity Abyss's gravity well, but now, they still stood at the ready.

"Watch yourself, Diablo... The enemy is still intent on fighting."

"Rose awaits Master's orders."

"Don't wait for me, just destroy the Fallen along with the Demon Overlord!"

In truth, Multiplex Magic left Diablo rather drained. He could replenish his MP with a potion, but if the battle lingered for too long, his concentration would plummet. He thought it'd be difficult to face seven grand turtles and the countless Fallen surrounding them in his current state.

Suddenly, a girl's voice called for him from behind.

"Diablo!" Rem cried. "We saved Klem and Edelgard! As well as the governor and Emile!"

Good...

Despite thinking so, he scoffed in his usual Demon Lord demeanor.

“Hmph... Tenacious fools.”

There were many still lying about near the ruined gate, though. It was hard to say they’d made it in time, but they were lucky enough to save Klem and their familiar associates.

Diablo brandished his magical sword again. He had no intent of showing mercy. Had they not come in time, Modinaram wouldn’t have just killed Klem, it would have laid its hands on the townspeople as well...and then proceeded to kill off the entirety of the races.

“We’ll exterminate it.”

“You are too late...Diablo...”

“What?!”

“Sink in despair... The flames of the end, ruination to all creation!”

Modinaram extended a hand to its own right breast and cut through its own skin, peeling it off with a cracking sound to reveal an eyeball buried in its body.

“The Demon Lord of the Eye, Iankaroz?!” Diablo felt a shiver run down his spine.

“Be blown into oblivion, fools who dared defy the Demon Overlord!” Modinaram roared.

The Flames of Ruination!

Light thick enough to blind Diablo’s entire field of vision was fired from the eyeball buried in Modinaram’s chest. It was a flash of light with the same amount of heat that had shattered through Faltra’s defenses, being unleashed for a second time, this time with the barrier already breached.

Diablo pushed Sasara and Rose aside and stepped forward.

“You lose, Demon Overlord!”

Diablo stuck out his left fist. Even the Flames of Ruination, which boasted the highest firepower in *Cross Reverie*, were classified as magic—and could be reflected by the Demon Lord’s Ring. The ring resting on Diablo’s ring finger shone with an ominous red light.

It doesn't matter how strong it is! So long as it's magic, it can still...

The flash consumed his opponent. Diablo's last image of Modinaram was that of the surprise overtaking its features. It may have had a goat's head, but its eyes were opened wide. Its mouth hung open and was screaming something Diablo couldn't hear over the blast.

Everything was dyed white, and the blinding light of the spell gradually faded. The thundering echoes quieted down as well, and an unnatural silence filled the area. Diablo looked around cautiously—not a trace of his opponent was left.

No body either, huh...

Diablo knew this pattern all too well. Just as one celebrated their victory, the enemy attacked by surprise, revealing they were still alive, and killed a comrade. He'd never fall for such a clichéd development.

"Shera!" Diablo raised his voice. "Can you recognize the Fallen's magical energy?!"

"H-Huh?! Y-Yeah, pretty much."

"Has anything changed since earlier?! Is the magical energy granted to them by the Demon Overlord gone?!"

He was worried she might not sense anything, since they were so far away from the Fallen brigade. The eyesight of the races would normally be incapable of making out their expressions, but...

"It's getting weaker!" Shera proclaimed. "Their magical energy is decreasing, Diablo!"

"Aaah!"

Did I do it?!

Sasara nodded along. "I can't feel that prickly, murderous intent from earlier. In all likelihood, the Demon Overlord is..."

"No response from any sensors," Rose reported. "Master is victorious."

"Heck yeeeaaaah!"

...That sort of innocent enthusiasm wouldn't be Demon Lord-ly, so Diablo

restrained himself, instead shrugging indifferently.

“Hmph... He claimed himself to be a Demon Overlord so I’d hoped he’d be strong... But this ended up being nothing more than a boring sideshow. He didn’t even lay a single scratch on me. How pathetically disappointing!”

Well, that’s thanks to the opponent’s trump card being a grand spell I could reflect and Sasara and Rose being there to protect me.

Yet another fight that taught Diablo how much having a vanguard protect you made battle much easier.

“You did it, Diablo!” Shera ran over to him. “You’re so strong!”

“Hmph... What’s the point of stating the obviou—mmfmfh?!”

Shera jumped toward him, with Diablo’s face burying into her bountiful bosom.

“Rose’s apologies, Master,” Rose said, narrowing her eyes. “It appears Rose has failed to notice another certain hostile life form...”

“Whoa?! Rose, don’t poke my butt with your sword!” Shera wiggled and struggled, still clinging to Diablo.

More! Face! Boobs! Booooooobs! Soft, warm, round!!!

“Rose, you’re stabbing it, you’re stabbing my butt!”

“Get away from Master!”

Chapter 3: How Not to Go to a Feast The setting sun burned beyond the rubble of the gate, sinking below the hills in the distance. The soldiers and adventurers were treating the injured, carrying them off in stretchers. The heavily wounded were taken to the church, as were the corpses of the deceased.

No one cheered for Diablo and his group. The only thing those who watched the battle with the Demon Overlord felt was terror. Diablo could tell from their expressions alone.

They don't see this as me defending them...

It was like this even in the game. Diablo single-handedly defeated bosses that required large raid parties to overcome, but no one really praised him for it. As for the citizens of this world, their lives were on the balance, so they didn't mock his efforts or make baseless claims that he was cheating. In that regard, things were better than his old world.

Diablo went back to town with Rose and Sasara, Shera still hanging on him, when the pattering of footsteps reached his ears.

"Diablo!" Klem waved to him with both hands. "You've done well to defeat the Demon Overlord!"

"Y-Yes. Are you all right?"

"Of course I am! This Demon Lord is a tough biscuit!"

She was energetic, but there were countless cracks and scratches running along her skin, having previously been as smooth as porcelain.

Edelgard was standing behind Klem. She'd been injured to the brink of destruction, but she was all healed now.

“...Phew.” The exhaustion was obvious on her face. She reminded Diablo of an office lady waiting for the last train on a Friday. Rem was right behind her.

“Amazingly done, Diablo... I think I’ve run out of ways to express my astonishment of you at this point.”

He’d intended to reply in a pompous fashion, when he suddenly realized her face was pale.

“What’s wrong, Rem?”

“...Ah... It’s not as bad as it seems. I’ve been so nervous I seemed fine earlier, but the teleportation spell may have gotten to me. All the stress must have left my body the moment you beat the Demon Overlord.”

“Still bad with vehicles, I see.” Though it was hard to say if a teleportation spell counted as a vehicle...

Rem hung her head. “I’m sorry...”

Diablo panicked internally. He didn’t think she’d get this depressed. It was times like these when his social ineptitude reared its ugly head! But, at the same time, a Demon Lord couldn’t go back on his words.

Just as he was searching for what to say next, regional knights appeared, their metallic armor clanging. They were carrying a stretcher, Galford laying on it. His left hand was missing and his right hand was broken. There were traces of him bleeding from the abdomen, but the bleeding there was stopped. Compared to everyone else present, he was as pale as a corpse, making even Edelgard and Rem seem healthy.

Galford craned his neck to look at Diablo, and parted his now purple lips to speak.

“To think you defeated that Demon Overlord... It defies all imagination.”

“Heh... He wasn’t even a challenge!”

His leveling up, the swordmaster Sasara, the magimatic doll Rose, and the Magic Reflection ring. If any one of them were missing there was no telling how it would’ve ended. Since he won, however, he wanted to gloat as hard as he could.

The other day, Galford had intended on taking Klem to have her inspected, but perhaps he thought facing Diablo was more dangerous than it was worth.

“You are...” he started speaking, his lips curling. But, just as he was about to finish the sentence, his voice became so small Diablo couldn’t hear the rest of his words. The regional knights bowed once before carrying the stretcher away.

“Didn’t you use a potion on Galford?” Diablo asked Shera, who still had her arms wrapped around one of his.

“Yes, I did. But one only healed him so much. I wanted to use another one, but he said he didn’t need any more.”

“Hm.”

It appeared a warrior over level 100 couldn’t recover their full HP with an SR-rank potion. That said, an SSR-rank potion was too precious to use freely like that. Diablo had enough of those put aside in storage if he ever needed to use them on himself or those around him, but not enough to treat the injured in such a large scale war. If Galford wasn’t at risk of death anymore, the church would have to handle the rest. Diablo had absolutely no intent of becoming complacent and using those potions too freely, only to run out when he’d need them the most.

†

Hearing a woman’s shouts, Diablo turned his gaze in her direction.

“Hurry! The war’s not over yet!”

It was Laminitus. She was accompanied by engineer troops, with measurement tools in hands.

“What’s going on?” Shera tilted her head quizzically.

“...This battle isn’t over until they restore the gate and the barrier tower,” Rem explained.

True enough, Faltra was currently in an exposed position. The Fallen were still to the west; they probably couldn’t believe the Demon Overlord was gone, but they may still be looking for a chance to attack. They still had seven grand turtles left as well, which could make for quite the menacing threat. Faltra

would have to restore the barrier to hold back their attack.

“How many days would it take to rebuild the tower?” Diablo asked no one in particular.

“...It would take a year or two to rebuild a replacement equal to what was destroyed. But I think they’ll probably make a temporary one for the time being.”

“Hmm.” Diablo nodded at Rem’s explanation.

“...It should take three days to build a temporary one in that case.”

“So if the Fallen make their move, it’d be within that time frame.”

“...Yes.” Rem looked at Laminitus as she shouted instructions. “Now that the governor is injured, having Lady Laminitus, governor of Zircon Tower, in the former Demon Lord’s domain is quite encouraging. Normally she would hold no authority over the stationed troops, but that doesn’t matter much right now, given the situation.”

“True.”

For an organization that had fallen into chaos, Laminitus, who took the initiative without minding the little details, was an ideal presence to have around.

Just as Diablo was thinking that, his gaze met with Laminitus’s. She closed one eye, sending a wink his way. He then remembered, once before, the night after he defended Zircon Tower from the Fallen, how she forced her way into his room and did...this and that, as a way of showing her thanks. The memory made Diablo go red in the face.

“...What’s wrong?” Rem tilted her head, now standing next to Diablo.

“Ah, no... It’s nothing.”

Something similar happened in the elven kingdom, and Rem had caught him with his non-proverbial pants down at the time... She’d gotten seriously mad and gave him the silent treatment for a long while. That was the moment Diablo decided to stop getting carried away by these situations.

Tearing his gaze away from Laminitus, he turned to look at the town, just to

be met with the sight of a girl with a pair of bunny ears hopping out of a carriage. She had red, shoulder-length hair and was dressed in a rather revealing outfit. Despite this, she had the body of a young girl. This was Sylvie, the guildmaster of this city's Adventurer's Guild.

"Hiya, Diablo! Everyone! Good work out there!"

"It's been so long, Sylvie!" Shera waved at her with a smile.

Rem simply nodded wordlessly, while Klem, Edelgard, and Rose seemed expressionless.

Sasara bowed her head politely. "It's nice to meet you. I'm the thirteenth swordmaster, Sasara Graham."

"Yep, a pleasure to meet you! I'm Sylvie!" Sylvie bowed her head back.

Exchanging greetings with everyone else, Sylvie regarded Diablo again. "You really saved us! I thought we were done for when the gate collapsed!"

"Hm."

"Oh? You're not asking me where I've been until now?"

"You were at the Mage's Guild, weren't you?"

"Man, there's really no fooling you, Diablo!" She smiled wryly. "You picked up on it so fast."

"If the Demon Lord's army is attacking Faltra, it means they're essentially fighting the Fallen-repelling barrier. The races wouldn't be defeated anytime soon so long as the barrier remained."

"Yup, yup."

"But putting it another way, that means the Fallen had to have some countermeasure for the barrier. When Edelgard attacked last time, they had a Fallen infiltrate the city by inciting a member of the Mage's Guild, and had that Fallen try to assassinate Celes."

It ended in failure, though. Being reminded of her past failure made Edelgard contort her face.

"That made the Mage's Guild cautious, which is why they asked me to protect

her," Sylvie said, snapping her fingers. "They had me keep Celes safe."

"Sounds like a valid enough decision." Both the contents of the request and the person they asked for protection were apt.

"We never thought they'd forcibly destroy the gate's tower, though."

"...Is Celes safe?" Rem asked.

"Yeah, but she was scared to death when the barrier was broken. But now she's laughing it off, saying that since she's free from the barrier, she has more freedom than she's had in twelve years."

"...This is no laughing matter... But that said, after seeing Diablo's overwhelming strength, I doubt the Fallen will dare attack us blindly."

"Ayup." Sylvie then remembered something. "Oh, by the way... We've taken Emile in at the Adventurer's Guild. He was seriously wounded, but there's no risk to his life. He should be fine in three days tops."

Shera gave a relieved, "That's good... I gave him an HP potion, but I wasn't sure it was enough."

"Thank you, Shera. If you didn't do that, he may not have made it."

"Hehe."

"...And the others?" Rem asked with a gloomy voice.

"Hm..." Sylvie lowered her eyes at that question. "Eristoff and Grutas didn't make it."

"...I see."

"There were quite a few casualties among the soldiers stationed at the walls and the regional knights... But, you know? When people heard an invasion by the Demon Lord's army with a thousand troops was advancing, everyone thought the western side of the kingdom, starting with Faltra, would be reduced to ashes."

Not just Rem, but Shera and Sasara had serious expressions on their faces. While he didn't outwardly show it, Diablo was listening carefully too.

"You and your group protected us all, Diablo," Sylvie said, looking him straight

in the eyes. “Thank you. I thank you all, from the bottom of my heart.”

†

“Then I’ll be going back to Celes now. Can’t let our guard down now!”

“...Can I join you?” Rem raised her hand at Sylvie’s words.

“Sure, but why?”

“...In exchange for my freedom, I promised to report everything to her.”

“I see. I’d love to hear your report, too...”

“...I refuse.”

With that exchange, Rem and Sylvie made their way to the Mage’s Guild.

“All right! Let’s go eat some biscuits!” Klem pointed to the south of the town.

“Huhhh, but it’s so late! All the stores are closed,” Shera said, her eyes wide with apprehension.

It wasn’t a matter of the time of day; with the Demon Lord’s army’s invasion and the collapse of the barrier, Fallen could flood the city at any time. No one had the leisure of keeping a store open at this crucial time.

“Buuut I want to eat biscuits!” Klem kicked the ground in annoyance.

“But everyone’s asleep...”

“That’s not true! Look, it’s so lively out there!”

Just as Klem said, the people in the streets were bustling like they were about to break out into a dance. They went from a critical situation, not knowing if they’d live to see another day, to the Demon Overlord’s defeat. The city had been saved. A similar situation had also happened in Zircon Tower.

“Didn’t you stock up on biscuits?” Shera asked.

“I ate them all already. I thought I’d have to fight Madness, so I ate them to psych myself up.”

“Oh my~”

“This Demon Lord worked real hard! And since I worked so hard, it makes no sense that I’m not getting any biscuits!”

“R-Right.”

“At this rate, my only option would be to reduce everything to ashes!”

“No no no! You can’t! We’ll go buy some biscuits, but if the store’s closed, we’ll wait until morning, okay?”

“Mmm.”

“Diablo, I’ll be going to Petre’s,” Shera said, looking a bit bothered.

“Hmm... I’ll join, then.”

“That’s fine, but...you must be tired after all that fighting, aren’t you? Don’t force yourself. Look, even Sasara’s super sleepy.”

“Hm?”

Now that she mentioned it...Sasara was sleeping while standing up. She was leaning against Rose and positively snoozing away.

“Zzz...Zzz...”

“A-Ah, Sasara?”

“Ah!” Diablo’s call made her eyes open wide with a start. “Ah, I’m sorry... I get sleepy as soon as it gets dark.”

“Didn’t you stay up the whole night reading that book last time?”

“Erm... I’m fine if I don’t have to fight so seriously, but... Aaaah.”

Apparently, fighting with high-level martial arts was exhausting. Diablo himself was tired, too. To be on the safe side, he drank a potion to recover his lost MP, but since he’d been forced into a state of total suspense, he needed some rest.

“Diablo group, rest.” Edelgard nodded. “Edelgard, protect Demon Lord? Protect!”

“Don’t be foolish. Your makeup’s all gone, and your waitress outfit is ruined. Anyone can tell you’re a Fallen right now.”

“Mmmrg...” She inspected her own appearance. Klem had healed her body, but her clothes were ruined from the Demon Overlord’s attacks, leaving her in a

half-naked state that would've made it hard for Diablo to look at her if it were any brighter out.

"...Weathering?" Edelgard tilted her head.

"What are you, a plastic model?! Rejected!"

Apparently working in some maid café knockoff filled her head with jargon she was better off not knowing...

But even so, this wasn't acceptable. Edelgard was with Diablo right now, and many had seen the battle earlier. However, if Edelgard were to go around town undisguised, it would cause a riot. Klem was apparently capable of changing her outfit at will; there weren't even any marks of the previous battle on her clothes now. Her tail was folded inside her skirt and her horns were hidden under a hat. Her ears and eyes still seemed atypical, but she could pass off as something of a strange demi.

"Edelgard, wait for us at the inn!" Klem ordered her.

"Uuu... Under, stood."

Shera smiled bitterly at the spiteful glare Edelgard regarded her with. After that, she took Klem to Petre's.

"What should Rose do with this one, Master?" Rose said, carrying Sasara.

"Ah... Carry her back to the inn. Is there a problem with that?"

"An easy enough task."

"You must be tired too... No, I guess you wouldn't be."

"Magimatics do not experience fatigue. Rose is, however, low on magical energy. Rose requires a quick charge to repair the damage inflicted during battle."

"Hm."

Diablo was a little surprised. He'd thought she'd just leave Sasara on the ground after having fallen asleep on her. She did treat Sasara as an intruder when they met in the Demon Lord's Labyrinth, but, maybe fighting back to back with the swordmaster changed her values somewhat?

I might be changing the same way, Diablo thought.

“Hmph...” Diablo felt his lips slacken into a smile. “You truly cherish Sasara, do you not, Rose?”

“Of course, Master. Rose is required to automatically lock away all items above SSR rarity. In other words, Rose cannot discard them without permission.”

“O-Oh.”

She was treating Sasara like another item...

†

The celebrations were more festive than Diablo had thought. People were still working in the front lines to restore the barrier, and even though the Demon Overlord was defeated, no one proclaimed the fighting had ended. This world didn’t have smartphones or text messages, so the only ones who could have told everyone such news were the soldiers watching the battle. Thus, information regarding the life and death of everyone traveled from mouth to ear, however slowly.

Those who heard of the victory ran out to the streets, dancing as they offered thanks to God. Older men walked shoulder to shoulder with any person they could find, even if they didn’t know their names, and offered them a drink as they sang marching cadences and the national anthem. People were exchanging high-fives and hugs with anyone they bumped into. Watching them filled Diablo with a sense of satisfaction over defending the town.

Aaah, it’s a good thing I protected them.

Drunk on the festive mood, some good-looking guy caught a random girl walking along the street, and, without giving her his name, pulled her in for a deep kiss. The girl didn’t seem dissatisfied by this, however, wrapping her hands around his back.

Diablo’s fist shook as he grit his teeth at the sight.

And now I’m feeling...much less inclined to save the races...

“Master...” Rose moaned, her eyes shining. “That expression on Master’s face

is...so good... Haa, haa...”

“N-No... Peace is the best. Hm!”

They’d arrived at the Peace of Mind Inn - Twilight, located in the western district. However, there was a crowd of people in front. There were other places like this along the main road where hops and businesses were holding lavish feasts to celebrate the victory.

Just as Diablo thought that all the free food would be better if it weren’t so loud out, a small shadow jumped toward him from a nearby alley.

“Wha?!”

“It’s meow!”

The moment he heard the voice, he stopped his Tonnerre Empereur mid-swing.

“Mei...is that you?”

It was hard to tell through the darkness, but this was the Peace of Mind Inn’s poster girl and idol, Mei.

“Yes≡ It’s Little Mei☆” she said, making a cat pose.

“What were you doing there?”

“I was waiting for mew, Diablo! I thought you might get in trouble if you returned to the Peace of Mind Inn like this.”

“Explain yourself. I’ll allow it.”

“I will, so follow me,” Mei said, looking left and right restlessly. “This place is no good.”

He was suspicious, but Diablo doubted this was a trap. He followed Mei into the back alley.

“Is this acceptable, Master?” Rose asked.

“Even if it is a trap, if it’s anything more dangerous than the Demon Overlord, that’d be entertaining in its own way.”

Rose bowed and took a step back. Edelgard was following them silently. If it

were Rem or Shera, he'd normally leave the negotiations to them, but...

Once they got away from the tumult, Mei parted her lips to speak.

"The people meow-ndering outside the inn are actually all here for you, Diablo."

"What?!"

"There's a rumor you defeated the Demon Overlord."

"It is no rumor, it is fact." Rose nodded. "Rose's exalted Master reduced the Demon Overlord to dust."

"Whoa... Really, meow. Well, anyway, everyone got excited and gathered here to see you."

"O-Oh..."

It didn't feel too bad. Maybe he should show his face after all.

"At this rate, it'd take until morning to receive a word of thanks from each of them." Mei shrugged her shoulders. "I thought you could do without getting hugs from all those old men."

Little Mei, you're a godsend!

It wasn't visible from Diablo's disinterested expression, but his heart was full of gratitude.

"And, because of that..." she said, leading them through the zig-zaggy alleyway. "Ta-da☆ The Peace of Mind Inn - Hideout! A secret inn, reserved for special customers mew-nly!"

It was behind the residential houses and didn't have a sign. Its door was plain and without any decorations, so even if one were to pass right in front of it, they wouldn't guess this was an inn.

"...Isn't this a residential home?" Rose asked with a cold voice.

"Th-Th-That's nyot true! It's a Peace of Mind Inn, service guaranteed!"

"This is fine. I'll allow it." Diablo nodded grandly. "I dislike noise and rowdiness. Let's stay here."

Diablo asked for Rem, Shera, and Klem to be shown here when they arrived at the Peace of Mind Inn - Twilight.

“Welcome♪”

The interior of the place looked just like the normal Peace of Mind Inn. Mei handed them a set of keys.

“Rose and the new girl get this key! Klem and Edelgard get this one. I have a room ready for Rem and Shera, too. You guys have the Hideout Inn all to yourselves, Diablo!”

“Hm.”

He’d gotten used to everyone sleeping huddled together on one big bed, but he was still more relaxed when sleeping alone.

“Ah, Diablo, could you wait for a second?”

“Hm? Rose, go ahead and put Sasara in bed in your room.”

“As Master wishes.”

Rose ascended the staircase, dragging Sasara along. Edelgard took her key as well and retreated to her room. It was just him and Mei now.

“Did you need something of me?”

“Well, hmm... Diablo, here’s the key to your room.”

It was a silver key.

“Oh?”

“It’s proof you’re a special client of the Peace of Mind Inn... It’s a lifetime invitation to stay for free♪ From meow on, feel free to think of this city as your hometown☆”

He’d found himself staring intently at Mei’s face.

“Ehehe... Do you like it?” she asked, her cheeks becoming rosy.

“Yes, it’s not bad.”

“That’s a present from the owner. And *this* is a present from Little Mei.”

“Hm?”

Mei stepped aside, climbed on top of a specially prepared platform, then stood further on her tiptoes.

“Mwa≡” Her lips touched Diablo’s cheek.



...Huh?!

Mei hopped off the platform with a small thud and made some distance between their bodies.

“Mrooow...” Her face was bright red. “I’m sorry if mew didn’t like the present. But that was a local idol’s first kiss☆”

Diablo was speechless.

“Diablo, thank mew for protecting all of us!”

The sight of her striking a pose to hide her embarrassment was somehow exceptionally innocent and adorable.

†

When he entered his room, he was faced with Rose, the top of her uniform removed. She was topless, her boobs fully exposed!

“Holy bejeezus, my life has a genre problem!” he’d found himself exclaiming aloud.

Somehow he’d gone from a sappy romantic scene to an erotic scenario that would fit right in with one of his porn games.

“Rose is prepared, Master,” Rose said with an indifferent expression that looked like nothing out of the ordinary was going on.

Well, good for you, because my heart sure as hell isn’t!

“Wh-What?”

“Of course, for Master to pour Master’s...into Rose.”

“*Magical energy!* My magical energy!”

He rather wished she’d stop saying the most important words in a low, inaudible voice.

“Yes, for Master to spill Master’s thick, abundant, syrupy...inside Rose.”

“...Are you doing this on purpose?”

She tilted her head with a genuinely quizzical expression. It felt like pointing it out any more clearly than that would be like willingly walking into quicksand.

“...Ah, is today too hard for Master? Is Master tired?”

He was indeed tired, but saying, “I’m tired so I’ll just sleep for tonight” was more “overworked salaryman lameness” than “Demon Lord coolness.”

“Hmph... Who do you take me for? Fighting an opponent of that level doesn’t even begin to tire me!”

“Aaah, as impressive as ever, Master!”

“I’ll pour out all the magical energy you’ll ever need!”

“Thank Master very much. Rose is so overwhelmed with gratitude, Rose detects an inexplicable shivering throughout Rose’s body.”

Having a half-naked girl bow her head so low before him that her exposed back was visible felt like he hadn’t fallen into a world based off of *Cross Reverie*, but some other type of game that would be best left unmentioned.

“A-Anyway, sit down. Ah, no, forget that...”

Rose’s body was as heavy as a fully armored knight. She didn’t bust through the second story floor, but that was owing to the building’s hefty construction. If she were to sit on a bed or chair, she’d likely crush the furniture.

Guess we’ll have to do this standing..

“Rose’s apologies.” Rose turned her back to him. “Rose requests Master provide her with magical energy in regions that are near the points that were damaged.”

“Very well.”

Her back. Finally, this conversation was feeling a little less over the top.

“Extend Master’s hands from behind to Rose’s chest, please.”

...Chest?

“...Hmm, Rose does not mind if Master is rough.”

As he stood there with his mouth agape, her hands clasped Diablo’s. He’d just talked a big game, saying he’d pour out all the magical energy she’d ever need, but despite that, he couldn’t do something as cruel as shake off her hands in this situation. She did wish for this, after all.

He felt his hands squish against Rose's large swellings.

Ah, that's soft!

"Ahn!" Rose's body shivered.

"D-Did that hurt?"

"...Uu... It was, nothing. Rose was simply overcome with joy."

"So you shivered?"

"Rose reports Rose has climaxed..."

Already?!

"Does that mean your charge has gone over the limit? Is this enough?"

"Rose's first magical energy tank is filled. There are more tanks, however..."

"I see. So I just need to send over more magical energy?"

"Yes... Ah... Nnn... Y-Yes, over there..."

"Wh-What? I didn't do anything..."

He didn't intend on doing anything, but contrary to his timid heart, his instincts ran wild. His fingers were very much moving by themselves.

W-Whoa?! They're just sinking in...

He could feel his fingers sinking into her soft chest. The small protuberances wedged between his middle and ring fingers were becoming increasingly hardened. He pinched and rubbed them with his two fingers.

"Aaahn?!" Rose wiggled her body. "Nn... Nnnn... Master... Over there, is..."

"What is it?"

"Aaah... Rose's... Rose is, going crazy... Aaahn?!"

"Crazy..."

Diablo's sense of reason was on the verge of going berserk. He groped and teased her breasts. He kneaded, rubbed, pinched, pulled, and eventually tried pushing them in.

"Hiyaaaaaa!" Rose jolted again and again in his arms, her back writhing. Her

shoulders spasmed slightly.

“D-Did you climax again?” Diablo swallowed his spit.

A full charge of magical energy, of course.

“Erm... Master...” Rose shook her head gently.

“Hm?”

“Don’t just, tease me there... You need to pour your magical energy in, too...”

“Aaah!”

He was so caught up with toying with the tips of her chest that he’d forgotten to send in any magical energy! Which meant what they just did here didn’t have any sort of magical energy charging. He was just fondling her breasts!

I can’t believe myself!

Perhaps fighting the Demon Overlord had drained him a bit, which made his thinking less crisp than usual.

“A-All right! This time for sure!”

Diablo once again focused his will on his hands and let magical energy flow through them just like when he was casting spells.

“Mm... Nnn... Master, that’s good. Master’s magical energy is...flowing in... Haa... It’s wonderful... Aaah, Ahn.”

It felt like her skin was adhering to him more tightly than before. Regardless of her being magimatic, her skin felt sweaty. It was like the boundaries between their skin were becoming muddled, and his hand was sinking into her bosom.

“Like this?”

“Aaah! Aaaaaah!” Rose screamed louder than before. “Master, Master, Masteeer, it’s amazing... Nnng... Incredible! So strong! More... More... Deeper... Ah! Ah! Hiyaaaaaa!”

Her voice was so loud it surely had to have reached outside.

Won’t Rem get mad at me again if she hears this?!

He was pouring out his magical energy like he was casting a grand spell,

hoping to get the charging period done faster. Rose's body would go on to spasm so hard Diablo had to wonder if he broke something in her...

†

Rose was lying on the floor with a satisfied expression, as topless as she was before. Normally Diablo would put her in bed, but, given her weight, that was a complicated task. Since looking at her like this was problematic, Diablo covered her with a blanket. He sighed as things had finally settled down.

"*Phew*... I'm kinda tired..." he muttered to himself.

There was a knock on the room's door. Rem and Shera weren't back yet, and if they were, they wouldn't have knocked.

"Hmph... Who is it?" Diablo asked, straining his expression. "If you do not fear audience with a Demon Lord, dare open that door."

"H-Hmm... It's just me..." The voice behind the door sounded like a man's, one which rang oddly familiar. Just as he was bad with remembering faces, Diablo couldn't recall people's voices all that well.

"Come in, I'll allow it," Diablo ordered the man.

"E-Excuse me!" His guest was a soldier clad in armor.

"Ah, you're..." Diablo finally remembered him.

"I'm Boris."

Right, he was a soldier defending the Bridge of Ulug.

Then Diablo thought about something. "How did you know about this place?"

"Ah...that's because you and your group are being tracked. I didn't know which room you were in, but the military and Adventurer's Guild are at least aware of where you're staying."

Sylvie had mentioned something like that once before, where Klem was being tracked by multiple organizations. Still, the thought he'd never noticed was embarrassing.

"Aaah, you mean those annoying flies." Diablo shrugged. "Tell them to keep their distance. If they become too much of an eyesore, I may just burn them to

ashes.”

“Y-Yes sir!” Boris reacted in an overtly serious manner, even saluting.

“Well, what did you come here for?”

“Ah... I, Boris Marks of the kingdom of Lyferia’s Thirteenth Faltra Defensive Regiment, have been ordered to invite you, adventurer Diablo, to a celebratory feast!”

“Celebratory feast?”

“Yes, a feast to celebrate the subjugation of the Demon Overlord and the successful defense of Faltra.”

“But isn’t the barrier still down?”

The Fallen hadn’t retreated yet; it was too soon to assume it was all over. From what he knew of Laminitus, she wouldn’t make such a careless suggestion.

“It’s, erm...the city council.”

“City council?”

“The city of Faltra is run by the governor, but there is a council of influential nobles separate from him. They’re in charge of commerce and agriculture, and on top of the local tax, they also levy a trade and agricultural tax...”

“Matters of the government do not interest me.” Diablo waved his hands horizontally. “Keep politics out of your squabbling.”

“I-I apologize. Essentially, the important people of the city are planning this feast, and it’s not related to the governor or Lady Laminitus. Therefore, they ask for your presence, as the greatest contributor and hero of this battle.”

Won’t they ask me to make a speech on top of a stage if I do go?

Just the thought alone made his spine feel like it had turned to ice.

“You intend to summon me to such a petty gathering?” Diablo glared at him.

“Yes, I thought you might say that... From what I know, you don’t like these sorts of things. Before, when the army of one hundred Fallen marched on the Bridge of Ulug, it was only said that they were ‘repelled with cooperation from

the Adventurer's Guild' and nothing else."

"Was it now?"

"I'm sorry. I just thought someone should at least inform you."

Sure enough...

He'd never go, but if they were to hold a celebratory feast without informing Diablo, the one who'd beaten the Demon Overlord, that would be infuriating in its own way. But Boris still came, knowing Diablo would refuse... The soldier had taken on this role.

"You never change, do you?"

"Ahaha... Well, seeing as I did inform you of the event, do take this, at least." Boris handed him an envelope. "It's an invitation."

"Hmph! I've no need of..."

"It includes the money, in coins, needed to cover your expenses."

"...I will accept it, in light of your efforts."

Diablo's group was constantly running out of money, Klem's hunger being the primary cause.

"I will report you won't be attending." Boris saluted. "Diablo... Our generation grew up on our fathers and grandfathers telling us the story of the hero Alan. But, from now on, I'm sure we'll be talking about the exploits of the hero Diablo. Seeing you fight with my own two eyes will be a memory I'll treasure for the rest of my life."

"Huh..." The sudden praise left Diablo speechless.

Boris left the room swiftly with a final, "Excuse me." Diablo fell back onto the bed, looking up at the ceiling. Before long, his eyes fluttered shut...

Chapter 4: The Lonesome One

“Diablo.”

Someone had called his name. *Who could it be?* he wondered. He thought it might be Shera, but another girl came to mind.

Rem, maybe?

“Diablo, please wake up.”

Yeah, that was definitely Rem’s voice just now. But what floated into his sight was...

“Eh?! “

It was, without a doubt, Rem. But what she was wearing wasn’t her usual Gemstone Gambeson, but something like a white wedding dress... Or rather, it was something that looked like one, but was far too transparent to be called as such. What she was wearing looked to be more like alluring lingerie.

Next to Rem was Shera, who was wearing a similar outfit. She leaned her chest on top of the bed, her body leaning toward Diablo.

“Diablo≡”

Wh-What are you...doing...?!

“Ooh... Aaah...”

His mouth couldn’t form words. His Demon Lord role play was the furthest thing from his mind at the moment.

“...This is all your fault, you know,” Rem whispered into his ear.

“That’s right, it’s all your fault, Diablo,” Shera added.

I’m responsible for this?!

Diablo wondered what exactly he could’ve done, but nothing in particular came to mind. It was this lack of confidence that made him develop a communication disorder in the first place. If he had to apologize for doing anything, being born into this world felt like the most probable answer. Looking

back on his life, everything seemed like a sequence of failures, regrets, setbacks...and escapism...

“Uuu...” Diablo scrambled, running away in a crawl.

He felt compelled to escape.

Why am I trying to run this desperately away from Rem and Shera dressed in transparent dresses?!

The reason— Suddenly, he felt as if he were floating through the air, and...

His head hit the floor with a *thud!*

Owing to his sturdy body it didn’t really hurt, but it was awfully embarrassing. When he opened his eyes, Diablo found himself on the floor next to his bed.

“I-It was just a dream...” Diablo sighed.

It really was odd seeing Rem and Shera dressed like that all of a sudden. The reason for that unusual sight and his own odd actions was clear: dreams were just like that sometimes. It wasn’t the first time he’d gone to sleep when he was too tired and had weird dreams.

What time is it right now?

It was still dark out, but he could hear singing from the main street. It seemed he hadn’t slept for more than an hour or two. Diablo could live just fine without many of modern Japan’s conveniences and technology, but having a watch handy would be nice.

Suddenly, there was a vigorous banging on the door, making Diablo jump. He stood up hurriedly from the floor. He couldn’t let out a panicked voice; his Demon Lord dignity wouldn’t allow it.

“What loud fool disturbs me?!”

“Diablo, it’s horrible!” Boris’s voice called out from behind the door.

“Persistent idiot!” Diablo shouted at him angrily. “I told you, I am *not* going to the feast!”

“It’s Miss Rem! She made an attempt on Lady Celestine’s life!”

Diablo couldn’t process what Boris had just said at first. His thoughts

grounded to a halt.

“Miss Rem visited the Mage’s Association earlier,” Boris continued, while Diablo remained quiet. “In the middle of giving Lady Celestine her report, she fired a magic attack at Lady Celestine!”

“Impossible!”

“I think so too, but there were many witnesses...”

“And Rem...?!”

“According to the reports, she’s been chased to the western walls.”

He was relieved to hear she was still alive, but this was still too early to be calm. Diablo put on his equipment.

“What about Celes?!” Diablo asked while fastening his cloak and putting on his boots.

“Miss Rem’s attack missed, and the guildmaster of the Adventurer’s Guild, who was also present, prevented any further attacks.”

The hell’s going on?!

Nothing made sense. Rem was always thankful to Celes, and went to make the report out of gratitude for giving her the freedom to act. Did the Mage’s Association try to capture her? But Rem wasn’t a Demon Lord’s container anymore. There was no reason for them to restrain her. And, if the Mage’s Association were the ones to initiate the attack, why do it in front of Celes?

With his staff in hand, Diablo left the room, Boris moving aside to let him through.

“Head to the ruins of the west gate. If she hasn’t moved away, she should still be on the walls near there.”

Just when Diablo was about to nod, a realization flashed in his mind.

“Boris, you said Rem fired off a magic attack.”

“Yes.”

“She summon anything?”

“It looked like elemental magic.”

Diablo felt as if his spine had turned to ice.

“Are you sure this is Rem we’re talking about? She’s a summoner! She can’t use elemental magic strong enough to kill someone!”

“Ah...aaah!” Boris’s face turned paler by the second.

“Report this to Rose and the others! I’ll go on ahead!”

Normally, this much of a ruckus would make everyone leave their rooms. But right now, Sasara was exhausted, and Rose was in a similar state of sleep after having been charged with magical energy, and needed repairs, too. As for Edelgard, she was brought to the brink of death in the last battle, so even a Fallen like her likely wasn’t in her prime. It’d be best not to rely on her at the moment.

Diablo rushed out of the inn.

Rem, what’s happening to you?!

†

Boris’s information was accurate. As Diablo faced north from the ruins of the western gate, he found a tumultuous, grave atmosphere fill the scene. Soldiers and curious passersby had formed a ring. They were holding lit torches, lighting the place up like the plaza. Their gazes were fixed upward, at someone on top of the inclined wall—a black-haired girl.

Rem.

There was no one but her on the bent wall. A row of soldiers was right below, but no one was trying to scale it. Standing in front of the soldiers were Laminitus and Sylvie.

“Surrender, Rem Galleu! You have nowhere to run!”

“Rem, just tell us what happened. We won’t treat you badly, I promise! Come on!”

Those two are the worst possible people to handle this...

Their respective allure and cuteness were things Diablo knew better than to

be fooled by. Laminitus and Sylvie were both hard-headed, and didn't shirk away from having to sacrifice others for the sake of their people. They were good people who abided by the law... People who put the law above everything else. Convincing them to let him take over the situation would be impossible. At worst, they'd deem Diablo as Rem's cooperator and have him apprehended.

"I guess...I'll have to tackle this from above."

He flowed magic into his SSR-rank boots, the Empty Sky's Gambol. His body was granted flight magic and levitated in the air and he swooped up to the top of the wall. A stir passed through the soldiers as they saw him. Perhaps the only reason he wasn't mistaken for a Fallen was because they knew Laminitus could use flight magic as well, and, fortunately enough, some of them saw Diablo fly earlier, too. No one dared fire a bullet at the man who'd defeated the Demon Overlord.

Diablo reached the top of the inclined wall. It was cracked, deformed, and on the verge of collapse.

"Rem!"

"...Huh?!" Rem's eyes widened in surprise.

Thankfully, or unfortunately, there was no mistaking it...she was Rem, the girl who'd been at his side from morning to nightfall for nearly a year now. He could tell it was her just from her gestures and atmosphere.

"...Diablo...you came."

"What happened? Speak."

Looking down made it clear why none of the soldiers were trying to scale the wall. It was wavering, ever so slightly. Shards were crumbling off it every other second. It was only a matter of time before this section of the wall collapsed on its own, be it now or in a few years' time. It was certain that, if a flock of armored soldiers were to rush their way up this wall, it would crumble at once. Diablo kept his flight magic active, and made sure to not apply his weight to it.

"You may not believe me..." Rem said with an agonized face.

"Oh?"

“...Right now...Modinaram is inside my body.”

“As I thought.” Diablo clicked his tongue.

“Huh...? Y-You believe me?!”

“Why did you assume I wouldn’t? I believed you when you said Krebskulm was sealed inside you, didn’t I?”

“Right, but... But I...attacked Celes...”

“I heard she’s fine. Now tell me, what happened at the Mage’s Association?”

Rem threw a glance at the ground. There was no movement among the soldiers. It seemed they’d decided to watch over Diablo’s actions for now. Laminitus, who stood at the lead, had a grave expression, however.

“...I was speaking to Celes in the Mage’s Association’s office,” Rem began. “Then my consciousness blanked out for a moment. It felt like I was falling asleep. My physical condition wasn’t good to begin with, so perhaps even without fighting, I’d grown fatigued—or so I thought.”

“Hmm.”

“...But, when I came to, there was a magic spear in my hand... A black one.”

“A Black Lance?”

“...I don’t know.” The girl shook her head. “I don’t have that sort of knowledge. But the spell was on the verge of activating. I diverted its target, so it wouldn’t hit Celes.”

“I see.”

“...I then realized, based on past experience, that there was a Demon Lord inside me. But this is the first time my body’s been manipulated like that.”

“Krebskulm was sealed, but Modinaram took refuge inside you. That may be the difference.”

This type of event had never happened in *Cross Reverie*.

Rem nodded. “...Krebskulm was supposed to revive if I died.”

“Right.”

“But I think...Modinaram awakens whenever I fall asleep.”

Why is it always Rem...?

The indignation against the unfairness of it all spurred up in Diablo. But he had to focus on finding a countermeasure first.

“Klem may know a way to solve this.”

She was a piece of the Demon Lord as well, and had knowledge from when she was crushed by God. She was knowledgeable about the other Demon Lords, too.

“...That’s, all...all good, but...I’m actually at my limit here.”

“What?!”

“...M-Modinaram’s consciousness keeps getting stronger.”

“Rem! Keep it together! You’re a skilled adventurer, aren’t you?”

“...I know. I have my dignity as well. I do not wish...to helplessly become someone’s...stepping stone...” She walked to the outer rim of the wall, and looked to the distance.

“...The Fallen...”

“What?”

“I’m sure...they knew Modinaram would revive. That’s why they stayed there.”

“That sounds likely.”

“...But I won’t let them have their way.”

“Of course we won’t. Leave the Demon Overlord to me.”

Rem suddenly smiled. There was no sign of agony in her face. It was a completely bright expression.

“...Thank you so much, Diablo... I’m truly happy I got to meet you one last time.”

Last time? What are you thinking, Rem?!

Rem clenched her teeth and flung her body beyond the outer rim of the walls

—

“Rem! Don’t die on me!” Diablo shouted.

The iron collar clasped around her reacted to his order. The Enslavement Collar. Rem, with her body leaning toward the outer rim of the walls, suddenly stiffened like a statue.

I did it...

“...Why...” Tears trailed down from her eyes. “Why won’t you let me die, Diablo?! I don’t... I don’t want to become your enemy...”

“I am the Demon Lord Diablo! No matter what tries to control you, I will destroy it without mercy!”

“Kya!” Rem’s limbs suddenly relaxed. It looked like she may collapse, but she remained suspended diagonally, as if she were held up by strings, completely unmoving. Black mist began enveloping her body, changing her shape. Horn-like appendages grew out the sides of her head, and her nails extended, becoming as sharp as knives. What looked like scales even grew over her skin at spots. It resembled Klem’s awakened form somewhat. She looked like a Demon Lord...

Two sets of four purplish-black wings sprung out from Rem’s transformed back. They looked like shapeless, indistinct smoke figures. From one of the wings surfaced the shape of a black goat’s head.

Modinaram!

The shape of its face opened its mouth to speak.

“Aaah... Fool that you are. Drowning in emotion, you have squandered your final opportunity to dispose of me...”

†

Diablo clutched his staff tightly. Rem had been taken over by Modinaram. His choice to stop her may have been a mistaken one...but he had no qualms.

“You will deeply regret laying a hand on my belongings, Modinaram. I will defeat you and take back Rem!”

“Nay. I have transcended completion.”

“Hm?”

“My defeat in our last battle stems from two causes. The first is a gap in knowledge. I knew not of you, while you were familiar with me and the other Demon Lords.”

True enough, that had decided the fight. Diablo knew most of Modinaram’s tactics already. These were all attacks the Demon Lords used in *Cross Reverie*, so Diablo knew them. Conversely, Modinaram didn’t know Diablo had magic reflection. The Fallen Eulerex was on the opposing side, so he likely could have provided Modinaram with that information, but it seemed strength gave way to conceit in this case and they didn’t exchange their knowledge. Nobody would make a walkthrough for a game that takes no skill to beat, leading to information being withheld.

“But I have gained such knowledge now. I know much of you, thanks to this pantherian...”

“Why Rem? If you wanted to take over someone, why do something so roundabout when you could have tried to take over me? Not that I’m the type of Demon Lord that would yield to you!”

“This pantherian is a vessel...” The wings at Rem’s back wavered. *“A rare existence capable of containing even a Demon Lord. The fact she was vacant was most favorable for me.”*

A long time ago, God sealed Krebskulm within Rem’s bloodline. Whether he gave them the ability to act as vessels or picked them for already being so was something Diablo didn’t know. Whatever the case, removing Krebskulm from within Rem left a vacancy within her. By going inside, Modinaram was able to access her memories and learn Diablo’s fighting style. Diablo couldn’t hope for it to repeat the blunder of launching grand magic at him again.

“The second cause for my defeat was the difference in our underlings. No arrogant Fallen would stand ahead of the Demon Overlord. We are unlike the races.”

“Hmph... Are you saying there are no cowardly soldiers under a superior commander?”

It was said in an attempt to agitate, but simply put, it was a difference in culture. The Fallen watched over the battle out of belief that helping would be shameful.

“According to this pantherian’s memories...” Rem pointed at herself. *“You have no subordinates at your side now.”*

“Heh! Fool. I don’t need help from my underlings to destroy you.”

Diablo didn’t let his bravado slip for even a moment, but there was no mistaking the fact that Sasara and Rose serving as vanguards played a great role in his last battle with Modinaram.

This’ll be tough...

Until now, Diablo had vast amounts of information on his enemies. His knowledge from *Cross Reverie* acted like intelligence that he’d gathered and gave him the upper hand. But now Modinaram had information on him, too. And it wasn’t as simple as an animal or a child; it was intelligent.

Up until now there were a few times when an opponent’s crafty schemes got the better of Diablo, like with Galford and the paladin captain Batutta... Diablo saw time and time again how it wasn’t enemies with high stats, but rather those that used their heads who proved to be true challenges.

“There is no defeating me,” Modinaram asserted. *“I shall emerge victorious, without fail!”*

Rem extended her hand, and a black broadsword appeared in it: the Godslayer sword. Modinaram intended to keep this a melee fight; a natural choice, given that he now knew of Diablo’s magic reflection.

But while Diablo spoke with Modinaram, he’d already planned three steps ahead in the battle.

“I order you, in the name of the Demon Lord Diablo! Do not move, Rem!”

The Enslavement Collar reacted again. While still poised with the broadsword, her body stiffened.

“Gah... What is this?!” Modinaram, who tried to manipulate Rem’s body to attack Diablo, cried out in surprise.

Good! Even the Demon Overlord can't easily dispel an Enslavement Collar.

Rem's body was under Diablo's control. He didn't want to give her orders, but if someone else was manipulating her, then the situation was dire. To top it off, Diablo looked down on it with as much ridicule as he could.

"Heheheh! You may have gained some knowledge, but that doesn't matter if you're simply a goat's head who doesn't know how to properly employ it! Rem is enslaved to me. So long as you inhabit that body, you, too, are my thrall!"

"Guh... Such intense force of compulsion!"

"Stay still, Rem. I'll crush those unsightly wings before you know it."

Diablo clenched his right fist.

Do I use spells that work by contact? No, both Matoi Izuna and Absolute Zero won't work on just the wings; they'll damage Rem, who's attached to them, too. Maybe Darkness Cannon, then? It fires a shell with powerful penetrating power. I'll fire it in close range so it doesn't hit Rem!

Promptly deciding on a strategy, Diablo rushed forward. As he closed in on his opponent, the wings behind her changed shape, forming a giant fist.

"Certain victory is mine!"

Rem's body couldn't act because of the Enslavement Collar, but Modinaram, who was currently outside her body, obviously retaliated. The massive fist extending from the wings was flung at Diablo.

"Of course you'd do that! You've only the one choice!"

Foreseeing this turn of events, Diablo easily avoided the attack, though it still managed to skim against his shoulder. Just that caused an impact which made Diablo feel like his whole upper half was blown away. From Modinaram's perspective, this was just a feint, but it was nearly a fatal blow for Diablo. It felt like a truck had just crashed against him.

Can I guard against this with my current gear? Can the Tonnerre Empereur: Libre deflect this?

It wasn't impossible, but a failure would cost him his life. The risk was too great.

A black monster now appeared from Rem's back. It had a goat's head and a gorilla's bulky, muscular body, but it felt somewhat different from the form Diablo had fought earlier. Its outline was unsettled, and it felt like smoke, or some sort of aura. Was it a lump of magical energy? Or maybe some type of spiritual body?

Diablo scoured his memory, trying to recall if monsters of that type ever appeared in *Cross Reverie*. If nothing else, a Demon Lord formed by fog was never implemented in the game. There were a few monsters of indeterminate form where physical attacks may have been useful when they had physical forms, but, for the most part, they were susceptible to magic.

I guess I should try to expose its properties by using simple attacks.

"Lightning Arrow!"

He fired a bullet of light. It didn't have enough firepower to damage the Demon Overlord, but it was swift and accurate. The bullet punched the fog, forcing it to disperse.

"I see..." The black goat head narrowed its eyes. *"You refuse to harm this child of the races... Hence, you will not use grand magic."*

"I've got so much to consider in this fight."

"Victory is all that is supreme!"

"That's the only thing I'll agree with you on!"

Diablo kicked the ground to make distance between them, then nodded. "There are three things you're wrong about, Modinaram..."

Diablo couldn't read the goat head's mood from its expression and silence, but his opponent stopped moving.

"You thought that by taking over Rem, you'd stop me from using grand magic..." He raised one finger. "But I never needed something that exaggerated to defeat you in the first place."

"Nonsense..."

"The second mistake you made was thinking Rem knew my entire fighting style."

“Hmm?!”

“I’ve got this up my sleeve, too!”

Diablo pulled a tube from his pouch, with a hint of shame. Before he used it, he clenched his teeth.

“Kuh... To think...I’d need to rely on something like this!”

A gacha-exclusive item I had to whale for!

The tube made a popping sound and a globe of light shot up from it, illuminating the area in a blueish luminescence. The goat head tilted curiously.

“Illumination?”

“Yes, Rem wouldn’t know about this. Naturally.”

It was an extremely rare SSR item even in the game, exclusive to the gacha loot box, that had a 3% chance of netting the player a SSR item. In addition, there were over 300 SSR items in the gacha pool. Diablo didn’t even want to calculate the probability of getting a specific one.

The sphere lit up the sky above them like a moon.

“Modinaram...you were the one to use such a foul trick of manipulating Rem first. You won’t dare call me a coward for this, will you? Though I’d laugh at you if you did.”

“This light, what manner of power is it?!”

“Heheheh... I’ll tell you. This is called a Customize Bomb. It’s a magical tool that applies a certain condition on this area.”

“Certain, condition?!”

“Listen carefully, for the condition is Physical Restrictor! As of now, all physical attacks in this area will be weakened by 90%!”

Diablo couldn’t read Modinaram’s expression, but he could tell how disturbed it was from its stupefied silence.

“And!” Diablo broke into a run. “Your third mistake was to think you could ever win against me!”

Diablo was once again within arm's reach of Modinaram and Rem.

"Oooooh!" Modinaram swung its massive fist at Diablo, howling.

Diablo flung his right fist against the massive, rock-like fist bearing down on him.

"Volcano Cannon!"

Magical, seething magma erupted from his right hand as the two fists clashed together. In a normal environment, Modinaram's fist may have been burned, but its overwhelming power would blow away the magma and crush Diablo's upper body. Right now, however, its power was greatly limited.

"Heheheh.... Didn't you hear me, Modinaram? All physical attacks have been diminished. Is punching all you're good for? Why not fire a spell or two? I'll still manage to reflect even those!"

"Guuuh... Diablooooooo!"

Modinaram started pushing back.

Even when reduced to ten percent, he's still this strong!

But now he could finish it!

"Rock Cann... Ah?!"

The enemy suddenly disappeared from his sight, leaving Diablo confused for a moment. Modinaram shouldn't have been able to move this quickly right now. It was using Rem's legs, after all, and she was ordered not to move.

For a moment, Diablo felt like he was falling. Then, a rumbling that felt like an earthquake reached his ears.

The walls are collapsing?!

†

Diablo was lucky the Empty Sky's Gambol's effect was still activated, granting him flight magic so he wouldn't be caught up in the rubble. He landed on the ground on the outer side of the collapsed walls. Roughly a hundred meters of the walls' length collapsed, and he could hear people in town going into a panic.

Flapping its black wings, Modinaram landed, along with Rem's body. She was

still being manipulated. Emerging from the wings at her back was the goat-head in gorilla form.

There're scores of Fallen watching over the battle from the west. If it flies there, things could get annoying...

Diablo couldn't tell if it was because of its current form or the Physical Restrictor's effect at play, but its flight speed was slow at the moment. They were back to square one, but the situation hadn't changed. He had to close the distance once again, and this time, for sure...

Diablo clenched his fists.

"You..." Modinaram growled.

"Hm?"

"I am! The Demon Overlord! Absorber of all other Demon Lords! The greatest Demon Lord, on the cusp of becoming the Primeval Demon Lord! Wielder of the greatest magic, and the greatest physical strength! And yet...a mere child of races! A mere child of the races!*"*

Its massive hands cradled its small goat head, and a squelching sound reached Diablo's ears. The head was becoming distorted.

"Why?!" Modinaram screamed with a bloodcurdling voice. *"How can the Demon Overlord be inferior?! Whyyyyyy?!"*

"Your preparations were too lacking."

"Giyaaaaaah?! Diablooo...ooo... Gah?! Gaaaaaa? Gugugu... Ooh?!"

The goat head tore apart, sending a splatter of blood onto the surrounding surfaces. Its head was crushed by its own massive hands.

Did he commit suicide?!

Diablo still had a bad feeling about this, and most of all, Rem's consciousness hadn't yet returned.

Crap, what now?! Shouldn't she come to her senses by now?!

As he took a step toward Rem's body, a black serpent suddenly lashed out against him.

“Uuu?!” He wasn’t sure what spell to cast in the spur of the moment.

Rem was in the line of fire. If the spell penetrated the serpent, it may damage her. But, if it was too weak, it would be able to block the attack...

Lightning fell down from above, piercing the serpent, and a girl’s loud voice echoed in Diablo’s ears.

“Step back, Diablo! You’ll get caught up!”

“Klem?!”

And leave Rem behind?!

Despite that, he had to believe in Klem right now. He flew back to the town, only to see a moment later that his judgment was correct.

Countless black serpents flowed out of Rem in droves, eventually blotting her out of sight.

“What’s that?!”

“The Demon Lord of Madness, Modinaram, has shown its true nature!” Klem shouted, running over to him with Shera in tow.

“What about Rem?!” Shera asked. “What happened to Rem?!”

“Stay calm, Shera! Modinaram is inside her body, so she should be fine. If its vessel were to be destroyed before it prepared its resurrection, even a Demon lord would be obliterated.”

“I don’t understand a word you’re saying, Klem!”

“Aaah. If Rem dies, so will Modinaram. It’s keeping her alive.”

“Huh...? So Rem has to die if we want to defeat Modinaram?”

“I won’t let that happen!” Klem shook her head. “This Demon Lord will drag Modinaram out of Rem’s body!”

“Yay!”

“...But Modinaram knows that. Even after using Rem as leverage, it couldn’t beat Diablo, so now its vessel is only a weakness. So it did that, seeking out its next form.”

“What is it doing, Klem?”

“Modinaram’s gathering up magical energy to gain a body powerful enough to defeat you, even if it knows doing that will bring about its destruction!”

“What do you mean? Don’t Demon Lords produce endless amounts of magical energy?”

“Yes, our supply is endless so long as we’re intact! But Modinaram lost its body and fled inside Rem, and its remaining magical energy wasn’t enough to beat you.”

So it was in that kind of state...

“What do you mean by gathering up magical energy?”

“It’s started.” Klem pointed. “Look for yourself and you’ll understand.”

The countless serpents were charging at the Fallen. Diablo could hear screaming, shouting, and explosions from spells and martial arts, but there was no stopping the black serpents. They were devouring the Fallen and magical beasts one after another.

“Ugh...” Shera clasped a hand over her mouth.

Diablo felt a chill run down his spine. “So that magical energy...was the Fallen?”

“You’re lucky, you know? The races don’t have that much magical energy, so it went in that direction instead.”

That many Fallen and magical beasts most likely had a staggering amount of magical energy to draw from...

†

When the black serpents appeared, Eulerex, the commander-in-chief, was the first to fly away.

“This is bad! Retreat! Run!” the Fallen Priest, Lazpuras, called out.

“Run away, Grand Turtle.” Manuela, the magical beast user, tapped on the shell beneath her feet.

“There’s no saving this turtle anymore!” Lazpuras grabbed Manuela under her

armpits and ran away, as if sliding down its shell.

Most of the Fallen and magical beasts didn't run away, but simply stood there, watching as things unfolded. Their individual fighting strength was high, so they were lacking in fear and caution.

They'll be wiped out.

Lazpuras kept running. The larger Fallen that stood in the vanguard were the first to be devoured by the black serpents.

"Demon Overlord?! Why...?!" the other Fallen cried out as they were the next prey in line.

Then came the magical beasts' turn.

"Why is the Demon Overlord doing this?!" Manuela asked, her face pale.

Lazpuras ran, desperately carrying her heavy body along.

"That's not the Demon Overlord anymore! It's nothing but a venomous snake that hungers for magical energy!"

"How can you say something so blasphemous! Aren't you a priest?!"

"You can lecture me all you want once we get away from here with our lives intact!"

His fat, frog belly slapped against his legs loudly as he ran. Not far from there, the serpents were feasting on the Fallen and magical beasts. And just as he was about to flee into the forest...

A black shadow was cast over Lazpuras's head.

"Ah..."

A serpent.

†

"Look, it changed form again!" Shera raised her voice.

"Yes! It looks like this is the final form Modinaram picked!" Klem said with an excited breath.

It was a castle, one that Diablo had seen once before.

“...The Demon Lord’s castle.”

The real one was much larger, though. In the game, the Demon Lord’s castle even dwarfed the citadel city of Faltra. That was natural; it only made sense for a final dungeon to be larger than a city encountered in the middle of the story. It had several spear-like spires as its towers, and was surrounded by high walls. The front gates would open with an ominous creaking.

“It’s probably beckoning you, Diablo,” Klem said.

“Hmm...”

“Modinaram thinks it can beat you inside there... No, it probably already lost all traces of thought. All it wants is to fight you now.”

“Is Rem inside?”

“She is. I can tell from her scent. I know it well, since I’ve been with her for so long.”

It was then that people from the city started coming out. The walls were reduced to rubble anyway, so there wasn’t much of a clear border between the city and the plains at this point.

“Hiya, Diablo,” Sylvie said. “This has become a real mess, huh?”

“What is that castle?” Laminitus showed up at her side. “When did it show up?”

“That’s what’s left of the Demon Overlord Modinaram.”

Laminitus didn’t look like she believed Diablo’s explanation, but she didn’t deny it, either.

“That’s a lump of magical energy, right?” Sylvie asked. “Can it maintain that for long without a body? I sure would like to hear a real Demon Lord’s opinion...”

Diablo wondered about how this was an implicit way of saying that there was a “fake Demon Lord” present, but didn’t comment on the matter.

“Right!” Klem nodded. “This is just it dispersing the magical energy it consumed from the Fallen! It’ll probably fade away by tomorrow morning.”

“I knew it!”

“But...if we just wait for that to happen on its own, this city won’t get away unscathed, either.”

“Ah, yeah, knew that, too.” Sylvie scratched her head.

Looking closely, the Demon Lord’s castle was still spouting out black serpents. It was also gradually moving closer.

“At that speed, it’ll come in contact with Faltra in an hour,” Laminitus said, glaring at the castle. “I don’t know how fast those black snakes can extend, but if they have the same range as a magi gun, they’ll be inside the city within half that.”

She was a magi gunner who commanded sand ships, so her ability to measure such things purely by sight was trustworthy. Sadly, there was no leisure for them to watch over the rising of the sun now. Laminitus began giving orders to the regional knights behind her.

“Move the civilians to the east gate, with priority on the injured! If anyone wants to flee to the capital, let them. We don’t have any soldiers to escort them and help with evacuation. Everyone else, guard this place with your lives!”

“Yes, ma’am!”

“You’re gonna fight that thing?!” Sylvie asked, her eyes round with surprise. “That’s the Demon Overlord after it gobbled up the whole Demon Lord’s army!”

“It doesn’t matter who the enemy is...six of the eight barrier towers are either intact or repairable. If it’s just two towers, we can set up temporary ones within three days. The Mage’s Association’s central power is intact as well. We can’t afford to lose Faltra if we’re to protect the territories of the races! If this town is broken through, the Fallen will be free to attack the other cities even without the Demon Overlord. Can you guarantee there are no Fallen left in the rear guard?”

“Mmm... There probably are, to be fair.” There were probably some cautious Fallen that hadn’t stepped to the forefront, biding their time.

Adventurers and soldiers stood to defend the city. As the regional knights ran

to and fro in a panic, someone else ran over to them.

“Rose, Edelgard!” Shera waved at them.

†

“Rose apologizes earnestly.” Rose bowed her head deeply in front of Diablo. “Master, punish Rose however Master sees fit. To think Rose would sleep slothfully while Master is engaged in mortal combat...”

“It’s fine, you needed that rest. What about Sasara?”

“Rose could not rouse her despite Rose’s best efforts.”

Is she for real?!

An awkward atmosphere fell over them. Even during a fight for the survival of the races, bedtime was bedtime? Really?!

It was then Diablo had considered something: God’s chosen High Priest, Lumachina, had a unique penalty that didn’t allow her to use her healing miracles on herself. So maybe...

“No, I doubt it... Well, I guess there’s no point in forcing her awake. A sword is only sharp if you maintain it well-whetted. If she needs that sleep, let her.”

“As Master wishes.”

On the other hand, Edelgard gazed at the Demon Lord’s castle with mixed feelings.

“What is it?”

“Many, friends...” the Fallen girl groaned at Klem’s question. “All gone...”

“Ah, right. You were one of the Demon Lord’s castle’s Fallen, too, originally.”

“Yes... But... Eeeh... Mmm...” Edelgard seemed to be searching for the words. She was always bad at talking, so no one rushed her, until eventually a single word escaped her lips.

“Regret?”

“Yes...that’s right.” Klem closed her eyes at Edelgard’s whisper, and the both of them fell quiet for a moment.

But then Klem clapped her hands with enthusiasm. “All right! Enough with the chitchat. Diablo. You have to decide! What do you intend to do?!”

Diablo looked over everyone present. His gaze passed over Shera, Klem, Edelgard, Rose, Sylvie, Laminitus...then settled on the Demon Lord’s castle.

Rem.

“It’s obvious! I’ll go and take back what is rightfully mine! Modinaram desires to face me one last time as well.”

Klem smirked. “Words worthy of this Demon Lord’s master. That thing will stop if you destroy its core, anyway. Go and finish it off!”

“You’re not going, Klem?” Shera tilted her head curiously. “Weren’t we going to save Rem together?”

“I’ll go alone.”

Diablo realized Modinaram’s strength well enough. In all likelihood, the Physical Restrictor didn’t have any effect within the castle’s bounds, since the Customize Bomb’s light didn’t reach it. If a fight broke out like earlier, Diablo couldn’t guarantee he’d be able to protect those around him.

“Physical attacks are weakened in the area right now.” Diablo pointed up. “If there are any people who use spears or swords, enchant them so they do magical damage.”

In fact, had Modinaram realized this, Diablo may have had to come up with another strategy. But it seemed Modinaram’s strength was so high it never bothered to think any deeper.

“That’s crazy, Diablo! Most soldiers and adventurers rely on physical attacks.” Sylvie frowned. “And you say ‘enchant their weapons’... I can only manage just a few at once, you know!”

“Hmm.”

Diablo hadn’t planned for that. He never did check too deeply about how magic enchantment worked in this world. He never had much of a reason to care, since his Demon Lord’s Ring would reflect any enchantments applied to him. But this was a problem. With most of their fighting forces weakened like

this, would the troops of Faltra be able to stave off the black serpents?

“Allow me to take over the role of enchanting.”

A voice spoke from behind them. Turning around, Diablo saw a group of regional knights and sorcerers approaching. The party swiftly parted to the sides, revealing a beautiful woman standing there with a smile and a long staff in hand.

“It has been a long time since we last met, Diablo.”

“Celes?!”

Some of the mages furrowed their brows at Diablo referring to her by a nickname.

“I’ve received a report on the situation.” Galford was standing at her side. “Leave this place to us... The races are still at risk. If that fake Demon Lord’s castle isn’t stopped, we will have all but lost.”

“You talk a big game, Galford...but will you really be of help here?”

“Would you care to test me?” Galford’s menacing aura hadn’t diminished in the slightest.

His lost arm was back to normal now. Despite being so grievously wounded, he was back in action in less than half a day! This was the strength of an experienced war hero.

“Diablo,” Celes cut into their conversation.

“Hm?”

“I will...do my best.”

“Ah, yes, hmm... Yes, help these weaklings live through this.”

Her calm, sluggish words seemed to pacify the tense atmosphere. In this situation, that was both good and bad.

“Please, Diablo...” Celes said imploringly. “You have to save Rem!”

“Are you serious? Didn’t Rem try to kill you?”

“Rem would never do that seriously. That was the Demon Overlord. That girl

is a responsible, persistent...lonesome child. I've always wanted to see her be set free, in the truest sense of the word."

Despite being a sorcerer, Celes's words felt like a prayer directed at God. But that went without saying.

Diablo pulled out his staff and said, "Leave everything to me."

Chapter 5: Going All Out

Taking to the skies with his flight magic, Diablo approached the Demon Lord's castle from above. Black serpents slithered out of the the castle's windows, writhing as they moved. Diablo thought Modinaram was inviting him inside, given it had opened the gates for him, but it seemed things weren't going to be quite so easy. The serpents lashed out at him, one after the other.

"Do not get in my way! Explosion!" Diablo unleashed his magic.

Judging from their fight with the Fallen, Diablo knew the serpents' individual power levels. Each serpent was roughly the strength of a large-type Fallen, so while low level magic wouldn't defeat them, it would still allow him to force an opening. Firing a powerful spell would wipe them out with one hit, but it would also leave him open. When attacked from all directions at once, it was essential for Diablo to keep dodging and only fire the most minimal amount of attacks necessary to advance.

His desire to save Rem was strong. Everyone else encouraged him, and emotions seethed in his chest. But while he was charging full force, Diablo's mind was rapidly growing colder. He'd kept track of the serpents' vigorous writhing and fired spells at the exact, most optimal angles. Sometimes circumventing them, sometimes attacking them forcefully...

"I'm through!"

Diablo burst through the web of black serpents, as if he'd disentangled them, and found himself in front of what remained of Modinaram: the false Demon Lord's castle. A single, massive black serpent stood in his way, as if that itself were the gate. It was large enough to swallow not just someone of the races, but even a giant whole. Its mouth was lined with blade-like fangs.

Gaaaaaah!

"I'll blow you to dust! Flare Burst!"

Diablo swung his staff, the Tonnerre Empereur. A sequence of explosions emanated from within the black serpent's body, blowing it up from within. Just

like the Fallen, the serpent was reduced to particles of light and disappeared.

It was fairly strong...

Rose and Klem could probably beat it easily, as could Laminitus, but it was probably too much of a burden for Shera and Edelgard to fight one-on-one. He couldn't judge when it came to Sylvie, though, and wasn't sure about Galford, either, since that governor had only just recovered from severe injuries. If the soldiers and adventurers were to fight it, Diablo could only see them suffering heavy casualties. He had to hurry and stop Modinaram before this Demon Lord's castle made contact with Faltra.

He passed through the open gates and stepped inside the false Demon Lord's castle. The air felt thick, with a stench reminiscent of an animal's breath. This castle was what remained of Modinaram, which meant Diablo was essentially traveling inside its body.

"Light!" He cast an illuminating spell a few steps in. The surroundings lit up, revealing a perfectly level corridor leading straight ahead. The cold walls were covered by curtains, but there couldn't have been windows here, which meant they were hiding something.

The curtains stirred.

Is the wind blowing?

That couldn't be...

As the curtains flapped away, a group of rhinoceros beetles, larger than adult men, lunged out from them. Diablo fired a spell instinctively, in what bordered on reflex. His habit of clicking a shortcut key whenever he was surprised manifested in this world as part of his incantation.

"Explosion!"

The beetles were blown away, disappearing into particles of light.

It's keeping magical beasts inside itself...?

If this were a normal dungeon, he'd have kept the enemies pinned down with magic as he progressed. But Diablo advanced carefully even as he hurried, so as to not involve Rem in his attack.

He kicked the door at the end of the corridor open, revealing an open space. A shadow stirred in its depths.

“Light!” Diablo illuminated the room with his light magic.

“Grrr...”

Before him stood a monster with a lion’s head and torso, eagle wings, and a snake for a tail.

“A chimera.” Diablo clicked his tongue. “He left an annoying monster here...”

This monster had a magic nullification barrier, and had impressive resistance to physical attacks as well. It was the type of monster Diablo wanted to avoid fighting wherever possible. But having it chase him around would only complicate things further.

“Hmph... So be it.” Diablo changed the Tonnerre Empereur to sword form. “I’ve trained as a warrior but haven’t put it to use in real combat yet. This is a good chance to test that.”

He was short on time, so he’d unleash his first attack at full force. The chimera roared and lunged at him as Diablo took position with his magic sword.

“Heat Sonic!”

He unleashed an eighty-strike combo martial art right off the bat, which was doubled by seven by the effect of his sword. Even the sturdy chimera was reduced to particles of light the moment the strikes landed. Diablo gazed at the magic sword in his hands with surprise.

I didn’t think I’d beat a chimera this easily!

It was a monster that had troubled him countless times in *Cross Reverie*, but now...

That said, in exchange for such massive offensive power, his stamina was greatly diminished. Unlike MP, SP regenerated naturally on its own with time...

“Nng...”

He could hear the sound of dry footsteps approaching from afar. Diablo smirked wryly.

Makes sense. There were a ton of black serpents, too.

Several chimeras appeared to surround him.

“Grrr, grrr, grrrrrr...”

Diablo tightened his grip on his sword. “I’m in a hurry, so I don’t have time to toy around with you fools. Come at me at once! I’ll cut you all down to ribbons!”

†

Diablo was able to recover with HP and MP potions, but the accumulated exhaustion was making his limbs sluggish.

Me, of all people... Am I really losing focus in the middle of the last boss’s dungeon?!

Using his body was gradually straining his nerves. Unlike the game, his life really was on the line. He’d been forced to consecutively face powerful opponents one after the other, more so than ever before, and he could feel he was being worn down.

Another door swung open, as if beckoning him inside.

A trap?

Even if it were, he had to keep going. The room he entered was so tall he had to look up to find the ceiling. Contrasting with the narrow corridors, this room was overwhelmingly spacious, making Diablo wonder if he’d walked for so long that he’d found himself outside again.

The ceiling was dome-shaped, and at its center were crystals extended downward, upside down. They were luminescent and lit up the room greatly. Directly beneath the crystals was a pale blue throne. The chill in the air reached all the way to Diablo; it was a throne of ice.

“Rem.”

She was seated atop that throne of frost. The horns on her head, the wings at her back, and those blade-like claws were all gone now. She’d even returned to her normal outfit, the metallic Enslavement Collar gleaming on her neck.

Her gaze was fixed on Diablo. He was filled with relief to find her still alive, and called her name again.

“Rem.”

“...Diablo.” Her faintly colored lips moved.

He felt the urge to rush to her side, but the fact that there was nothing to get in his way was all the more concerning. It was like a mouse trap with Rem being the cheese for the mousey Diablo.

Rem didn’t budge. Of course she wouldn’t; he’d given her an order not to do so earlier. There was something he had to ask her before he rescinded that order.

“Where’s Modinaram?”

“...He’s no longer within me.”

Was it true? Rem wouldn’t lie, but if she were being manipulated by Modinaram she could say anything.

“...Leave me behind,” she said with a sunken voice.

At first he thought he’d misheard her.

“Wh-What are you saying, Rem? This is no time for jokes.”

“...It definitely isn’t a joke. I’m just...all too useless. I’m an adventurer, but all I ever do is cause you trouble.”

“Don’t be foolish. I merely act as I wish. I’ve never acted to save you. I am a Demon Lord! Do not presume to know the meaning behind my actions!”

Diablo spoke with grand haughtiness, but couldn’t know how much she truly understood.

“Uuugh...” Rem wailed. “I’m too useless... I owe Celes so much, yet I placed even her life at risk...”

“It was Celes who was the first to plead for me to bring you back safely. If you’ve anything to tell her, you will tell her yourself when we return to town.”

“Shera, too... Compared to her, I...”

“Stop spouting nonsense.” Rem and Shera were close enough to promise each other that they’d run a café together.

“B-But...” Rem wrung out her voice. “In the end, you chose her, didn’t you?”

“*Chose* her?!”

“You became king of the elves...and m-married Shera!”

He’d found himself inadvertently taking a step back. He didn’t think she’d say that in this place... But, no, it was probably exactly because this was the situation they were in that she said it. Should he take Rem back to town even if he had to drag her? Would that truly save her?

Diablo took a deep breath and swallowed. “Ah... Rem... I understand what it is you’re trying to say. But I will correct you on one point. I will save you, and it matters not how useful or useless you may be.”

She silently awaited his next words with a terrified expression. Diablo then took out a certain item from his pouch: a silver ring. Rem’s eyes widened. Diablo’s heart was beating faster than it had in any battle today.

“A-Accept...this. No, p-please... No, I am a Demon Lord, so...”

Giving a ring while role playing a Demon Lord was impossible, but at the same time, forcing it on her felt wrong, too. Diablo pondered deeply on it and eventually elected to give it to Rem, taking it especially for her from the treasure vault. The event he received it from in *Cross Reverie* was meant for couples, so he naturally got two rings from it.

“Aaah! Take it, Rem!”

“...I’m so happy.” Rem’s eyes filled with tears.

“Huh? You are?” Diablo was taken aback by how honestly pleased she seemed. He felt himself becoming increasingly awkward.

“...But...” Rem shook her head. “I can’t. I have no way of proving Modinaram isn’t within me anymore.”

“Hm.” Diablo understood the danger behind it, and it was more than just him at risk here. What if he were to take Rem back to Faltra, and she turned out to be Modinaram? Not just that one city, but the entirety of the races would be

destroyed.

No, this is when I'm supposed to tell her, "I believe in you," walk up to her, and put the ring on her finger.

He shook his head.

But isn't that like a flag for a bad end where she pierces through my heart in the heat of the moment?!

Getting so drunk on romanticism he stopped thinking rationally and did something dangerous was unforgivable for a gamer! Diablo couldn't walk into a potential death scene without any proof it was safe. Prioritizing one's own emotions was shameful, especially when the lives of so many were riding on his shoulders. Defeating Modinaram, who'd become the Demon Lord's castle, was just as important as saving Rem.

He considered it carefully. Modinaram could peer inside Rem's memories, so it'd be able to answer any questions he posed. Any question it failed to answer would be one Rem didn't know the answer to in the first place either.

"Prove the Demon Lord isn't inside you."

Isn't that impossible? It's a devil's proof.

It was common sense in his old world that it wasn't possible to prove something didn't exist (though some people didn't understand that, sadly...). Demanding her to prove her own innocence would be doing the same thing a corrupted paladin might.

Maybe he should touch Rem and see her magical energy? That was dangerous if Modinaram was still lurking within her. If it were to attack the moment Diablo came within arm's reach, he wouldn't be able to block it.

Was the one he was speaking to right now really Rem, or was she being manipulated by Modinaram?

Ah! Diablo then realized.

Beginning with a spark of inspiration, his thoughts went deeper, as if tracing along a thin thread. He considered it from several perspectives, but it all seemed right.

“If I prove your innocence, Rem, would you go back with me?”

“...If you’re able to... I doubt it’s possible,” she replied with a grim tone.

“Very well!” Diablo smirked and spread out his hands. “Rem Galleu...I permit you to call forth a summon!”

“...You’re not ordering me to summon one, but...permitting me to?” Her eyes widened.

“Indeed. I’ve partially lifted my prior order forbidding you to move. If you’re the true Rem, summon something. You won’t be able to if Modinaram is controlling you, since it uses elemental magic.”

When Rem attacked Celes under Modinaram’s influence, she’d used elemental magic. Elemental magic and summoning magic were similar in the sense that they couldn’t be cast against the caster’s will. Even if someone were to control another’s body and throw a summoning crystal, the summon wouldn’t appear.

Rem rose from the throne of ice.

“...Brilliant, Diablo.”

She took a summon crystal out of her pouch and held it in her hand.

“I order you in the name of Rem Galleu—come forth, Iron Golem!”

She shattered the azure crystal against the floor, a gust of wind bursting from its fragments. A white fog filled the air then cleared, revealing a clumsy-looking, dark gray statue standing at her side.

“...I *am* Rem.” She patted the Iron Golem affectionately.

“So it seems... I rescind all my orders!”

The binding effect of the Enslavement Collar was lifted. She slowly walked across the floor, her expression laden with nervousness.

“...Diablo...can I truly believe your words from a moment ago?”

“I am the true Demon Lord! Never do I speak in jest!” There was no backing out now, no saying he was too nervous.

Rem stopped before him and presented her left hand. Her fingers trembled as

she stood there wordlessly, probably due to how overcome with emotion she was. Diablo also couldn’t restrain his own embarrassment as he took her left hand in his, and slipped the wedding ring he held in his right hand onto her finger.



†

A loud *bang!* emitted from the ceiling. Diablo wrapped his arms around Rem in a panic and covered her. A black orb descended to them along with the rubble. It had a black goat's head and a gorilla's body.

"Diaaaaaablooooooo!" it roared.

"Modinaram!"

It was as Klem had speculated; the madness in its voice greatly overshadowed any hint of intelligence. Even knowing it would disappear by tomorrow, it still absorbed its Fallen and magical beast underlings and assumed the Demon Lord's castle's form.

"Gaaaaaahaaaaaa!"

"'Madness,' eh?" Diablo brandished his staff.

The situation was far from favorable, though. He'd predicted as such, but the Customize Bomb's effect didn't extend inside the castle, and after absorbing so much magical energy, Modinaram was close to full strength. If he got too close, even a grazing blow would be fatal. He also had to fight while protecting Rem...

Can I win this? No... I have *to win this! If I don't beat it here, this false Demon Lord's castle won't stop its rampage!*

Diablo may have recovered his HP and MP, but the exhaustion still wore down on him, making him sleepy.

"You called yourself useless, did you not, Rem?"

"That's..."

"Hear me, and commit it to heart: Those without strength or natural talent must never flee from effort. The useless are only so because they struggle to the very end!"

Rem seemed shocked at first, then nodded with a smile. "Yes... That said, I've always been terrible at giving up."

"Good. Stay behind me."

"...Diablo, I don't have any proof to support this idea...but there's something

I'd like to check. Do you have an Elixir on you?"

"Of course I do, but why?"

Diablo took one out. It was a potion known as a divine medicine, capable of healing people at death's door, restoring one's MP to its entirety, and removing all negative status ailments. Rem didn't seem gravely injured, though.

She pointed at the enemy. "Use it on Modinaram."

"What?!"

"Gah?!" The goat-head's eyes widened, and it began shaking.

"...When Modinaram was within me and peered into my memories...I got a glimpse of its own memories as well. In one of those, I saw him fearing an Elixir."

"Fearing an Elixir? For what reason?!"

"...Madness is a status ailment. Therefore, an Elixir can cleanse it."

"Wh-What?!"

Modinaram had that kind of weakness? Countless players battled Modinaram in *Cross Reverie*, but not one of them was odd enough to use a super rare Elixir on a Demon Lord. If nothing else, that sort of information never existed on the walkthrough sites.

Holding an Elixir in his left hand, Diablo slowly closed his distance on the enemy.

"Hmph... How interesting. It's worth a shot!"

The result didn't need to be mentioned. Modinaram retreated, evidently afraid. With the exit to the dome-like room at his back, the goat-head's gorilla-like body was causing an uproar like an animal at a zoo.

"I will leave no openings," Diablo threatened. "I will show no mercy. I will destroy you, here and now!"

"Uugh... Uugh... Uugh..."

"Begone, Modinaram!"

“Gaah, gaah, gaaah!”

Clank! A mechanical noise echoed through the dome-like space. Symbols were etched onto the goat-head’s forehead.

“What?!” Diablo had a bad feeling about this.

“Those are numerals of the celestial alphabet...” Rem said with a concerned expression. “I believe that’s...nine, eight, seven...”

The etched numbers were changing rapidly, counting down at a pace of one every second. It was definitely a countdown!

“You!”

“Y-Y-Y-You shall meet...ruin...with me... Gyaha! Gyahahahaha!” The goat-head’s lips curled up in a nasty smirk.

“Yeah, sorry...that cliché’s overdone.”

“Aaah?!” Diablo had wrapped his right arm around Rem.

The numerals on Modinaram’s forehead were still changing, then its body turned into a flash of light.

†

Before the citadel city of Faltra’s western gate— “Hiyaa!” Shera fired an arrow, hitting a black serpent that quickly disappeared with a popping sound.

“Hmmhmm, well done, Shera!” Klem grinned at her.

Klem had bestowed more power on Shera’s bow before this battle started, as well as to her boots and garments. Shera was currently clad in what could be called a “Demon Lord Gear Set.” It was thanks to this that the area Shera and Klem were in charge of remained well-defended.

On the other hand...

Rose the magimatic maid was single-handedly grappling several black serpents. However, her magical energy, which was running low to begin with, was nearly depleted.

“Rose will complete the task Master has entrusted Rose with...even if Rose must sacrifice Rose’s body to do so!”

In contrast, it seemed as if every time she defeated the black serpents, they spawned back out in even greater numbers. The attacks were growing more and more savage the closer the castle approached. Galford and Laminitus were fighting bravely as well, with sword and magi-gun respectively in hand.

The places defended by everyone else, however, were on the verge of collapse. The soldiers were being devoured by the serpents, the adventurers were being pushed back, and screams were ringing out everywhere.

“Everyone, fight to the best of your ability!” Celes shouted, surrounded by sorcerers. “Just a little longer! Diablo will surely stop the castle!”

Those words were mere consolation—which made it all the more unbelievable when they became reality!

Edelgard glared at the castle, blood flowing from her head.

“Ah... Light?!”

An explosion spread out. A flash of light spilled from within the castle, fire erupting from the windows the serpents emanated from. Eventually, the whole castle was overcome in black flames. Everyone stood stupefied, gazing at the massive fireball that appeared before them.

“Where’s Diablo?!” Shera asked in a voice that bordered on a scream. “What happened to Diablo?! And Rem! Where are they?!”

No one could answer her question...

The black serpents caught fire, their charred corpses spreading all over the ground as they were reduced to dust with a sizzling sound. They then turned into particles of light and disappeared into the sky.

When the fire began dying down, Klem suddenly pointed at where the castle was previously.

“Look!”

†

At the epicenter of the explosion was Modinaram, lying down with only the upper half of its torso remaining. What remained of that was crumbling away, and it was only a matter of time until it would fade away completely.

A black orb was floating near it. The next moment, the fabric making up its surface turned into a cloak with a flapping sound.

“Ah!” Rem breathed out. Diablo felt just as suffocated, but held it in out of Demon-Lord-like dignity.

“Pheeew...”

“...Are you all right, Diablo?”: “What of you, Rem?”

“...Yes.” She smiled.

“Why?!” Modinaram’s teeth creaked as it lay on the ground. *“How?! Hooow?!”*

“Black Curtain.” Diablo pinched up his cloak. “Its effect is a several second long damage nullification. It protects its wearer from any and all damage during that time frame.”

In *Cross Reverie*, it defended all the wearer’s party members, but from what Diablo could tell from this usage, it could only protect up to three at most.

“...To think such a cloak could exist...” Rem said, evidently impressed. “It must be a very rare item.”

“No, the Black Curtain is only of SR rarity. You may find another if you look around well enough.”

Its effect was useful, but its stats were rather modest. Even if it did offer complete damage nullification, it only worked for three to five seconds, making its use unstable and highly situational. Diablo only equipped it when facing exaggerated enemies like Demon Lords.

You could only activate its effect once every three minutes in the game, but I wonder how long it would take in this world...?

Diablo stood near Modinaram’s dying body with an Elixir in hand. It had no more strength to resist.

“Can’t even be bothered to take refuge inside Rem anymore, can you? Begone.”

“Wait...are you sure you wish to...heal me?”

“Your bluff is ineffective, Modinaram. You should have said that before self-destructing.”

Diablo spilled the contents of the tube over it, like spilling boiling water over an ice sculpture.

“Aah! Aaah! Aaah! Disappearing! Fading! Aaah... Gaaaaaah!!!” Modinaram’s hoarse screaming echoed throughout the field.

And so the Demon Overlord Modinaram was no more...

Diablo dropped the empty tube into the hollow cavity left in its wake, and it lodged itself in the charred earth. It wasn’t much in the way of a grave marker, but...

He turned around, and Rem met his gaze. She affectionately pet her right hand’s ring finger, which now had a silver, unadorned ring on it.

“...Um, Diablo... Is it really all right for me to have this?”

“Y-Yes.” Her asking again made him embarrassed.

“...I’d like to hear you put it into words.” On the other hand, she rather easily asked him to do such a difficult task.

Ugh...

“Aah... Erm...” Diablo approached Rem and put his hands on her shoulders. “What I’m trying to say...is...”

“...Yes.” The short girl raised her chin and closed her eyes, her pantherian cat ears twitching.

Huh? Eh?

Diablo found himself stiffen.

Wh-What is with this situation?! What am I supposed to do here?!

It was then that Shera’s voice called for them from the direction of the town.

“Diablooo! Reeeeeem!”

It wasn’t just Shera who’d raised her voice; Klem, Rose, and the others were running to greet them as well.

“Shera! Klem!” Rem responded.

Yes. It’s finally over. Diablo crossed his arms and nodded deeply.

“Diablo!” Rem said with a grin, her tail waving to and fro.

“Hmm?”

“...I never know when to give up, so prepare yourself!”

Epilogue

Three days after the showdown with the Demon Overlord— The Fallen-repelling barrier had finally been restored. Galford declared the battle a victory, and the town erupted into cheers. Even after sunset, there was no sign of the excitement dying down. At that rate, it seemed like the festivities truly could last for a month.

That was simply how grave this battle was. Many lives were lost, but it was said that the survivors had a duty to live on for both themselves and those who were lost.

Diablo, however, interpreted that saying as, “Let’s laze around enough for both ourselves and those who were lost.”

At the Peace of Mind Inn - Hideout— Today was yet another day Diablo spent lying in bed. His HP, MP, and SP were all perfectly restored, and his fatigue was all gone. He simply spent the days lazing about for no particular reason.

Bless thee, mighty days of sloth!

Days where you didn’t have to do work were blessings. Diablo pondered how these days were what people lived for. A sweet drowsiness soon came over him, and he closed his eyes...

“Diablo.”

Someone had called his name.

Hm?

A feeling of déjà vu, having seen this once before, assailed him.

“Diablo, please wake up.” It was Rem’s voice.

He opened his eyes, and what greeted him— “Whaaaaaa?!”

It was, without a doubt, Rem. But what she was wearing was an outfit so daring it left little to the imagination. It was as white as a wedding dress, but her skin was more visible in it than any normal lingerie would enable one to see. She wasn’t quite nude, but that only drew the eyes to her more.

Shera was also present, snuggling up to him. She was even more dangerous because of her voluminous chest. Her impressive swellings jiggled and swayed within her see-through outfit. She was kneeling on the bed, approaching him slowly.

“Diablo≡”

“Wh-What are you doing?!”

Is this a dream?!

Shera’s hands crept onto Diablo’s lap. The realism of that sensation blew away any suspicion that this may be a dream. This was no hallucination or delusion.

“I heard you made Rem your wife, too, Diablo?”

“Uuu...?!”

He was actually planning on doing so more gradually, at the right time, after consulting Shera first. But, because of Modinaram, he had to give Rem the ring under such circumstances.

So this isn’t my fault!

“Polygamy isn’t accepted in Lyferia,” Rem whispered in his ear.

“Uuoh?!”

Cross Reverie’s marriage system didn’t support it either, come to think of it...

“But you’re the king of Greenwood, Diablo. Maybe it’s allowed there?”

“I wonder?” Shera tilted her head quizzically. “No one’s ever done it before, so I don’t know.”

“If anything, Diablo gets to decide if it’s possible or not. He is the king, after all.”

“Yep, you’re right. He’s the king.”

Diablo was filled with anxiety. Wouldn’t a king’s first order immediately after rising to the throne being “Polygamy is now permitted!” be too dark of a setting? What would the minister of internal affairs, Drango, and the mother queen say?

“It’s not like the law matters, anyway.” Shera threw back her golden locks.

It doesn’t?!

“...That’s true,” Rem agreed. “It doesn’t matter. Diablo, from what I hear, you haven’t done...erm...*that*, properly with Shera yet?”

“Aaah, huuh?” Diablo’s sight was swimming.

“And you said to leave everything to you,” Shera said, puffing her cheeks sulkily.

I’m sorry, for real.

“...And so, erm...” Rem mumbled, the blush not being limited to her cheeks but going all the way to her neck. “I thought it might be best if you...erm...include me...so we can form some...err, established facts... No, I mean, solidify this relationship properly. Such is my conclusion.”

Such was her conclusion, eh? Diablo had to doubt the integrity of her reasoning.

“Well, forget the complicated stuff, let’s just do it.” Shera leaned forward. “Let’s do it, and properly. So, what do we do?”

“...We start with a kiss.”

“Wow, you’re really savvy, Rem.”

“...For the sake of dispelling any doubts, I will point out I have no experience with this.”

Rem also placed her hands on Diablo’s shoulders. The touch of their soft, gentle hands completely bound Diablo’s freedom of movement.

They whispered into his ears.

“...This is all your fault, you know... I’ve been waiting for you, but you wouldn’t come to my room once these past three days.”

“That’s right, it’s all your fault, Diablo.” Shera nodded. “I never knew you didn’t actually do it properly.”

“I was... I am a busy man!”

Rolling around aimlessly in bed was serious business of the highest priority. In no way, shape, or form was he avoiding them because human relationships were a drag...

Looking to the left, his eyes met Rem's. Her cat ears were twitching. Looking to the right, Shera's breasts were blocking his field of vision.

I'm done for...

His rationality was, at least.

The two girls' lips drew toward Diablo's. Rem and Shera were breathing more heavily than usual, as their lips...

To be continued...

Afterword

Our anime adaptation has finally been decided! Rem, Shera, and Diablo will be moving and talking on the screen! I can only offer my deepest gratitude to you, my supporting readers, for making this a reality. Thank you so much!

To Takahiro Tsurusaki, who's helped me since the planning stages and handled illustrations. To my editor, Shouji. To Ooishi, the designer from Afterglow. To Naoto Fukuda, who's in charge of the manga adaptation. To the editorial departments in Kodansha and Sirius! And to everyone else involved!

You can check out the details on the official *How NOT to Summon a Demon Lord* anime website.

This project all started with a chat I had with Tsurusaki. There were few demi-human heroines in the light novel scene, and other-world stories all had to be web novels—that was the outlook at the time. We actually submitted the idea to several publishers, but they turned us down...until Shouji from Kodansha's light novel publishing graciously said, "It looks cool! Let's do it!" and accepted it, and we were able to put it out into the world.

The result has been such a resounding success that we, the creators, couldn't fathom, and with Fukuda's manga adaptation, our popularity grew even further. And now here we are, with an anime in production. This has been my goal since before I became an author, so I'm very happy. I'll keep putting my all into this work, so please continue supporting us.

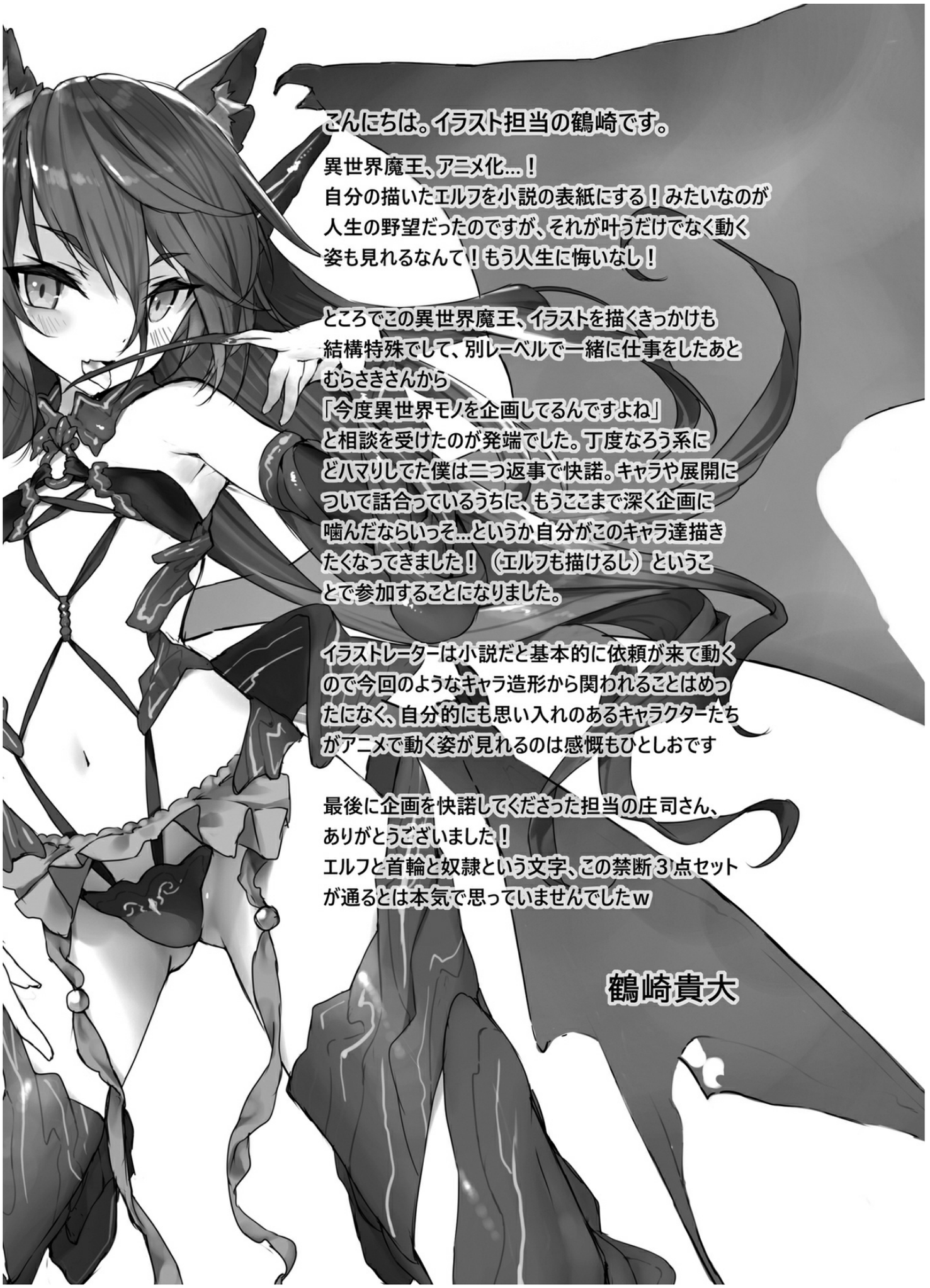
On to volume nine, then! The climax of the Demon Overlord arc and the greatest battle in the series yet. I've penned over fifty volumes of light novels, but I've never had to fit so many battle scenes one after another. For a moment there I was worried I may end up getting defeated!

Rem's relationship advanced as well. However, the rings Diablo gave are ones he gained in an event in the game. In other words, the rings Rem and Shera have on form a pair... The question of what that implies will be answered soon!

The next volume will be out soon! This volume was structured a bit differently from the ones before, and I enjoyed writing it. It had few slice of life scenes, and

the next volume will have tons and tons of them. Look forward to it!

Yukiya Murasaki



こんにちは。イラスト担当の鶴崎です。

異世界魔王、アニメ化…！
自分の描いたエルフを小説の表紙にする！みたいなのが
人生の野望だったのですが、それが叶うだけでなく動く
姿も見れるなんて！もう人生に悔いなし！

ところでこの異世界魔王、イラストを描くきっかけも
結構特殊でして、別レーベルで一緒に仕事をしたあと
むらさきさんから
「今度異世界モノを企画してるんですよね」
と相談を受けたのが発端でした。丁度なろう系に
どハマりしてた僕は二つ返事で快諾。キャラや展開に
ついて話合っているうちに、もうここまで深く企画に
噛んだならいっそ…というか自分がこのキャラ達描き
たくなってきました！（エルフも描けるし）というこ
とで参加することになりました。

イラストレーターは小説だと基本的に依頼が来て動く
ので今回のようなキャラ造形から関われることはめっ
たになく、自分的にも思い入れのあるキャラクターたち
がアニメで動く姿が見れるのは感慨もひとしおです

最後に企画を快諾してくださった担当の庄司さん、
ありがとうございました！
エルフと首輪と奴隷という文字、この禁断３点セット
が通るとは本気で思っていませんでしたｗ

鶴崎貴大

Illustrator’s Afterword

Hello, this Takahiro Tsurusaki, the illustrator!

How NOT to Summon a Demon Lord is getting an anime adaptation!

At first, I just wished to see an elf girl I drew on the cover of a novel! That was my lifelong dream, and now I get not only that, but I’ll be able to see it in motion! My life is complete!

By the way, the circumstances of how I got to draw for How NOT to Summon a Demon Lord are pretty unique too. It started one day when, after working with Yukiya Murasaki on something else, he said he wanted to consult with me about “an other world story I’m planning to write next.” I’d recently gotten hooked on “Narou”-type stories, so I said yes right away. We then began developing the characters and the setting and, before I knew it, I realized that since I was this involved with working on it, I may as well...or rather, it really made me want to draw those characters (plus I’d get to draw an elf!). So that’s the story of how I got involved with this project.

Illustrators usually draw for novels on demand, so it’s not often one is this deeply involved with the character creation. That’s why seeing these characters, which I’ve become this attached to, moving in animation is a very emotional experience.

Lastly, I’d like to extend my thanks to the editor in charge, Shouji. Thank you so much! I never thought I’d get to chance to line up three forbidden words like “elf”, “collar” and “slave” in the same sentence. lol

-Takahiro Tsurusaki

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How NOT to Summon a Demon Lord: Volume 9

by Yukiya Murasaki

Translated by ZackZeal

Edited by Kris Swanson

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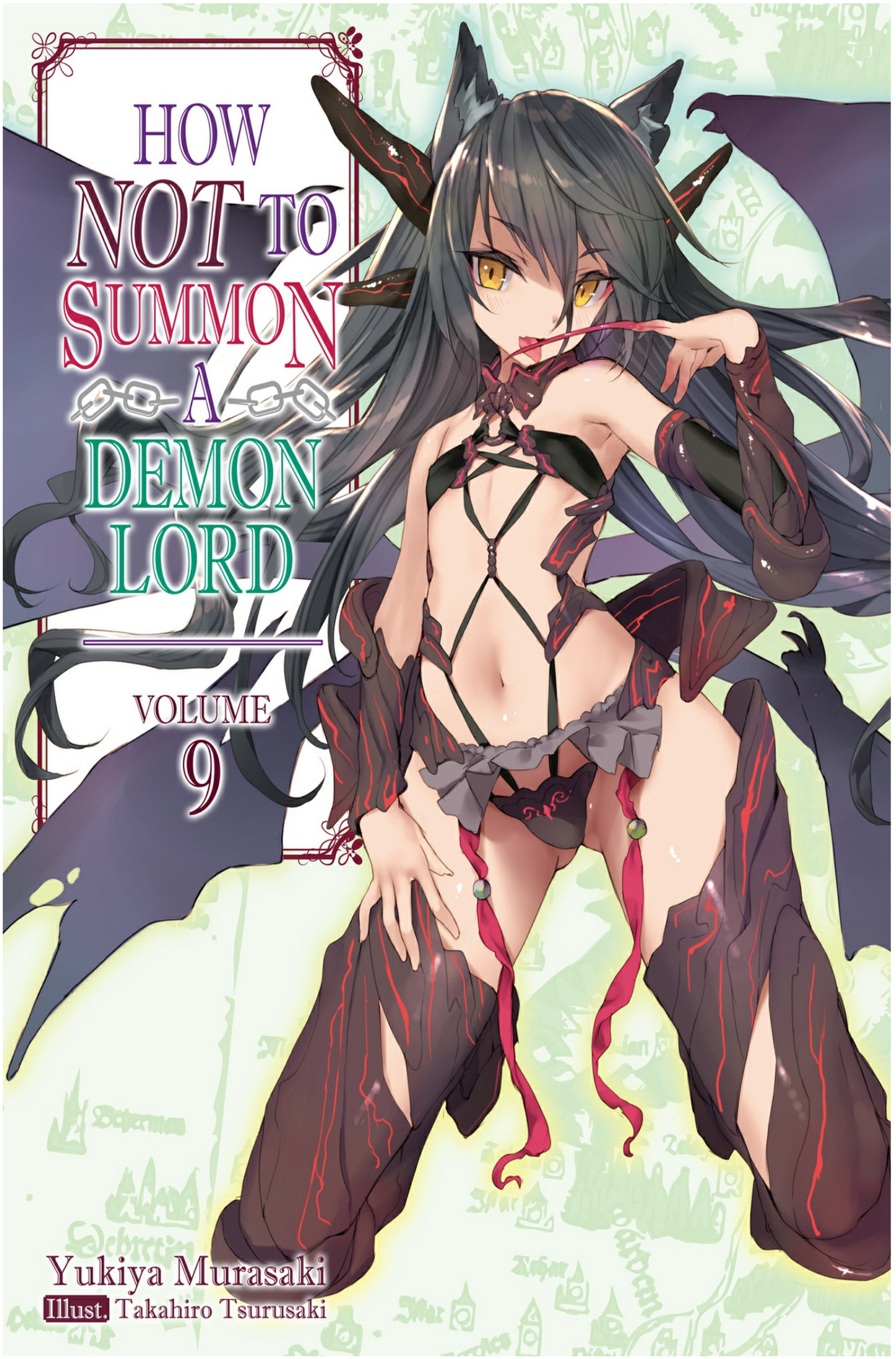
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