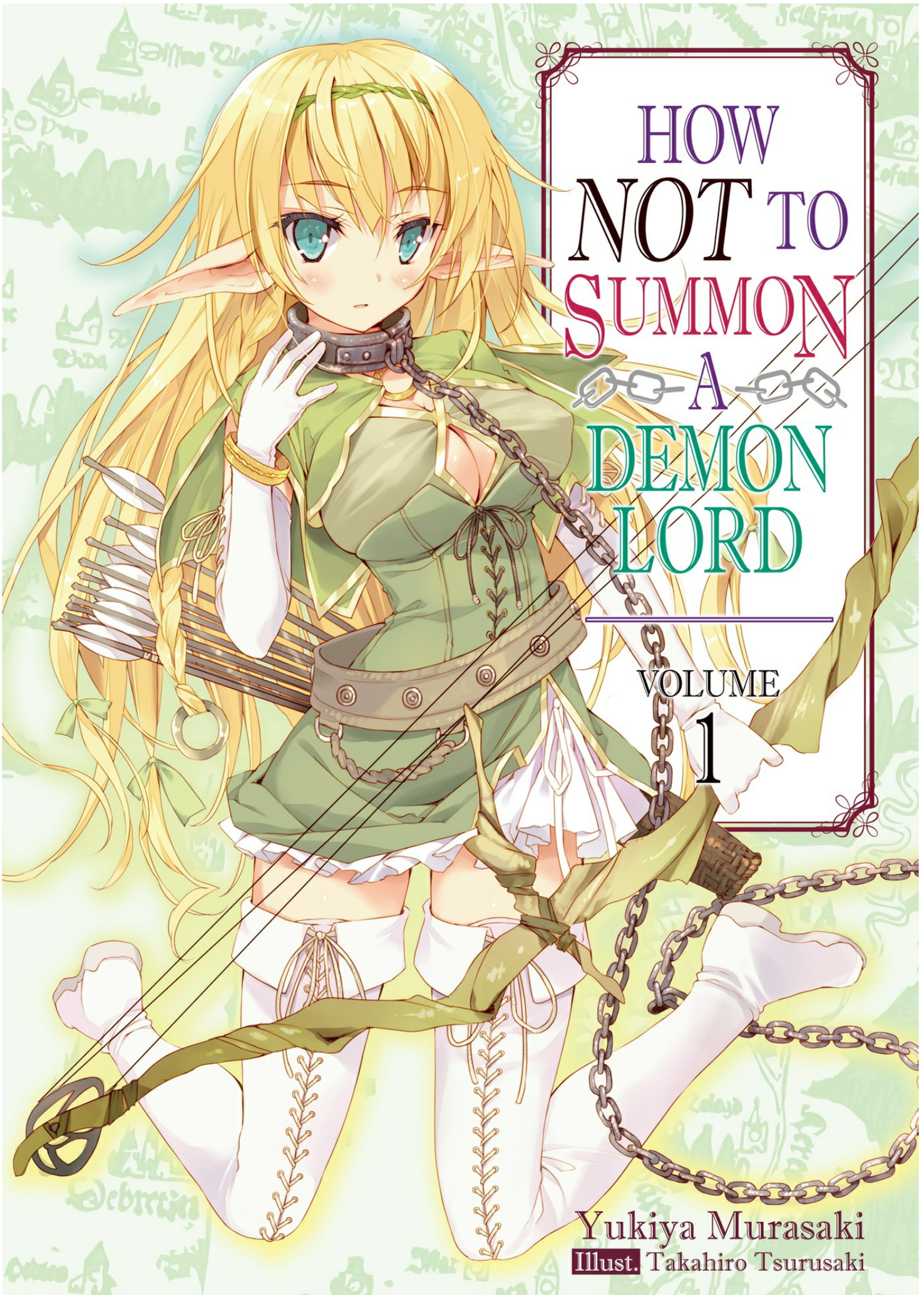

HOW
NOT TO
SUMMON
A
DEMON
LORD
VOLUME
1
Yukiya Murasaki
Illust. Takahiro Tsurusaki


"...IF IT'S YOU, THEN YOU REALLY MIGHT BE ABLE TO SAVE ME."


No matter how you looked at it,
one of the girls was most definitely an Elf.
The other one had pointy ears
on top of her head, just like a cat.
Both of them were more beautiful
than any actual human.
Still thinking it all a dream,
Takuma continued to stare
as the two girls came
closer and closer—
The faces of the two girls drew closer.
Oh, this is a dream—Takuma figured.



—Isn't this kinda bad?
But even as he thought that, his reasoning just wouldn't work. All he could do was touch, squeeze, and fondle her voluminous chest.

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Prologue

The fantasy MMORPG Cross Reverie—

There was only one person who could be called the true “Demon Lord” in that game.

The true Demon Lord was not one of the monsters in the game.

He was one of its three million players.

In this game, the player was able to create their own dungeon and reign over it as its boss. Anyone could become a boss character.

However, there was only one who was called “Demon Lord.”

He created dungeons that surpassed the official ones in terms of detail and quality. He possessed the most powerful equipment, and had the skill to leave those who dared to face him perfectly and utterly defeated. The true identity of the Demon Lord was shrouded in mystery.

His power alone was something to be feared, and as he became known among the highest-ranking players, he became a legend.

—This was because the Demon Lord was always holding back.

When he was serious, the Demon Lord was unimaginably powerful; so powerful that you would never think to challenge him twice.

Highly-ranked players who heard the rumors would challenge him with the intent to make him fight seriously.

The Demon Lord, however, made sure to give his opponent a performance befitting of a final boss. Ever the gentleman, he would never forget to entertain his guests.

And so, the players thought:

—What makes the Demon Lord get serious!?

Is it the rarity of the challenger's equipment?

The title they hold?

Is he only serious against truly skilled players?

They were all wrong.

There was only *one* thing that would make the ultimate player, the Demon Lord《Diablo》, serious.

That was—

"Oh, these guys are a couple. Time to murder them."

The Demon Lord—otherwise known as Takuma Sakamoto—muttered this to himself after discovering a certain item in his challenger's inventory.

He settled back, sinking deeper into his computer chair.

Displayed on his monitor was a dungeon he had built with explicit detail.

The designs on its walls depicted internal organs, with skeleton candle holders and bone-white candles eerily lighting the way. A battle was already unfolding on the expansive marble floor that made up the field.

Dressed in all black, the man who stood towering in front of the throne with horns growing out of his head was the character everyone called "Demon Lord."

His challengers: a male sorcerer and a female healer.

Takuma's mouth twisted into a look befitting of a Demon Lord.

“For those foolish enough to bring something as impure as real-world love into this game... I, as the Demon Lord, must pass judgment upon you!”

While it may have seemed that there were no girls on the Internet, especially in online games, it was clear that these two were actual lovers in real life. Which player was male and which was female in real life was not clear through their characters, and was beside the point.

In this game, there was an item called the《Wedding Ring》.

It was said to have been implemented at the request of other players.

An item that could only be equipped with both players’ mutual consent, it boasted no parameter bonuses whatsoever.

The only reason you would even think to get it was if you and your partner were a couple while offline, in a relationship in the “real world.”

Takuma pressed the shortcut on his keyboard to change his equipment.

“Ku-ku-ku... If you must insist on using that ‘Wedding Ring,’ then I shall make you regret equipping such a useless item with a ring of my own...”

His heart becoming completely like that of a Demon Lord, Takuma equipped Diablo with the item that gave him his namesake.

《The Demon Lord’s Ring》.

One of the strongest items in the game, it was able to reflect all types of magic.

It was an extremely rare item, obtained as a ranking reward for being the first one to defeat the《Demon Lord of the Mind, Enkvaros》in an update from two years ago.

It also reflected healing and support spells, so you had to be careful when you used it.

“It shall be a massacre! You fools dare to challenge *me*, the Demon Lord, with an item that does not even raise attack or defense!? MMOs are not all fun and games. You normies living it up in the real world should just explode! And I shall

be the one to make this happen, in spectacular fashion!”

And so, the one-sided slaughter began.

Using the most powerful of spells, he exploded his enemies into dirty fireworks.

His opponents’ offensive spells were all deflected, rendering them completely useless.

Takuma had once again instilled the terror and fear of online gaming into the hearts of yet another couple.

No other player knew.

The one thing that would make the Demon Lord Diablo get serious was not something to do with the game.

—Kill all couples.

It was through this sentiment alone that he became a symbol of terror known as the “Demon Lord.”

Never in his wildest dreams had he imagined that he would be summoned to another world as an actual Demon Lord.

Chapter 1: Being Summoned

The faces of the two girls drew closer.

Oh, this is a dream—Takuma figured.

No matter how you looked at it, one of the girls was most definitely an Elf.

The other one had pointy ears on top of her head, just like a cat.

Both of them were more beautiful than any actual human.

Still thinking it all a dream, Takuma continued to stare as the two girls came closer and closer—

Then, the realistic sensation of lips.

He felt the softness of their lips on his cheeks.

He could feel the almost burning sensation of their body heat.

It was enough to make him feel like he was melting.

The scent of the two girls gave off a faint sweetness.

As the torrential waves of these previously unknown experiences crashed over him, he knew this was something he could never have made in his imagination.

And he came to realize that this was all happening in reality.



†

It was happening too fast for him to comprehend.

Takuma spaced out as he stared at the sky. The two girls were now gone from his field of vision.

The sky that spread out before him was fantastically blue. This was not the ceiling of his room that he was used to seeing. Even the way he was dressed had changed.

—Do I have a cape on?

Instead of the usual T-shirt with loose collar and frayed shorts he always wore, he was clothed in jet-black garments and an extravagant cape. In his hands, he held a staff that was emanating a pitch-black aura.

He viewed his surroundings.

No matter matter how many times he checked, this most certainly was not his room.

Shaped like an octagon, the place was not very large—perhaps five meters long from edge to edge.

Takuma sat upon a stone altar in the center of the area, surrounded by four stone pillars.

The light coming from the tips of these pillars was not from fire or electricity, but had a soft, phosphorescent glow, not unlike the magic FX you would find in a video game.

Beyond this, that vast blue sky spread out before him.

It seemed that he was on top of a very tall building, or perhaps a tower.

He was not alone. There were others here as well—

The two girls.

One of them was an Elf. Though he doubted his own eyes, that was all he

could think she might be.

Her ears were long and pointed. Elves were so well known for this particular feature that they could almost be called the “long ear” species.

Her hair looked as if it were made of melted gold, and she wore a hair decoration fashioned from grass.

The green tunic she wore was only tied together with bits of string, and her skin showed through from time to time.

On her back she carried a large bow, with a quiver for arrows at her waist.

Her arms, legs, and neck were long and slender, which fit with what Takuma already knew elves should look like. However, her incredibly robust and ample breasts were the one feature that did not fit the usual Elf image.

Then, on the other hand—

There was the girl with cat ears growing out of her head.

Her hair reached down to her waist, and was the same glossy black color as her ears.

She had a slender body, and from what little he could see of her legs, it was clear that she was in great shape.

Her eyes slanted like a cat’s, with highly arched brows that conveyed the strength of her will. She stared at Takuma with an expressionless face.

She wore a vest over her jacket with a wide leather belt coiled around her waist, and a skirt made of layered cloth. Because he was on top of the altar, he could not see anything else below that.

The girl with the long ears was a beauty, and the girl with the cat ears was incredibly cute.

Takuma had seen their likenesses before.

—So, one’s an Elf, and the other is...a Pantherian?

When a player first started playing Cross Reverie, they were able to pick whatever race they wanted their character to be, and could change features such as their face and body type.

Elf and Pantherian were part of the selectable races for the game.

Elves specialized in long-range combat with bows, while the Pantherian attacked fast and possessed great strength. That was what their character profiles were supposed to be, at least.

—It's like I'm inside the world of Cross Reverie itself.

If that was the case, then where was he right now?

He felt like he had seen a place with similar background graphics before, but he could not remember...

Takuma was one of the top players of Cross Reverie, his knowledge of the game far surpassing that of a normal player.

He tried to fervently remember what this building was, while also carefully taking in his surroundings.

The reality of it all was no joke.

The feeling of the stone.

The remains of a dried up puddle of water.

The clouds that floated in the ever-expansive blue sky.

Because he was so high up, the strong gusts of wind made loud whooshing noises as they passed over him.

The light from the sun was brighter than any PC monitor would be able to render.

There were also the smells.

The wind carried with it the scent of mold and dirt, just as you would expect from an old building.

The design of the stone patterns on the ground were scattered everywhere.

What kind of hi-spec computer and monitor would you need to replicate this? It all looked far too authentic.

Takuma thought to himself:

—Is this reality?

But, he was sure that he had seen these surroundings in the game before.

The Pantherian girl murmured something in a voice that was almost drowned out by the wind.

"...That should be the end of the《Enslavement Ritual》."

—Did she just say "Enslavement Ritual?"

Takuma suddenly remembered the name and purpose of the tower he was on.

In the MMORPG Cross Reverie, there were numerous skills with effects that made you wonder why the developers even bothered adding them at all.

These kinds of inefficient skills were labeled as "cool, but impractical." For Takuma, and others like him who insisted that "Online games are serious business!" and only focused on winning, these were the skills they would never pick.

For example, you could find two patterns of these kinds of skills in the "Sorcerer" skill tree, the job class that Takuma was using.

The first was called the "Brawler Sorcerer." These skills focused on fighting at close-range, despite the fact that you were just a squishy Sorcerer.

The other kind was called—

"The summoning was a success! That means I'm a Summoner now, too!" the Elf girl joyfully proclaimed.

That's right, a "Summoner."

It was already well-known that Sorcerers who used spells based around the elements of earth, water, fire, wind, light, or darkness were the strongest.

Despite this, a Summoner rejects these elemental skills and spends all their skill points from leveling-up on summoning skills. That is what it meant to be a Summoner.

Their way of fighting was to “summon and enslave beasts to make them fight for you.”

However, the damage their Summons dealt per attack was relatively weak, and an Elemental Sorcerer of the same level was way more powerful.

For defense, they would have to do things like: rely on their Tank to protect them while running around in circles; or beat their opponent before their adversary could hit them.

Because of this, summoners were called weak, and they were regularly made fun of with typical jeers like: “Summoner (lol);” and, “If you want an in-game pet, go play another game!”

This place had a deep connection with Summoners—

The summoning point: 《Starfall Tower》.

It was here that you could call Summons to enslave them to your will. Though, there were also special events where you could obtain Summons. This was the place you would normally come to get them.

The altar that Takuma had been lying on was the spot where the Summons were supposed to appear...

The Pantherian girl spoke up.

“...I would appreciate it if you would not mistake yourself. *I’m* the one who summoned this Summon. Your magic was a failure.”

The Elf angrily voiced her objection.

“What!? I don’t understand *what* you’re talking about! I used the summoning magic, didn’t I!? A-And...I did the Enslavement Ritual, too! Even though it was super embarrassing, I did k-k-kiss him, after all!”

“...I-I did it, too... Although, I have never seen a Summon shaped like a human before. Compared to the normal Summons, this one must be many times more

powerful. There is no way an Elf's magic would be able to conjure someone like him. So, looking at this logically, it would make sense that he is my Summon."

"No! You're wrong! He's mine!"

The two girls began fighting with each other.

It was then that Takuma understood his predicament.

—Now I understand... I haven't been summoned to this Cross Reverie lookalike as a player...

The girls shouted at each other at almost the exact same time:

"...I was the one who summoned Diablo!"

"It was me who summoned Diablo!"

Takuma Sakamoto—no, now "Diablo"—had been summoned to another world.

And he had been summoned not as a player, but as a Summon to one of these two girls.

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Takuma reflected on what he remembered about Summons in Cross Reverie.

In opposition to other monsters and magic-type enemies, Summons were a class of their own. They were beings who existed to be summoned and controlled by Summoners.

Though they could not speak, they possessed high intelligence, and were able to unleash fairly powerful attacks. There were even types of Summons who could use healing magic.

But, because it was difficult to control them, you had to bind them using an "Enslavement Collar" gained from performing an "Enslavement Ritual."

Any Summon with an Enslavement Collar on them would be completely

dominated by their Summoner.

—Am I going to be dominated!?

Takuma turned pale as he remembered this information.

If this world was using the same setting as Cross Reverie, then he would have no choice but to be under the control of one of the two girls before him.

Either the Elf with golden hair and slender legs and arms; the well-endowed beauty.

Or the expressionless girl who sported cat ears and a slim, elegant body.

He was starting to think that being dominated might not be so bad after all.

—No, no, no! That's still a bad thing!

Having given into temptation for a moment, Takuma shook his head back and forth.

At this, the girls turned their gazes back toward him.

They seemed to have reached a compromise for now. The girl with the cat ears spoke first.

"...Can you understand what we are saying?"

"Huh? Oh, yeah."

His response was minimal.

As if they were not expecting this, the Elf and Pantherian opened their eyes wide.

"He can talk!?"

"...This is a surprise. I have never heard of a Summon that could understand our language, let alone speak it..."

“Way to go, me! Even though it was my first summoning, I summoned something super amazing!”

The girl with cat ears glared at the Elf.

“...I will say it again, but *I* am the one who summoned Diablo, not you.”

“And *I’ll* say it again, too! Diablo answered *my* summons and came for *me*, got that!?”

The two continued to stare daggers at each other.

They were still fighting over who was the actual Summoner.

And there was no feature in the game that had two Summoners working together to summon one powerful creature.

“...Fine. If you’re going to go that far, then let’s confirm who Diablo is enslaved to.”

The Elf looked down at the cat-eared girl as she gave her response.

“Fine by me, let’s do this! He is *my* Summon, after all, so of course he’ll obey me!”

Things had definitely taken a turn for the weird here.

The Pantherian girl approached Takuma.

“...By the name of Rem Galleu, I command you to raise your right hand.”

So her name is Rem Galleu. Would Rem be her first name, then?

Takuma obediently raised his right hand.

The Elf started to protest.

“Anyone would follow an order like that! If you’re going to order him to do something, make it a little more ridiculous!”

“...It pains me to see you act like a sore loser, but as you wish. Diablo, I command you to pinch the cheeks of that Elf over there.”

“Is that something you would normally order someone to do!?” the Elf said, dumbstruck.

Takuma tilted his head.

“What? I don’t really want to do that...”

Rem was shocked at his reply. Because he was able to resist her command, this meant that she was not the Summoner.

—Or something like that, I guess?

With her face positively beaming, the Elf stuck out her chest. Noticeably.

“See! See, see, see! Looks like I was the Summoner after all! So, my Summon, Diablo! I order you in the name of Shera! Give that Pantherian girl over there a good spanking!”

“...Ordering him to use violence against others makes me doubt the value of your character,” retorted Rem.

You told me to do something similar just now, remember?—Takuma thought to himself.

“I don’t want to do that either.”

“Why!?”

The Elf’s eyes were as wide as could be.

Even Takuma was tilting his head a little.

—That’s weird. There’s no kind of oppressive force that makes me feel like I’m being enslaved... Maybe it’s because I’m a player after all?

Rem was glaring at Shera.

“...It seems that something has gone wrong since you tried to take over my summoning.”

“Um, wrong!? I was the first one who thought to use this place, you know! I was the one who thought the elevated amount of magic here would be able to call a Demon Lord from another world!”

“...I should have chased you away from the beginning... And it’s still not too late to do that. I will make you leave here by force and redo the ritual. The Demon Lord is mine...”

Rem reached into a pocket on her leather belt and pulled out a transparent crystal.

Shera reached for the bow on her back and took a stance.

If things carried on this way, there was going to be a fight.

Fighting is bad!

I'll talk to them and get them to calm down—thought Takuma. Trying to think calmly, he attempted to reach for the words he needed to explain this all away, but suddenly found himself freezing up.

—Huh? H-How am I supposed to talk to a girl again?

Takuma searched his memories.

When was the last time he had actually talked to a girl in real life?

A year ago? No, wait! There was that time with the female employee at the convenience store, so surely... Wait, did he actually talk to her!?

Reality was cruel.

Even in the game, he always played solo as the "Demon Lord," so all he ever talked to were dudes who played as girls in-game.

—Hold on, there was something! I talked to a girl!

He *did* talk to a girl, and recently!

Turning to face Rem and Shera as they continued to get ready to fight, Takuma mustered what little experience he had and called out to them.

"Cease your pointless squabbling. You are in the presence of Diablo."

The two girls instantly stopped moving and turned to face him.

—All right! That's it!

It was the tone of voice he used as the Demon Lord when someone came to challenge him. If he just talked like that, he should be able to talk to girls with no problems.

He almost felt like striking a pose as he faced the two girls.

However, he managed to suppress the urge. Demon Lords do not usually strike poses, after all.

“I am not partial to such futile quarrels. It is incessant, like the noise of two insects fighting with each other. And so, I order you two: make peace by shaking hands...and with a smile!”

Rem narrowed her eyes.

“Who would want to make nice...with such a foolish, useless Elf like——!?”

Shera raised her eyebrows.

“What!? It’s that little Pantherian pipsqueak who’s at fault here! She owes me an apology, and I won’t forgive her until she——!?”

The girls’ expressions started to change in strange fashion.

Their eyelids started to close in awkwardly, and the corners of their mouths began to twitch upwards.

The changes did not end with just their faces.

While still holding the crystal in her left hand, Rem offered out her right hand. Shera lowered her bow, and also reached out with her right hand.

One step at a time, they slowly began walking toward each other.

“...How...How could something like this...”

Usually devoid of any kind of expression, it was only now that you could call what Rem had on her face a “smile.”

Shera was afraid.

“No... Stop...! Why...Why is my body moving on its own!?”

It looked like she was about to cry. However, the girls’ faces stayed as they were, lips curved upwards.

An exchange of handshakes.

Though their odd facial expressions clearly showed that they didn’t like it...just as Takuma had ordered, the girls shook hands, smiles and all.

Suddenly, a black light began to coil around their necks.

A low, vibrating noise could be heard, followed by a heavy *_thunk_*, as if something was being locked.

Two thick collars had materialized around Rem and Shera's slender necks.

They appeared to be made out of a dull-colored metal, similar to iron.

Rem's eyes opened wide as she touched her neck.

"This is...an Enslavement Collar!?"

Shera checked her own neck, and let out a scream.

"What!? Why!? Isn't this supposed to go on the Summon instead!?"

"...I am certain we performed the Enslavement Ritual necessary to have the Summon wear an Enslavement Collar."

Takuma tilted his head.

"Hm? Enslavement Ritual? On me?"

Rem nodded while making a puzzled face.

"Y-Yes... Um, well, we certainly...cast the ritual...you see..."

Takuma looked down at his body.

He was wearing the armor《The Ebony Abyss》, and an extravagant cape called the《Curtain of Dark Clouds》. On his head were two goat-like horns—《The Distorted Crown》.

On the middle finger of his left hand was a ring that appeared as if it had been shaped from a flame, with an ebony jewel embedded into it.

He remembered seeing this pattern before.

The Demon Lord's Ring.

This incredibly rare item from Cross Reverie possessed the ability《Magic Reflection》, an effect that had no equal when it came to battling with enemy Sorcerers, though it was difficult to use since it also reflected healing and

support spells.

Takuma started to put two and two together.

—So, because of this ring, it looks like the enslavement magic bounced off me and onto these two instead.

It was not Takuma who had been enslaved, but rather, the two girls who were meant to be his Summoners, instead.



†

"...While Magic Reflection is quite a powerful ability...there is no way I can accept this situation. Not at all."

"Well, me neither! I don't want to be enslaved by a Summon that *we* should be enslaving!"

Rem and Shera were shouting.

I feel like leaving the two of them like this would be a bad thing—Takuma thought.

As for now, Takuma had succeeded in "enslaving" the two girls.

However, "Enslavement Ritual" was a word that was only mentioned in explanations of Cross Reverie's backstory. It wasn't something that players could do any time they liked.

According to the setting for the game, Summons were powerful beings who lived in another world, with their entire existence revolving around being told what to do by puny humans.

In the game, Summons were not meant to fight back or resist in any way.

Because of this, it was unclear what the effects or details of the Enslavement Ritual really were. At the very least, there was no system in place where Summons would suddenly rebel against their masters.

Takuma was currently in a world that was very similar to Cross Reverie. One of those "summoned to another world" things, it seemed. Well, as long as this wasn't all a dream...

In this world, what kind of effects did this "Enslavement Ritual" have?

—Maybe there's a way to release them from it?

That might be bad.

When not being used, Summons in the game would turn into items and be placed in the player's inventory.

—What would happen if I was turned into an item?

The visuals in-game showed Summons turning into some kind of crystal. He didn't think that things would go smoothly if this happened to him.

He should give the order not to allow this item-ification to happen while they still had these Enslavement Collars on.

—But first, I'll ask if it's possible to undo the enslavement magic.

"You two. Can you not even release yourself from your own magic?"

In the middle of bemoaning their predicament, the two turned to look at him.

Rem's eyes narrowed.

"...If we could, we would have already done so. This isn't the kind of magic that you would normally need to undo, so we don't know how. If we head into town, we may find a way. Or...if the Master dies, then the enslavement magic will be undone."

"Hmph."

There was the slightest tremble to his voice. Even though he had worked on his Demon Lord act for many years now, it took all he had to retort with just that one sound.

It seemed to have done the trick, however, as Rem backed off.

"...That was just another method. If you were weak enough that we could defeat you, then there would be no point in summoning you. We understand...that we are no match for you."

There was fear in her voice.

Thanks to his "Demon Lord" performance, as well as his ability to use Magic Reflection, it seemed that Rem and Shera took that as a sign that he was a powerful force to be reckoned with.

They must have taken the slight tremble in his voice as a sign that he was angry.

He was just glad that none of his true self had slipped through the cracks there.

—But...am I strong, as I am now?

While his Magic Reflection ability had indeed activated, it was also a possibility that the only thing that carried over from the game world was his equipment.

Takuma had reached the max level of 150 in-game, and had mastered numerous kinds of elemental magic. He was the ultimate Demon Lord who used his countless battles as research to learn all there was to know.

That said, there were no menus or shortcut icons to be found. Without a mouse or keyboard, it was possible he would not be able to use magic.

But even if he could use magic...

—If the maximum level for this world isn't 150, I'm kinda screwed.

This meant that he had to test his strength against something to check and see for himself. How strong was he compared to monsters or other people?

He had to check with other people from this world—that is, the two girls—and gauge their reactions.

"Hey, you two."

The Elf girl pouted her lips.

"Geesh! Stop calling us 'you two' all the time! I have a wonderful name, you know! I'm the genius Summoner, Shera L. Greenwood!"

—Hm? Greenwood?

That was a name he felt he had seen before in a compilation book for Cross Reverie. Though it was on the tip of his tongue, he could not bring himself to remember.

"Hmph... 'You two' should be enough. Do not anger me with your pointless drivel."

"Oooh... F-Fine, I got it..."

It seemed like the effects of his Demon Lord act were still working in full-force.

But soon enough, he would have to show them how powerful he actually was.

He should confirm his power as soon as he could.

Starfall Tower was only meant as a place to summon beasts, and was fairly cramped as a result.

While he was worried about being too weak, he also had to worry about being too strong at the same time.

If the magic he cast spread beyond the range he was expecting, it was possible that these two could be caught up in it as well.

“Are there any monsters around here?”

“...Only the occasional beast that gets chased out of the forest. There are plenty near town, though.”

Takuma silently breathed a sigh of relief.

He didn’t want to get into any sudden battles while he was still unsure of his own abilities.

If he started acting like a coward now, Rem and Shera might start to question how strong he actually was.

He had to at least *act* like he was strong.

“Hmph... So there are no monsters around here. What a dull place... No matter. Any kind of boulder will do for my purposes.”

With the staircase as his goal, he started to walk.

While his memories were a bit fuzzy, he was relieved to find that the stairs did indeed go down.

“Wait a minute! Don’t just head off on your own! You’re my Summon, you know!?” Shera called out from behind him.

“He’s not your Summon...” Rem mumbled.

Taking short steps, Rem trotted over to Takuma’s side.

The small, cat-eared girl gazed up at him.

Well, technically they were panther ears. She was a Pantherian, after all.

Though she didn’t have any expression on her face, he sincerely felt that to be

an adorable trait of hers. It was like she was a small, innocent animal.

—Dang, she's cute.

He was overwhelmed with the sudden urge to pat her on the head.

Ahhh, how he wanted to try touching her ears!

However! Demon Lords did not just go around patting cute girls on the head.

The sound of Shera's footsteps approached them from behind.

Glancing behind him, it wasn't just Shera's golden hair that was swaying to and fro, but her voluminous chest (that seemed completely unbefitting of an Elf) as well.

—Holy crap.

Mustering his will of steel, he managed to tear his gaze away.

Like a true Demon Lord, he walked as if he were leading the two girls.

The truth of the matter, though, was if they ran into trouble, he would have no choice but to rely on them.

†

Footsteps echoed off of the stone staircase.

Because everything had happened so suddenly, they were moving at a relatively slow pace.

Placing his hand on the wall as he walked, Takuma descended the narrow spiral stairs of the tower.

—It's all so real.

The thin cracks etched into the stones, the coolness when he touched it...

Perhaps because the place had been built so long ago, fragments of the wall cracked and fell off near their seams.

Sunlight streamed in through the circular windows.

Thinking back to Cross Reverie, he tried to remember what things had used the name "Sunlight."

When Takuma would gather information, he did not focus on things such as backstory or information about the world, but was only interested in things like new items or practical ways to efficiently use spells.

He had already beaten all of the main story quests, so he felt he had a decent grasp on the world overview...

The real problem, however, was how much this world had in common with the game.

They exited the tower to the outside.

Takuma squinted his eyes against the bright white light that washed over him.

After his eyes adjusted, he began to get a clear view of the outline of this world.

While looking exactly like Cross Reverie, the feeling of reality from the landscape that spread out before him was incomparable to any game.

Up until now, he had been at Starfall Tower.

The《Man-Eating Forest》sprawled out to the West.

Though the dense overgrowth of foliage and trees was blocking it from view, there should be a dungeon in the form of some ruins near the entrance to the Man-Eating Forest.

To the East, ever-expanding fields of green stretched out as far as the eye could see.

In-game, there would be a river just beyond these plains, with《The Border City, Faltra》being just past that.

If he remembered right, going by foot should get you there in about five minutes or so... But from here, he couldn’t even see the river. Maybe it was because of the landscape of the plains; maybe because it was far away.

Or it could be that the geography of the world was different.

There were three modes of transportation in Cross Reverie: walking, riding

mounts, and teleportation.

When on foot, there was a chance you could encounter monsters. They would pop up at random, with most of them attacking players on sight.

Large boulders dotted the landscape of the plains in front of him. If he hid behind those, then he should be able to avoid fighting any monsters.

Because he was still keeping up his Demon Lord persona, however, hiding would make him seem lame.

Checking his surroundings, Takuma was relieved to confirm that there were no monsters in sight. He was just glad that he wouldn't need to have the girls protect him.

In the Starfall Tower area, monsters were usually around the low 60's.

For Takuma's character in the game—Diablo—they would not even pose a challenge. As he was now, however, he wasn't sure if he could take them.

That was what he was on his way to confirm for himself.

As usual, Shera and Rem were back to arguing over who had summoned Diablo.

Takuma turned around to look back at them.

"I believe you two are mistaken about something."

"...What are you talking about? Well, it is true that this useless Elf is mistaken if she thinks she's the one who summoned you."

"I'm *not* mistaken, thank you very much! I'm the one who summoned Diablo, okay!?"

"...You are being foolish. This was your first summoning, wasn't it?"

"It was, but I'm a genius! Everyone back home told me so!"

"...I have already made contracts with seven Summons. Even among the other Summoners back in town, this is a top-class amount... Put simply, I am an outstanding Summoner, while you are not. Diablo is an outstanding Summon, and therefore, the obvious conclusion one can come to is that I am the one who summoned him. Do you understand now?"

“What? Huh? So, um...what!?”

“...Elves should just stick with shooting arrows, you dumb Elf.”

“Don’t lump me together with the other Elves! And right back at you, kitty girl! Pantherians should just go sharpen their claws on a scratching post or something!”

“...It’s because I am special.”

Rem turned up her lips and looked the other way.

Takuma wanted to sigh.

—Dang, the more girls talk, the more they get off track. Or is this just how these two are?

However, a Demon Lord who started sighing because he did not know how to handle a couple of girls was the exact opposite of looking strong. Instead, he let out a scornful chuckle.

“Hmph... It seems that you two are against listening to me speak.”

They froze in place.

He felt bad about scaring them like this, but this was for the best if he wanted to get information out of them.

Besides, he had no idea how to talk to girls outside of his Demon Lord act, so this was just how it had to be.

—Man, what the hell do I do now?

Looks like he would have to keep on pushing through as the Demon Lord.

“Listen well, for I want to be clear on this... I am no Summon!”

The two looked at each other.

Shera opened her mouth to speak.

“B-But you were summoned because of the summoning ritual, right?”

“I am a being who transcends conventional wisdom. Being compared to the likes of those one-trick beasts is nothing short of an aggravation.”

“...So what you are trying to say is, you don’t fit into the category of a

Summon? ...Are you saying you have more than two abilities?”

Summons in Cross Reverie came with a certain set of parameters, and only one special ability.

This could be anything from poison, paralysis, recovery, letting their Summoner ride on them, or even firing lasers to mow down multiple enemies at once. However, outside of their basic attack, Summons were only supposed to be able to perform one other action. What Rem had said must mean it was the same for this world too.

He was a bit relieved to hear that.

With a sneer, Takuma twisted his face into an expression fitting of a Demon Lord.

“Yes, that’s right. As proof, I do indeed possess abilities outside of Magic Reflection.”

Elemental magic.

He wouldn’t be going to much of anywhere if he couldn’t use this.

Of course, his equipment had other effects as well.

As Takuma stood at the edge of a puddle on the ground, his appearance was reflected on its surface.

The black outfit he was wearing, the Ebony Abyss, had the ability to reduce the power of physical attacks, as well as provide a hefty stat boost just for having it on.

The cape that covered his back was called the “Curtain of Dark Clouds.” In addition to protecting its wearer from negative status effects, it also had an effect that would leave the wearer with 1 HP from any attack that would normally reduce it to zero. He wore it so he could say things like “the Demon Lord will never die!” but so far, no one had been able to get his HP down to zero. If he was attacked again while at 1 HP, though, he really would die.

In order to give him more of a Demon Lord-esque appearance, he wore an item called the “Distorted Crown” on his head. Not only did it change how he looked, but it also had an automatic HP regeneration effect as well.

For his weapon, he carried a stave named《Tenma's Staff》. Not only did it boost his INT (Intelligence) stat, but it also shortened chant times for spells.

He also carried an item pouch on his waist.

Hidden under his cape, it held things such as potions to restore MP, as well as healing potions, since the Demon Lord's Ring would reflect recovery magic.

He also carried with him a special rare item he planned on giving to anyone who could defeat the Demon Lord to commemorate their accomplishment.

He wanted to take them out to check, but to "take out" something in-game also meant "to use." Since this world seemed based in reality, he doubted that would happen... But he wanted to avoid the risk of wasting any items before he could finish confirming his own power.

The Demon Lord's Ring sat on the middle finger of his left hand.

This was the only thing that he had been able to confirm its effect. In-game, and in this world as well, it was Diablo's ace-in-the-hole.

Takuma also got his first glimpse of Diablo's face since coming to this world.

—Damn, I look good!

A face vastly different from the real-world Takuma was reflected in the water.

The light from his black eyes gave off a sharp gleam, and bluish-black tattoo-like marks covered his cheeks and forehead. Because of the effects of the Distorted Crown, he could also see two horns growing out of his head.

There was a mocking smile plastered on his face.

He was savagely handsome: his skin tanned and his body toned and muscular.

This was not《Sakamoto Takuma》.



He was《Diablo》, his appearance exactly the same as it was in-game.

—What are my abilities?

His particular fighting style was to circle the enemy while unleashing elemental magic, reflecting all of his opponent's spells and annihilating them in the process. Could he do the same thing here?

Rem and Shera brought their faces together and started talking amongst themselves.

"...He isn't a Summon? It is true that I have never heard of a Summon with more than two abilities before..."

"But Diablo is supposed to be a Summon, right?"

"...Why do you have such a hard time picking up on these things?"

"Huh? Picking up on what now?"

"......Diablo just said himself that being treated as a Summon was unpleasant for him."

"But he was summoned from another world, right? Isn't that what a Summon is?"

"...I give up. Putting that aside, I wonder what other abilities he could have besides Magic Reflection?"

Rem had a pensive look on her face.

Shera clapped her hands together, as if she had a brilliant idea.

"Why don't we just have him show us!"

"...It is true that, as his Summoner, it is necessary for me to have a grasp of his abilities."

Rem turned her piercing gaze toward Takuma.

Eyes sparkling, Shera also turned toward him.

"Hey, Diablo! Show us those abilities of yours!"

"...Yes. If you really do hold multiple abilities, then I definitely would like to see them."

The reason he had come outside was for just that: to test his own abilities.

—I'm sure I can use magic, I have to be able to! Probably... I'm kinda screwed if I can't.

He could not bring himself to say that it might be impossible.

Takuma sneered.

"Ku-ku-ku... Very well! I will show you the true power of Diablo!"

†

Taking a quick glance at his surroundings, Takuma found a reasonably large-sized boulder. It was roughly 3 meters tall, and probably about 5 meters across.

The surface of the rock looked as if it had been polished until it was completely smooth; it was unthinkable that this could have been formed naturally.

In the game, this was an indestructible object that would not break, no matter how much magic you hit it with.

This was the boulder he would try using his elemental magic on.

However, he was nervous.

He didn't want to be seen as a weirdo who just randomly threw around his offense spells, which is why he said that all that stuff about "showing them his true power." But that might have been going overboard.

Now they were expecting him to do something amazing.

"N-Now then... I cannot get too serious, as it would vaporize this world. I will only use a sliver of my power. Perhaps a thousandth... No, one ten-thousandth of my full power... I believe this amount will be enough to show you two."

"Who cares! C'mon!"

"...Please show me your power."

Well, no getting out of this one anymore.

As the two girls looked on with great interest, Takuma began to concentrate.

To use magic in the MMORPG Cross Reverie, you had to line up your cursor

with your target and press the shortcut you assigned it to on your keyboard.

While auto-targeting was an option, Takuma would often use tactics such as leading his shots, so he liked to manually control the cursor from a third-person over-the-shoulder viewpoint.

—Look at the rock as if you're lining up the cursor with it.

He imagined another Takuma, looking at him from above.

His other self was controlling his Sorcerer persona, and would make him use his magic.

He decided on something that he frequently used in-game.

An Elemental spell that would ignite and cause fire damage in a small area—《Explosion》.

This was a mid-tier spell an Elemental Sorcerer could learn by allocating skill points to the appropriate categories once they reached level 50.

Though it did not have a lot of power, the AoE of the spell was substantial, making it easy to use. Even as he kept leveling up, it was something he would use often.

The Diablo in that game was level 150, and an ultimate Sorcerer.

—There's no way this won't work!

Takuma pointed the tip of Tenma's Staff at the boulder.

—But... can I even use magic?

"!?"

The sudden doubt that crossed his mind caused him to stop moving.

Rem tilted her head.

"...Is something wrong?"

"What are you doing? Weren't you going to show us your power?"

His heart started pounding at their words.

If things kept going like this, it would be bad... It would be *really bad*...

“D-Do not rush me.”

“...Since I am your Summoner, I should know exactly what your powers are. Please hurry up and show me.”

“Wait, *I’m* his Summoner!”

Rem did not react to Shera’s obstinate retort.

If he did not succeed, he would lose his place here.

He was starting to sweat.

—Gotta remember the description they wrote for this magic!

He needed more details to get a solid image in his head of how to make the spell work.

There must have been something written in the explanation.

Yeah, it was something along the lines of, “Gather hydrogen from the surrounding air and ignite it with magic.”

He didn’t know if this made sense scientifically, but he tried imagining it anyways.

He could do it.

—Even if the me back in the real world can’t!

If it was the Demon Lord Diablo, the man who had laid waste to countless other players, he would surely be able to do it.

A black light began to emerge from the tip of Tenma’s Staff.

Takuma etched the image of the magic succeeding in his mind— No, he was not Takuma now. In this world, he was the Demon Lord, Diablo!

He murmured:

“‘Explosion!’”

An actual explosion!

The enormous boulder burst apart from the inside, fragments of rock

shooting out like shrapnel and spraying the surrounding area.

Rem and Shera let out a scream and took cover behind Diablo's back in a panic.

Though they may have just been shards of rock, if they hit you at that speed you would not get away unscathed.

Diablo had not been able to avoid them.

He stayed still out of habit, since usually graphical effects in the game (like an exploding rock) did not cause damage. It might have been dicey if he actually took damage from the sharp rocks... However— The damage-reducing effects of the Ebony Abyss had activated. Right before the flying chunk of rock hit Diablo, it lost its momentum. No problems there.

He had actually used magic!

A great sense of joy bubbled up inside him at the thought of his success. He wanted to jump up and down he was so happy. However, he could never do something so childish. He was a Demon Lord, after all.

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

He tried saying it in a way that made it seem as if his original power was much greater.

But it was then that a terrible thought came to him.

—What if this actually isn't all that impressive to people in this world?

Diablo turned to look at the two girls hiding behind him.

Shera and Rem had huddled together and were whispering to each other.

"What...just happened?"

"...It looked...like magic. Elemental magic, to be exact... But that can't be..."

They looked like they were surprised. The problem was, he did not know if they were surprised because he was strong, or because he was so weak. He wished that they would have given him some more feedback out loud.

In this area of the game, the monsters should be around level 60 or so. This would have been suitable for players who had made it this far.

If that was the case, then perhaps “Explosion,” being a spell you learn at level 50, might have seemed a bit weak.

“I will show you a different magic.”

He pointed his staff at a boulder even larger than the one before.

—The important thing here is to imagine the description of the spell.

He had a feeling that remembering the details surrounding the spell would end up being more effective.

If he tried throwing in some of the things he had learned in school for manipulating the elements, he could come up with a more specific image in his head. He was sure that he would be able to cast an even more powerful spell.

For the next one, he thought it would be good to try something outside of fire elemental spells.

Monsters in Cross Reverie were assigned certain elements.

It would be dangerous if he could not use at least two types of magic.

—Next I’ll try going with the level 80 magic,《Freezia》.

It was a spell that would completely freeze the area you targeted.

Its description read, “Use magic to force the molecules in the area to put on the brakes, freezing them.”

Pointing his staff, he imagined the heat being drained from the area he chose as his target.

—It worked.

“‘Freezia!’”

A formation of ice in the shape of a blooming lotus burst into existence, though this was just an illusion caused by the spell. The ice flower remained in the center of the area he had targeted for a short while, until it eventually turned into light and dissolved into pieces. It was a spell that was beautiful to watch unfold.

The boulder was frozen in an instant.

But that was not all—

The vegetation around the boulder was also frozen solid, with even the clouds of dirt in the air turning white.

The freezing effect in the area around the rock had transformed it into a frozen tundra.

The chill was enough to reach the three of them, even though they were outside the area of effect.

Diablo turned around to look at the two girls behind him.

They were looking up at him, stunned expressions on their faces.

He wasn't sure how to take this reaction.

He started to feel uneasy.

—They're not being all quiet because of how totally weak that was... right?

Shera barely managed to whisper something.

"...-azing."

"Hm?"

"Amazing... That was amazing! What was that!? It looked like elemental magic, but can you even *do* that with elemental magic!?"

Rem's lips were trembling.

"...Top-class... No, I don't think you can even put a label on this ability... Even the top-class Summons《Ifrit》and《Leviathan》do not have this kind of overwhelming power..."

"Diablo's body was all like, **whooosh**, and got all shiny! Even the flow of magic he put out was amazing! It was amazing!!"

"...Diablo... As long as you are here, I am sure you will be able to save even me... No, that aside, you have my great admiration. I would be grateful if you would choose me as your Summoner."

"I already told you, *I'm* his Summoner! Jeez! Besides, I need him! There's no,

no, NO way that I'm letting you have him!"

"...I also have no intention of handing him over."

Diablo felt no small relief at seeing their reactions.

—It looks like my magic is actually strong in this world.

He couldn't let his guard down just yet, but he should at least be able to feel a little relieved at knowing that.

Just as a Demon Lord would, Takuma put an arrogant smirk on his face.

"'Amazing,' you say? But of course... I am Diablo, the being known and feared as the Demon Lord!"

†

The two girls had always called him "Demon Lord," but it was the first time he had used it himself.

Rem gave a satisfied nod at hearing those words.

"...Thank goodness... I really did succeed in summoning a Demon Lord from another world."

"Of course! I was already planning on having a Demon Lord as my Summon from the beginning!" Shera proudly exclaimed.

"...Not only does she lack understanding, but she does not even listen to other people when they talk... Typical Elf. Well, no matter. As long as I have Diablo's power, we might be able to defeat it..."

"And what is this 'it?'"

"...The Demon Lord of this world, Krebskulm."

She pressed her hand tightly against her chest.

It was as if she were praying.

The expression on her face was a pained one.

In Cross Reverie's setting, the Demon Lord Krebskulm was the most powerful boss in the game.

The story in the game went something like this:

“Long ago, there was a great battle between the Celestials and the Fallen. The Celestials emerged victorious over the Fallen, and the soul of the Demon Lord was sealed away. However now, 1000 years later, the Fallen are plotting to resurrect the Demon Lord. The only ones who can put a stop to this are the descendants of the Celestials—Adventurers.”

The player was made out to be a member of a gifted race and set out into the world of Cross Reverie as one of these Adventurers.

Adventurers were always doing battle with the Fallen, who were scheming to revive the Demon Lord, and trying to stop their plans. If the resurrection was somehow a success, then their mission would be to combine forces to destroy the Demon Lord.

—That being said and all, that’s just the objective for the story of the game. I’m pretty sure most players only play because they “want that weapon,” or “want to learn that magic,” or “want to clear the next event.”

The story for Cross Reverie was not complete.

Online games were always like that, though. The story would keep going until the very last day the game’s service finished.

Even now, they would periodically add limited-time events and new story quests.

When the game first started three years ago, the last boss was supposed to be the《Demon Lord of the Sword, Sankdius》, who the Fallen had resurrected. Beating that boss gave you a kind of “Congratulations!” scene.

It turned out, however, that Sankdius was only a “Fragment of the Demon Lord.”

Players speculated that, at the time, the Demon Lord had not been completely resurrected.

—But is Krebskulm supposed to be the completed Demon Lord? That hasn’t been confirmed yet, huh...

In the game’s lore, Krebskulm was “a name that the Fallen held in great respect.”

So far, there had not been any quests released that included him.

In any case, Takuma thought it might be for the best not to call himself “Demon Lord” here. Since other people did not know about his situation, there was no telling what kind of reaction he would get from them. At the very least, he expected it wouldn’t be a favorable one.

Shera tugged on the dark sleeves of the Ebony Abyss.

“Hey! Let’s hurry and go back to town and do our Adventurer registration! Since you’re here, I can finally register myself as a proud Summoner, too!”

“Is that...so?”

“Mmph.....”

Rem glared at Shera, a look of extreme dissatisfaction on her face.

His interest piqued, Diablo asked:

“You two. Are Summoners people you respect?”

In the game, Summoners were either people who were not using their skill points correctly, or people who did not care about stats and just did what they wanted.

The three classes available to you from the start were《Warrior》,《Sorcerer》, or《Archer》.

It was just common knowledge for anyone who picked “Sorcerer” to spend their skill points to make their Elemental magic stronger.

Depending on your stat distribution and the skills you learned in Cross Reverie, the name of your job-class would change automatically.

For a Sorcerer who prioritized their point allocation, they could, for example, go from《Pyromagician》to《Burstfire Sorcerer》, and even further to《Incineration Sorcerer》; or possibly even a《Frostflame Sorcerer》. There was an endless amount of titles depending on your level and how you distributed your points.

Even if you were to reach the max level of 150, it was not possible to master every kind of spell in the game.

This was because the points you received from leveling up would not be enough.

After clearing numerous difficult events, achieving victory over other players in battle, and obtaining various items he earned as a result... Using all the points he had saved up, Diablo's job class had changed to《Sorcerer of Annihilation》.

It was thought that there was only one player in Cross Reverie who held this job title. This was because, even if you managed to reach the same stats, you would only become a《Sorcerer of Destruction》.

Because it was the only one of its kind, it was thought that it was a title given to the person who had first managed to reach the requirements for it.

Though nothing was officially announced about it, it might have been a modest reward for the challenger who had cleared a path through areas of the game that had not yet been found on any strategy wikis.

Whatever the case, a Sorcerer was expected to use the power of their Elemental magic as a wave-motion cannon to inflict high amounts of damage upon their enemies.

This was not about sending your Summon to the front lines to fight for you. Spending points on Summoning was nothing short of impractical.

This was common knowledge in-game, but...

It seemed like the girls respected and even looked up to Summoners here.

Shera's face showed surprise.

"They're Summoners, you know!? When you think of Sorcerers, it's gotta be Summoners!"

"And what of elemental magic? I already showed you my power, is it not the most supreme form of magic here?"

Rem was the one who answered his question.

"...The average elemental magic is not that powerful. At best, it can be used to muster up a fireball the size of your fist, or summon a gust of wind to knock someone over."

“Right? You would just get laughed at if you called yourself an Elemental Sorcerer. People would just tell you, ‘If you want to start a fire, just go get some flint!’”

“...I cannot deny that. Elemental magic is good if you are a child who wants to practice using spells, but once you grow up, you learn Summoning magic.”

“How...could this be...”

—Is elemental magic really that weak here!?

This could be the biggest difference between the game and this world—Diablo thought to himself.

The job class he had spent so much of his time and enthusiasm into—now a job class for fools! He couldn’t believe people treated it as a laughingstock.

It was as if his days of information gathering, saving up points, and training his elemental magic was being denied. He felt nothing but grief.

Rem shook her head.

“...Your elemental magic is on another level. If the other Elemental Sorcerers could put out a hundredth... No, even a thousandth of the power you showed us, then maybe they would be treated a little better.”

Shera nodded in agreement.

“Usually if you said you wanted to be an Elemental Sorcerer, everyone either pities you, starts talking bad about you, or gets really angry with you.”

“...Kind of like an Elf who chooses not to become an Archer.”

“It’s not a bad thing for me to choose a path that’s more suited to my own talents!”

Tuning out their bickering for the moment, Diablo was busy setting his own heart straight.

Elemental Sorcerer was now a job class for fools.

But that was only because it was not studied as much here; Diablo’s magic was shown to have the same amount of power as it had back in the game. It was thought to be fairly strong.

He was a little saddened at having lost his comrades from the strategy wiki who would trade information about elemental magic with him...

But it was no problem.

Diablo steeled himself and called out to them.

“Are you two only capable of fighting when you open your mouths? We’re heading into town. Come with me!”

It was only after he finished speaking that he realized something.

It would not be very Demon Lord-like to ask where the town was after saying all that. It would definitely be lame.

—Please let the town be in the same direction I remember it being!

Using his memories from the game as a base, he started to walk.

“W-Wait up!”

“...Y-You are going a little fast...”

Since the two of them had started to run to catch up with him, he was relieved to see that he was probably going the right way.

†

After continuing on through the rock-strewn plains, they eventually came to see a large river spanning from north to south, as well as a sturdy-looking bridge made out of stone.

This was《The Bridge of Ulug》, located to the west of town.

After crossing the stone bridge, there was a fortress made to look like a castle gate, and beyond that laid the town proper.

Walking this far from Starfall Tower should have usually taken about three minutes in-game, but it had taken about three hours to get here.

—Well, it’s not like this is some crappy game that takes three hours to get anywhere. And there’s no way they would build a fortress in a place that only takes three minutes to get to by foot.

In the game’s setting, the Bridge of Ulug was supposed to be the one defense

that the city of Faltra had to protect itself in this area.

This was because if you passed through the Man-Eating Forest that spread out to the west, you would enter the domain of the Fallen, where high-level monsters would appear.

It was used as a place that players could recover their HP and MP and wait for their other party members in order to conquer the《Primordial Forest Ruins》dungeon located in the forest.

—I was the only one who would pass by everyone waiting for their party and head to the dungeon by myself, though!

How was the Bridge of Ulug used in this world?

He didn't see any Adventurers around.

Since it was located along the southeast path to the town, the Bridge of Ulug also acted as a checkpoint of sorts.

They would do things like check travelers' identities and inspect luggage; kind of like modern-day security checks.

There were numerous guards equipped with armor, making it easy to understand that this was a heavily fortified position.

Despite their heavily-armored appearance, the guards were standing at full attention.

Diablo crossed the bridge and tried to pass through the fortress—a guard stood in his way.

"Hey, you there!"

He carried a halberd in his right hand, with only the upper half of his body covered in armor.

It was normal for infantrymen not to wear any armor on their legs. Because of that, the armor they wore from the waist up was quite thick.

His race was that of a《Human》male. He had short brown hair that spiked out at the ends.

His eyes were wide, and there was nervousness on his face.

Now that he looked at him, he seemed to be quite young.

Perhaps it would be better to call him a teenager.

—I wonder what kind of role guards play in this world?

Back in the game, they were basically the police, and would dole out punishment to any Adventurer who committed crimes.

So, for example, if you did something like killing a player outside of combat or stole something, then those Adventurers would have their names colored red as a mark that they were a《Criminal》. If you approached a town or fortress in this state, the guards would surround you and beat you to death.

—I didn't somehow become a criminal, did I?

His Demon Lord act was just that: an act. It wasn't like he was doing anything bad!

There was no name display either, so he couldn't know for sure.

In the game, there were no events where guard NPCs would stop the player. He was considerably shaken up by this unforeseen development.

If he gave a weak reaction here, then there would have been no point to him doing his Demon Lord roleplay for the two girls behind him.

He would have to answer back as best he could!

He mustered his voice.

"What is it, knave? I trust you have made your resolve for stopping me, Diablo."

The guard backed off, stunned.

It was obvious he had been overpowered.

"W-Well, it's just... We're in charge of checking those who come through here trying to get to Faltra, and I've never seen you before... It might seem rude, but I'd like you to tell me who you are and what you're here to do."

Rem's voice came from under Diablo's arm.

“...He is my Summon...kind of. The circumstances are a little complicated.”

For some reason, she was hiding her body under Diablo’s cape, only making her head visible to the guard.

Just like Rem, Shera also only showed her head as she spoke.

“And I’m telling you, you’re wrong! I’m the one who summoned him!”

“Oh, it’s Rem, and Shera the Elf... But, a Summon? I’ve never seen or heard of a human-shaped Summon before. Not only that, but he can talk, too?”

Rem looked away.

“...With my power, I am able to call Summons the likes of which have never been seen before. You’re not doubting me, are you?”

She had tried saying that in a forceful tone of voice, but since it was only her head sticking out from under the cape, ears twitching, she looked more like a scared kitten. Cute.

The guard was a bit flustered after being asked that.

“N-No, I would never doubt your power, Rem! But, you know...your Summon doesn’t have the necessary collar around his neck or anything...”

Diablo reached back and grabbed the two girls hiding behind him by the scruff of their necks.

“Collar, was it?”

Sorcerers may seem to be fairly weak physically, but once you reach level 150 like he had, picking up two girls with both hands was a piece of cake.

“Wha—!?”

“Stop! Stop it!”

Rem and Shera resisted, but Diablo was able to drag them out from behind his back with little effort.

“If it’s collars you want, then here they are.”

“Whaaaaaaat!?”

The guard was shocked.

Turning a deep shade of red, Rem and Shera hid their collars with their hands.

“...Humiliation.”

“Oooh... This isn’t what it looks like!”

The guard raised his voice, bewildered.

“H-Huh!? But usually it’s the Summon who gets the collar, but... Huh!? On you... Huh!?”

“Hmph... Do not put me together with the likes of those Summons. It is unpleasant. If you insist on fouling my mood any further—”

“...Please let us through.”

“What else do you want from us!?”

In the face of Diablo’s overwhelming pressure and the girls’ protests, the guard stepped aside.

“I-I’m terribly sorry! Please take care!”

“Good. Let’s go.”

“Wait, you’re going too fast! And while we’re at it, try not to stand out so much!”

“...The shame...it’s unbearable... I will absolutely remove this spell once we make it back to town.”

Ignoring their objections, Diablo kept walking.

In a panic, Rem and Shera ran to catch up with him.

The other guards and travelers they passed on the Bridge of Ulug reacted with the same level of shock when they saw the girls’ collars.

Their faces showed great concern as they watched Diablo walk along, the two girls in tow.

†

Faltra was a town with a warm climate that received blessings from the river nearby.

The townspeople were cheerful and kind, and because of how pleasant it was,

there was no small amount of Adventurers who chose to settle down and live here—that's what the setting for it was in the game, at least.

The area around here was about level 60 or so. This was only a place the game's story would have you come back to, or for when you finished the beginning parts of the game. If you were going to settle down here, he thought, then the game wouldn't go on...

Whatever the case, there was no mistake that it was a convenient, warm, and beautiful town.

The outer walls were built of stone, and came together in the shape of an octagon.

Water from the river was drawn into waterways, forming a moat around the town. It also ran inside the town, splitting it down the middle.

The stone walls and the moat served as a way to avoid monsters. Wild animals were a constant threat to the normal people living here. They would even damage the crops.

However, in the face of abnormally strong enemies such as the Fallen or Summons, they were severely lacking in power.

It was not just the walls and moat that protected the town.

Towers were built in the corners in each of the eight sides of the stone walls.

They were thin and tall, like antennas.

These towers formed a barrier that would protect the town.

This barrier did not allow just anyone who approached it to pass through, and would only intercept and protect against attacks or the Fallen.

Because of the powerful barrier, no monsters or Fallen could enter the town, making it a safe haven—that was its backstory in the game.

Diablo was aiming for the drawbridge located on the west side of the town.

He was a《Demon》.

This was one of the playable classes you could choose when starting Cross Reverie.

According to the game's setting, Demons were a race of humans who had somehow received the blood of the Fallen. Tattoo-like marks covered their face and body, and while their physical prowess was lacking compared to the other races, they excelled at anything related to magic.

This was especially true for the INT (Intelligence) stat, which determined the power of your spells. It was only this class that could max out this stat.

Since their HP and AGI (Agility) stats were weak, even among the other Sorcerers, they were a class for players that had to rely on protection from their allies.

It was extremely unusual to see a solo player like Diablo use a Demon Sorcerer as their class.

Because the town's barrier would repel anything related to the Fallen, Demons, as well as weapons and armors made by the Fallen, could not enter the town.

Because of this, there were gates placed at the four cardinal directions of the town that anyone could pass through.

Though you could come and go through them as you pleased in the game, Diablo was already expecting them to be under even stricter watch than the Bridge of Ulug.

People were actual living beings in this world. They were different from NPCs who would only act according to their programming.

By the time they had reached the gate, it was already dusk.

The setting sun lit up the stone walls, painting it the color of amber.

The plains they had traveled across were dyed red, as if they were on fire.

It was a beautiful scene.

Rem and Shera did not say anything as they were used to seeing it, but Diablo was secretly moved by it.

They crossed the drawbridge.

Six guards in armor were standing in front of the gate.

Turning up the lapels of their clothes and using their hands to cover their necks, Rem and Shera passed by while hiding their collars.

This time, no one tried to call out and stop them.

He could feel stares following them. They were attracting attention.

They entered the town.

Continuing through a large thoroughfare sandwiched between tons of stone buildings, Diablo decided to head toward the town plaza.

At this point, it wasn't so much that this was a habit he picked up from the game, but it was simply because he wanted to go sightseeing. The goal: to look around town.

Despite it being the early evening, the area around the west gate was packed with people.

Just walking was a challenge.

—So these are all NPCs?

It was an amount you would have never seen in-game. This was an obvious difference though, as a game where you couldn't even walk because of all the NPCs around wouldn't be fun at all.

They weren't shopkeepers or receptionists at the Adventurer's Guild, but just normal people who looked like they had nothing to do with any kind of quest progression whatsoever.

As for the races here: there were Humans; long-eared, slender bodied Elves; Pantherians, with their triangle-shaped ears; Dwarves, who had thick beards and dog-ears; Grasswalkers, who looked like children with rabbit-ears and tails; and finally, though there weren't many of them to be seen, Demons, who had marks covering their bodies and faces.

They were wearing everything from plain clothes to armor, carried knapsacks and weapons, and were walking, talking, and buying things as they pleased.

At first, he had been excited to see all this... But he was actually bad with

crowds. On top of that, he was mentally fatigued from all the sightseeing he had done as well.

—I don't feel so good...

Though the fatigue had not affected him despite how far he had walked until now, it was starting to weigh heavy on his shoulders.

Rem, who was standing right next to him while hiding her collar, cheeks flushed as if she were embarrassed, started to speak up.

"U-Um..."

"What is it?"

"I would like...to go to the inn..."

Her face turned completely red as she fidgeted around.

—Does she need the little girl's room?

If that was the case, he would feel sorry for her if he had to ask why out loud.

"Hm, yes. I was just thinking that I would like to head to the inn myself."

It was then a voice reached his ears.

"That's Rem and that Elf girl, isn't it? Why are they wearing those collars?"

Maybe it was because they had stopped, but by the time he had noticed, they were surrounded by people.

He could hear parts of the conversations they were whispering to each other.

"Huh? Those two weren't Summons, were they?"

"But aren't they wearing Enslavement Collars? That should go on the Summon..."

"No, they aren't just for Summons. They go on slaves, too..."

"Does that mean those two became that guy's slaves!?"

"Shh! Don't say it so loud! ...Look at that guy's face, he's bad news. He may be a Demon, but I haven't seen many like him before. Look at those horns...

They're twisted, real ominous-looking too..."

"You got that right... Making Lady Rem into a slave, doesn't that make him pretty dangerous? Might be a good idea to report this to the Mage's Association."

"From what I hear, that Elf girl over there is supposed to have come from a pretty crazy background."

"She's definitely no normal Elf, that's for sure... Something must have happened if he made those two into slaves, right?"

"Oh crap, he looked at us. Be best not to get involved with him, he's gotta be something like the Fallen."

They were saying some pretty horrible things.

It seemed Rem and Shera could hear it, too. Their faces red, they cast their gazes downwards. Their shoulders were shaking a little.

—Now that's a shock. I wasn't expecting there to be slavery in this world!

He had thought they were embarrassed about their collars because the enslavement magic had reflected back onto them, but he had been wrong.

They were embarrassed because they would be mistaken as slaves.

There was nothing like slavery in the game, so the thought had not even crossed his mind.

Not only that, but Rem was famous enough that people were calling her "Lady," while Shera was supposed to have some kind of amazing family background.

—Oh my god, what do I do!?

He was just now realizing the cruel reality that he had paraded these two around town as slaves.

Diablo was filled with all kinds of regret at this.

They continued to gain more and more attention.

"Hey, you two, what are you doing standing around for? Did you not want to

go to the inn?”

Since the townspeople had started to give them a wider berth, it was a little easier to walk around town.

†

They arrived in front of the inn.

It was a stone building located in between the west gate and the plaza.

About halfway through, Rem and Shera had led the way for him.

While there was only one inn in the game, there were multiple ones to be found even in this one area of town. Also, you usually couldn’t enter any buildings that didn’t serve some kind of function, and any places that had nothing to do with quests always had their entrances blocked off.

But this world was different.

Not only could you enter most of the buildings here, even the signs found on them did not all have the same pattern. A good portion of the buildings were built out of stone, were two stories high, and had triangular roofs and doors made of wood. He couldn’t even tell them apart.

—Back in the day, there was that one RPG that had scenery graphics that were so good you didn’t know where you were going. It was a big title for the dawn of the 3D era of gaming.

It might be harder to not get lost than to use magic...

If only he could have had a map function or something.

Diablo reached out and grabbed the metal doorknob. Pulling the wooden door open, he entered the inn.

It had been a while since he had been in the town’s inn.

Since he had customized his dungeon into his own personal space, he rarely left it.

In the game, inns did not only serve as a way to recover your HP and MP. The first floor was made into a bar; it was a place where you could gather

information from NPCs or mingle with other players.

First of all, there was the reception desk.

There, a young Pantherian girl with yellow cat-ears—well, technically panther-ears—could be found.

It was an NPC Diablo had remembered seeing before.

With brown hair that came down to her shoulders, the Pantherian girl gave them a smile that spread from ear-to-ear.

“Hello, hello! ☆ I’m the idol of the《Peace of Mind Inn》, Mei~ ♪ Kyaha!”

—Ah, so this is still the same as it was back in the game.

He didn’t know whether to feel relieved or amazed at this.

It seemed that the girl always acted like that in this world, since Rem and Shera did not seem to pay it any mind as they went to talk with her.

“...Could I get a key for a room?”

“Rem! Welcome back~☆ Was your summoning a success?”

“...It was... The summoning part, at least...”

Rem was hiding her collar with her hands.

The receptionist girl made a puzzled face.

“What’s wrong?”

“...Never mind that... I would also like to get one extra room.”

—That should be mine, right?

He felt bad about having her take care of him, so Diablo was planning on at least paying for his own room.

However, he wasn’t sure where the money for that would be.

What happened to his money, anyways?

There was a display on the bottom-right of the screen in-game that would show how much you had. It wasn’t an item he possessed.

He didn’t have any kind of leather pouch that seemed like it could be it,

either. No matter where he patted himself down, he couldn't find anything.

The currency used in Cross Reverie was something called "friths." The icon for it in-game showed them as either bronze, silver, or gold coins, but...

No matter how much of a different world this was, he was sure that commoners wouldn't be using gold coins as currency for their everyday lives. They must be using silver or bronze ones, but he couldn't see any anywhere.

—So that means...I'm broke right now?

If it came down to it, he could bite the bullet and sell his equipment or items or something. And if this was a world where you could work as an Adventurer, then someone as strong as himself could easily start saving up some money...

The receptionist craned her neck.

"Another room? For the guy behind you? Hey there, mister! I'm the idol of the—"

"Excuse me!"

Shera suddenly raised her voice.

Though she was surprised, the receptionist girl still managed to respond with a smile.

"Hey to you too, Shera! ☆ What do you need today? If it's a key you want, I'll get it out right away. ♪"

"I-I would... um... I want to add one more person to my room, is that all right!?"

Her face was bright red.

—Is she talking about me!?

This is where Diablo had to put his foot down.

"Listen, you... You aren't talking about me sharing a room with the likes of you, are you?"

His true feelings were something along the lines of, "If I have to share a room with a girl, I won't be able to sleep at all. Please stop, you're going to kill me."

Shera grit her teeth.

“But, but...! I don’t have the money to pay for two rooms! And if you go stay in the room Rem’s getting you, then it makes it seem like she’s your Summoner!”

Rem gave her a frigid smile.

“...I was the one who called Diablo to this world, so it is only natural for me to prepare a room for him. Do you understand? You should just go enjoy being poor by yourself.”

“You’re wrong! I’m his Summoner! A Summoner and their Summon should always be together!”

“...No, someone as amazing as Diablo should be with someone who is equally amazing. That would be with me. So, you see... I will prepare... No, he will stay in my room.”

It was true that Diablo was penniless.

But what was all this about living together with a girl!?

It seemed like there would be no compromising with either Rem or Shera.

The receptionist clapped her hands together.

“Allllrighty! Three guests to stay in our extra large room~ ☆”

Shera started to panic.

“What!? No, no, no! That’s actually kind of a problem! Why am I in the same room as Rem!?”

“...Staying in the same room as this dumb Elf is highly unappealing to me.”

While still keeping her smile, the receptionist tilted her head. You could almost see the sound effects for rumbling appearing behind the two.

“Je~ez, it’s a problem if you two start fighting at the front desk. ☆ I’m gonna put you bad kids in the same room, then! ♪”

Rem seemed as if she was going to say something in protest, when the receptionist’s smile disappeared.

“I’ll throw you out.”

In the face of this intensity, Rem and Shera could only nod silently.

The smile returned to the receptionist’s face, and she handed Diablo the key.

“Then there you go! Try to keep it quiet at night, okay? That’s a special request from me, the idol of the inn. ☆”

He took the heavy, worn iron key.

Sharing a room with two girls...

It took an extreme amount of effort to keep his hands from noticeably trembling.

†

There was one large bed in their room on the second floor.

—There aren’t three of them!?

There weren’t even distinctions like “large rooms” or “small rooms” in the game. The fee to stay the night was always fixed, so there were already a lot of things different here.

The bed itself was a wooden frame filled with straw and some sheets thrown over it. The smell of hay wafted throughout the room.

It seems like these were the kinds of things people slept on back in medieval times... He never thought that he would end up sleeping on a straw bed himself. And with two girls, no less.

If he had told himself last night that “Tomorrow night, I’m gonna be sleeping in the same bed as an Elf and a Pantherian,” he would like to think he would have responded with, “What the hell is wrong with me!?”

On the bed, there was only one blanket for the three of them.

He didn’t think it would get that cold at night, but...

—Just one blanket, huh...

There was nothing else there in the way of furniture. The windows were

made of wooden boards, with no glass of any kind being used.

There was no attic to be found, and the triangular ceiling with beams criss-crossing it was of a medieval design that you would never see in the modern day. The candles on the walls gave the place an antique kind of feeling.

It was a simple room.

But it made Diablo remember the feeling of excitement he got from seeing this kind of scenery for the first time.

From the entrance of the inn all the way to the room, no matter how much he stared, he never got tired of it— But there was only one bed.

Standing on either side of the bed, Rem and Shera were shooting nasty glares at each other.

"...How did I end up sharing a room with you. It would have been fine with just me... No, with just the two of us... Maybe...? No, we definitely would have been fine together."

"That's *my* line! If you hadn't said those things about being Diablo's Summoner, then I would have already finished my Adventurer's registration by now!"

All sorts of luggage was piled up by the side of the bed.

Diablo stood in the entrance to the room.

No matter who he took a step toward, it looked like one of them would either get angry or start crying, so he couldn't make any foolish movements.

"...And how does a tramp of an Elf who is not even registered as an Adventurer, such as yourself, even plan to pay the inn fee? Sleeping outside would suit you better."

"I can't even imagine life without a bed! For money... Well, you know... I was gonna start saving up... Or, you know... I have to save up...or else that would be bad..."

"...You didn't come here without enough money to pay for the inn, did you?"

"I have it! I have...it? Yeah, I have it... I feel like, I have it... I still have some

pretty-looking stuff I took from the treasure room... I-It's fine! I'll start saving up! I'm gonna start saving up with Diablo!"

"...I thought I told you not to use the Demon Lord I summoned however you pleased—"

—These two sure love to fight, don't they?

Diablo was already past feeling troubled by all this, and had started to find the whole thing kind of charming.

They had taken out their weapons when they fought at first, but they seemed to be keeping it to just verbal arguments for now.

That said, there was something he wanted them to do before they got too much into their fighting.

"Hey, you two. Before you start your petulant quarrels again, first you shall tell me more about yourselves."

He already knew their names from their conversations with him.

The small Pantherian with the black hair and panther ears was Rem Galleu. She possessed seven Summons and appeared to be quite an accomplished Summoner, with some of the people in town going so far as to call her "Lady."

The gold-haired Elf with the huge chest was Shera L. Greenwood. She admired Summoners, but seemed to be proficient with a bow. She also appeared to have come from "an amazing background."

That was all he knew about the two so far.

Because it seemed like Diablo would be living in this world for who knew how long, he had to gather as much information as he could about the two of them.

—I don't know if I'll even be able to get back to the real world, either.

He couldn't say if he would end up living a life here as one of their Summons, but it was definitely the option with the highest probability at the moment.

It was important that he confirmed the girl's motives for doing all this.

If their reason for traveling was something like, “I seek a place to die...” or “I want to find people who are stronger than me!” then he would have to decline.

He didn’t think there would be any mechanics like “You lose all your experience points when you die and then respawn” in a world that felt as real as this one.

“You must have a suitable reason for calling someone as powerful as myself. Tell me your skills and goals. I shall allow it.”

“...Would it be all right to consider this as your way of treating one of us as your Summoner?”

“What, really!? You’re gonna be a Summon for us!?”

“Depending on your true power and your ways of thinking, I would be willing to lend you two my assistance.”

He really just wanted to hole up in his own room in peace. He had to start saving up if he wanted to do that, though.

Rem was the first one to nervously open her mouth.

“...I will introduce myself again. My name is Rem Galleu. The reason why I became an Adventurer was because, I had to... I had a need to continually demonstrate my own strength.”

“You had to keep showing your strength?”

“...It’s a personal reason.”

Rem quickly glanced at Shera. It might be something hard to say in front of her.

Rem continued to talk.

“...Anyways... I have to become stronger as an Adventurer. My ultimate goal is to defeat the Demon Lord Krebskulm and completely destroy his soul.”

It was obvious for an Adventurer to make hunting down a Demon Lord their objective. It was in any game, at the very least.

But that was only how it looked from the outside. The real reason you would do it was usually for fame and fortune.

—By the way she talked about it, it seemed like she was serious, though.

That, or she was hiding her true objective.

“...My specialty is Summoning. Besides summoning a Demon Lord from a different world such as yourself, I also have formed contracts with seven other Summons. They are currently in my pouch in crystal form.”

“Hm, understood.”

It seemed that she was hiding a lot of things.

But it doesn’t seem like she’d do anything stupid—thought Diablo.

Her way of talking was intellectual and deliberate. The reason it sounded like she was hiding things was because she was considering how much information it would be all right to reveal at the time.

Pantherians were supposed to be a race of lightning-bruisers. If she was a proficient Summoner on top of that, this was surely because of her own hard work.

And he didn’t hate hard workers.

Also, she was cute.

She had a lean, flexible body, and since her height was short, more dynamic clothes suited her well.

Pantherians not only had cat-like ears on their head, but long, bushy tails as well. She got bonus points for the way her tail came out the back of her pleated skirt...

—Hooooold it, hold it! Now’s not the time for thinking about that!

He tried to play off his now slackened jaw by clearing his throat.

Shera, seeming dissatisfied, opened her mouth.

“If you already have seven of them, then why don’t you just let me have Diablo then!”

Rem sighed.

“...You truly are an idiot, aren’t you. You only said one sentence, but managed

to get two things wrong. Number one: it's been said a thousand times, but Diablo is not a Summon. And number two: Summons are not things that can be transferred to another person."

"But I'm the one who called Diablo! You think so too, right!?"

Looks like the conversation had been passed to Diablo.

Her eyes sparkling, "I want you to agree with me!" was practically written on her face.

Diablo pointed to Shera with his chin.

"You should be talking about yourself as well. Depending on what you say, I may consider it."

Shera's face lit up in a flash.

"Really!? M-My name is Shera L. Greenwood! I may have the same last name as the Elven royal family, but that doesn't matter, okay!?"

—Oh yeah, that's right.

He had a feeling he had read the name "Greenwood" in things about the lore of the game before.

It was the name of the forest that the Elves made their home. Not only that, but in this world, it seemed Greenwood was the name of the Elven royal family here.

There was even a quest where you would save the princess of that royal family.

Also, as a bonus tidbit, you couldn't enter it as your player name either.

Rem fired off a retort.

"...If it doesn't matter, then do not bother with saying it in the first place."

"Oh, that's right! That's why I decided not to go around saying it out loud! Uhm... Can we just keep going on while pretending I didn't say it!?"

She had already said her name when they first met at Starfall Tower, too...

"Do as you like."

“Anyways! On that note, um... The reason I thought I would become an Adventurer is because I’m almost out of money, and because of the people coming after me— I mean, uh... and for other, various reasons, I thought it would be good for me to be with someone strong. Also, it’s lonely traveling by myself... Also also, I seem to have a talent for Summoning! Go figure!”

Halfway through, when it seemed like she had remembered something, for an instant, an expression of loneliness had crossed her face.

Though she didn’t seem like much of a thinker, the fact that she was so honest left a good impression.

She seemed like she was having a lot of trouble since she couldn’t keep secrets very well, but Diablo shouldn’t have to worry about having someone with a bright personality like hers around.

Just like Rem, it was obvious that she was hiding things...

Also, she was beautiful.

In the game’s lore, out of all the races, Elves were said to be the ones who were closest to Celestials. Their shining hair, flawless skin, and slender bodies seemed as if they had been molded from statues. Their movements were lithe and filled to the brim with elegance.

Not only that, but Shera had distanced herself from the traditional image of flat-chested Elves, thanks to her possessing a large and bountiful bust. Just looking at it made things like safety and adventuring and all those difficult things just melt away...

—Hold it, hoooold it! Living is important! And now’s not the time to be thinking of stuff like that, anyways!

Be cool, be cool...—Diablo kept repeating to himself.

Shera put her hands on the bed as she leaned over it.

“A-Anyways, that was my self-introduction! Now you’re fine with being my Summon, right? Right!?”

Because she was leaning forward, her chest bounced, emphasizing the cleavage of her two luscious...melons.

Rem's expression stiffened.

"...You cheater."

"What are you talking about, Rem!? I wasn't lying or anything!"

"...I don't want a high-fat Elf with useless sacks of meat like you saying my name so casually."

"Wha—!? Well *I* don't like you calling me a high-fat Elf! I have a name, you know!"

"...I'll just call you high-fat Elf from now on."

"Whaaaaaat!?"

They were on the verge of fighting again.

Diablo knew that the reason these two were fighting was because he wouldn't make a choice.

—It's still too soon for me to declare something like, "Become your own strength and live on your own..."

They were still hiding things from him, but they must have had their own reasons for doing so.

What should I do?—Diablo thought to himself as he stared at the girls arguing with each other.

Then, there was a knock on the door behind Diablo.

†

Now that he thought about it, they were warned not to be too noisy.

—Could it be the receptionist girl?

Diablo stepped away from the door.

When he did, he had stepped toward Rem without realizing it. Shera looked like she was in shock, but he pretended that he hadn't seen it. If he opened that particular can of worms, he was going to be stuck there for a while.

Rem, as the one who had paid for the room, was the one who answered the

door.

“...Come in.”

“Pardon the intrusion.”

It was a soothing voice that sounded like a bell.

The door opened.

Their visitor was a beautiful woman.

She was a kind-looking person.

Her long blue hair plaited behind her head, with the rest of it spilling down toward the front of her chest.

She wore an extravagant red cape embroidered with gold, wearing it like a coat when she entered, but had opened it and put it on her back when she greeted everyone.



She wore a soft, blue robe that covered her from the shoulders to her ankles. It didn't show off much skin, but since it was of a tight-fitting design, her ample bodyline was made visibly apparent.

It was kind of hard to control where he should look.

In her hands, she was holding a gorgeous white porcelain wand, with a gold ornament adorning it. He understood that to mean she was an accomplished Sorcerer herself.

Judging from her clothes, she must be some kind of higher-up—Diablo guessed.

She looked like she was in her early 20s, age-wise. Though she was only smiling, she gave off a sense of open-mindedness.

"Good day, everyone... So you really are sharing a room, Rem. I'm so happy to know that you've made some friends."

Rem shook her head.

"...They are not my friends. One is someone I summoned from another world, and the other is...some kind of an extra. Please pay it no mind. Since its clothes are green, just think of it like mold you would find stuck on a wall."

"Isn't that too mean!?" Shera lamented.

The woman laughed cheerfully, and went to introduce herself.

"Ufufu... This is our first time meeting each other, right? My name is Celestine Baudelaire. But call me Celes, okay? I came here today because I had some business with Rem, but I would love to hear about you two as well."

The way she tilted her head was really cute.

Though she seemed kind and mature, she also had a childlike charm to her as well.

—So her name's Celestine? I feel like I've read that before somewhere, too... If I remember right, she was the Mage's Association's...

He had remembered, but thought against saying it out loud.

It was because it would be strange for a Demon Lord from another world to

know that.

Thankfully, it seemed that Shera had picked up on it as well.

“What!? You mean the Celestine from the Mage’s Association!? *The* Lady Celestine Baudelaire!?

“Yes. Thanks to a string of coincidences, I am currently acting as the head of the Mage’s Association of Faltra.”

Celes nodded, gradually looking more and more embarrassed.

The Mage’s Association.

In-game, this was an organization that the player could not enter themselves, but they would see the name mentioned often.

Whenever a new spell was added in an update, it would be explained by saying something along the lines of: “The Mage’s Association has made a new discovery!”

The name also came up often as the client for quests.

As an organization, they kind of gave off the feeling of some kind of state-run research institution.

There was generally one Mage’s Association found in every town, with some having two or more in rare cases.

All Mage’s Associations had a loose alliance with each other, but since each one had their own way of doing things from town to town, there were good and bad things to be found in them all.

However, they all shared a common theme in the game’s lore.

The head of each respective Mage’s Association was in charge of maintaining the barrier that protected their town.

Basically, this meant that this woman’s very existence protected the town of Faltra from monsters and the Fallen.

He had seen the name Celestine Baudelaire as the client for various quests

before, but he did not remember her ever making an appearance as an NPC before. So that's what she looked like.

—Why would someone as important as her be at an inn on the outskirts of town?

Celes should have been in the deepest part of the Mage's Association, using all her power to maintain the town's barrier. *I can't believe she came all the way to see us, she must have some kind of reason*—thought the shut-in, starting to get pumped up.

Celes clapped her hands together.

"Oh, I know! Would everyone care to go get some dinner together? It seems like you all have some...complicated circumstances, after all."

Her eyes, thinned because of her smile, were looking at Rem and Shera's necks.

That is where the two "Enslavement Collars" were.

Diablo nodded.

"Very well. I was just starting to feel a little famished myself."

"...Then I will come too. I am Diablo's Summoner, after all."

"No fair, saying that in front of Lady Celes! Diablo belongs to me!"

The two girls were the same as always.

Celes tilted her head a little.

"Hmm... It seems like those circumstances are a little more complicated than I thought. We may be able to find a way to sort that all out as well, so let's get going."

Turning on her heels, she left the room.

Rem followed her.

Though she had been fighting with Rem just a second ago, Shera was practically skipping as she followed along.

"Food, food~ Actual, real food. ♪"

—That's right, she did say she didn't have any money. She might not have been getting enough to eat...

That song seemed a bit sadder now.

Despite what Diablo had said earlier, he was not particularly hungry.

What he needed now wasn't food, but knowledge.

Being able to talk with one of the town's big shots was certainly a stroke of luck for him.

He left the room.

There should be a bar down on the first floor.

†

The bar was a short trip down the long hallway that stretched out to the left of the front desk.

The ceiling, the floor, the counter, the evenly-spaced tables... Everything was made out of dark-colored wood that had a smoky finish to it. The walls were made of stone.

There were no customers besides themselves at the moment.

The bar Diablo was used to seeing was usually packed to the brim with players and NPCs, chat boxes flying everywhere.

It seemed that Celes had somehow cleared everyone out.

It was only Diablo, Rem, and Shera at the table, with Celes sitting opposite of them.

There were two more people who stood behind Celes on either side of her. It looked like they were keeping watch over Diablo and the others.

They were both young men, Sorcerers in brown robes that reached to their ankles who each carried a long magic staff in one hand.

The one standing in front of Diablo was as thin as a wire, and was wearing a high-strung expression on his face. He was also making no effort to conceal the fact that he was glaring at him.

—Is he on guard? Wait, is that hatred? Contempt? It's the first time I've met this guy, right?

Well this didn't feel good.

Since they were security from the Mage's Association, they did not sit down.

Celes gave a bitter smile.

"I'm sorry, but because of my position I can't just go out by myself..."

That should be obvious.

If anything were to happen to her, then the town's protective barrier would disappear. He had never seen a situation like that happen before, but if monsters or the Fallen decided to attack... He didn't expect any of the normal people living here would make it out unharmed.

Just from the fact that she only brought two escorts here, he could feel Celes's respect for them—well, actually, it felt like she was showing respect for Rem.

Diablo gave a generous nod.

"No matter."

His reply seemed to have struck a nerve. The guard standing in front of him made a face as if he were having a cramp.

"Hey, you. You best watch your tone when speaking with Master Baudelaire. If you don't show her the proper respect, I won't hold back."

This guy sounds like a douche—he thought.

Celes, seeming troubled by this, went to calm down the man behind her.

"Galluk, that's rude... It was those two who were the ones who forced him to come along with them, after all."

"It may not trouble you so much, Master Baudelaire, but having this Demon nobody disrespect you is an insult to the dignity of the Mage's Association!"

Diablo's shoulders were shaking slightly.

—What the f—... Is this guard really going to lecture Celes, the head of the

freakin' Mage's Association, about the dignity *of the Mage's Association?*

It seemed like this guy was overly sensitive to other people being rude, but was too thick-skulled to notice when he was being rude himself.

—It would be a pain in the ass to get involved.

If he was being honest, he had basically zero communication skills back in the real world. Even though he had come to another world, that fact still hadn't changed. If he tried to speak normally, then the words just wouldn't come out right.

It would be bad if he was rude, but he didn't have the verbal skills to pay respect while keeping up his own grandiose image.

Even if he didn't want to stir up trouble, the only way for him to talk in a comprehensible manner was to use his Demon Lord roleplay.

He concluded that it would be safest if he just ignored it, though it seemed like Mr. Bodyguard over there wasn't satisfied with the whole thing...

Celes went to change the subject.

"Before we start talking, let's eat first. I'll be taking care of everything, so please eat as much as you'd like, okay?"

"We can!? Really!?"

"Of course, help yourself to whatever you'd like."

"Woohoo!!"

Out of joy, Shera threw both her arms in the air, then started making requests to the receptionist, who had come to take their order.

Before long, several dishes of food were brought out.

There were sausages of various sizes, boiled potatoes, plain soups, and white bread. Veggies that looked like lettuce and eggplant made an appearance, as well as apples and grapes.

The drink placed in front of Diablo looked like it could have been beer.

Rem and Shera got some kind of fruit juice, while Celes got wine.

“Yay! Let’s dig in!”

Shera reached out toward the food.

Judging by her reaction, this must really be a feast—he thought.

—But it doesn’t really look that good, though.

Diablo tried biting into one of the sausages.

It had just the right amount of chewiness to it, and the juicy, rich flavor of the meat spread throughout his mouth.

—Huh!? This is delicious!

It had a powerful, rustic flavor.

Shera was voraciously tearing into the food. It was enough to make you wonder where she was putting it all in that slender Elf body.

—Oh, I see! So that’s why her chest is like that...

Rem, from the corner of her eye, glared at Shera, who was happily stuffing her face. However, without bringing up Shera’s eating habits, she switched the conversation to the issue at hand.

“...So, Miss Celes...is this going to be about ‘that’ again?”

Rem sounded like she was annoyed.

Since the way she said it had been rude, he thought that the bodyguard from earlier was going to get involved again, but he did not give any reaction in particular.

—I wonder if Celes and Rem are of the same status to him?

That would mean someone from the Mage’s Association would see Rem as someone on the same level as the head of the Mage’s Association.

It made him wonder what kind of position Rem held.

Celes put her hands together, as if she were making a request.

“Rem, I’m just thinking that it would be great if I could help you, you know? You must have gone through many hardships, and you may not trust me, but I want you to know at least that part is true.”

“...I do not like like going to the Association headquarters, and I do not like having guards follow me around, either.”

“But it’s been pretty rough out there lately. There’s been reports of the Fallen having deceived people and making it through the barrier in other towns... If you were a member of the Mage’s Association, I can’t imagine a town being taken advantage of by the Fallen would be enough to cause you trouble.”

“...Thank you for your concern, but I am capable of protecting myself on my own.”

“Do you hate me, I wonder?”

Celes had a forlorn look on her face.

Rem sighed.

“...I have said it before, but I have never doubted your character. However... I do not know how to rely on people. I have always managed through life on my own, and I plan to keep pushing forward using my own power. Using that power —I will destroy the Demon Lord Krebskulm.”

“The Mage’s Association may be able to help you do something about that collar.”

Rem quickly touched her collar.

“This is...”

“You’re not wearing that collar because you want to, right? I don’t believe someone such as yourself could be forced into being a slave... Could it have been from an accident even you could not have foreseen, which caused the collar to be attached to you? And would I be mistaken in saying that the owner of that collar would be Mr. Diablo over there?”

“...You would not.”

“Hm.”

Without thinking, Diablo let his voice slip out.

—That’s some amazing insight she’s got.

There hadn’t even been anything said that would let her guess the course of

events that led to the collars being put on them.

She had come to that conclusion only by the conversation between the three of them.

It seemed she hadn't become the head of the Mage's Association just because of her magical prowess.

Celes looked at Diablo.

"Please, I beg you, is there any way you could bring yourself to release Rem? She's a very important person for this world. Of course, I promise to compensate you appropriately for doing so."

He did feel that he wanted to release her.

However, even for someone who had played countless hours of Cross Reverie such as himself, he did not know the way you would go about removing an Enslavement Collar, since it was only mentioned in the game's setting.

Diablo turned his head to the side.

"I am not in the habit of forcing others to obey me with magic... But since I do not know the method to release them, I cannot comply."

He thought it would be best to tell her straight.

Celes let out a disappointed sigh.

"I see... You seemed to be quite the experienced Sorcerer, so I thought you might have been able to understand things that I could not... It looks like I have no choice but to look into this starting from square one."

Shera made a serious face.

"Hmm... Since Diablo was the one who reflected the magic back at us, and his magic seems to be really powerful, even if you find a way, a normal Sorcerer might not be able to get the job done... Or something like that could happen, right?"

"It was reflected? I see... If that's the case, then I may need to request Diablo's assistance."

Listening to the conversation, Diablo let out a sigh.

“So you’re all incompetent, unable to even undo your own magic... Very well. If you find a way, tell me. I will lend you my assistance at that time.”

BAM!

It was the sound of something striking the wooden floor.

He turned his gaze to look.

The wiry guard behind Celes had slammed his staff on the ground.

“You... You bastard! What right do you have to reject Master Baudelaire’s request! Not only that, but you have turned Lady Rem Galleu into your slave!? By what right!”

—Like I know...

All he had been saying was that an unfortunate accident had occurred, and that he was unable to undo the magic of his own will.

—Man, there wasn’t even an NPC as annoying as this in the game...

Celes stood up.

“It looks like going any further would only cause trouble for you... I’m sorry everyone, even though you must be exhausted.”

He hadn’t expected the conversation to stop midway thanks to the guard’s hysterics.

Celes’s position must keep her busy, but he thought he might have been able to get a little more information out of her.

Rem cast her eyes downward.

“Miss Celes... I may have seemed scornful after refusing to go to the Association and rejecting the guards. But, could I still ask you...to please look into a way to remove these collars?”

“Of course. All I want to do is protect you.”

Celes smiled.

It was a gentle smile.

Rem lowered her head.

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it. But if you ever change your mind, you can always rely on me, okay? The Mage’s Association has a duty to the world to protect you... And you’re like a little sister to me.”

At this, Celes turned and left the bar.

The two guards went to follow her.

However, as they were leaving, the wiry guard glared at Diablo, eyes full of loathing.

—Well, I’m sure I won’t be running into him that much, anyways.

But besides that.

Rem had been keeping a grave secret.

It was a secret so shocking that the head of the Mage’s Association had even said that protecting her was for the sake of the world.

This was something that could definitely turn into a big problem.

This is something I should know about—thought Diablo.

“Hey. You.”

“...What is it?”

“It seems the secret you carry is no ordinary one. I am intrigued... I shall allow it, so speak of it now.”

“I can’t...do that...”

She faltered.

It didn’t seem like it was something she could say so easily.

He knew that telling such a serious secret to someone that you had known for only half a day was asking for too much.

However, this was not the time for him to be backing down.

—My gamer sense is tingling. The problem Rem is wrestling with...is one of those things that makes the story get more serious!

For the most part, whenever a situation like this comes about where some big-shot comes all the way out to see a specific person; or if the person in question says it's not something they can really talk about with other people; these secret circumstances only become clear after completing a bunch of story quests and reaching the finale.

There were also many instances where the whole thing could have been solved much more easily if they had just talked about it sooner.

These kinds of secrets would come to light if you started prying into them. That was how they would get you excited about playing through the story of a game.

It would be fine if we were talking about a game, though.

But this was another world; this was reality.

He wanted to avoid taking risks wherever possible.

Diablo wanted to take care of Rem's problem, treating it as if a story quest had just appeared before him.

—Even if I have to force it out of her, I'm going to hear her secret and bust through that story!

By thinking of it as if it were part of the strategy he needed to beat a game, he had become strangely more assertive about it.

"Hey. You."

"...What is it?"

Diablo got up from his seat.

Going over to Rem, who had barely touched her food, he grabbed her by the arms and made her stand up. Holding her by the waist, he picked her up and lifted her over him.

"You're pretty light."

"Wha!? Wh-Wh-What are you planning to do!?"

Shera looked up at them, countless sausages stuffed into her cheeks.

“Mmphmphmph! *_gulp_* Where are you two going? There’s still tons of food here!”

Now that he thought about it, Rem did seem to hesitate talking around Shera earlier. If he was going to pry this secret out of Rem, it would be better if it was just the two of them.

“I’m going to torture her.”

The two girls were at a loss for words.

Seeing the usually cool and collected Rem get this frightened was kind of a surprise.

Bread still clutched in her hand, Shera was frozen in place. Then, after a few moments...

“...I-I’ll just go ahead and keep on eating, then!”

She avoided looking at them.

Rem called back in a voice that sounded like she was about to cry.

“Y-You... You and I were traveling companions, even if it was only for a short time, right!? Are you not even going to try and save me!?”

“You know, I have this straaange feeling that you kept calling me a stupid Elf the whole time!? And even just a little while ago, you said I was mold on a wall or something, didn’t you!?”

“...Why are you not being tricked, even though you’re so stupid!?”

“You said it again! You called me stupid again! I don’t even care anymore! I’m not going to save you!”

“Th-That was something someone who is going to save me would forgive me for saying!”

She was completely terrified.

There was no way of putting the brakes on the Demon Lord act. If he were that skillful, then he would have been speaking normally from the very start.

Even so, Diablo tried to work out a way to spin his words to try and reassure her a little. It wasn't like he was trying to take her life or anything, he just wanted to know what she was hiding.

"Ku-ku-ku-ku... There's no need to be afraid, I will not try to kill you... If you spill your secret fast enough, that is."

Maybe the nuance of what he wanted to say changed a little.

He tried smiling.

As if she had accepted her fate, Rem closed her eyes and whispered: "...I wonder if you could call my fourteen years living in this world as long or short. Mother, Father... It looks like I will be joining you on the other side tonight..."

It seemed to have had the opposite effect.

Since there were no other options, Diablo quickly made for their room while still holding Rem.

†

After returning to the room, he locked the door.

It was already nighttime.

The only light sources in the dimly lit room were the candles on the wall. The only things that could be faintly seen were things like the bed, the wall, and the two of them.

Since there were no chairs, Diablo sat Rem down on the bed, then turned his attention to her.

She was looking down at the floor.

Her little panther ears were lying flat on her head, and were trembling slightly.

—Dang, she's cute.

—Maaan, I want to try touching them.

—Wait, I shouldn't be thinking about that right now. I have to make sure and hear what her deal is.

He didn’t want to have to force it out of her, though.

There was a possibility that they would be working together from here on out. He wanted to keep some semblance of a relationship with her.

“There is only one thing I wish to know... Why did the head of the Mage’s Association come all the way out to see you?”

“...I can’t say.”

Rem’s will was firm.

Even though she was this scared, it seemed she had no intention of revealing her secret.

Diablo was hesitant. The reason he wanted to ask Rem about her circumstances was because he wanted to get a head start on the difficult quest that was guaranteed to come up because of it. He wanted to avoid making their relationship worse, which would also serve to make this an even bigger problem.

—Maybe I’ll try digging around a bit more.

“Are you asking me to lend you my power while hiding things from me?”

“...That...That is true, but...I do not want to talk about it.”

“Hmm? Would this secret of yours be something that would be disadvantageous for me?”

Her voice sank. “...No... If I say it, then you will leave me as well...”

In the dim light, her eyes full of despair, Rem looked so despondent. It was enough for Diablo to be at a loss for what to say for a moment.

She continued.

“...I have a terrible secret. If you were just a powerful Summon, then I may have been able to talk with you about it. But as it is now, you have the choice of choosing between me or Shera...and that is why I am afraid. I need the power of the Demon Lord Diablo...but if you learn my secret, then you may distance yourself from me.”

—So the reason she doesn’t want to say it is because she’s insecure.

Rem was afraid that he would leave her if she knew her secret.

—A terrible secret, huh.

It also seemed that there were people who distanced themselves because they knew her secret. It was enough to have hurt her emotionally.

—I don't think she'd believe me even if I said that I'd be OK with it.

By the time he was close enough for her to trust him, it might be too late. That was a common pattern for these things.

If Diablo had chosen to play the role of a valiant hero, then that's probably how it would have turned out.

He didn't have any magic words that could heal the wounds on Rem's heart.

He didn't have enough time to get her to trust him, and he also did not have the talent to give her the courage she needed to say it.

—A Demon Lord should do things like a Demon Lord.

Diablo sneered an extraordinarily evil sneer.

"I understand why you don't want to say it. However, what I want to know is why Celes came to visit you. Did you think that a Demon Lord would hold back on you?"

"Hyah!?"

Rem tried to resist, but she was already sitting down.

Despite this, she managed to skillfully crawl up onto the bed. As you'd expect of a Pantherian, she had mastery over her small and light body.

Chasing after her, he placed his hands on her shoulders and pushed her down.

Diablo's AGI (Agility) and STR (Strength) stats were far above hers.

It seemed that Rem was too scared to be able to use her true power.

"Ku-ku-ku... It seems like torture will be necessary after all."

"Ngh... A-Are you planning...to disgrace me?"

"Huh?"

The thought had never occurred to him.

He hadn't imagined he would have pushed her onto the bed either, but maybe it was a little weird that something like that didn't even occur to him.

That was reasonable, considering the life he had led up until now was one where he had even forgotten the last time he had spoken with an actual girl.

—I was a solo player, even in real life... And now I'm making myself depressed.

Having come to a conclusion at what Diablo's silence meant, Rem shut her eyes tight. She was trembling.

She had long, thin eyebrows, with small shoulders, slender arms and legs, miniature, doll-like fingers, and light-pink lips.

There was also an earthy smell to her. Was it because Pantherians were Earth-type?

Not only that, but she smelled sweet, too.

Her clothes were in disarray, and because the hem of her dress-like outfit had been pulled up, her snow-white thighs were showing.

—She's cute.

Damn. She was so cute, the feeling was overwhelming that, no matter where he ended up touching her, he would seem like a criminal.

Tears were glistening in the corners of her eyes.

Well, he had already gone so far as to grab her and push her down. The question was, what would he do next.

He thought that maybe he would be able to make her talk by threatening her with a little pain... But now, even thinking of doing that to her was too sad to think about.

Her black hair spilled out over the sheets, kind of making it seem like she was one of the reverse-side images of a hugging pillow. Wait, maybe it was the opposite. Those were the kinds of products that modeled themselves after girls posed in this way, after all.

Rem's ears were trembling, as if they were trying to hide in her hair.

—Wonder if here would be all right?

He reached out...and grabbed her silky panther ears.

“Yoink.”

“...Mm!?”

They were thin. Not only that, but her fur was soft and smooth to the touch as well.

The feeling of sliding his fingers from the base to the edges of her ears was nothing short of absolute bliss, and the resistance her fur gave when he brushed it the opposite direction was heavenly.

He relished the feeling of stroking her fur.

Rem’s body twisted about.

“Ha...ngh!?”

“What’s wrong? Does that tickle?”

“...I-It does... C-Could you please...stop that?”

She was just barely managing to hold onto her cool personality. It seemed like her ears were quite a sensitive spot.

Diablo smiled.

“Then you shall tell me your secret.”

“No way!?”

“So you can’t say it... Then there is no way around it.”

Gently grasping her ears, he began rubbing them.

Rem’s body twitched in response.

“Hyan...!? Ah...ah...! You...can’t...!”

“I see, I see... So around the outside of your ear is good, is it?”

He made his attack by tracing circles around her fur, just barely on the verge of touching it.

Rem kept twitching.

“Fuwahh!? Nghhh... That’s too...ngh...kuh... Hnng... It...tickles...”

Her calm and collected attitude was no more.

Her expression having been broken down, she was gasping in a higher-pitched voice than normal.

Diablo’s heartbeat had also strangely gone up.

“Now, how about the base of your ears?”

This time he would try scratching behind the base of her ears. He made sure to use the tips of his fingers in a way that wouldn’t hurt her.

Rem kept twitching, her body seeming like it was jumping in shock as her slender white fingers grasped the bed.

Straw came pouring out from where the edges of the sheet had been pulled up.

“Hah! Ah! Mmmph! N-no more...ngh... Not, there... Ah! If you scratch there... A-Ahhhhh...!! Not behind my eaaaars!!”

“Are you going to tell me your secret?”

“...I... I will, not...”

“Aren’t you a stubborn one. Then, how about if I do this!”

Taking one ear in both his hands, he used all ten fingers to stimulate the base of her ear.

Scratch scratch scratch scratch scratch scratch scratch scratch...

“Hyahhhhhhhhhhhhh!?”

Rem’s back muscles tightened, raising her hips into the air.

Her hair completely disheveled, she tried to escape by moving to the edge of the bed.

He thought it would be dangerous if she fell, but was afraid he would hurt her if he went to grab her arms or shoulders when she was thrashing around this much.

Even if God could forgive someone for putting a scratch on her beautiful skin,

the Demon Lord would not.

As Diablo moved on top of her, he wrapped his left arm around to try and hold her head, while he used his right arm to hold her shoulders down. *This should make it so she wouldn't fall off the bed.*

It looked like he was holding her down so she couldn't run away, but that most certainly was not his intention. Probably.

Even while this was happening, his right hand had been caressing her ears.

"Hya! Ngh, ah... Mm... Not...there... Ear...tickles... Khh, this is...nyhaaaa!"

"How's that?"

"Hyau!? Hah, hah... Ngh... I won't...say..."



Since he was hanging over her, his lips were incredibly close to her ears. Was it because he had been breathing on her? Her reaction then had seemed incredibly honest.

He tried blowing in her ears.

Phewww

“Fwahhhhhh...”

Another reaction that was completely different from when he was stimulating her with his fingers.

Though not strong, it looked like it had reached down to the very core of her being.

Rem’s breathing was ragged, and her face was crimson red. Tears poured from the corners of her eyes; her back was arched, and she gripped the sheets of the bed with her fingertips.

I feel like one more push should do it—he thought.

She looked at him with glistening eyes.

“Hah...hah... Diablo...”

“Do you feel like talking now?”

“I... I can’t, go on... This is...too embarrassing...”

Holy crap.

So cute.

He was starting to think he couldn’t go on much longer either.

“Rem, just leave it all to me. No matter what your circumstances may be, I will accept it all.”

As he said this, he opened his mouth—and wrapped it around her ear.

He experienced the softness with every part of his mouth; his teeth, his lips, his tongue.

Her small body convulsed and buckled under the multiple stimulations.

“Kuhahh!? Ah...ahhh...ngh, haaah...ahhhhhh!!”

Rem kept trembling over and over in his arms.

As her screams continued, it was almost shocking how someone as small as herself was able to make screams that loud.

“Ahhhhhnnnnngaaaaahhhhhh...!!”

After the loudest scream from her yet, Rem collapsed as her strength left her.

In the end, her voice was hoarse from her screams.

Even the sound of her breathing had quieted, causing him to worry.

Diablo took his lips off of her.

“Phew...”

“...U...uhu... *hic*”

Rem let out a sob.

—I made her cry!?

Diablo propped himself up with his elbows.

“H-Hey...”

“Uhu... *hic*... Oo, hng... *hic*”

The area around Rem’s eyes was completely red.

Transparent tears dripped down and stained her cheeks.

—Oh crap.

—I may have overdone it a little.

“Are you hurt anywhere?”

“...N...o... I’m...happy...really happy...”

“Wh-What!?”

Did her ears feel that good!?

“...U...ngh... Because...you said you would accept me...n-no matter my circumstances...” she said, her voice mixed with her sobs.

“Hm? Oh, b-but of course!”

He did feel like he had blurted out something like that in the heat of the moment.

What was he going to do if her secret was something really crazy...

—Man oh man. And here I thought I would never have to deal with any kind of trouble from getting involved with girls.

Rem’s breathing calmed down.

If there was a water supply or something around here he could have grabbed some water for her, but unfortunately drinkable water in this world was a luxury. He would have to buy some from the counter at the bar if he wanted any.

“Hm? Wait, now that I think about it...”

Though it wasn’t something you could normally do in-game, he may be able to expand upon how he used his elemental magic in this world. If he just imagined the basics of how a dehumidifier worked, he should be able to extract moisture from the air itself.

He decided to give it a shot.

Diablo opened the palm of his hand, imagining a small figure made of ice forming in it.

Even if the shape was simple, it would do fine.

He thought of something that he was always using, a cup, as well as gathering water molecules from the air. This would be the basics of the basics of magic.

“《Ice》 and 《Water》.”

A flash of light came from Diablo’s hand, and in it appeared a cup made of ice with water inside.

He already had experience with a spell like this, so he just tried to remember what he knew about the flavor text for the magic and gave it a try.

Rem’s eyes widened.

“What’s...this?”

“A cup with water. The cup is made of ice, so it might be slippery.”

Supporting her back, he helped sit her upright and handed her the cup.

“...It’s cold...”

“Don’t drink it all at once. Take it slow.”

Holding the ice cup in both hands, she sated her thirst.

If he was able to make glass or other kinds of ceramics, that would be a big help in living here.

—I wonder if that would be Earth-type magic?

He wasn’t particularly good at those. When he had the time, he would give that a try as well.

Rem exhaled deeply.

“...Phew.”

“Are you done already?”

She nodded in response. When she did, he made the cup and the water vanish.

By the time he noticed, he was sitting next to her on the bed, arms supporting her. Almost like how two lovers would hold each other.

—No no no, this is just me taking care of her. Oh, hold on, this was supposed to be me torturing her, wasn’t it!?

His goal was supposed to have been finding out why someone like Celes had come to see Rem, and to make her tell him that secret.

Rem turned her gaze toward him.

I wonder if this is what it feels like when a kitten stares at you.

She seemed frightened, but also as if she was hoping for something.

Diablo did not rush her.

Rem opened her mouth.

“...Inside of my body...is sealed the soul of the Demon Lord, Krebskulm.”

Diablo nodded. “Hm! I see.”

Rem’s eyes were the ones to widen in surprise.

“...What? Is that all? Doesn’t that repulse you? Doesn’t that make you afraid? A-Are you not...going to hate me...?”

“The soul of the Demon Lord Krebskulm? Repulsive? Scary? I am the Demon Lord Diablo, you know.”

“...Then, that means...”

“Celes said that she wanted to protect you. From that, I believe it would be reasonable to think Krebskulm will be released upon your death, or if you are taken away by the Fallen, they will release it somehow. Not only that, but as of now you are unaware of a method to remove it from yourself. If you did, she would surround you with the armies of this world, then draw out Krebskulm to defeat him. As of now, the only person that knows about this should be Celes. Of course, it seems like no one in this town has any idea, and that goes the same for the underlings from the Mage’s Association, too. I would think that someone such as that crazy bodyguard from earlier would never address someone who carried the soul of a Demon Lord in them as ‘Lady.’ As far as they are concerned, they only know you as a very accomplished Summoner. How’s that? Did I get anything wrong?”

Her eyes widened.

“...Th-That’s correct... The soul will be released when I die.”

“Then I will ask: did your mother carry the soul of the Demon Lord Krebskulm as well?”

“.....”

Rem nodded.

—So that means the soul of Krebskulm is hereditary. From mother to

daughter...

If this was the lore for Cross Reverie, Takuma would be complaining at the developers big time.

Making one girl bear the burden of the fate of the entire world by herself was just too cruel.

Not only that, but as an Adventurer, she was severely lacking in power.

“Hmph... Seems like even God can defy expectations. Forcing everything on this girl and then disappearing... Very well. I will crush the soul of the Demon Lord Krebskulm for you. As for pulling it out of you, some research will be required to find a method.”

Besides what Celes already understood, she should be researching a bunch of other things as well.

He would make sure to ask her about it the next time he saw her.

It looked like he had been right to look into finding out about Rem’s secret.

This information was sure to be the key for the story quest that would lead to the game’s finale.

—Like hell I’d play this tearjerker questline in order!

“Hm? What’s the matter, Rem?”

“.....Ngh...!”

Tears were pouring from her face even harder than before.

“...Th-This is...the first time...someone didn’t...leave... Wahhhh!”

He couldn’t really make out what she said through the sobbing.

—That’s right. Rem had been worried that I would leave her once she told me her secret.

“Hmph... You underestimate me! For Diablo, the Demon Lord of another world... I am not so weak as to leave you over a thing like that.”

Rem gave a sob and tried to say something, but he couldn’t make it out.

Eventually, just like a kid, she tired herself out from crying and fell asleep.

Since she was already on top of the bed, he made sure to cover her with a blanket.

Her face when she was asleep was cute, too.

—Wait, that's not it.

She had always been on edge up until now, but this was the first time she had an expression of relief on her face.

Diablo heaved a sigh.

"But man, I really did make her scream, huh... And as she was crying, too. I'm pretty sure the other rooms must have heard that... Wonder what they're gonna think of me. Man... Oh well, I am pretending to be a Demon Lord, after all. I guess it'll be fine."

He should go and tell Shera that they were finished up here.

—I guess I should also go and apologize to the receptionist girl as well.

He would make sure not to say how it had concerned the fate of the world, though.

†

After Diablo had finished his errands, he left the inn.

Though the receptionist had warned him that nighttime was dangerous, he wanted to cool down his now heated-up body with the cool night air.

To be honest, can anyone in this town even put a scratch on me?—he thought.

The town at night—

He didn't have any destination in particular.

—Guess I'll make my way to the west gate and back.

A large moon and an unbelievable amount of stars were shining in the night sky. Maybe because of its size, it was still bright out with just the moonlight.

All the stores were closed. Only the bars still had their lights on, where the

sound of people talking and raucous laughter could be heard.

There weren't many passersby to be seen.

Compared to the afternoon, the stone houses and roads now looked cold to him.

In front of him, a group of people wearing familiar robes were walking toward him.

—Looks like fifteen of them in total.

Diablo was able to get an idea of how many opponents were in a group and their positions with just a glance. This wasn't any particular skill from the game, but a testament to his own skill as a gamer.

The robes these people had were the same as the guards who had come with Celes earlier.

They were probably Sorcerers from the Mage's Association.

—What are they doing walking around in a big group like that at night?

It piqued his curiosity, and he had no reason to avoid them.

Diablo walked slowly, eventually passing the group.

"Hey, you. The Demon over there."

He was stopped by a voice that sounded like it was trying to pick a fight. There was also a hint of mocking to it.

"Hm?"

Now that he thought about it, humans in the game's setting would discriminate against the other races, with the ones they scorned the most being —Demons.

Players in the game never did anything like that, so he had never really given much thought about it.

He didn't want to get involved in anything, so he tried to ignore it and keep walking. However, his challenger drew closer.

“Hey! So a Demon thinks he can just ignore me, huh!? You’re just a parasite who’s living here thanks to our and Lady Celes’s kindness!”

—Parasite!?

It is true that Celes’s power kept up the barrier protecting the town, but there was no reason to go that far, was there!?

He recognized the man who had come forward to insult him.

It was that wiry guard with Celes who wouldn’t stop complaining, whose name escaped him.

Diablo decided to give him a response.

“What, Small Fry?”

“Ngk!? You really don’t have any manners, do you! My name is Galluk! Calling someone the likes of me, who serves under the head of the Mage’s Association, a ‘small fry’ is pretty damn rude, don’t you all think!?”

He was met with a chorus of “That’s right!” from the other members of his group.

They also reeked of alcohol.

—Oh god. Not only is this guy a pain in the ass, now he’s drunk, too?

Diablo was getting a bit dejected.

“What do you want? I don’t recall being able to be stopped by small fry like you.”

“H-Hmph! Say that while you still can. Ever since I first saw you, I never liked you! Not your attitude toward Lady Celes, and not your attitude toward Lady Rem, either! Everything you do lacks respect!”

—Seems like discrimination wasn’t the only reason he came after me.

Even though Rem was another race, a Pantherian, he would still call her “Lady.”

Another small thing Diablo noticed was that he would call Celes by her last

name, “Master Baudelaire,” when she was around, while he would call Rem “Lady Rem Galleu.”

—Looks like this guy has another side to him.

It seemed as if he had taken offense from something about Diablo, and was releasing his pent-up stress with the aid of alcohol and the advantage of being in a group.

It was for the best if Diablo didn’t get caught up with someone the likes of him.

“If you’re going to be noisy, go do it somewhere away from me. I will not lend an ear to the nonsense spouted from some small fry.”

“You... Youuuuu... I won’t let you get away with this! Heh...heh!”

The wiry man sneered an unpleasant smile.

Staring at the man, Diablo had a bad feeling about this.

“You won’t let me get away?”

“Yeah, that’s right! You’ll regret what you said to me... No, what you’ve said to *us*!”

—So he’s relying on numbers.

He counted how many people they had total.

Fifteen, just like he thought.

It depended on how strong each of them were, but taking them all on at once might be a bit annoying.

However, he wanted Shera and Rem to keep thinking of him like he was a Demon Lord, so there was no way he could back down here.

“Now, won’t it be all of you who end up regretting this?”

“Heh... After this, you’ll be begging me to spare your life! Behold!”

Galluk took something out of his robes.

It was a crystal, roughly the size of a baseball.

Diablo remembered seeing the graphics for it somewhere before.

“So, a Summon.”

“That’s right! As someone who stands next to the leader of the Mage’s Association, I’m an accomplished Summoner as well! I possess Summons that can crush you in a snap! Now, if you don’t want to get hurt... Kneel! I’ll have you apologize for your rudeness toward me!”

The crowd went wild around him.

Diablo cocked his head to the side.

“Rudeness? What are you talking about?”

He wasn’t aware of doing anything like that...though he probably had.

Because he was so bad at communicating with people, these kinds things would happen a lot. He wasn’t trying to be hostile, and he didn’t mean bad by it, but he would make enemies before he knew it.

—Trying to get along with other people is just plain impossible.

After coming to this world, he thought he would have managed to get by just talking with other people using his Diablo roleplay, but...

When someone started attacking him without telling him their reason why, his desire to shut himself away in his room came bubbling back to the surface.

—No, this guy may just be a special case. I won’t give up all hope just yet.

Galluk’s face was bright red as he screamed. He looked like he was really pissed.

“You damn Demon! I’m going to tear you limb from limb and scatter you across the ground! When I do, Lady Rem will see who is truly useful, and who should be by her side!”

“Tear me limb from limb... You don’t say.”

“Fuhahahaha! Come, 《Salamander》!!”

Galluk smashed the crystal on the ground.

Arising from the shattered pieces appeared a lizard, wreathed in flickering

flames.

—It's huge.

Maybe not as big as one of those cut-outs you would find at the zoo, but it was enough that Diablo had to look up to see it.

It was covered in scales of flames, flicking its tongue in and out as it raised its head. Its cold, inhuman eyes so common in reptiles were meant to strike fear into those who saw them.

Usually it would make you feel petrified, like a mouse that was being stared down by a snake.

—It at least looks strong...

In the game, this would be around the fourth Fire-type Summon you could use.

Its stats were about the same as a Warrior at level 20.

Using it could be said to be advantageous for you, since even if the Summon was killed you wouldn't take any damage.

Its special ability was《Heat Breath》, a Fire-type AoE attack which was capable of inflicting the《Burn》status.

However, Diablo was currently equipped with the cape, the Curtain of Dark Clouds, which came with a passive ability that prevented negative status effects.

This meant that it was not an enemy that he had to fear. More than that— "A Summon, and in the middle of town..."

Diablo was surprised something like that was even possible.

Back in the game, you were unable to use any combat-related spells while in town. Summoning magic and offensive spells could only be used while outside of town, while Warriors were not even able to swing their swords.

—If you think about it, I guess that'd be obvious.

The only thing that separated the town from the outside world was the barrier, something that did not possess any abilities outside of repelling

monsters and the Fallen.

It was only in the game that the guards would come after you for breaking the rules. It was the middle of the night right now, and he saw no sign of them anywhere.

It seemed that Galluk had mistaken why Diablo was surprised, as he began to brag about his Summon.

“How do you like that! This is the level 30 Summon, Salamander! Breath hot enough to melt steel! Scales that can repel any blade! A massive body with destructive power hidden inside of it! Forget about trained fighters, this is the ultimate Summon, enough to burn a Warrior to death even if they are wearing armor!”

Galluk laughed gloatingly.

Diablo was speechless.

—Is the level for this world really that low?

The area around the Border City Faltra was about level 60 in-game.

To think that all adventurers in this town could be easily handled with only a level 30 Salamander...

He didn’t understand.

If this was how things were, he would have fought some of the monsters outside of town.

—I wonder if level 60 enemies even spawn around here.

Galluk seemed to have mistaken Diablo’s thinking as a sign that he was terrified, and started acting high and mighty as he ordered him around.

“Now, apologize! If you do it now, I’ll let you off with only a few burns!”

—What the hell is this guy saying?

The guard had picked a fight with his group while walking at night, sicced a Summon on Diablo that could ‘burn armored Warriors to death,’ and kept calling for Diablo to ‘apologize’ even though he wouldn’t say why.

This wasn’t the kind of talk that could just be blamed on alcohol. Now Diablo

was the one who was pissed.

“Stop this nonsense, Small Fry. Do not anger me.”

“Ngk... You asshole! You don’t think these are just threats, do you!?”

In response to his menacing attitude, the rest of the group tried to warn him.

“H-Hey, isn’t fighting out in the streets like this kinda bad?”

“Let’s just end it here, ok?”

“What happens if someone sees us?”

However, Galluk would not be stopped.

He gave a crooked grin.

“A fight? What are you saying... All we’re going to be doing is just doling out punishment! Not only did he bring insult to Lady Celes, he has unjustly made Lady Rem into his slave! This is all punishment for this coward of a Demon!”

Reacting to Galluk’s feelings, Salamander let out a cry.

“Hsssssssss!”

It sounded like a snake’s hiss, but raised to a deafening volume.

At the same time, it unleashed its Heat Breath, which spewed forth from its mouth.

—It’s attacking me!?

Diablo’s vision turned red as he was engulfed in the flames.

They had come from directly in front of him, hitting him dead on.

Galluk’s voice was mixed with equal parts insanity and joy.

“Fuhahahaha! How do you like that, Demon! Learned your lesson!? Burn! Burrrrn!!”

His comrades from the Mage’s Association had turned pale.

However, they were just as guilty as Galluk for having watched this and done nothing to stop it.

—That’s what I think, anyways. Wouldn’t you?

The flames that surrounded Diablo dissipated.

There was not a scratch on him.

The stones at his feet had been completely liquified.

But despite this intense heat, not even his clothes had been burned in the attack.

These weren't just any ordinary clothes, so of course this would happen.

"That was all, was it?"

Diablo let out a sigh.

—The level gap here is just way too big.

There was an old gaming aphorism that went, "Just level up and punch 'em."

In the MMORPG Cross Reverie, level gaps were tremendous things. The difference between a level 150 and a level 30 was like the difference between a tank and a child.

To someone like Diablo, it was just a matter of fact he did not take any damage.

—Well, maybe it wasn't a matter of fact.

Since this was the first time he had actually been attacked, he was able to confirm that his magic defense was as high as it was back in the game. Thanks to that, you could say there was plenty of meaning to what just happened.

—But that was an attack that would've killed a normal person.

If Diablo didn't hold the power of a Demon Lord, then he would have been dead for sure.

This man had decided he hated Diablo so much that he would try to kill him... It seemed like a little "punishment" was in order.

Galluk was shocked.

"Wh-What is this? Why are you still alive?"

It seemed that this man truly believed from the bottom of his heart that Salamander was the ultimate Summon, and it was strange Diablo was not dead.

Back in the game, if you had tried saying that a level 30 Summon was the best, people would just think it was some kind of joke.

That meant the reason he made this sad, sad mistake was because everyone else's levels were so weak. He would say he pitied him, but he didn't.

"Once more!" Galluk screeched with a high-pitched yell.

Again, the Heat Breath came rushing toward him.

His magic defense was definitely superior, and understood that he had taken no damage.

Usually in other games, no matter how big the level difference, you would at least be able to put in some scratch damage from attacks. In Cross Reverie, however, you would just see an effect that let you know no damage was being dealt.

Galluk yelled at the rest of his group.

"H-Hey! Send out your Summons!"

The rest of them, who did not seem as angry at Diablo, were indecisive.

"Ummm... But, won't we get punished for summoning them in the middle of town—"

"It's fine! I'll take responsibility for it, so hurry up! Hurry up and do it!"

He was frantic.

In response to his fervor, Galluk's allies threw their own crystals on the ground, the sound of them shattering echoing out.

What appeared were elemental spirits of various types.

《Fire Spirit》, 《Water Spirit》, 《Earth Spirit》, 《Wind Spirit》—

They were Summons shaped like the silhouettes of birds, and lacked eyes and mouths. The red ones were "Fire;" blue was "Water;" "Earth" was yellow; and green was "Wind." They were flat, and looked as if they had been cut out from colored paper. Each one was about the size of a Steller's sea eagle.

If it weren't for the fact they were magical beings that would hurt you just by touching them, they were probably big enough that people could ride on them.

Their main way of attacking was to fly into enemies at high-speeds, but they were also able to split up the magic that composed them and launch that as an attack as well.

In total, fourteen of these things had appeared.

Salamander was still going strong, too.

The smile returned to Galluk's face.

"Heh heh heh... I don't know why, but it seems like you can resist Salamander's breath attack... But I bet you've never been surrounded by this many Summons before! We haven't had to trap anything like this since the time a monster from the Man-Eating Forest appeared. You could say that this only happens when there's an incident that could be called a 'disaster.' You will regret having defied the Mage's Association!"

Now this was a shock.

At some point, it seemed that he had gone from fighting with Galluk to making the whole Mage's Association his opponent. The fact that this guy had basically said "I am the Mage's Association" scared him for a whole different reason.

Not only that, but judging from the way he spoke, it seemed Galluk thought these Summons to be quite powerful.

He just didn't feel satisfied knowing that. These Summons were the first ones you could get in the game.

Since a monster from the Man-Eating Forest would be around level 60, these things wouldn't even make a good shield, let alone be able to take on said monster.

It was a mystery.

—Why are the levels in this world so low compared to the game?

Seemed like he would have to look into that later.

Right now, he had to focus on the problem at hand.

Galluk and the others had called their Summons purely to settle a personal grudge.

He had thought of the Mage's Association as a logical and neutral organization...but that was just naive thinking on his part.

It was hard to think of it like that when there were people in it like these guys, who just did whatever they wanted.

"Are you all being serious?"

They remained silent, but showed no sign of backing down.

Galluk laughed.

"Heh... Heh... Heh heh heh! Lost your nerve? But you're the one who made this happen, you know! If you had just known your place from the beginning, you wouldn't have to die here!"

Unfortunately, he seemed to be serious.

If his opponents were coming after him with the intent to kill, even if it was to protect himself, he would not hold back.

If they were going for the kill, humans were just as dangerous as any monster. He could not afford to let his guard down by holding back.

"Do not expect any mercy from me."

"Die, Demon! Summons, get him!"

The Summons moved on Galluk's signal.

He was assaulted by Salamander's Heat Breath and long-range attacks from the elemental Spirits.

It was a torrent of light made up of four different colors.

However, Diablo felt no need to avoid it.

No matter the attack, it was certain to be weaker than his magic defense. Not only that, but if you attacked with different types of elemental magic, some of them would conflict with each other. So, for example, a water and a fire

elemental spell would cancel each other out.

—Have these guys never practiced using multiple attacks at the same time?

He could just scatter them all using his own magic. Or...

—Now's a good chance to try out a few things.

First off, he wanted to know his own physical strength.

A Demon Sorcerer like Diablo was supposed to have low attack power. There were monsters that resisted magic, however, so there may come a time where he would have to get up close and attack directly.

—I wonder how much I can do right now?

Diablo approached Salamander.

The Summons kept up their attacks, but it was only enough to make him see spots of light in his eyes.

He stopped in front of Salamander.

It was big enough that he was looking up to see it.

He couldn't help but say a quick prayer.

—Please don't let this be over with just one hit.

If he was going out of his way to test his strength, then he was hoping this thing would be sturdy enough to handle it.

Diablo took up his "Tenma's Staff" and swung it sideways, striking Salamander in the neck.

It was as if he had waved some mist away.

Then, like it had been cut with a sharp sword, the giant Summon's head fell clean off of its body.

As red lights danced around it, Salamander disappeared, leaving a black crystal on the ground.

A defeated Summon would turn into a black crystal, meaning that it couldn't be used for a certain period of time.

Diablo sighed.

“It was way too weak.”

He was hoping it would have been able to take at least one hit from a Demon who specialized as a Sorcerer. It seems he had been wrong to expect anything from a level 30 lizard.

Galluk’s eyes practically popped out of their sockets.

“Wha.....? Ah, n, no! Don’t falter now! H-He only got one of them, that’s all! Wh-What are you all doing!? This is our chance! We...we can beat him! Kill him!”

“If you were going to run away, then I had no intention of following you... But there’s no way around it any longer. Let’s check the elemental affinities for offensive magic.”

This was a system in the game where, depending on what type of magic you attack with, if your target was of the same elemental affinity or resisted that element, then the power of that spell would be reduced.

Fire was strong against wind, wind was strong against earth, earth was strong against water, and water was strong against fire.

Basically, this meant that if you used Fire elemental magic against a Water-elemental monster, then the power of that spell should be drastically reduced. That is what he wanted to confirm.

Diablo pointed his staff at one of the Water Spirits.

“Burst to pieces. ‘Explosion!’”

The resulting explosion caused by his magic hit the Water Spirit.

His conclusion—it was too weak to be used to gauge the effects of elemental affinities.

The Explosion that Diablo unleashed not only hit the Water Spirit he was aiming for, but engulfed the other Summons in the area as well.

On top of that, the after-effects of the explosion had gouged out the stone tiles from the ground, breaking them into pieces and sending them flying.

Not only did they strike walls of the buildings facing the street, but they even

struck Galluk and the other robed members of his group.

Luckily, no one was dead... But the Summons had been completely wiped out.

—Well that was a failure. I guess I should've tried using a weaker spell on them.

Galluk sank to the ground, unable to stand up any longer.

"De... Destroyed... They were all destroyed...in one shot?"

His robed companions were in a miserable state. Some were crying, some letting out strange voices, some were venting their anger at Galluk, and some were just plain dazed.

Despite the fact that they were the lowest level Summons you could get, it seemed they had thought them to be powerful enough to take pride in them.

—You could pass that level just by playing the game for a week, though...

He understood that everything here couldn't even be called an experiment.

They shouldn't come looking for a fight with him again after a thrashing like that.

—Let's just think of that as a good thing, that's one less annoyance to have to deal with.

As Diablo went to leave, unexpectedly, Galluk called out to him.

"Wh-Who... Just who are you!? This can't be... Something like this...can't be..."

—Who am I?

He had been summoned, but was not a Summon. Nor was he a denizen of this world.

He was planning on becoming an Adventurer, but right now was different.

Diablo loomed over them.

Covered in wounds and stupefied, fear ran through the group of robed underlings from the Mage's Association.

He faced them with a devilish smile.

“I am ‘Diablo,’ a Demon Lord who has come from another world.”

†

Chapter 2: Trying to be an Adventurer

The next morning—

Diablo opened his eyes, light streaming through the window.

An unfamiliar ceiling and unfamiliar walls.

Everything was made from old wood that had been polished to a shine.

He must have kicked the blanket off himself at some point, since it wasn't covering him.

Sleeping on a bed that was nothing but straw with some sheets on it felt better than he had thought it would, but it was still rough. Thanks to his highly durable body, it didn't trouble him that much.

The smell of straw lingered in the air, but what concerned him was the slight scent of compost that came with it.

The sheets were made out of some kind of material that was completely different from wool or linen. It was rough and scratchy.

This was another world, one that closely resembled the MMORPG Cross Reverie.

He hadn't awoken to find it had all been a dream, and that another day back in the real world was about to start.

—I really have come to another world.

His head still fuzzy as he thought this, he squinted his eyes at the morning light.

Though it was coming from a hole small enough that you couldn't even stick your head out of, it was enough to brighten the room that had been pitch black since the lantern and candles had gone out.

He wasn't even sure when he had drifted off to sleep.

He was certain that his standoff with the guys from the Mage's Association

had not been a dream.

His memories as he returned were fuzzy at best. He remembered that he made it back to his room and collapsed on the bed...

It was almost strange how tired he had been.

—It's probably because of everything that happened yesterday...

He hadn't felt hungry or tired yesterday, but that was probably because of the excitement of having come to another world. As of right now, he felt that he would slip right back to sleep if he laid down.

And he had felt the most tired after using his magic last night.

It wasn't because he had taken damage. He was mentally exhausted.

It must have been because of all the MP I used—thought Diablo.

There were no numbers to confirm it like in the game, but it felt like he had built up some fatigue from using his magic.

—I wonder what would happen if I ran out.

All that would happen in game was he would be unable to use magic; and based on how tired he felt using it here, he felt like he wouldn't .

Running out would be dangerous.

From now on, he would have to be more careful about managing his MP than he had back in Cross Reverie.

Diablo had enough MP to fire off close to one hundred "Explosions." Well, he did in the game, at least.

—How much MP do I have right now?

If he was feeling tired after only a few shots, then getting close to a hundred was looking impossible.

Either way, he would have to look into this.

Avoiding high-level spells that used a lot of MP seemed like the best course of action. Using spells above level 100 would not only crank up the damage, but the MP cost as well.

—If last night was any indication, I don't think there will be too many times where I'll need to use that kind of magic.

—I wonder why Adventurers in this world are all lower levels than in the game?

Diablo had been wondering about it since his encounter with Galluk.

It would probably be best to look into this as well.

—I still don't have enough information yet.

First, he would ask Rem and Shera for more information about what was going on.

Now that he thought about it, even though he was sharing a room with two girls and one bed—something that would have never happened to him in real life—he had slept like a baby.

He was so tired last night that he had ended up hogging the bed to himself, which made him feel kind of bad. Where had the two girls slept last night?

—Oh, that's right... If I die, then the enslavement magic is supposed to wear off.

Had he been a bit careless? No, it seemed like the two of them needed Diablo around for one reason or another. That especially went for Rem, who had a reason to trust him, at least. And Shera didn't seem like the kind of person who would straight-up murder him in his sleep.

"Guess I'll look for those two first..."

Diablo let out a short sigh, then went to prop himself up with his arms.

Squish

Squishidy squish

He felt something soft.

Diablo recoiled in surprise. Even pillows back in the real world didn't feel like this.

It almost felt like it was alive, and it was warm, too.

—It couldn't be...

An impossible thought crossed his mind.

"...OK, me, just calm down. It's not like this is an anime or a manga or anything. It's too soon to be jumping to conclusions like that just because I happen to be sharing a room with two girls, who I don't happen to see right now."

—Let's try checking it out.

He turned his gaze to look.

For the *squish*—it was from Rem, the Pantherian girl, who was only wearing a thin black outfit.

As for the *squishidy squish*—that was Shera, her voluptuous body covered only with a loose fitting robe.

Though it was only on the outside of their clothes, Diablo's right hand was on Rem's chest, while his left was touching Shera's.

He stopped breathing.

—Keep it together! Demon Lords don't lose their cool!

He was suddenly sweating bullets.

As his mind was racing, he tried to figure out what to do next.

He would act proud and confident, just as a Demon Lord would!

—All right! Let's get out of here quietly...

Truly a pitiful display on his part, but what was he supposed to do? Even though he called himself a Demon Lord, it was really just Demon Lord "roleplay." He was not equipped to handle waking up sandwiched between two beautiful girls, hands on their chests, like it was a CG for some visual novel.

Diablo may have been a level 150 Sorcerer, but he had zero experience in skills for dealing with other people. And that went double for girls.

If he was going to make a great escape, he had to first take his hands off them.

—But he couldn't do it.

It was as if he was being sucked in.

—What is this, some kind of adhesive?

—Is my heart refusing to let me take my hand away!?

He could feel the heat of the girls he was touching, how soft they were. The sweet scent they gave off was more than captivating enough to crush his will into pieces.

His fingers moved on their own.

He was starting to rub them, against his better judgment.

Rem was definitely about as moderate as she looked, with a bulge that was just barely sticking out. Maybe something on the verge of a bulge. Possibly the beginnings of a bulge? That was the feeling he was getting from it.

As for Shera... It was amazing. His fingers were actually sinking into it.

Despite the fact they were sinking, it also had an elasticity that pushed back against him.

Diablo was getting dizzy from its springiness, not to mention the volume that he could not fully grasp with his hand.

—Does this world not have underwear? Or do you take it off when you go to sleep?

He was getting an incredible amount of detail from where he was feeling, and there was no limit to the softness.

Only one piece of cloth.

This feeling... It must be because there was only one layer of clothing.

—Holy crap. I want to keep doing this forever.

Shera, who had been asleep, let out a yawn.

“Mm...fwah...”

Her body squirmed. Shera opened her eyes.

“Mmm... Huh? Diablo...?”

He went to take his hand off at lightspeed.

However, he wasn’t able to do it. *Even in a situation like this!? Was this some kind of trap caused by magic!?*

Shera tilted her head as she rubbed her eyes.

“Mm...mhm? For some reason, I feel a little...restless...”

She turned to look.

Diablo’s hand was gripping the right side of her chest.

Eyes wide, Shera turned to look at him.

While still grabbing her chest, Diablo opened his mouth.

“.....Ah.”

Not only had he been groping a girl’s chest while she was asleep, she had actually woken up. The Demon Lord had no idea what to say in response to this.

Shera was confused for a second, but had seemingly come to terms with her situation.

Her face became bright red right before his very eyes.

Right after that:

“I-I don’t think doing this is very good!”

Embarrassed, she glared at Diablo with upturned eyes.

“Ye...ah...”

If it wasn’t for his Demon Lord act, he wouldn’t be able to make conversation as his normal self. Which was what was happening now.

“Th-This kind of stuff is, um, you know... Something you do after getting to know each other better, and, erm... A-As long as you haven’t picked me as your

master, then this is bad! OK!?”

“Y...eah...?”

He had heard that as “this is something you can do if you choose me as your Summoner.”

“Anyways, this kind of stuff is a no-go! It’s bad, bad, bad! It’s bad, OK!?”

“...Y-Yeah.”

“...N-No doing that anymore, OK?”

Shera pulled herself away, and Diablo’s hand was finally free of the sweet sensation it had been feeling... Though it was a somewhat reluctant farewell.

He was thankful from the bottom of his heart that Shera had forgiven him.

He was still unable to get back into his Demon Lord character, and wasn’t able to get the right words out to say anything back.

On Diablo’s right side, Rem was rubbing her eyes.

“...Mm...mh? It’s so noisy... What’s going on?”

“Uhm...”

“...Hm? It feels like there is something heavy...on my chest...?”

He had forgotten.

His left hand had been “busy” with Shera, and he had finally gotten it away from her— But his right hand was still on Rem’s chest.

Even a high-level spell couldn’t have made Diablo as petrified as he was now.

Rem turned to look at her chest.

Silence.

Looking at his hand, her gaze followed along his arm, and then to his face.

Once more, she looked back to the hand, then to his face.

Her expression said it all.

He would have to say something here.

He would handle this with dignity and majesty, just like a Demon Lord would!

Yes, dignity and majesty!

Diablo opened his mouth.

“Rem, stick out your chest out with pride! Even if it is just a little bulge, it is still your most valuable asset.”

—What the hell am I saying?

Rem’s high-pitched scream rang out in the early morning.

†

Back at the bar on the first floor of the inn—

Built with wood that had a glossy, smoky finish to it, this was where they had dined with Celes just yesterday.

Of course it operated as a bar in the evening, but you could also come here in the morning or lunchtime to grab a bite to eat.

Celes had managed to drive everyone away last night, but right now it was jam-packed with people.

Diablo, Rem, and Shera had somehow managed to grab a table and were sitting down for breakfast.

There were seven tables that could seat four people here, and a counter as well, but they had already been taken.

There were even people standing around and talking with each other, so it was pretty noisy.

—Everyone here’s a Demi.

Diablo tilted his head as he thought.

There were six races to choose from when first starting Cross Reverie:

Elf, Pantherian, Dwarf, Grasswalker, Demon, and Human.

All other races besides humans were called “Demi.”

According to Cross Reverie's setting, some humans (usually aristocrats) would discriminate against Demis. The various troubles caused by this was used for several quests in the game.

There were many more types of Demis than humans, but humans were said to have made up half the population. Since they came with really good starting stats, there were lots of players who would go with Human as their race.

—The staff, even the customers here are all Demi... I wonder if it's a coincidence?

Shera brought her face closer to his and started whispering.

"...Rem's being pretty scary today."

Rem was sitting in complete silence, stabbing her potatoes over and over again with her wooden fork... It was as if she had some kind of grudge against them.

Seems like she was still mad about what happened this morning.

Diablo, as he should, opened his mouth to apologize.

"Rem, about this morning..."

"...I'm not upset."

The tone of her voice said otherwise.

"But, you know..."

"I am not upset. I'm not upset, so pick something else to talk about. Please."

Stab, stab, stab.

Rem's relentless fork assault was slowly turning the poor potato into a mashed potato.

She did seem like the type to seethe silently in anger.

That's just the way that particular cookie crumbled, so he did as he was told and changed the topic.

"It seems that this inn only has Demis. I don't see any Humans anywhere, why is that?"

“...Humans do not stay in Demi inns.”

Maybe it was because she was in the middle of murdering her potato, or maybe it was because she always said everything in a calm and collected tone of voice, but he had a hard time understanding what she meant.

“Hm... So there are inns for Demis in this world?”

Even if the game said that someone was “discriminated against” or “hated by many,” there was never any actual discrimination found in the game.

It was true that there were certain NPCs in quests who would talk like racists; but it should go without saying that everyone who played Cross Reverie was human. With all the roleplays he had come across, he had never seen anyone try to even pretend to discriminate against Demis.

It seemed there was a bigger gap between Humans and Demis in this world.

—Seems like it’d be smart to be wary of Humans here.

Being hurt for no reason was the very definition of discrimination.

It was probably a different story if you were a Demi with special circumstances, like Rem.

—So the soul of the Demon Lord Krebskulm is sealed inside her...

Diablo stared at the Pantherian girl.

Noticing this, Rem quickly covered her chest with her hands.

—It wasn’t like I was looking there, OK!? Well, I mean, I guess with everything that’s happened this morning, nothing I could say would have any sway. Of course she’d be on guard.

Putting that aside, he just remembered something Galluk said that had been bothering him. He had used the word “level.”

“Hey, you two. Do you use ’Levels’ as the way to measure your power here?”

Shera looked as if she had difficulty talking about it.

“Levels, levels... I don’t think that I, um...have one...?”

“...I am a level 40 Summoner.”

Slightly boasting as she said that, Rem's mood seemed to have improved a bit.

Looks like they did use levels here after all.

But this was a world with no status windows, no EXP bars, and not even a little jingle for when you leveled up.

"What do you use as a basis to decide what your level is?"

"...If you are a Sorcerer, then the Mage's Association determines that for you. They have a way to measure it there. I do not know how it works for other professions, but I would assume there would be someone who would measure it in the Adventurer's Guild."

"Yeah! That's it! That's why I don't have a level yet, it's because I haven't registered with the Adventurer's Guild! When they go to measure me, I'm sure I'll be, like, level 40 or 50 or something!"

Her ears were wiggling as she proclaimed this. *Huh, so they actually move.*

Rem's black tail swished back and forth, as if it were brushing off what Shera had said.

"...No matter how you look at it, you are probably around level 10... Which would be sub-par."

That would probably mean the average level of this world was in the twenties or so.

Shera puffed out her cheeks.

"That's not true! I was level 40 according to the Guild back home!"

"...That was according to the Sorcerer's test back in the land of Elves?"

"Um... Well... As an Archer..."

"...If you already know your level, then aren't you already registered as an Adventurer? If you have already done that in a town, then you should not have to do it at another."

"I wasn't old enough to be an Adventurer then, but they still let me get tested. It was kinda like a chance to test my skills, since I was still a kid."

"...You were level 40 as a child? Then I have no doubts about your skill as an

Archer... But why do you want to be a Summoner?”

“Archers are loners, you know!? Summoners get all these cute Summons, right? Then I wouldn’t be lonely, even if it was in a dark forest in the middle of the night!”

“...So you wanted cute Summons. I see, I see... Then you won’t be needing Diablo, then. He isn’t even a Summon, after all.”

“I need them to be strong, too!”

It looked like they would be at each other’s throats any second now.

Diablo stepped in as a mediator, issuing a command.

“Once we are finished eating, we go to the Adventurer’s Guild!”

Excitedly, Shera bent forward.

“Yay! I gotta go get registered and start saving up! If Diablo’s with me, then I have nothing to worry about!”

“...Ignoring the dumb Elf over there, I was also thinking that I wanted to take Diablo to the Adventurer’s Guild. I am curious about his level.”

It’s true he kept saying he was level 150, but that was only in the game.

What would he be in this world?

He wasn’t weak, that much he was sure about. What he wanted to know was what level he would be according to this world’s system.

—Let’s finish breakfast and get going.

Diablo reached out with his fork for a potato that had not been mashed.

†

The Adventurer’s Guild was located in the western part of Faltra, not far from the inn they had stayed at.

It was a stone building with a triangular roof and a wooden door—just like every other building in town so far. However, with just one glance you could tell right away that this building was indeed the Adventurer’s Guild.

It was around four or five times bigger than all the other buildings.

The roof, windows, and doors were all made large, as if something that was several sizes bigger than the other residents of the town lived there.

Diablo and company passed through the massive doors, entering the Adventurer's Guild proper.

The inside was like that of a bar.

There was a counter and rows of tables, also made of wood with a smoky polish like back at the inn. Just as you would expect from the impression it gave from the outside, it was incredibly spacious.

However, the inn had more of a sense of cleanliness to it. The dirtiness here stood out more, and there were even broken chairs lying around.

There were dark red stains on the wall that looked like dried blood, and the marks from swords that were carved into the counter were a bit intimidating.

The attitudes of the people inside were also different from the others in town. Just like in the game, they had an overwhelming presence to them.

There was:

A Human man, who glanced at them with sharp eyes;

A Pantherian girl, dressed in something that looked to be a dancer's outfit that left plenty of skin exposed; A childlike Grasswalker, who carried a gigantic sword on the back of his small body; A calm-looking Demon youth who covered himself in white robes;

A Dwarf who was fully equipped with a sturdy set of armor.

—*They didn't look this dangerous back in the game!*

Looks like a fight had broken out for some reason.

An Elf girl and a Dwarf were arguing with each other, which eventually came to blows.

Since everyone else had gotten up from their seats, he thought that maybe they were going to try and stop the fighting... But instead, they moved the tables out of the way to make some space and were egging them on.

The brawl had started.

It looked like they were fighting over who had accepted a quest first.

—What is this, a place for savages!?

Diablo was shocked.

There were Adventurer's Guilds back in the game as well, but all that happened was an exchange of a few text boxes. Fights, the stink of alcohol, and beast-like war cries had nothing to do with it.

There was no scramble to grab quests, since everybody was able to accept the same ones.

But this is what it meant to be an Adventurer.

It was a term that would generally refer to all players in the game, but here...

It was a title that referred to those who, for various reasons, would fight and put their lives on the line in their work. If he had been by himself, he might have turned around and left because he was so scared.

He understood why Shera had not come to register by herself, despite her proficiency with a bow.

Seems like people had started to take notice of them.

They craned their necks as they looked.

"...What's with that Demon?"

"I've never seen anyone with horns growin' out their head, let alone a Demon. He's not a Fallen, is he?"

"He's with Miss Rem and the Elf girl with that weird name... Both of 'em should be pretty skilled, but..."

"Those are enslavement collars on them, right?"

"Who is that Demon, really?"

Thanks to the effects of the Distorted Crown, it seemed people thought his

horns were actually real.

It was a piece of equipment he had not only chosen for its abilities, but also because it changed his appearance to give him something that looked like devil horns. He hadn't really thought much about wearing it before.

But he had no idea that it would cause him to get these strange looks while in another world.

He couldn't take them off now, though. A Demon Lord suddenly taking off his horns would totally kill the mood.

Ignoring the commotion around them, Rem pointed toward the staircase.

"...Let's get going. It is a bit noisy here, but that is how it always is. The counter for Adventurer registrations is on the second floor."

"Of course."

Hiding the unrest inside of him, Diablo nodded.

Shera was clearly freaked out by the people fighting.

"Y-Yeah..."

The three of them headed toward the staircase.

†

"Wait, the Demon with the horns!"

It was the Human who had called out to stop them.

He had thick eyebrows, and looks that gave off a sense of strong determination.

He was tall and slim, and though his hair was short in the back, one long part of his bangs hung down in the front. He was covered fully in golden armor, and wore a longsword on his waist.

Rem knit her eyebrows.

"...Emile."

"Blegh."

Shera also wrinkled her forehead as she made a displeased face.

The young man called Emile swaggered over to them, blocking their way.

Taking a good hard look at Diablo's face, he let out a snort.

"I don't like your face."

Diablo turned to Rem.

"What's his problem?"

"...He is said to be the strongest Warrior in the Adventurer's Guild. He is also the examiner for Warriors here."

She said it with complete disinterest, as if she had been reading from an instruction manual.

Emile ran his fingers through his long bangs.

"But of course! I am the great Emile Bichelberger! At level 50, I am the pride of the Guild, known as the《Superhuman Warrior》!"

—Well that was certainly a pompous and theatrical way of telling us his name.

Diablo's hand drifted to his staff.

He had received countless challenges from people in the game who would announce themselves just like this. And he had destroyed them all.

—Hold up, just calm down. This isn't the game, and this isn't my dungeon. He might not even be a challenger.

If he tried to talk Emile up, then that would just hurt the image he had been working on with Rem and Shera. Thinking back to the incident with Galluk, it would be for the best if he didn't go around incurring people's wrath.

He would try to keep in mind not to provoke him as he dealt with him.

"Who gave you permission to stand before me and name yourself, brat?"

Not just Rem and Shera, but all the other Adventurers were frozen in shock.

An intrepid smile appeared on Emile's face.

"Permission? Ha, right back at you! Just who gave *you* permission to do

anything!? Listen up, Demon. I don't know about you, but I actually LOVE women!"

"What?"

"I will never forgive you for sticking collars on poor Rem and Shera and parading them around! You must have some balls turning them into your slaves!"

The other Adventurers echoed their support for Emile with calls of, "Yeah, that's right!" Looks like the fight from earlier had been settled already.

But they had it all wrong.

It might be easy to get the wrong idea because of his Demon Lord act, but Diablo was a pacifist at heart. He didn't like going around causing trouble, and he didn't want to butt heads with other people.

Most of all, he was bad with these kinds of people who basically proclaimed themselves to be in the right all the time, which meant he couldn't disagree with them.

He would try talking as peacefully as possible to get this guy to let him go.

Diablo opened his mouth.

"Don't make that much noise over putting collars on some girls, weaklings."

Emile raised an eyebrow.

"Hmhmmm... So you're saying that I should come at you with everything I have if I want to free them, aren't you!"

—No! That's completely wrong!

Now that he thought about it, whenever he finished talking while doing his Demon Lord act, that's when he would start the fight against his challengers.

Maybe he just wasn't that good at avoiding getting into trouble.

—But I can't even get the words out if I don't use my Demon Lord roleplay... Best I can manage is a few "Ah's" and "Um's."

And if this guy was confident about fighting, he would just take that as Diablo being scared and laugh at him.

Well, that was that. Looks like it was time to give up trying to talk him out of it.

Diablo was a Sorcerer, and had no business with an examiner for Warriors. He went to go around Emile and head toward the staircase for the second floor.

He tried to, but Emile would not let him pass.

“Hold it! I won’t let you get away until you release the girls!”

Rem had a pained look on her face.

Shera looked like she was hesitating about something.

It would be embarrassing for them to have to reveal that the reason they had the collars on was because their own magic had failed, and they did not know a way to take them off. They had even needed to talk with Celes from the Mage’s Association to help them find a way to do so.

But there was no reason for them to tell this to the other Adventurers.

—If only Emile hadn’t gotten involved!

Now he knew why Rem and Shera had looked so unhappy when Emile called out to them. Basically, this guy was just plain annoying, and would go around sticking his nose into other people’s business.

Rem opened her mouth to speak.

“...Emile, these collars are actually—”

Diablo cut her off.

He did not want to shame them.

He didn’t want to make her say that they were slaves to a Demon who they barely knew anything about in front of the other Adventurers.

Diablo took up his staff.

“If you’re going to get in my way, then I’m going to have to destroy you here. No matter who you are.”

Emile unsheathed his sword.

“I’m going to have you take off those collars you forced on poor Rem and Shera! I am the protector of all girls, Emile Bichelberger! Know that I will never fall while in front of any woman!”

It was actually kind of nostalgic accepting a challenge from someone else.

Diablo unconsciously put some distance between himself and the swordsman. Putting himself at a range that was advantageous to him was as natural as breathing when he was battling with other people.

—Though it kind of looks like I’m afraid of him and just backing off...

If he was level 50, then this guy should be able to use a few good《Martial Arts》skills.

Martials Arts were special skills that Warriors and Archers were able to use. There were attacks used not just with swords, but with axes, spears, bows; even bare-handed attacks as well.

By using SP (Stamina Points), you were able to use these attacks. There were also defensive and movement skills as well.

Unlike HP and MP, SP would recover naturally over time, and at a very fast rate.

Diablo did not possess any Warrior skills.

But if he was able to get a handle on his opponent’s abilities, then it should be business as usual as he went to outmaneuver them.

If he could see the starting animations for the move, then he would know what attack was coming for him.

—“Sword Smite,” huh.

It was a sword technique where, after the user would lower their stance, they would close the distance between themselves and their opponent instantly, unleashing a powerful horizontal slash to mow them down.

Since Warriors could do just about nothing until they got closer, most Warrior players would use this technique first when fighting.

However, aside from maybe PvE, the side slash wasn't for actually hitting an enemy.

An experienced player would use the charging range from Sword Smite to close the gap between them and their opponent, canceling the side slash into their next attack.

Warriors were meant to be played like a fighting game, where you read your opponent's moves and got in close to attack.

Usually, he would protect himself from the charge by unleashing a barrage of spells. However...

—I'm guessing it'd be bad if I busted up the Adventurer's Guild...

"Hmph... What a bother..."

"Here I come, Demon! I'm going to make you release those girls!"

Emile started his charge.

And then—

Diablo was stunned.

—He's not canceling the slash!?

He took the blow using Tenma's Staff.

Emile's face showed surprise.

"Hoh, so you were able to take that, Sorcerer!"

"Did you underestimate me?"

"Don't make light of me! I always give everything I have if it's for the ladies!"

Saying that, Emile took a giant swing and brandished his sword over his head.

The next Martial Art he was going to use was a technique that was very powerful, but took a while until it activated: 《Alps Fall》.

Diablo groaned.

"How can this be..."

People in this world were not only low-leveled, but they lacked common gaming sense!

Using Alps Fall at point-blank range was just like asking someone, “Please punch me in the face.” Usually, you wouldn’t even see it unless someone made a mistake and pushed the wrong button or something.

This guy had severely slacked on his testing of the skill.

Using his staff like a cane, Diablo thrust it at the wide-open Emile.

He hadn’t learned any Martial Arts, so this was just a normal attack with his staff. However, it was an attack packed with the physical strength of someone who was level 150.

“Hmph!”

“Gah!?”

Emile was sent flying back.

All the air was driven from his body as he smashed into the wall. Crumpling to the ground, he was on his knees by the staircase to the second floor.

The Adventurers who had been watching fell silent.

—Was that too strong!?

However, Emile picked himself back up.

“GrrAHHH!! Making ME! Fall down while in front of WOMEN! Will never HAPPEN!!”

Surprisingly, he was a guy that had some willpower to him.

—Well, I guess that should be obvious for a level 50 Warrior.

As a Sorcerer, it seemed like he wasn’t able to dish out enough damage to knock someone unconscious with just a normal attack.

If he was going to come back at him with a flurry of consecutive attacks, then he would not have as many openings as before. It wouldn’t be possible for Diablo to win if he had to hold off using his magic for fear of damaging the building.

—Could you back off already, man?

Diablo let a sadistic smile creep across his face.

“Heh heh heh... I won’t be able to hold back on the next one.”

“Oh yeah? Well same here! I’m the Superhuman Warrior of the Adventurer’s Guild, Emile Bichelberger! For the sake of all oppressed women, I will take up my sword and fight until I die!”

“...Emile.”

Rem quietly called out to him.

“Don’t worry, Rem! I’m going to set you free from this heinous Demon right now!”

“...Please, just stop. Let me say this clearly: the reason I am wearing this collar is because of a failure of my own design.”

“Huh? ...Wh-What...are you talking about?”

“...I do not want to go into detail... But because Shera and I failed, we were the ones who received the collar that should have gone on our Summon instead.”

Rem bit her lip.

Shera’s cheeks were red, and looked like she was about to cry.

—So, she said it...

She had stepped in to make sure Diablo and Emile’s fight would not get any more intense.

“...He has promised to help us remove these collars.”

“Wh-What did you say!?”

“...We don’t know how to take off the collars ourselves, and we have Miss Celestine helping us search for a way to remove them.”

Emile’s voice was frail.

“Was I, maybe...”

“...Getting ahead of yourself, yes. Please put away your sword.”

A chill ran throughout the room.

After staying silent for awhile—Emile laughed.

“Heh... Ha ha ha! Great! So there weren’t any girls being forced to wear collars, then!”

—He wrapped everything up like it was the ending to some kind of touching story. What the hell.

He was beaming an invigorated smile.

“Hey, Demon! What’s your name?”

“Diablo.”

“My name is Emile Bichelberger! I’m an ally to all women, and an ally to those allied to women! So that means if you’re helping Rem and Shera to get those collars off, then I’m your ally too!”

“That so.”

“Sorry for trying to cut you down out of the blue like that! Anytime you need a Warrior’s power, feel free to ask the great Emile! That said, you weren’t so bad yourself!”

“Heh...”

Diablo let out a chuckle.

—He wasn’t such a bad guy after all.

Not only that, but unlike with Salamander, which Diablo had defeated with one shot, this guy was still raring to go. Looks like him being a level 50 Warrior wasn’t for nothing.

Emile stepped out of the way of the staircase.

“Sorry for getting in your way. You’re going to do your Adventurer registration, right? If you’re looking to be a Warrior, then I’ll rank you based off that last shot you got on me. Hmm... As a Warrior, I’d say you’re about level 40!”

There were murmurs from the crowd around them. Looks like being rated a level 40 Warrior was pretty substantial.

—Wait, are all these guys lower levels than that? This ain't the first town of the game or anything, come on!

Diablo shook his head.

"I am a Sorcerer."

"What!? That's really too bad... Well, that's just how it goes, I guess. Diablo, come find me after you finish your first job as an Adventurer! I'll treat you something to celebrate!"

"Hmph, if I feel like it."

Emile seeing them off, Diablo and company started up the staircase to the second floor.

Rem, who was right next to him, spoke out.

"...Emile is not a bad person, and his abilities are certainly the real deal."

"But he's pretty much a big idiot, right!" Shera chimed in.

"...That is true."

He could tell exactly how Rem felt by the way she said that.

They had run into a bit of trouble they weren't expecting, but they were finally on their way to do their Adventurer's registration.

—He did say we'd celebrate once our first job was over. Let's give it our best, then.

Just like when he had started Cross Reverie for the first time, his excitement levels were shooting through the roof.

†

Climbing the wide and rickety wooden staircase, they arrived at the second floor. It was just like Diablo remembered in the game.

The second floor was like a loft, and overlooked the bar on the first floor. Here, you could find the counter for the Adventurer's Guild.

It was his first time seeing it, but he was still overcome with a sense of nostalgia.

The layout of the place was built kind of like what you would find at the bank or post office. Behind the wooden counter sat three girls who served as receptionists.

If this was the same as the game, then starting in order from right to left, they would introduce Adventurers to《Beginner's Quests》,《Advanced Quests》, and《Story Quests》.

The three girls all had the same face.

If they hadn't been wearing different colored clothes, then you would not be able to tell them apart. From right to left, it went blue, yellow, then red. It was just like a traffic light.

Back in the game, they were made to be triplets as well.

The girls were all Dwarves.

Dwarf girls would always stay short, no matter how much they matured. However, unlike the childlike Grasswalkers, their chests were not held to the same restrictions. It was true what they said: "Big things come in small packages."

They also had dog ears, and the tails to match. The three girls' ears drooped down, just like a Labrador's.

Diablo naturally came to stand in front of the receptionist in the yellow outfit.

Rem tugged on his sleeves.

"...That is the request counter for experienced Adventurers. Registration is done with the person in blue on the right."

"I see. That was just a force of habit."

Story quests weren't added all that often, and it had been over two years since he had last taken on a Beginner quest.

—Man, this takes me back. It's been so long since I've talked with Bleu here.

Players took to calling the receptionist on the right "Bleu." Whenever someone finished all the Beginner quests, it was common for them to say, "I've graduated from Bleu!"

Coming this far made it feel like the second coming of his game. He was starting to get pumped up.

Diablo stood before the receptionist in blue clothing.

In the game, these girls would not even move in the slightest until you came to talk to them.

But in this world, they were actual, real, living beings.

Bleu started to panic a little, and when she went to gather up the documents she had spread out on the desk, she ended up dropping them on the floor.

“Awa, awawawawa...”

“I’ve come to register as an Adventurer.”

“Ah, Y-Y-Yesshir! Adventurer’s registration, yes! Welcome! I-I’ll do my best!”

Rem came from the side to vouch for him.

“...This person is an acquaintance of mine.”

“Oh! You know him, Rem? I see... Well, that should be fine then! Phew... I was wondering what I was going to do if he was a scary person.”

“...He is quite scary, though.”

Rem scratched the girl’s ears with her fingertips. Her face started to flush red.

Diablo cleared his throat.

“Hurry it up.”

In the game, this is the part where you would enter your name, pick your gender and race, choose a job class, then adjust your initial stats. However, he had most of those things taken care of already.

The game also had an event where they would tell you your level.

It was a rite of passage for all players to be told, “Looks like you’re still level 1... B-But you should be able to get stronger right away!”

Bleu started to explain while she picked up her documents.

“Well, if I could get your name—”

Shera stuck her face out from Diablo's side.

"Finally, our Adventurer registration! Hey, can I go first? Pleeease?"

She looked positively over the moon about all this.

Her eyes were practically sparkling.

Besides his knowledge of the game, Diablo knew too little about this world. All he was sure of was that the higher his level, the better. *Guess I'll go after watching Shera first*—he thought.

He nodded.

"I do not mind. Register yourself first."

"Yay!"

Shera happily threw her hands in the air.

Looking at her carefree smile just made him want to give up on his own selfish ways.

This could be dangerous.

—Was I always an accommodating kind of guy? Nah, can't be.

Diablo stood with Rem behind Shera, watching to see how the process worked.

The receptionist for Beginner quests, also known as "Bleu," pulled out a piece of paper from the pile of documents she had scattered earlier.

"Well then, if you could please give me your name and the country you are from."

She brought out a quill pen and ink pot.

Taking them, Shera started to write down some symbols.

—Even though I can understand what everyone's saying, looks like I can't read anything.

Diablo decided to himself that he would have Shera do his part of the paperwork for him, too.

Shera talked out loud as she filled in the necessary information.

“Okay! Let’s see... Shera L. Greenwood... Place of birth, the Kingdom of Greenwood...”

The receptionist made a strange face.

“...Miss Greenwood, from the Kingdom of Greenwood?”

“Yup!”

The worker tilted her head curiously.

—Does Shera really have ties that powerful?

Diablo and Rem reflexively exchanged glances.

Bleu went to check over the documents.

“Um, okay then... Yes, there don’t appear to be any problems here. Now I will measure your job class compatibility. If you have any particular class in mind that you would like to take, then please say so. If not, I will have you take all the tests for the Warrior, Archer, and Sorcerer classes.”

“Summoner!”

“All right, a Sorcerer it is then. After checking the specifics of the contract here, please give your signature and seal of blood in the bottom-right corner.”

“You need a seal of blood!?”

“Y-Yes. After all, it’s a contract stating you won’t sue the Adventurer’s Guild, even if you die...”

Bleu placed a small knife on top of the counter.

Diablo started to shake a little.

Shera, on the other hand, picked up the knife like it was nothing.

“Blood seals do kinda hurt, don’t they.”

She then proceeded to lightly cut her thumb.

After a bead of blood had formed from the wound, she pressed it against the bottom-right corner of the paper.

Sticking her cut thumb in her mouth, Shera turned around to face Diablo and Rem.

“All that’s left is the aptitude test! I’m definitely gonna get a higher level than you, Rem!”

“...That would be impossible.”

“Ah, fix the cut on my thumb! You must have a Summon that can do healing or something, right?”

“...Just put some spit on it.”

“Mean!”

They made a small ruckus.

—I get it now. I thought she never listened to other people because she wasn’t that bright... But maybe it was because of her upbringing?

Bleu began to speak to Diablo.

“U-Um... If you would like to, please go ahead and fill out the forms... I-If you are an acquaintance of Rem and Shera, taking the aptitude test at the same time should make things go faster, and, um... I-I’m sorry for saying something so forward!”

“No, you haven’t said anything wrong.”

Shera held out the pen to Diablo

“All right, your turn next!”

“Hmph, I am not partial to these kinds of trivial tasks. You do it.”

“What, really!? Yay! That makes me kind of like your Summoner, then!”

Rem was glaring at her, but didn’t start fighting over who would be Diablo’s secretary.

Bleu pointed to the paper.

“U-Um... The signature and blood seal can’t be done by a representative...”

“I know.”

—Though I really don’t like pain...

If he was dead then he wouldn’t be able to sue them, so he wished they would make an exception for him there.

Shera was quickly filling out the information on the new sheet of paper.

“Name, Diablo... What’s your last name?”

“I do not have such a thing. I am...an absolute and solitary existence. Do I need to have one?”

“What do you think?”

Bleu’s face turned into an expression of slight shock in response to Shera’s inquiry.

“N-No! Well... Demons have their own fair share of hardships... U-Um, it’s all right to leave the country of origin blank as well!”

It seemed like she was misunderstanding something. But it was a misunderstanding that worked out well for him, so he decided to just keep going like this.

His preferred class: “Sorcerer,” of course.

Shera moved away from the counter.

“Now all that’s left is your signature and your blood seal!”

“Hm.”

Before he did so, he made Shera read him the terms of the contract.

He wasn’t the kind of guy who would read every single detail of the Terms of Service when making an account or anything, but this was a world where things such as Enslavement Collars existed. He couldn’t be too careful.

The terms were mostly things about how the Guild took no responsibilities for death or injuries, and for members to follow the laws and regulations of the country or town before the Guild’s. Even listed was how stealing would disqualify you as an Adventurer.

—OK, doesn’t seem like anything unreasonable here.

Satisfied, he took up the pen and signed his name.

Since a signature was more of a symbol rather than something that used actual letters, he decided to write it out in cursive. Who would have thought his days of secretly practicing writing his character’s name would come in handy

here!

Rem and Shera both looked on with interest at the unfamiliar looking signature.

“Now then...”

Diablo took the knife that was laying on the counter.

Doing this was just like getting a shot, and the more he hesitated, the more scared he was going to be. *It’s not gonna hurt... It’s not gonna hurt... Even Shera made it look like it was nothing!*

Squeezing his eyes shut, he dragged the blade across his thumb.

—It actually hurts a lot!!

Red blood gushed from his fingertip.

And I mean *gushed.*

—I made the cut too deep!

—Seems like when I go to hurt myself, the defense from my Curtain of Dark Clouds or magic barrier won’t activate.

—But now’s not the time to just leisurely think over this kind of stuff!

Blood was spilling onto the counter.

Rem and the others looked on in horror, their pupils shrinking to the size of peas.

It would be embarrassing to say he had cut himself more than he wanted. While he kept an expression on his face like he had meant to do this, blood still dribbling from his thumb, he pressed it down on the paper across from his signature. It looked more like a bloodstain than a seal.

There was still a stinging pain left over. However, his wound had already started to heal. The flow of blood was quickly stopping, and the deep cut he had made was closing itself up.

—This must be from the HP regen effect of the Distorted Crown.

Though it was in a place he never expected it to happen, he had managed to

confirm another one of his equipment's abilities.

"Will this do?"

Bleu's face turned the same color as her uniform as she went to check Diablo's registration form.

"...Y-Yes, no problems here... Probably... U-Um, since everyone has chosen Sorcerer, I'll take you over here for the aptitude test and determine your levels."

She guided Diablo and the others to a mirror off to the side of the counter, having them stand in front of it.

It was a full-length mirror.

—Was there even a mirror here back in the game?

He couldn't remember anymore. At the very least, nothing like this had happened in-game.

The mirror was bordered with gold, giving it an ornate appearance.

The surface of the mirror looked cloudy, as if it had not been polished. It did not reflect much of the their appearances.

Shera blinked in surprise.

"What's this?"

"...A mirror that measures the strength of your magic. This is how you use it."

Standing directly in front of it, Rem reached out and touched the mirror with her fingers.

The surface of the mirror started to glow.

The cloudiness of the glass started to clear, and Rem's reflection was shown. It was only her upper half, but it was a distinct and vivid image.

"...By sending a steady stream of magic into it, you change the clouded glass into that of a mirror."

Bleu gave Rem a small round of applause.

"Just as you would expect from Rem! You are level 40 or above, without a

doubt! It seems like your magic has gotten stronger from last time, too!”

“...Thank you.”

When Rem removed her hands, the cloudiness returned to the mirror.

Shera raised both her hands.

“Got it! Allllllrighty, I’m gonna do my best!”

She pressed her hands against the mirror.

While scrunching up her face, she made some grunting noises.

Shortly after—

The clouded mirror cleared, distinctly showing Shera’s face in its reflection.

The receptionist was astonished.

“Wow, that’s amazing! It looks so clear! U-Um, let’s see here... If it’s clear enough to be able to count the number of eyelashes on your face, then that counts as ‘Up to the chest’ on the scale. So your level is...30!”

“Thirty!? No way...”

Shera’s voice was tinged with disappointment.

From what he had heard so far, being level 30 was quite a favorable assessment.

—But Shera’s goal was to be above Rem, huh.

Rem stuck out her small chest.

“...You were foolish to think of surpassing me.”

“But, it’s because I haven’t even been on an adventure yet! I’m gonna pass you in no time flat!”

“...That won’t happen. You will have to look up to me for your whole life.”

Quietly, Rem let out a sigh of relief.

Though she wasn’t letting it show on her face, it seemed she had been worrying on the inside that Shera might have been judged a higher level than her.

†

It was Diablo's turn next.

—What should I do to "send magic" into it?

He was able to use magic. But he didn't have any idea about what to do to send it out.

Rem and Shera had already showed their true power, and he did feel that he wanted his level to be higher than theirs.

—What am I gonna do if they say I'm level 1? Try and play it off by saying, "Hmph, looks like the Guild can't judge me..." or something?

Feigning calmness, he reached out toward the mirror, his heart pounding.

The clouded glass turned to thick darkness. It looked like he had opened a hole that led directly into the depths of Hades itself.

A black aura started to seep from the mirror.

—Hm? It seems like, maybe...this isn't right?

Rem raised her voice in shock.

"...What's happening!?"

"What!? What is this!? It's kind of freaking me out!"

Even Shera's voice was laced with panic.

Not just Bleu, but the other receptionists in yellow and red let out screams as well.

—This might be dangerous.

Diablo quickly took his hand off the mirror. As soon as he did, the black aura faded, and the mirror returned to normal.

He went to ask Bleu: "What kind of judgment would you give this?"

"...U-Uh, um... This is the first time, I have seen something like this... Uhmm?"

It seemed she had no knowledge about what just happened, and was at a loss for what to do.

“What was that just now!?”

From behind the counter, a door flew open, and out jumped a small girl.

She was a Grasswalker who had ears and a tail like that of a rabbit. Though she looked like a child, it was said that this race would never change in appearance, no matter how old they got.

Her outfit was severely lacking in material.

Though she had some cloth covering her chest, her shoulders and stomach were bare. The thin cloth that dangled from her waist couldn’t even be called a skirt, with almost all of her slender thighs exposed for the world to see.

Her hair was short and red.

She fixed her large, innocent eyes on Diablo.

Bleu began to give a flustered explanation.

“GM! Um, wh-when this person went to determine his level, the mirror...”

The GM, otherwise known as the Guildmaster, was the leader of the Adventurer’s Guild, and was the most important person to be found there.

She was sizing up both Diablo and the mirror.

A smile crossed her face.

“Hi there. Did you do that just now?”

“So it seems.”

“I want to have a little chat with you in the back, would that be all right?”

When faced with that childlike smile, he felt like he would let his guard down at any time.

—But I’m talking with a Grasswalker, who also happens to be the leader of the Adventurer’s Guild of Faltra. I have to keep focused.

Diablo nodded.

“Very well.”

“...I will come as well.”

Rem stood on his right side.

Shera, in a slight panic, went to stand at his left.

“I-I’m coming too! If you want to talk with Diablo, you’re going to have to let me come too!”

“All right, then you two can come along, too. Could you follow me this way, then?”

The GM spun on her heel as she turned around. Bleu gave a small bow.

“U-Um, then please, go on in... Oh, come in through here...!!”

She lifted up a part of the counter and removed it.

It wasn’t a particularly amazing feature, but Diablo caught himself enjoying finding out about another detail of this world that was never mentioned in the game.

Diablo went through to the other side of the counter.

—There was never a moment in the game where you would go to the Guildmaster’s room. I’m kinda looking forward to this.

Passing by desks with paperwork stacked on top of them, they headed toward the back.

†

The Guildmaster’s office was about ten square meters big.

Just like everywhere else, the interior design of the room was all made of wood.

It was clean, as if she were expecting visitors at any time.

Diablo sat himself in one of the wooden chairs near the low wooden table for guests. Rem and Shera were on either side of him.

The GM was sitting behind a thick work desk that was a bit far away from Diablo and the others.

The chair seemed to be a bit tall for her, as she had to jump to get up on it.

“Hello, and thanks for taking the trouble to come here. I’m the Guildmaster of

the Adventurer's Guild of Faltra, Sylvie. Over there is the Summoner Rem, and...?"

Shera leaned forward.

"I'm Shera! And that's my Summon, Diablo!"

Using her tail, Rem smacked Shera on the butt. It made a whapping sound as she did so.

"...Diablo has said that he is not a Summon... Also, you are not the one who had summoned him. You really are a dumb Elf who doesn't listen to what other people say."

"I'll say it as many times as I have to! Diablo is a super amazing Summon that I called because I'm a genius!"

"Heh... A level 30 genius..." Rem snickered, covering her mouth with her hand.

Shera's face turned bright red.

"That mirror just didn't judge my actual talent, all right!"

"...I at least have to respect you for your self-confidence."

"Yay! She respects me!"

Sylvie stared at them.

"Looks like you have some complicated history together, huh?"

"Don't pay much attention to them. Besides, you have something you want to tell me, don't you?"

Diablo went to move on to the main point.

Rem and Shera shut their mouths, and turned to look at Sylvie.

"I'm going to get right to the point. I don't think we can take you in, Diablo."

She looked fairly cheerful as she said that.

Diablo tilted his head to one side.

"I assume you're going to give me a reason?"

“I don’t know if it’ll be enough to satisfy you, but yes. Not just here, but Adventurers who register at any Adventurer’s Guild are given a level which the Guild uses to determine what kinds of quests to give them... In your case, we don’t know your level.”

“You don’t know?”

“It’s the first time the mirror has ever done that. I’m fairly certain that you’re a high level, but I just don’t know how high that is. I can’t figure out what kind of quests I can trust you with.”



“I’m certain I can clear all the quests that have been posted publicly so far.”

“You sure sound confident! Nonetheless, you’re outside the norm by evaluation standards. It’s a bit of a tough call for a Guildmaster like myself.”

“Outside the norm, you say?”

That was disappointing for him to hear, since Diablo wanted to know what his level was in this world.

But as he thought about it, maybe that’s just how it was.

The town of Faltra marked the end of the beginning parts of the game. After you entered the domain of the Fallen to the west, that’s when the MMORPG Cross Reverie really got started.

Using the town as a foothold, you would slowly take control over Fallen territory and prevent the resurrection of the Demon Lord.

In order to do so, you would need to be level 80 or above, near the level cap for the various races of the game.

By completing an extra quest, “Surpass the Limits of Your Race,” you could raise your maximum level to 100.

—I’m not certain, but it might be because I’m already past the level cap so they can’t measure my level.

It was good and all to be a high level, but now it was a problem because he wasn’t able to get any work. He had no way to earn money.

—Maybe I’ll make potions and sell them.

Cross Reverie had something called “sub-classes” in it.

There was everything from Baker to Blacksmith, and even someone like Diablo wasn’t able to remember them all. That’s just how many there were. Everything known about sub-classes was posted on the strategy wiki, but there was still an enormous amount of information about them left unknown.

Diablo had chosen《Combiner》as his sub-class. As long as he had the materials, he could make items such as health potions.

Because of the effects of the Demon’s Lord Ring, he had no choice but to

depend on healing items, which is why he settled on that particular sub-class.

The best healing items in the game could only be made by players. Because of this, buying them off of other people was expensive, and it wasn't like they were available to buy whenever you wanted.

He might be able to make use of his Combiner skills and sell the potions he made... However.

Last night, he had made a promise to Rem to destroy the soul of the Demon Lord Krebskulm.

As of now, he was their greatest enemy.

Potion-makers had a lot on their plate, and if he wasn't fighting, then his focus on and sense for battle would only weaken.

Not only that, but it was true that he really wanted to be an Adventurer for a living.

Diablo asked her: "So you're saying that you're not going to accept me as an Adventurer, is that it?"

Sylvie shook her head.

"I would be happy to have you here at the Faltra Adventurer's Guild. I was more worried that you'd be the one who wouldn't be satisfied staying here."

"As long as there are quests to do and rewards for doing them, then I have no complaints."

"That so? I'm probably a lot weaker than you. Are you going to be okay taking orders from me? Or are you thinking about switching places with me and becoming the new Guildmaster?"

He had never even thought of it.

In the game, the Adventurer's Guild was a mediator that would offer quests for the players to do. Even if the Guildmaster was weak, it was impossible to even consider refusing to do quests.

In actuality, the head of the Adventurer's Guild was said to be seeking to become the strongest there was.

—They do have a lot of rough-looking types here, after all.

Diablo thought back to the fight he saw on the first floor. Seemed like you would have to be strong if you wanted to keep people like that in line.

"I have no interest in the organization itself. You should be the one to take care of such trifling matters."

"Ahaha, you sure are an interesting one. Then just one more thing: we don't have much in the way of quests that match up to your true power."

It was Faltra, so of course that would be the case.

After all, this was the town where you would finish the last of the Beginner quests to unlock the Advanced ones.

When you entered the domain of the Fallen, the Beginner's quests would disappear and be replaced by《EX》quests.

And since the story quests were only there to advance the plot, you would generally be suffering from a lack of money around here. In exchange, you were able to do things like advance to the next area or raise your level cap...

Diablo looked at Rem.

—But even now, it looks like I'm in the middle of taking on a story quest.

"There's no need to worry about the level of the mission. I would assume that there are no quests in this area that would even be a challenge to me anymore."

"Really? Well then... Looking forward to working with you!"

Sylvie ran up to him and stuck out her right hand.

He took her small hand in his.

"Hm."

While he was still keeping up his arrogant attitude, on the inside he felt relieved.

—I didn't know what was gonna happen after the mirror turned black, but I'm glad we seem to have gotten that all squared away.

With this, he was now an Adventurer!

†

"Hey, let's go on a quest right away!"

Shera was getting all worked up, and Diablo felt the same way.

—I wonder how strong the monsters are around here?

He could barely contain his excitement.

Diablo and the others had returned to the counter to find a quest to accept.

Taking a casual glance back down at the first floor, Diablo saw a familiar figure.

—Is that Small Fry over there?

It was the guy from the Mage's Association who had picked a fight with him last night: Galluk.

He was just leaving the Adventurer's Guild, sending out stares of contempt at the Adventurers around him.

Galluk was not an Adventurer, so he probably wasn't here to take on a quest.

—If that's the case, maybe he was making a request.

The Mage's Association from the game would frequently give quests to players.

For the most part, they would turn out to be fetch quests. For example, a good part of the quests would be something like: "I need you to hunt some《Demonic Ligers》and pick up three《Dark Fangs》from them for an experiment I'm doing."

—Well, I guess it's nothing for me to worry about.

Rem and Shera were already talking with the receptionist, Bleu.

"These are the current quests we have available."

"...Since this is your first time accepting one, a Beginner level quest would

probably be good.”

“Fine by me, but isn’t the pay really cheap!?”

The receptionist in red was discussing something with Sylvie. Seeming to have wrapped up their conversation, Sylvie called out to them.

“Heya, Diablo. I have a quest I want you to do for me right away.”

She produced a piece of paper and laid it on the counter.

—Still can’t read.

Diablo motioned for Rem to read it.

“...This is a quest to hunt a《Madara Snake》in the Man-Eating Forest. Is there anyone who would even think of asking someone to do this?”

Diablo tilted his head.

“Isn’t hunting monsters normal for quests?”

“...The monsters around that area are not the kind you can defeat with just a few Adventurers. Normally, you would hunt monsters around the Bridge of Ulug or Starfall Tower.”

“It’s because they keep doing that that their levels won’t go up.” Diablo shrugged his shoulders.

Not letting any emotion show on her face, Rem continued to talk in an indifferent tone of voice.

“...That’s just how it is. Nobody is as strong as you, after all. There will be nothing to show for if you die after challenging a powerful monster.”

“I see.”

“...Normally, nobody would take a quest like this... But if someone has requested it, then there may be a good reason for it.”

“U-Uh... There’s a bunch of strong monsters in the Man-Eating Forest, right?”

Shera’s voice was shaking.

Sylvie spoke: “It looks like the requester is the Mage’s Association. Seems like they need the eye from a Madara Snake for some kind of experiment they’re

doing. The deadline is pretty short, and I don't have the time to gather a bunch of strong people for it, so how about it? I won't force you to take it...but what do you say, Mister Diablo? Wanna give it a shot?"

Diablo thought to himself, *The Man-Eating Forest is set to be about level 60, so monsters around that level should show up there.*

Supposing he was level 150, then this wouldn't even count as a warm-up for him.

—The problem's gonna be my MP.

He had to be cautious about what kind of effect shooting off consecutive magics would have on him.*This would be a good chance for me to test it out.*

If the monsters were level 60, then he would be able to deal with them all bare-handed.

If anything, rejecting this quest would put a dent on his Demon Lord act. He did not want them to think he was scared.

"Very well, I shall be the one to head out there."

"Thanks! But be careful, OK? I feel like there's something...fishy about this quest."

"...Fishy?"

"Every once in a while, we get these quests that seem like they're made to trap our Adventurers in some way. Of course, we usually don't accept any suspicious requests, but I think that since the requester is the Mage's Association, we should be able to trust it... But it still kinda bugs me a little."

"Worry not. No matter what the plans of some insect may be, they will not be able to harm me in the slightest."

"Ahaha... You sure are reliable."

Putting aside his Demon Lord roleplay for a second—

—This does seem like a strange request. Gotta make sure to be careful.

After hearing what Sylvie had to say, the thought of Galluk leaving the Guild earlier crossed Diablo's mind. He probably hated Diablo's guts, even if it was

unjustified.

—But after what happened last night, maybe he won't try to pick fights with me anymore?

Rem raised her small hand.

"...I will go, too. Diablo is still unfamiliar with the area around here, so I am sure he will need a guide."

There was no way Shera would be quiet after hearing that.

"I'm coming too! After all, I'm his Summoner! And—"

Just when it seemed like the normal pattern was going to happen, Sylvie interrupted.

"I'll leave forming a party up to you, Diablo! The pay is just as it's written there, no matter how many people you have coming with you. They've already paid for the quest up front, so we can pay you right away! Now, good luck on your first job!"

—I guess she must keep pretty busy, too.

"Leave it to me."

Swishing his cape around, Diablo started to walk, while Rem and Shera trotted behind him to catch up.

—My first quest!

In his heart, the excitement he first felt when he started Cross Reverie came rushing back to him.

†

Leaving the Adventurer's Guild, they headed toward the West gate of the town.

As always, Rem and Shera were concerned about the collars around their necks.

For Diablo, he felt almost no tiredness no matter how many hours he spent walking, but he did find the whole thing to be a pain.

“It would be convenient if we could use《Teleport》to get to the Man-Eating Forest, but is there a portal near there?”

Rem and Shera had blank looks on their faces.

—Huh? Did I say something bad?

“...U-Um...what is a ‘teleport?’”

“What? Being able to use a spell to warp you back to town is the basics of the basics, is it not? You should be able to find warp items fairly easily in the opening as well.”

It wasn’t just Shera with a weird look, who he knew the gears in her head spun a little slow, but even the usually wise Rem was wearing a curious look on her face.

Diablo could only think of one thing for it.

“Does this world not have teleporting in it? Hey, you two, maybe the name is different here, but do you know of any items that can instantly transport you from one place to another?”

“...According to the legends, it is said that Celestials were able to transport themselves from location to location. I have also heard that there is a ritual magic passed down in the Mage’s Association of the Royal Capital that achieves the same effect.”

“That’s just a rumor, right? If something that convenient existed, everyone would be using it! Even I would’ve been able to make it through the forest without having been so scared!”

“...An Elf is afraid of the forest?”

“Forests at night are different, okay!?”

—Teleporting... There’s another difference between here and the game.

If teleporting was talked about in legends and was said to be passed down at the Mage’s Association in the Royal Capital, then there was a good chance it existed in this world. However... It looked like it hadn’t spread to the general public yet.

At the very least, it didn't seem like it was something Adventurers could easily use.

Thinking about it, if teleporting did exist, then the way people used it here would probably be completely different.

You could send troops and supplies in an instant, and sending orders would be even better than in our modern age of using phones and the Internet.

Getting to the Bridge of Ulug had taken three hours in this world when it took three minutes in the game.

Based on that, there might be a big difference in how teleporting worked as well, in terms of the distance you can teleport.

—Should I try it?

Curiosity started to get the better of him, but he managed to restrain himself. There was no reason to put himself through any dangerous experiments.

Even things like offensive magic demanded a high level of concentration. It wasn't as easy as just clicking wherever you wanted with your mouse.

What if using teleportation magic required a high degree of control? It would be trouble if he messed up and warped himself inside a rock or something.

—Well, it's not like I'm in a rush.

This wasn't a game he was playing in his precious free time after school or work. This was another world.

If there was a place that took half a day to get to, then he should just take half a day to get there. It's not like he ever felt tired, so there wasn't a problem there.

Finishing his inner discourse on the finer points of teleporting, Diablo kept heading for the West gate.

†

Unlike last time, where he had been looking around at everything out of curiosity, it only took two and a half hours to pass through the Bridge of Ulug. It had taken them about a total of five hours to reach the forest after leaving the

town.

This was partially because Shera was absolutely beside herself since it was their first quest; though on the inside, Diablo was just as eager as well.

According to the request, the Madara Snake was said to inhabit the swamp located near the entrance to the forest.

As they approached the area, the murky waters gave off the faint smell of something rotten.

If this were back in the game, it would give you a panoramic view of the forest and then play a small movie of the kinds of monsters you could expect to encounter.

The Man-Eating Forest—

The three of them stopped to look at the forest before them.

Trees blocked their vision, and going inside meant not being able to see more than a few meters in front of them.

The thick, overgrown foliage hid the sky from view, robbing Adventurers of their sense of direction.

This primeval forest untouched by human hands was home to countless wild beasts who would attack given the slightest opportunity.

This is the Man-Eating Forest. Once someone set foot inside, they wouldn’t come back.

—In the game, there was a map in the top-right corner, and if you looked around there was always a path to follow, so getting through wasn’t all that hard.

It seemed like it was made to be rather user-friendly in the game, in regards to navigating around it.

Shera approached the swamp, poking at clumps of bushes with her feet.

“Hey, so... Where is this ‘Madara Snake?’”

“...I will say it now, but it will not be in the bushes.”

“Oh, really?”

“...It is a snake with a body more than twenty meters long, so there is no way it would come out from some bushes. Its head is larger than your shoulders, so I would say it is probably inside the swamp itself.”

“Hieee!?”

Shera jumped back from the swamp.

Oh yeah, I guess it was a giant snake about that big—remembered Diablo.

He had forgotten the small details about level 60 monsters.

With a tense expression on her face, Rem surveyed their surroundings.

“...I am not sure of the specifics, but it is said to usually inhabit swamps, and will come out when it senses prey nearby.”

“I-Is that right?”

“...If you do not want to be swallowed whole, do not go too close to the swamp. I will scout out the situation with one of my Summons.”

I get it... So she’s going to use a Summon as a decoy. Even if it’s attacked, if she just undoes the spell it’ll turn back into a crystal.

Shera slightly tilted her head.

“Hey, so we’re supposed to be the only ones doing this quest, right?”

“...That should be obvious.”

“Then are there actually a lot of people who end up coming in and out of the Man-Eating Forest?”

“...What are you saying? This is the most dangerous area near Faltra. Unless you are someone who does not value your own life, you would never come here on purpose.”

“Really? But even if it isn’t hunting for Madara Snakes or anything, there’re still requests to come out here, right?”

“...Even if it was just to collect some berries, entering the Man-Eating Forest is

extremely dangerous. There isn't any requester who would ask for a quest no one would take. The only reason this one was taken is because Diablo was the one taking it."

"Is that true?"

"...What are you trying to say?"

"Hm? Well, you know... It's just that I can sense other people nearby. Seems like there's quite a few of them out there."

"What!?"

Rem looked at the forest. Diablo also turned his gaze toward it.

It was completely quiet.

There was almost no wind in the forest, so the trees here were not moving in the slightest. It was almost like a photograph.

—Is there actually some kind of presence out there?

Rem narrowed her eyes.

"...Are you sure?"

"There's about ten of them up in the branches. They must be waiting to ambush a monster, right?"

"...I do not know whether you are an idiot, or a humongous idiot."

"Why!?" Shera exclaimed with displeasure.

Diablo was starting to see where this conversation was going.

The group waiting in the forest wasn't lying in wait for a monster.

"They're waiting for us, then."

"What, why!?"

Shera's eyes were wide.

—Looks like it's only her senses that are sharp.

Rem whispered to him: "...What should we do, Diablo? I think it would be all right to just leave... This is obviously a trap."

There wasn’t anything wrong with turning back and telling the Guild that there was an ambush waiting for them.

But if he didn’t deal with this now, there was a good chance they would target Diablo and the others again.

—We were lucky that we sensed the ambush coming. Might as well take care of it.

“Shera, where are they now?”

“Over there, and there...”

Memorizing the places she pointed out, Diablo adjusted his aim so it would be slightly off from those areas.

If he was up against other people, he didn’t want to just suddenly take their lives.

It was important to talk these things out.

Diablo raised his staff.

“《Burst Rain》!”

With a thunderous boom, the sphere of fire that had appeared in the sky burst open. This was a level 70 AoE spell. Fireballs about the size of fists rained down on the area Diablo had targeted.

“Uwah!?”

“What is this!?”

He heard the screams of men.

Several figures descended from the trees around them.

They wore green-colored light armor, and were holding bows.

Shera raised her voice. “Ah, Elves!”

The people who had been lying in wait in the treetops all seemed to be Elves.

—What does this mean?

He couldn’t think of a reason for the Elves to lay a trap for them.

At best, the only person who should hold a grudge against Diablo at the moment is Galluk. He couldn't imagine Galluk asking a group of Elves for help in exacting his (unjustified) revenge.

"Tch, using a shady spell like that!"

One of the Elves, a fair-looking youth, had taken up his bow and pointed it at Diablo.

His body was slender yet tall, and he had the arms and legs to match. His hair was a dazzling blond that reached all the way down to his waist.

He wore a lightweight chest protector for armor, and an emerald green tunic under that. His pants were the same green color, making it an outfit that was perfect for blending him in with the forest.

He had a face so pretty that it could be mistaken for a girl's at first glance. The small lump that was his Adam's apple proved that he was a boy.

—But I've never seen him before in my life.

"Celsior!? What are you doing here!?" Shera shouted.

"Lady Shera! We heard that you had been captured by slave traders, and were dispatched here posthaste to save you!"

One after the other, the Elves took up their bows.

—I see, so they're Shera's acquaintances.

Diablo had come to terms with the situation.

There were ten of them, just as Shera had predicted.

"Hey, Shera, who are these people?"

"They're, um..."

It looked like she had a hard time saying it.

The boy called Celsior raised his voice.

"So *you're* the slave trader! I will have you return Lady Shera to us!"

"...Who are you saying this to? I am no slave trader."

"Quiet! Then what would you call that thing wrapped around Lady Shera's

neck!? You've taken Lady Shera, a pure soul who knows nothing of the ways of the world, and turned her into your slave, haven't you!?"

"That's not even worth considering."

"How could Lady Shera end up with you... No, no matter who it is, it isn't right for anyone to put an Enslavement Collar on her!"

Celsior drew back his bowstring.

It seemed like Shera was quite an important person to him. He even called her "Lady Shera."

It wasn't unthinkable for him to lose his ability to think rationally after seeing her with an Enslavement Collar.

He already had an idea of who she was, but just to be sure, he decided to ask.

"And just what kind of person is Shera?"

"Such insolence! In the sovereign home of the Elves, the Kingdom of Greenwood, Lady Shera L. Greenwood is our noble princess!"

†

The Kingdom of Greenwood—

In the game's setting, it was a country located deep within a forest, completely self-governed by Elves. Amongst the other Elven countries, it was said to be the oldest, largest, and most important of them all. It was established in-game as an isolated country.

There were quests that took you inside Greenwood, but the other Elf NPCs would mostly give you the cold shoulder. Since Elves were said to be the race closest to the Celestials, that pride gave them an air of exclusivity.

One of the game's story quests was a request from the Kingdom of Greenwood. The title of that quest read, "Save the Elf Princess!"

Instead of a slave trader, the details stated the princess had been abducted by the Fallen.

—I see... So I guess you could say these Elves are in the middle of a quest to save their princess from me.

He was completely the bad guy here.

Diablo smiled.

He had decimated many an Adventurer while doing his Demon Lord role play, so playing the bad guy was letting him get fired up.

Besides, he also had something he had to ask them.

The quest Diablo and the others were on right now was a request from the Mage's Association.

Did Celsior and the others deceive the Adventurer's Guild by falsely using the name of the Mage's Association to ask for the quest? Would they even do something like that in such a roundabout way? If they had found Shera in town, they could just try and take her back like Emile had done back at the Guild.

They had gone out of their way to call Diablo away from the town and out into the Man-Eating Forest, where they had been waiting to ambush them. The client for this quest also would know that this job was handed off to Diablo.

Comparing the information available to him, he came to a conclusion.

—Someone had come up with the ambush plan, put a request in for this quest, and then got Celsior and the others involved.

But who could that be...

—You know what, I feel like I already know.

Celsior called out to Diablo.

"Take that collar off of Lady Shera, slave trader!"

He understood his opponent's personality. He was frank to the point of foolishness, but if he was doing what he was doing because he was worried about Shera, then it would be going overboard to kill him.

—It would be nice if we could talk this out...

Is what he thought, but because of his Demon Lord act he kept goading people.

But people are always able to learn. This time for sure, he would resolve this peacefully with his words!

Before he could speak up, however, Shera beat him to the punch.

“I don’t care about the royal family!”

Celsior wore a troubled expression on his face.

“Princess... The royal family is very worried about you. Please, even if just once, return back home.”

“The only thing my brother and the others are worrying about is a successor! They just want to force me to have a child!”

“It is a very important role.”

“I hate not being able to do what I want, and I won’t be forced to marry someone I don’t even want to! I’m never going back! I’m going to live on my own!”

“But aren’t you a slave right now!?”

“No! This is a collar that’s supposed to go on a Summon, but it got put on me by accident! I’m no one’s slave! Not Diablo’s, and not the Kingdom of Greenwood’s! I’m me!”

“By accident? It seems like you have your own reasons, but if the royal family were to see you now... There is no way they would be able to approve of it.”

“Even if they don’t approve, it doesn’t change how I feel!”

“You are much too powerless to be able to live on your own. We will be taking you back, even if it is by force.”

“You... You can’t...”

Shera stepped back, frightened.

Rem stepped in front of her.

“...Very well said... A good performance, considering it was you.”

“Ah, Rem!”

“...You cast aside your country and are trying to live on your own merits. I do

not dislike that.”

She was grasping a Summon crystal in her hand.

—Shera did say that the reason she tried summoning a Demon Lord from another world was because she wanted power.

The power to live on her own.

The power to not be chained down by anything.

Diablo thought to himself—

—What level are these Elves?

If they were surprised by a spell like Burst Rain, then they must not be that knowledgeable about magic. But bow-users like them who could fire off powerful, rapid attacks from a distance were a Sorcerer’s natural enemy.

Shera was said to have evaluated as a level 40 Archer when she was just a child. Despite that, these people were good enough to be able to take her away by force.

—Would that make them level 60 or above, then?

It would probably be a good plan to hand Shera over to them and avoid being targeted by the Elves from now on.

In fact, the Kingdom of Greenwood might even owe him one if he did that.

—Even if I asked for a reward handsome enough that I would never have to want anything else to live sufficiently in this world, I’m pretty sure they’d give it to me.

Diablo smiled.

—But doing things like that would be boring, right!

“You are all fools.”

“Wh-What!? You’re calling *us* fools!? You damned slave trader!”

“You have all committed three grave mistakes. I will correct those mistakes, one at a time. First, I am not a slave trader, but a Sorcerer.”

“Mmh...!? Then, that rain of fire from earlier...”

“Next, Shera is not powerless. That is because... I am lending her my assistance.”

It was not just Shera who was staring at him, but Rem as well.

“Diablo, you’re going to be my Summon!?”

“...How could you.”

“Do not be mistaken, I am just ‘in the mood’ for it right now. I said it before, didn’t I? That depending on your goals, I would lend you my assistance.”

“Yeah! You did!”

“Having a whelp like him come before me and prattle on about ‘taking you by force’... It looks like I’m going to have to show him a bit of what real power is.”

“Th...Thank...you...!!”

Shera looked like she was about to burst into tears.

Though she had been firm with her words earlier, she must have been uneasy on the inside. Rem placed a hand on Shera’s shoulder.

“...It’s all right now.”

“Yeah...”

She nodded, her voice tearful.

Diablo let a cruel and arrogant smile creep across his face, just as a Demon Lord would.

“And the third error you fools have made... Is making me your enemy. Now, despair as I make you realize how powerless you truly are!”

If he made them realize how big the power gap between them was, then they probably wouldn’t come after them again.

—Although it might be hard to just scare them without killing them...

Facing Celsior and the others, he made a declaration: “I will annihilate you all!”

“If you are going to resist, then fall prey to our bows!”

The Elves drew their bows.

“Fire!”

They were well-trained. At Celsior’s command, ten arrows came speeding toward Diablo, all at the same time.

Shera and Rem were behind him, so there was no way he could dodge the arrows.

—I wasn’t gonna dodge them anyways, though.

Right before the arrows could strike him, they suddenly lost all their momentum.

This was due to the effects from his magic barrier and the damage reduction of the Ebony Abyss.

Most of the attacks didn’t even reach him.

Celsior and the others were in shock.

“What is this!?”

“Hmph... I thought you would be more serious than this.”

Seemed like anything deemed “the best” or “elite” in this world was around level 50.

There was panic in Celsior’s voice. “This can’t be... Even after taking our arrows, you’re still unharmed!?”

—I wonder if it’s more than just the level gap?

It seemed that their equipment was lacking in quality, too.

In the game, bow-users would use arrows that were reinforced by magic. If they were using enchanted arrows, then even if the physical damage was reduced by half, it would still be enough to harm Diablo.

He stared at the arrows on the ground.

Arrows were consumable items in Cross Reverie. In exchange for being able to unleash powerful attacks from afar, it was possible to run out of ammunition. You either had to buy them from shops or make them yourself by utilizing a sub-class skill.

And, obviously, depending on the quality of the arrow, the damage it would deal greatly differed.

These arrows were made of wood, and were about a meter in length. The arrowheads were triangular, while the ends were tipped with feathers.

—Looks just like the icon graphics they use for the stores in-game.

In order to stay in control as the Demon Lord, Diablo had to be able to determine the effects of his opponents' arrows by seeing what they looked like.

These arrows were completely ordinary.

"What do you even do battle with? What can you defeat using these arrows?"

"Are you mocking us...!?"

"No, I'm asking you a question. You can only hunt beasts from the forest with these. You must not fight against the Fallen or monsters, am I right?"

"W-Well...that should be obvious..."

Celsior and the others looked a bit daunted.

I see—Diablo thought, nodding to himself.

—That's why everyone in this world is low-leveled.

He remembered what Rem had said before:

"There will be nothing left if you die after challenging a powerful monster."

It was just as she said.

In this world, if you die, it's all over.

Unlike the game, where you would be kicked back to the last town you visited with a level down penalty, there was nothing to save you here.

If Cross Reverie was the kind of death game where, "If you die in the game, you die in real life," then no one would go into the Man-Eating Forest.

Who would go training every day if finding the right hunting spot for you could take half a day for a one-way trip?

Not only that, but you would have to travel back on foot. There was no such thing as a “return home” spell here.

There would be no hints from the game devs on Twitter, and no being able to exchange information with other people on the strategy wiki.

If you wanted to survive, then you would do your best to avoid the crazy strong monsters and stick with hunting beasts from the forest.

You could survive with just a plain bow and arrow.

The same went for magic.

Rather than being an Elemental Sorcerer (where even though the spells were powerful, one mistake could lead to your death), it was much safer to be a Summoner who could use their Summons as a shield.

If your one and only life was riding on it, then you would choose the safest, easiest, and most comfortable choices for yourself.

It was just obvious.

Celsior nocked another arrow into his bow.

This new arrow was completely green. Its main feature was the arrowhead, which was cone-shaped like a drill. A swirling green wind was being released from the tip of the arrow, slightly fluttering Celsior’s hair.

“Hm, 《Tempest Arrows》... I see,” Diablo said with some admiration.

“How do you know that!?”

It was something that had been used against him many times back in the game.

These things were capable of nullifying his damage reducing effects. His challengers would often bring them as a countermeasure against his Ebony Abyss.

They were also effective against monsters who could only be damaged by magic, so it was a standard item for bow-users who were around level 50 or so.

“Not bad. You may actually be able to damage me if you are using Tempest

Arrows.“

“Of course! These arrows are treasures we have received from his Majesty himself! These are the ultimate arrows, able to drill through everything and anything! I don’t know what kind of magic you’re using, but I’ll pierce through it, along with your wicked nature!”

He drew back the bowstring to its limit.

—To be honest, I really don’t wanna get hit by that.

It looked like Celsior was about level 50 or so.

He was taking his time in actually releasing the arrow, so he was probably using the Martial Arts《Charge Shot》to boost its power.

Tempest Arrows were sure to cause him some damage.

—I bet it’s gonna hurt, too.

But if Celsior couldn’t deal huge damage to Diablo, even after doing all this, then he would be sure to see the differences in their strength.

Diablo put on a fearless smile. On the inside, he felt like he was waiting to get a shot from the doctor.

Celsior yelled out: “Pierce through him!”

Leaving green trails in their wake, a multitude of Tempest Arrows came rushing toward him even faster than the arrows from before.

The other Elves also gave out cries of, “Go!” and “Pierce him!”

Rem and Shera were calling Diablo’s name.

But he did not evade.

The damage-reducing effects of the Ebony Abyss were ignored, and the speed of the arrows did not slow down in the slightest.

—I bet these things are going out through my back if they hit my skin.

Pain shot through his abdomen.

It wasn’t the sharp pain of being stabbed that he was expecting, but more like he had been punched by a fist.

“Guh...”

Dull thuds could be heard hitting the ground.

The green arrows had not pierced Diablo’s body, and had fallen to the ground.

The Elves were practically screaming, while Shera and Rem were so elated that they were embracing each other.

“...As I would expect of Diablo.”

“Thank goodness!!”

Celsior was shaking, his eyes wide open.

“...Why...? The arrows his Majesty gave us himself...aren’t working?”

“Hmph... It’s not the arrows that are at fault, but yourself.”

Celsior’s face distorted.

Huh... I really do start smiling when people are being driven into a corner— thought Diablo.

“Who... Who are you? Are you...actually a Sorcerer? Then...what was that talk about you being a slave trader?”

“I do not know who put that idea into your head, but I am no slave trader. I am also no ordinary Sorcerer.”

“...I thought so... Then, who are you?”

“Engrave this into your heart, along with the fear that comes with it. I am Diablo, a Demon Lord from another world.”

Aiming for the forest behind Celsior and the other Elves—he unleashed a Freezia.

The wind howled. The ice effect scattered and danced about. The chill brought on by the spell enveloped the Man-Eating Forest in ice. A beautiful frozen flower came into bloom.

The monsters who were nearby ran out of the forest in a panic, along with the other animals who were living there.

—It looks like the one who just ran away into the swamp was the Madara Snake. Guess there's no need for it now, since this quest turned out to be a trap.

He could even hear beasts that were several meters away fleeing in terror.

It seemed they were more sensitive to danger than the people who lived in this world, as not one of them headed toward Diablo.

Celsior and the others collapsed on the ground as they watched these events unfold in front of them. Just by looking at them, Diablo could tell they had completely lost their will to fight.

He lowered Tenma's Staff.

†

Something other than a wild beast also came tumbling out of the forest.

It was a man, wearing a robe.

His hands and feet were as thin as wires, and he wore a high-strung expression on his face. It was Galluk.

He started to yell angrily at Celsior and the other Elves, who had lost their fighting spirit.

"Hey! Weren't you all supposed to be an elite Elf squad or something!? You didn't even manage to get one arrow in him! I knew it, I should have expected this from Demis!"

—I knew it.

He had been wondering about it ever since he saw Galluk back at the Guild... He just couldn't understand what had the guy so worked up.

It seemed like his "punishment" from before wasn't enough. Communicating with others really was difficult.

Diablo, in character, made his voice show great displeasure.

"Small Fry... It seems like you've been spurring these Elves on."

Galluk shrunk back.

It seemed he was still aware of the gap between their abilities.

“Uhh... Well, you see, I... They were searching for their princess, all I did was tell them she would be coming here...”

“They seem to be under the impression that I’m a slave trader.”

“Th-They thought that up all by themselves! Demis aren’t that bright, after all!”

—Everyone here but Galluk is a Demi, though. Can this guy not even think rationally anymore?

“Hmph... No matter, Small Fry. Do not try to get involved with me again. The next time you try to face me, I will not hesitate to blow you away!”

He made sure to emphasize his threat.

Galluk was trembling.

—It’d be nice if he would just stay quiet after that.

“A-Aren’t you the one at fault here!?”

Unexpectedly, Galluk argued back.

“Hmm?”

“I-I mean, Lady Rem is at fault here, too! You are special, so why are you hanging around with the likes of a Demon and an Elf!?”

Rem made a displeased face.

“...I am a Pantherian. I am also subject to the discrimination of Demis by Humans.”

“But Lady Celes approves of you! That means you are something like a Human!”

“...What an irksome conversation this is... And besides, you have no business in criticizing who I choose to associate with.”

“But you’re an important person to the Mage’s Association... No, to the entire world! You should be aware of that and show some self-restraint! You should

only be around those who come from superior pedigrees, the ones who are guaranteed a bright future! You should be with Humans, like me!”

“...To be completely honest, not only would that be an annoyance, but it would also be completely revolting.”

“Gah!?”

Galluk recoiled.

Rem was glaring at him.

“...I cannot overlook your actions here. If you are going so far as to use the name of the Mage’s Association, then Celes must know about this too, I presume?”

“Urk... Ooooh... No... I’m... I’m not wrong here!!”

Galluk started to sprint away.

It might have been a bit of a problem if he had headed deeper into the Man-Eating Forest, but he managed to turn himself in the direction of the town. What a champ.

Rem apologized to Diablo and Shera.

“...It seems like I have gotten you involved in my own ordeals. I’m sorry.”

“Do not worry yourself.”

I was the one who made his grudge against me even worse—thought Diablo. *But damn, I never thought he would end up being this much of a pain in the ass.*

Thinking about what had happened, the best thing was that Galluk wouldn’t get involved with them anymore. Though the reason Diablo had done what he did before was because he thought that’s what would have happened in the first place.

—Dealing with other people really is tough.

Shera stood in front of Celsior, who sat dazed on the ground. She was at arm’s length for him, but it seemed that he no longer had the willpower to try and “take her back by force.”

“You OK? You can get back home, right? It seems like this forest is kind of

dangerous, so be careful.”

“Ah...uhh...”

“And could you pass something along to my brother for me? I’m never coming back. I’m not some ‘thing’ that my brother owns—right now, I’m Diablo and Rem’s comrade!”

Without waiting for a response, Shera turned around and walked away.

Her cheeks were completely flushed.

Laughing, she said, “Let’s go back, I’m starving!”

“...When did we become comrades?” Rem said with a sigh.

“You said that you liked me, right?”

“...I did not. I only meant that I did not dislike your determination.”

“Oh? Are you getting embarrassed? Your cheeks are red!”

“Ngh... Stupid Shera!”

“What’s with you all of a sudden!?”

—I’m...her comrade?

Diablo froze up.

†

Diablo and the girls made their way back to the inn.

They had already made their report to the Adventurer’s Guild and then grabbed some dinner, so it was already nighttime.

Diablo was sitting in the flickering candlelight of the room.

He was so tired, all he wanted to do was lay down on the bed...

But since there was only one bed, here he was, sitting on the floor.

The only other person in the room was Shera.

She sat down on the bed, and every once in awhile, would glance over at him.

—What's going on here?

He didn't know what do when all alone with a girl.

—Now what?

Rem, who was always good to have around for these situations, had been called out by a messenger from the Mage's Association, and had gone to see Celes.

Most likely, it was about the incident with Galluk.

Diablo and the others hadn't mentioned his name when making their report, but since he was the one to make the request in the first place, the receptionist already knew who he was.

Since he had used the name of the Mage's Association without permission, it was obvious for this to turn into a serious problem. Celes would probably have to make an apology as well.

The reason Rem had gone alone was because she was being considerate.

If Diablo had gone, then he would end up scaring people unnecessarily. The news about how he had sent Emile flying and being declared unable to be evaluated by Sylvie had already spread.

Not to mention the way he looked and spoke.

With a truly apologetic look on her face, Rem had said to him, "...If you were to come as well, then Celes would probably end up having to apologize more than needed, so I will go by myself."

—Well, it's true I'm pretty bad at talking with other people, so that actually really helps me out.

—But Shera's acting kinda weird. Hurry up and come back soon, Rem...

Shera looked over at him again.

Unable to take it any longer, Diablo called out to her.

"Do you need something?"

"Hyah!? U-Uh, um... That snake was big, wasn't it!"

“Hm?”

Thinking about it a little, he realized what she was talking about.

“Ah, the Madara Snake.”

“If this quest hadn’t been a trap, would we have fought that?”

“Rem would have used one of her Summons to lure it out, which is when I would finish it off with my magic. It wasn’t a bad plan. Well, I guess there was always the option to just freeze the area as well.”

The Freezia in the game didn’t have as large an AoE as it did here.

It could be because he was using his scientific knowledge as a base when he used magic here. That, or it was made to look much more reserved in the game.

By the time he had noticed, Shera had gotten off the bed and was coming toward him.

“Yeah! Your magic was really amazing, Diablo!”

“Well, of course... I’ve come to realize something about levels here. The people of this world live their lives doing their best not to die. They don’t put themselves through any unnecessary hardships, and live as safely as possible.”

“Isn’t that just normal?”

“Even if it meant dying, I always prioritized the most efficient and fastest way to level myself up. That’s the kind of world I came from.”

“Are you talking about the other world you lived in?”

“Yes. That’s why there’s such a level gap here. Judging from what happened with Freezia today, I don’t know if it’s the people who are weak here, or the monsters...”

“Oh, that spell you used this afternoon?”

“That’s right. Based on the reactions of the other animals back there, they are most likely much weaker than the ones I am familiar with.”

Shera had a mystified expression on her face.

“Do you not care about your own life?”

“I’m not thinking of throwing it away for no reason.”

“Hey... Does your stomach hurt?”

“What? I haven’t really eaten anything strange, but... Ah, are you worried about when I took those arrows earlier?”

“I mean, Celsior’s arrows were the treasures of the Greenwood royal family. I’ve heard that they’re supposed to be really special... You even made a face like they hurt a little, didn’t you?”

The others had also been surprised that none of the arrows pierced him.

It seems she had been concerned about him, even down to the expression on his face.

“My equipment has an effect that recovers HP... I mean, heals my wounds. It’s not a problem.”

“Really!? That’s amazing!”

It was true that he was plenty strong enough. The unease he had felt when he was first summoned was pretty much non-existent now.

“If you want to keep living in this world, then I would imagine it to be fine to keep hunting wild beasts and the like. But you would never be able to defeat the Demon Lord Krebskulm that way.”

Shera’s breath caught in her throat.

—As I thought, the Demon Lord’s name really is something to fear for the people of this world.

This was what he was thinking, but turned out to be slightly mistaken.

The expression on Shera’s face sank.

“So... Are you really going to choose Rem?”

“What do you mean?”

“Ever since last night, you’ve been looking only at her, you know?”

“...That was not my intention.”

“Rem’s always worrying about the Demon Lord Krebskulm, right? Even

though we don’t know when or where he’ll be resurrected.”

“Y-Yeah.”

It was true that you would think it strange for someone to be so fixated on a Demon Lord that wasn’t even resurrected yet.

Shera didn’t know that the soul of the Demon Lord was sealed inside Rem.

“You’re thinking about defeating the Demon Lord too! So you really are going to pick Rem!?”

“H-Hey!?”

She clung to him, pushing him down.

Even if he wanted to run away, all that was behind him was the wall, and the door and windows were too far away.

Shera wore an earnest expression on her face.

“I need you, Diablo!”

“H-Hm...”

“I’ve kept quiet about it all this time, but... I-I’m... I’m the princess of an Elven country.”

—I knew that! We had this conversation just this afternoon, remember!? Were you really not paying attention to that!?

It was enough to make him worry about her future.

“Celsior said that earlier.”

“Oh, yeah... Did he? I guess he did! I don’t know if it’s because of that, but even though I’m an Elf, my chest is...you know...”

Embarrassed, Shera used her hands to push her chest together.

The two mounds were straining against the fabric of her clothes. Through the seams, he could see her soft-looking cleavage.

“Whoa... A-Are those a particular characteristic of the royal family?”

“I wonder? My mom wasn’t like this. They said it was rare, or something.”

“I see... That’s amazing.”

—I don’t even really know what I’m saying anymore.

“Even though I’m an Elf, because of these, people always look at me funny. All my brother would do is talk about having children...”

“Hold up. You’re supposed to make an heir...with your brother!?”

“That’s what he said. Royalty should marry with royalty to leave a thicker bloodline.”

“Because Elves are close to the Celestials?”

“Yeah, though I don’t really get it myself... But because of that, my brother was always saying stuff like, ‘You can raise the kids, Shera,’ and ‘I want at least three children.’”

“He said that to his actual little sister...”

—If this happened back in Japan, this shit would be taken to court.

“Isn’t it awful!?”

“So, you didn’t like that, which is why you left.”

“That’s half the reason. The other half is because I wanted to know what I could do on my own, and how far I could get.”

“Seems you’re still on your way.”

Shera nodded.

“Yeah, but... If you weren’t here, Diablo, they would have taken me back...”

Celsior and the others were anything but weak.

If Shera had been by herself, they would have caught her easily.

Shera faltered.

“Thank you for today.”

“Y-Yeah...”

He could feel her shaking as she embraced him, like a child that was being comforted by their parent.

As Diablo laid down on the floor, he could feel her chest being pushed up against him. It was warm.

“But...if you choose Rem...then, I...”

“Are we not comrades? Didn’t you say that before?”

“I did... But...”

“Hm?”

“You just made a scary face and didn’t say anything... Rem was smiling, though...”

—That was because no one has ever called me their comrade before; my brain stopped working!

—I was happy.

...If he could just be honest and say it like that, then he wouldn’t have this much trouble communicating with others.

It was embarrassing... And what would happen to his Demon Lord act? Could he be happy about being called a comrade, and still preserve his solemn, majestic demeanor?

But making Shera feel uneasy wasn’t good.

He hadn’t chosen Rem yet, and he had no intention of leaving Shera, either. How should he communicate that to her?

—First of all, it’d be good to get her off of me.

Shera’s supple chest had been pressed up against him the whole time, and the smell of citrus coming from her had been tickling his nose.

Her soft hair brushed against Diablo’s hands.

—Like hell I can think normally in a situation like this!

He went to push her back, so he could get himself off the floor—

But at the worst possible timing, Shera lifted herself up.

“Ah, sorry for being on top of you the whole—”

Squish

Diablo ended up pushing her two melons instead.

Wait, this wasn't right.

—I was trying to push Shera off so I could get up... Well, technically I'm kind of pushing her now, but I was going for her shoulders...

That's right, he was just trying to push her shoulders.

Shera's face turned completely red.

"Ah... Uwah...!?"

"Y-You! Listen well!"

"Yes!?"

"I am a Demon Lord! I have no such thing as comrades!"

It would have been great to take his hands off as he said this...

This morning he had felt them from above. While that had been quite the amazing experience, this time was from below. Her chest was fighting against gravity, making the sensation feel twice— No, three times as powerful. It was overwhelming.

—My fingers are being buried in her chest, even though it's only the outside of her clothes!

"Fwah!"

The soft moan Shera let out reverberated in his brain.

—Not good, not good! We were talking about being comrades!

"I-I have not chosen Rem! Understand!?"

"Really!?"

"Of course! Do not think that a Demon Lord would bend to your wills so easily!"

As he said this, he was toying with her chest.

The sensations would change as he moved his fingers.

Shera twitched and shuddered in reaction to this.

She wasn't getting angry with him like she had this morning.

"Ah...ngh...no..."

"Um... Because I am a Demon Lord and all..."

"Ngh...fwah...no...! It feels...weird when you touch there...so you can't...!"

"I-It feels weird!?"

"Yeah..."

He felt something grinding against his lower body.

Looking down while still grasping her chest, Diablo saw that Shera was starting to move her waist.

She was moving her hips, rubbing up against him.

"Uwoh!?"

"Hyah...! D-Don't...be so rough..."

"Ah! Did that hurt!?"

He had meant to be as soft as possible, but it was true that he was level 150 right now. He had to be extra careful when it came to dealing with any sensitive parts.

—But wait, isn't this wrong? After all, isn't it kind of bad to even be stimulating sensitive parts in the first place?

Shera wiped away the tears that had formed in the corner of her eyes with her fingers.

"No, it didn't hurt... I was just a little surprised is all... H-Hey, Diablo... Do you like boobs, too?"

"Wha!?"

"I mean, whenever you look at me, you're always looking at my boobs, right?"

"Uh, well... That's because they stand out so much..."

—She totally knew the whole time!

“At first, I was a little worried about it... But if it’s you, Diablo...”

“Wha-wha-whaaaa!?”

“If... If you don’t make it hurt...then it’s fine...”

“!?!?!?”

His throat having dried up, all he could do was make a weak noise as air passed through it.

Shera was staring directly at him.

“Ehehe... They’re bigger than Rem’s, right?”

“Well, yeah...”

“The bigger they are, the more you want to touch them, right? If it’s you, then it’s okay!”

“Well...that’s...”

“Ah... Mm...”

—Isn’t this kinda bad?

But even as he thought that, his reasoning just wouldn’t work. All he could do was touch, squeeze, and fondle her voluminous chest.

While listening to Shera’s sweet moans, he felt something stiffen under his hands.

“Is this...?”

He softly pinched it from over her clothes.

The muscles along Shera’s back contracted.

“Nnhaaaaaaa!!“

Her body jolted, as if she had been electrified.

He could feel her body heat rising, emanating to him through her hips.

She was staring at Diablo, eyes glistening.

“Hey... Diablo...”

“Wh-What?“

At that instant, he felt a frigid stare boring into him.

It was a presence more terrifying than he had felt from any of the beasts of the Man-Eating Forest.

Slowly, Diablo turned his eyes around in their sockets.

In the corner of his vision, he saw the door had been thrown wide open.

“Ah...ha...”

A sense of intimidation overwhelmed him. It was enough that he could not even use his Demon Lord act.

With a dreamy look on her face, Shera turned to look.

“Oh, it’s Rem~“

Standing in the open doorway, for some reason wearing glove protectors with spikes sticking out of them, was Rem.

“...It’s fine...after all...I’m small, aren’t I!”

—So she’s been listening since that part...

Afterward, the two of them apologized to Rem in earnest.

Chapter 3: Trying to Save the World

The next day—

Diablo was called to the Adventurer's Guild early in the morning.

The location: behind the counter, back in the Guildmaster's office.

Diablo was sitting on the leather sofa, with Shera sitting nearby. Rem was the only one standing up.

Behind the large desk was the rather small Sylvie.

"Sorry for making this back-to-back, but I've got another quest designated for you, Diablo.

"Is this going to be another trap?"

He had taken on a quest yesterday, but that group of Elves had been lying in wait for them.

Diablo and the others had managed to fend them off, but if things had gone south, Shera would have been taken away; or maybe even worse: killed.

There was no guarantee they would make it out unscathed this time, either.

Sylvie smiled.

"I understand that you're wary, but this time it'll be all right. The client is the head of the Mage's Association herself. I got the request from her in person, so it's for certain this time."

It looked like Celes was the one who made the request.

Diablo turned his gaze toward Rem.

"What did you two talk about yesterday?"

He had been wondering about it, but since "that" had happened last night, he hadn't had a chance to ask.

Rem looked the same on the outside, but he had the feeling that her voice

was a bit stiffer than usual.

"...She apologized for the incident yesterday. She also offered some pay as a consolatory fee, but I refused."

"Hm, so that means instead of the money, we get a request instead."

Sylvie went to explain the particulars of the request. Considering the amount of work to be done, the reward did seem to be substantially higher than one would expect.

"...Jeez, that Celes..."

Rem sighed.

"There's no need to be so cold about it, is there?"

Shera chimed in: "If it's a quest with good rewards, then I'm happy to do it!"

But it seemed Rem was thinking something else.

"...I do not want to be indebted to Celes. I would accept if it was a normal request, but I refuse to take one on, such as this, where the reward is exorbitantly high."

"But this is a request for Diablo, right? So even if you do help out, then you won't have a debt to owe to anyone!"

"...Considering that it's you, you sure have given some thought about this."

"I'm amazing, right!"

"...It is just like Celes to include that kind of excuse with her request... But I will not go. You two seem to be getting along *very* well, so you should just go by yourselves."

—Getting along well?

Shera's face turned red.

"I'm sure you would like to go with Shera and her useless bags of meat rather than a washboard such as myself." Rem pouted her lips.

—Ah, looks like she's still mad.

Rem did seem like the type to silently seethe in anger. Seems like she would

need some more time before she cooled off.

Because of that, it looked Shera wanted to come along as well.

“I-If you’re gonna say that, then me and Diablo are really going to head out together! We’re really gonna go together, OK!?”

—I guess I can pay Rem back the money I owe her for the inn with the reward we get from this.

“Hmph... If you do not want to come, then you can stay in town.”

“...I will do that.”

Rem muttered, sulking.

Sylvie clapped her hands.

“All right! So it’s going to be Diablo and Shera going, right? Then that’s that! Counting on ya!”

She handed over the request forms.

—Still can’t read.

Diablo began to hand it over to Rem, but stopped himself and held it in front of Shera instead.

Elated, she started to read the details of the quest.

“Um, uh, let’s see... It says... It’s a delivery to the Bridge of Ulug.”

“I cannot see this quest as having much of a point.”

Sylvie gave a pained smile.

“Somehow, I feel like I’ve caught a glimpse at the hardships Celes must be going through to get you that compensation money.”

This could be Celes’s way of worrying about Rem’s secret circumstances. Or it could be an expression of her feelings, thinking of Rem as a little sister.

She seemed more like some grandma trying to give Rem some pocket money rather than a big sister, though.

Also, dealing with girls who were still maturing was just plain difficult.

Rem spoke in a sullen voice.

“...Does she truly think that I would be satisfied and accept the reward for a quest that is obviously too easy? She underestimates me.”

Diablo felt half-hearted about the whole thing as well.

“I can see no merit in having me go out there.”

Shera started to get flustered.

“What!? Come on, let’s go together! I hate being alone!”

“I cannot imagine that you would be running into any dangerous monsters.”

“I don’t want to go alone! Let’s go! Let’s gooooo!!”

—What is she, a kid?

“There’s no helping you, is there... Well, I did accept it, so I guess I will go as well.”

“Yay! Then let’s head out right away! This’ll be our first quest!”

“What was yesterday, then?”

“That was a trap! That doesn’t count as a quest; this one’s a do-over!”

“Hm, well, I suppose you can think of it that way.”

“...Celes is much too soft.”

Rem sighed.

Sylvie was smiling cheerfully as she stared at the three of them.

†

All around them were grassy plains as far as the eye could see.

Following a dirt road with wheel tracks in it, Diablo and Shera were heading toward the Bridge of Ulug, with Shera carrying the wine they were to deliver there.

She kept talking about one thing or the other, with Diablo making a noise every once in a while to show he was listening.

Their random talks eventually led to Rem.

“You know, Rem is pretty amazing! Even though she’s about the same age as me, she’s already a proper Adventurer, a high-level Summoner, and super confident in herself, too!”

“You’re quite confident yourself, aren’t you?”

“Because I’m a genius! But... I’m not confident... I’m only a genius because that’s what everyone called me... That’s why I want to truly believe in myself.”

“Hm.”

“You help too, OK, Diablo? I’m only going to keep on getting bigger! You should consider yourself lucky if you get me to owe you a favor right now!”

She stuck out her chest.

—You can get bigger than that?

Is what he started thinking, but chased the thought out of his head.

He started to think about what he had felt last night, and peeled his eyes away from her chest.

“Do your best.”

With just those words, she nodded back cheerfully.

—She does seem to have some talent, so I want her to be able to stand on her own as an Adventurer.

He wasn’t fond of people who would mooch off of other Advanced players just to get the rewards. In the game, they were scornfully known as “Parasite Players.”

He didn’t want Shera to just rely on him; he wanted her to become a more independent Adventurer who could think for herself and make her own decisions.

Shera carried on nonchalantly, unaware of Diablo’s wishes for her.

“Ahh, this is some nice weather. Just making a delivery is kinda boring though, huh.”

“True.”

This was more an errand than a quest.

It would be perfect if you were some level 1 Adventurer, but Diablo was already level 150. Even Shera was a level 30 Sorcerer, though it seemed she didn't know any spells as of yet.

—This isn't just boring... It's really boring.

—If an《Invasion》happens, then I might have something to do.

An Invasion was when a high-level monster would appear in a low-level quest. There were quests that featured the system, though for the more unfortunate, they would end up happening upon them by chance.

It was almost always an unwelcome event for players.

"Ah! I see it!" Shera pointed.

It was the Bridge of Ulug.

The same day he was summoned to this world he had been stopped by the guards there, so he didn't have the best memories of the place.

—I passed through it just fine yesterday, so I'm sure it's fine now, too.

He lightly touched the horns on his head as he thought to himself. *Looking at how this world is now, it seems like these things could end up being the source of a lot of trouble for me.*

But he had already lost his chance to say "These are just for decoration" and take them off.

As Shera trotted behind him to catch up, they finally made it to the bridge.

The dirt road they had been traveling along gave way to paved stones.

The Bridge of Ulug was a stone bridge that linked the east and west sides of the river.

If you headed toward town, then you would find a fortress that acted as a guardpost in front of the bridge.

Enemies that came from the west would be engaged on the bridge, while travelers from the east would be checked before being able to cross the bridge.

Right now, the fortress was bustling with activity.

It was obvious to see there were a *lot* of guards around.

“Wonder what that’s all about? Are they having a party?”

“It does not look that way.”

The guards that had gathered there looked anything but calm.

Not only were they all holding weapons, but they were decked out in armor as well. There was a thick sense of tension hanging in the air.

As Diablo and Shera approached, the frenzied guards took up their weapons.

“F-Fallen!”

“Why are they coming from the town!?”

“C-Come on, you bastard! Let’s do this! LET’S DO THIS! GRRRRAAAAAHHHHH!!”

It looked like they would try to cut Shera and Diablo down at any second.

“Wh-What...?”

Shera’s body had gone stiff out of fear.

Diablo pulled out Tenma’s Staff.

“What is the matter with you all? I am not a Fall—”

“P-Prepare yourself!”

One of the guards readied their halberd. It looked like they were going to use an assault-type Martial Art.

Yesterday, he had not been suspected of being a Fallen. Now, not only was it decided that he *was* a Fallen, but he was on the verge of being attacked.

Unable to comprehend this baffling situation, Diablo prepared to use a spell for his counter-attack.

Right then, another guard came running forward.

“Wait, wait! You’ve got it all wrong! This person’s just a Demon, he’s with Rem!”

Diablo recognized the guard's short, brown, spiky hair and youthful countenance.

"You're the one who called out to me the other day, aren't you?"

The guard nodded, a tense expression on his face.

"Y-Yes. My name is Boris. I apologize for what happened back then."

"For these people to mistake me for a Fallen... They seem to be in a fervor. Did something happen?"

"Actually, after hearing the report from the patrol, everyone's on edge right now."

"Report?"

"Y-Yes, well... How should I put this... You may not believe me when I say it, but..."

As the words came out of his mouth, it seemed even Boris doubted what he was saying.

He pointed to the west.

"There's an army of over one hundred Fallen heading toward the Bridge of Ulug."

It turned out that, as Boris said, Diablo did indeed have some trouble believing this.

—Over one hundred Fallen...and they're attacking as an army?

He had never heard of an in-game event like that before.

Each of the Fallen were supposed to be several times stronger than any Adventurer. Whenever they showed up in a quest, they were always treated as a mid-or final boss. At the very least, they weren't the kind of enemies that you would just randomly encounter while you were exploring a dungeon.

At the very least, they weren't the kind of enemies that you would just randomly encounter while you were exploring a dungeon.

It was normal for a party of at least six people, or even multiple parties to combine forces and make a concentrated effort to challenge a Fallen.

—If they're Fallen enemies from around here, then I guess they would be about level 90.

And there were supposed to be one hundred of these guys heading toward them right now.

This was a large-scale "Invasion," one the likes of which would never happen in the game.

†

The Bridge of Ulug was a two story box-shaped structure, connected by stone arches. At a glance, it looked similar to a castle gate.

It was a spacious building, with many of the guards spending a good portion of their day-to-day lives there.

But right now, it was cramped since most of them had come down to the first floor, fully decked out with armor and weapons.

Some guards were thinking about where they were born; some were trying to psyche themselves up; others were shedding tears at the thought of impending death... Diablo saw a plethora of emotions as the guards were faced with the hopeless situation ahead of them.

Shera had already handed off the wine they were supposed to deliver to Boris, so their quest was already finished.

They could just head back toward town, but...

—If I leave them alone, they're probably all going to be completely destroyed.

That would likely mean the Fallen would invade the town as well.

But this was strange.

Faltra had a barrier protecting it. Even if the Fallen came to attack it, if they just closed the gates, then there was no way for them to get inside.

Maybe all these Fallen had gathered together to go on a pointless trip

together... All one hundred or more of them.

Beside him, Shera was shaking.

“Have you ever seen a Fallen, Diablo?”

“Of course.”

“Because you’re a Demon Lord!”

“Well, yeah...”

“They’re pretty strong, right?”

“If it’s one-on-one, then there shouldn’t be a problem... Just for my own confirmation, in this world, you call those who wish to cause harm to other races ‘monsters,’ correct?”

“Yup. They’re things like wild beasts who attack people, like the Fallen and other magical beasts.”

“Putting aside the beasts for now, would I also be correct in saying that the Fallen appear similar to the other races, but are completely different beings altogether?”

As you would expect from someone of the Elven royal family, Shera seemed to be quite knowledgeable on the subject.

“That’s right. The Fallen belong to the family of the Demon Lord, while the other races are descendants of the Celestials. That’s why they’re said to be completely different beings. Right now, the Fallen seem to be moving all over the place trying to resurrect the Demon Lord.”

“Hm...”

So far, this was just like the game.

If that was the case, then the possibility that the Fallen were aiming for Rem was high.

Was her secret leaked out somehow?

Or did they sense the magic inside of her?

It may be that they didn’t single out Rem in particular, but sensed that the

soul of the Demon Lord Krebskulm was somewhere in Faltra.

He would have to make sure to warn the others not to reveal this kind of information carelessly.

—But one hundred of them, huh... Even though I'm level 150, taking them all on at once would be pretty rough.

—Should I hurry up and get back to town?

—I mean, it's not like the Fallen would be able to get in.

Boris, who had taken the wine from the Mage's Association, came back with a letter of some sort.

"Excuse me, but here! This is a thank you note. I was thinking it could act as a kind of receipt for you, to prove that you made the delivery."

"Are you in your right mind? Right now, there are one hundred Fallen heading toward you, and you write a letter to say 'thanks for the wine'?"

"Haha... You're right. You might think that I'm not staying on guard... But if today may be my last moments in this world, then I want to live them properly."

"Hm."

"Please, you and Shera should head back to town."

"Are you all not going to retreat? If you fall back to Faltra, then the Fallen would not be able to enter because of the barrier, correct?"

"If we retreated, then the people working the fields outside of town, as well as other outside travelers, would be in trouble... Our job is to buy time for everyone to make sure they escape to Faltra."

—So, the guards are prepared to do battle, feeling like that.

Shera was moved to tears.

"Diablo... Can't you do anything?"

—Well, guess there's no way around this one.

He took Tenma's Staff and slammed it against the stone floor.

“Unfortunately for you, your resolve is wasted here. This will not be your last day on this earth!”

Boris was taken off guard. “Huh!? Wh-What are... Diablo?”

Then, that’s when the Fallen appeared.

The guards on the Bridge of Ulug started to yell, bordering on screams.

Diablo turned his gaze to just beyond the stone bridge.

There, he saw a large black mass, slowly approaching them.

The entities within it all possessed some kind of beast-like trait.

There were some with heads shaped like a bull; instead of hands, some had hooves; and some were impossibly huge, while others had skin colored a dark blue.

In spite of the mass of figures all having different appearances, they were united in the fact that they were grotesque and strange-looking.

—Is the person in front their commander?

It looked like they were some kind of knight, fortified in pure black armor. They carried a great lance, like the ones you would find in a jousting tournament.

They were the only one riding a monster, their steed resembling a dragon about the size of a horse.

—That would make them a Dragon Knight, then.

In the game, players were able to tame and ride certain kinds of special monsters.

Diablo had never invested any time into his riding skills so he had never experienced it himself, but it was said there were players who rode wyverns in the game.

Even he had thought about wanting to ride one at least once.

—For now, I have to focus on just making it through this.

He had talked big in the heat of the moment, so there was no backing out of this.

The Fallen had come within a range where bows and arrows could reach them.

The guards began firing arrows at the mass, albeit unskillfully.

The Fallen did not seem to be taking any damage in the slightest.

They let out ferocious howls.

“GRROOOOHHHH!!”

A flood of fireballs was launched in retaliation, followed by an explosion.

There was an explosion.

A portion of the Bridge of Ulug crumbled away from the enemy’s attack.

The archers seemed to have gotten away before they were caught up in it themselves.

Diablo spoke to Shera.

“You, stay here. If you get too close, then it’s harder for me to use magic.”

“O-Okay! Um...!”

“What?”

“Diablo... Be careful.”

This was the first time anyone had worried about him before he headed into a fight.

Strangely, he felt his chest getting hotter. His only response was for his face to turn red.

He turned his back to her.

Right now, he felt like he couldn’t lose. Not even to a Demon Lord.

†

Diablo stood on the stone bridge.

He was the only one to have come out from the fortress, so the Fallen had all turned their attention toward him. There were a lot of them where it was hard to tell where they were looking, though...

He could feel the stares of the guards behind him, which were mixed with equal parts expectation and unease.

If he was his normal self, he wouldn't even be able to get out a single word. That's the kind of situation he was in.

Now more than ever was the time for his Demon Lord roleplay.

Standing boldly in the open, he let an arrogant smile cross his face.

"Who gave you all permission to come here with your army? For not knowing that I was here, you should feel ashamed of your ignorance!"

Normally in this world, when one of the races would come upon a Fallen, they would either draw their sword, beg for their life, or run away.

He was willing to bet that this was the first time they had been called out like this by someone using such a condescending tone.

The unrest amongst the Fallen was obvious.

This was a first for Diablo, too. Usually, monsters would just come after you and attack without saying anything. Even on special quests, enemies would just one-sidedly announce their intention to murder the player, and not listen to what they had to say in return.

This was the first time he had used his Demon Lord act on the Fallen.

"Who, you?"

One of the Fallen came forward.

It was a giant that resembled a mountain, standing at about five meters tall.

It had a face that resembled a wild boar, with a nose that projected outwards. From its bottom lip came two tusks that pointed upwards.

Each step it took came crashing down with a loud thud, creating tremors as it came in front of Diablo.

—He's frickin' huge!

The gigantic boar-headed Fallen raised an axe that was suitable for someone of its stature— And smashed it into the ground.

With a tremendous noise, cracks spread along the stone bridge.

The guards in the fortress screamed.

"Good grief... So you don't know me. Then I shall carve that answer into your body."

—Well, of course he wouldn't know who I am.

Taking another step forward, the boar-headed Fallen raised its war axe.

This time, Diablo was within striking distance.

"You, small. Look weak. Kill!"

There was no reason for Diablo to take this attack.

He thrust forth his staff.

"《Flare Burst》!"

This was the superior version of the Explosion spell he was always using. For any Sorcerer who hadn't broken through the level cap yet, this spell was the upper limit for magic.

The Fallen was blown away.

Diablo's vision was enveloped in a flash of blinding light.

He had unleashed his magic at point blank range, and was in danger of being caught up in the blast himself.

However, thanks to the powerful Demon Lord's Ring, Diablo was able to reflect all types of magic, even healing spells.

The explosion did not reach Diablo.

The light started to die down.

The boar-head Fallen had been blown to the other side of the bridge, back to where the other Fallen were lined up.

It was lying there, limp.

In the game, any magic-type monster or Fallen you defeated would turn into black particles and disappear. They wouldn't leave corpses on the ground like with other wild beasts.

—What, so I didn't beat him?

But it wasn't getting back up.

Thinking back to the game, if you took damage from an attack that was more than half your max HP, then it was possible for you to get knocked out.

That would mean boar-head over there would go down for sure if he hit it with another Flare Burst. There was a chance that the first hit could have been a critical or a fluke, so he couldn't say it for sure, though...

The legion of Fallen was starting to get rowdy.

—It would sure be great if they just went back to wherever they came from because of that.

But it looked like things weren't going to go so smoothly.

After being knocked out for a good few seconds, the boar-headed Fallen opened its eyes, slowly raising itself off the ground.

"Kill... Kill... Guh, nrgh... You... You burn me... I, kill you..."

—It's still raring for a fight. That's the Fallen for you.

—Looks like I've managed to aggro everyone here, though.

That should mean they wouldn't try to make any more attacks on the fortress, at least for now.

Even if he hadn't made them retreat, it was easier for him to fight when he didn't have to worry about other small things like that.

Diablo raised Tenma's Staff.

“So you will not back down. Very well! Then I shall be the one to annihilate you all!”

†

Rem was in the dining hall of the inn. It was where she had had breakfast with Diablo and Shera earlier that morning.

Right now, there was another woman sitting across from Rem.

It was the head of the Mage’s Association, Celestine Baudelaire.

She was wearing an embroidered cape, and robes that fit her so perfectly you could see every curve of her body.

Rem had never really wondered about it before, but...

She was big for a Human.

Bigger than Rem, at the very least.

Standing behind the head of the Mage’s Guild were two escorts. Galluk was not one of them, of course.

Celes gave a smile, one that made you feel her sense of open-mindedness.

“I’m sorry for making you go through the trouble to meet with me just so we can continue off from where we left last night.”

“...There is no need for you to fuss over me so much. I have no intention of making the Mage’s Association my enemy.”

“Well, personally, I want to get along with you better, Rem.”

“...I do not want to be held captive by the Mage’s Association, and I do not want to be put under surveillance by them.”

“I have no intention of doing either of those things, you know?”

“Being protected within the Mage’s Association, being assigned guards by the Mage’s Association... The only thing that changes is how you say it, not the meaning.”

If Rem lost her life in the middle of her adventure, then the soul of the Demon

Lord Krebskulm would be released.

There was no precedent for this situation, so it was only natural for Celes to be thinking of locking Rem away in the safest place possible because of that threat.

In fact, she was prepared to be captured once people knew of her secret.

Rem herself was an accomplished Adventurer, so she had no intention of being taken in without a fight, however.

Faced with Rem's obstinance, Celes let out a sigh.

"I'm sorry. Let's put that conversation aside for today."

"...Yes, let's."

"After I spoke with you last night, I went to ask Galluk about the details as well."

"Were there any discrepancies?"

Since it was Galluk, she was wondering if he had thought himself not in the wrong and distorted the truth; but it seemed that wasn't the case.

"If I were to say if anything was different, then maybe it would be in his perception of what happened?"

"...Perception?"

"Galluk thought that he was doing the right thing. He lamented that, even though he tried everything he could to persuade you, you wouldn't listen."

"...I cannot fathom what he means."

"I figured as much."

"...Though he claims he wanted to persuade me, I do not think that trying to do so by bringing harm to Diablo and Shera could be considered a normal thought process for a person."

Celes nodded in agreement. Even she didn't seem to be able to understand him.

"I have dismissed Galluk. It's true that he caused trouble for the townspeople,

and even used the name of the Mage's Association at his own whim... I had to have him take responsibility for that."

"...That is quite a bold action for you."

"After being let go, I'm sure he will reflect on his actions and mend his ways."

"...I wonder about that."

Rem wished that Celes had done this sooner, but she was too kind.

It was because of that kindness Rem was able to walk around so freely.

"When I spoke with Galluk, there was one thing in particular that stuck out to me."

"What would that be?"

"Well, apparently, Diablo called himself a 'Demon Lord'?"

Rem decided that it was not possible to hide it. It would not be a good idea to make Celes her enemy here, after all.

"...I will not deny it... Diablo is a Demon Lord from another world. On the day when both the sun and the moon appeared in the sky, at Starfall Tower... At Shera's suggestion, I went there with the intention of summoning him."

While Shera also placed her hand on the spellbook during the summoning ceremony, Rem believed she was the one who had summoned him.

Her face completely serious, Celes asked Rem:

"Did he really come from another world?"

"...What do you mean by that?"

"I understand that you're a proficient Summoner, but I've never heard of anything like a Demon Lord from another world. And I certainly don't believe that a being who ruled over another world could be called forth by any of the races in this one. Is it possible that he's a Fallen from this world, who appeared because he was drawn to the soul you hold?"

"...That simply cannot be."

Diablo had had plenty of opportunities to kill her.

There was no way for him to be a Fallen.

On the contrary; the other evening, he had made a promise to her:

“Very well. I will crush the soul of the Demon Lord Krebskulm for you.”

Rem was going to believe in him.

But she thought that this wouldn’t be proof enough for Celes.

“I had someone I trust go see the remains of his fight.”

“...The one in the Man-Eating Forest?”

“Just looking at the report sent shivers down my spine. I’ve never heard of anyone being able to do that with elemental magic.”

“...I was surprised as well. However, it is not like you to decide someone is a Fallen just because they are powerful.”

“Rem, do you trust Diablo?”

“...Of course I do.”

“To be honest, I’m a little afraid of him.”

“...What do you want to do with him?”

“That’s where I’m at a bit of a loss. I want to believe in him, like you do... But as the head of the Mage’s Association, I can’t just leave him alone.”

She should tell Celes that she had told her secret to Diablo, and how he had even offered to help her on top of that.

The way Diablo conducted himself was arrogant and full of danger.

Despite that, Rem felt that he might actually be a good person deep down.

How could she say this in a way that Celes would accept?

If she didn’t give her an answer, then—

“Ah, excuse me, dear customer, but the place is reserved right now. ☆”

“Don’t touch me, you damned Demi!”

“Ow!?”

The sounds of a dispute reached their ears. With a bang, the doors to the dining hall flew open.

Galluk had appeared.

†

Galluk entered the dining hall. His eyes were bloodshot; his face was warped into a manic expression; and his breath was ragged.

He was still wearing the robes of the Mage’s Association, but they were torn in various places, and his hands were stained with blood.

His voice shook as he spoke.

“L-Lady Celes! Have... Have you reconsidered what you said last night!? I mean, it’s strange isn’t it!? Why was I made to leave the Mage’s Association for doing the right thing!”

The two guards had taken up their staffs and stepped forward.

Celes answered in a calm voice.

“As I explained to you many times, what you did was wrong.”

“That’s strange! It’s strange, isn’t it!? For someone as talented as me to be let go, there must be some kind of mistake! I-It has to be some kind of mistake... I had to give the people who came and tried to take my robes a good b-beating, and t-tried to make them say the truth... But, they kept lying! Th-They kept saying that I had been l-let go...”

“Beating? Are the others from the Mage’s Association all right?” Celes frowned.

That’s quite a serious expression for her to make—thought Rem.

Galluk shouted: “Worry about me! Th-That, that Demon, he’s not right in the head! He has disrespected me t-twice now! He’s not suitable for Lady Rem to be around, so all I did was try to keep him away from her! Why do you choose to worry about those second-rate underlings instead of me!?”

The color of his face was constantly changing. His eyes were all over the place as well.

It was evident that he was mentally unstable.

Celes stood up.

“First, I need you to calm down. Let’s just take it easy and talk this through, shall we?”

“I am calm! *You’re* the one who’s acting strange!”

His voice was conspicuously loud.

Deciding that there was no reasoning with Galluk, Celes’s guards closed in on him.

“Galluk, just come with us quietly!”

“We’re turning you over to the knights!”

Galluk was holding his head in his hands.

“It’s strange... It’s strange! Everyone is strange! Ahh, so what they said was right! No lesser-minded person can understand my talents, how great I am!”

Galluk pulled something out from around his waist.

It may be a Summon crystal—Rem thought.

Though she felt sorry for the damage this would cause to the inn, Rem started to reach for her own crystals so she could fight back.

However, what Galluk held in his hand was a dagger; an ominous, black dagger.

Rem could feel something in the back of her chest starting to grow hot. She could feel a suspicious aura coming from the weapon Galluk held.

—I don’t know what exactly it is... But it’s dangerous!

Staying alert, the two guards approached Galluk.

“Stop!”

“Do not continue this shameful display any longer!”

Galluk glared at his former colleagues.

“Shut your mouths! You’re nothing but weaklings! Don’t get close to me!”

He raised the dagger.

Celes made as if she was going to step closer to Galluk, but Rem held her back with one hand.

“...You can’t get near him... He is no longer sane...”

Galluk was screaming.

“Not sane!? It’s not me that’s insane, it’s all of YOU! Everyone from the Mage’s Association, and this whole world, too! Why am I not treated well when I am so evidently proficient!? Why is my value not acknowledged!? Why does no one worry for me!? It’s wrong! Wrong! This is definitely WRONG! That’s why...”

The black dagger he wielded had an eyeball that looked almost alive.

Though it shouldn’t have been possible, the eye swiveled around.

It looked at Rem.

A chill ran throughout her body.

She threw one of her crystals against the floor.

“《Shadow Snake》! Stop Galluk from moving!”

A long, thin shadow emerged from the crystal. A black snake, about five meters long in total, quickly slithered across the floor. Its special ability was《Bind》, and when used against one of the other races, it was able to restrain their movement for about five seconds.

But before her Summon could reach him, Galluk made his move first.

“This world must be made right, and *I* will be the one to do it!”

Galluk plunged the dagger into his own chest.

—He’s committing suicide!?

Rem’s breath stopped in her throat.

Celes covered her mouth in shock, while the two guards looked on in quiet dismay.

—Wait, that’s not it!

Sensing a large expansion of magic energy, Rem yelled out a warning:

“Get away from him!”

A black liquid spilled out of Galluk’s mouth.

Something similar to sludge gushed forth from the wound on his chest.

His skin darkened, turning into something that resembled polished obsidian.

His body and arms warped and elongated, swelling in size. A large, thick tail grew out from the back of his waist.

His face was changing shape as well, slowly turning into that of a lizard.

In the blink of an eye, Galluk had been completely transformed.

Rem grasped her chest. She felt the Demon Lord’s soul inside of her responding to what had happened.

Her voice shook as her heart pounded.

“...It can’t be... A Fallen!?”

“!?”

Celes let out a small scream. The two guards, who had been dumbfounded up until now, moved in to defend her.

The lizard head that was once Galluk spoke in a murky voice.

“Ah... Ahh... Looks like it’s finally time for Gregore to take care of things. Damn, there wasn’t any need for you to keep blabbing away, you stupid Human!”

Gregore rolled his shoulders. As he did, his hardened skin made a grinding noise.

Rem's Shadow Snake began to coil itself around Gregore's body. With that, his movements should have been completely sealed.

"The hell's this? Don't go gettin' in my way!"

Grabbing the Summon with his thick fingers, he tore it apart as if it had been made out of paper.

—He dealt with a level 20 Summon with his bare hands!?

Rem saw the difference between their strengths.

—I'm an Adventurer! I have to protect Celes!

The two guards took up their staffs.

"Leave this!"

"To us!"

Rem grabbed Celes by her hand and ran for the window.

The inn didn't use any high-quality materials like glass, but instead used wooden boards that were propped open with sticks.

Grabbing the bewildered Celes and lifting her up, Rem flung her outside.

"Wait, Rem... Kyaaah!?"

"Please, just bear with it!"

It was only the first floor, so she was sure Celes wouldn't die or anything.

Rem immediately followed after her.

Their opponent was a Fallen. By tempting Galluk and transforming him into one of their own, the enemy had managed to invade the town in a way Rem had never even heard of before.

Their objective was most likely the destruction of the barrier. There was no mistake that they had to be aiming for the head of the Mage's Association.

—I have to protect Celes!

Seeing Celes collapsed out in front of the inn, passersby stared on with expressions of disbelief plastered on their faces.

It was because she didn't seem like the kind of person who would jump out of a window to escape something.

While helping Celes up, Rem shouted: "Everyone, get out of here! It's the Fallen!"

Immediately after—

The wall of the inn's dining hall was blown apart.

Flying chunks of the wall flew out and struck several people who had let their curiosity get the best of them. It wasn't pretty.

From the half-destroyed building emerged a giant with the head of a lizard; Gregore.

His fists were completely smeared with blood.

Nothing could be heard from Celes's guards.

"Hey now, I don't have any business with these damn pipsqueaks! I got business with the lady over there! You're Celestine Baudelaire, ain'tcha? This barrier thing is in the way, so I'm gonna have to kill you!"

Gregore brandished his giant fists.

Celes had no experience with actual combat, and was petrified with fear. In fact, as most of her magic went into maintaining the barrier, she had no fighting strength in the first place.

Rem threw down another crystal.

—Now is the time to call forth the most powerful Summon I can use!

"Come forth, 《Asulau》!"

What emerged was an enormous bull with three horns on its head.

Its special ability, 《Charge》, rivaled a level 40 Warrior's Sword Smite in terms of power. Not only that, it was ferociously tenacious as well.

It should be enough to buy them some time.

Standing Celes upright, Rem pushed her from the back.

"Run! Either to the Adventurer's Guild, the Mage's Association, or even to

where the soldiers are stationed!”

“There’s no point if you’re not coming with me!”

“I know that!”

Rem had to protect herself as much as she had to protect Celes.

Asulau charged forward.

Gregore let out a war cry, smashing his fist into the Summon.

“Heeargh!!《Aura Punch》!!”

With just one blow, Asulau had been crushed to a messy pulp.

A black crystal fell to the ground.

Rem was stunned.

“...This can’t be...”

A level 40 Summon couldn’t even serve to slow him down.

She was petrified with fear, unable to run away.

Gregore came closer.

“Hey, hey, hey.... I said to get outta the way, Shrimpy. You wanna die first?”

†

The townspeople screamed as they fled.

There were some guards who had shown up after noticing the commotion, but their opponent was a Fallen who could pulverize a powerful Summon in just one blow. The pointless sacrifices just kept piling up.

There were no longer any signs of people near the front of the inn.

Those that did remain were Celes, who had frozen up and couldn’t run away; and Rem, who was standing in front of Celes to protect her, but had no kind of backup plan whatsoever.

Approaching them was a veritable giant, covered in hardened scales.

He was a《Bruiser》, a kind of Warrior who would only use their fists, not weapons.

Those fists had destroyed the most powerful Summon Rem could conjure in one shot.

—I can't win!

Then, someone came running toward this street devoid of people.

"Heh... Looks like I made it just in time!"

Rem turned around at the sound of their footsteps.

She saw the glint of golden armor, and recognized their flashy appearance.

The person ran his fingers through the one long part of his bangs, combing it upwards.

"Are you all right, my dear Rem? And you as well, Lady Celes?"

"...E-Emile!?"

Putting himself in front of Rem and Celes to protect them, the Warrior Emile stood before Gregore.

"Good grief... I heard the commotion and came running as fast as I could. I don't know how he got in, but I can't believe we have a Fallen rampaging about in the middle of town. But, most of all, what I cannot forgive is him aiming for women!"

He spoke in a theatrical, pompous manner.

From behind him came the sounds of cheering. Other Adventurers had ran up along with him.

Emile was the strongest Warrior in the Adventurer's Guild. He was also fairly popular.

Gregore clenched his fists.

"And who the hell are you supposed to be!?"

Emile took a stance with his longsword, holding it in front of himself.

"My name is Emile Bichelberger! I am the Superhuman Warrior of the

Adventurer’s Guild, and an ally to all women!”

“Well, well, ain’t you a funny one! Go on then, try and entertain me, Human!”

“It won’t be a very funny end for you, I assure you that!!”

Emile flourished his sword.

A magical light surged from his blade as the other Adventurers buffed his sword with their own magic.

Combining this with a Martial Art of his own, Emile unleashed a mighty blow, driving it straight into Gregore’s neck.

A loud clang reverberated out, making it hard to imagine he had sliced into an actual, living creature. He had not able to break through the obsidian-like scales.

Despite this, Gregore staggered back several steps, taking a knee.

“Hey, hey, hey, hey... You’re pretty strong for a Human, ain’tcha!”

“I’m not finished yet!”

Emile launched into a follow-up assault, unleashing a multitude of slashes that were unable to be tracked with the naked eye. It seemed this was another one of his Martial Arts.

Gregore covered his head with both of his arms.

Each time the sword struck, it made a high-pitched clang, as if the steel was trying to cut through rock. Small black fragments were also flying off with every strike.

“If it wasn’t for my sword being enhanced by magic, there’s a chance it may have broken by now! But right now, this sword of mine is invincible!”

“Guh... Ngh...!?”

It was hard to tell if this was actually effective...

But Emile had him pinned down!

Gregore was staying on the defensive.

“So annoying, so damn annoying! This is the best!”

“Ha! So you like taking these attacks, do you!? Then I’ll keep on slashing until those scales you’re so proud of are all gone!”

“Heh heh heh... What I like is to take Humans like you and make them fall into despair! The looks on their faces when that happens... Oh man, it’s the best!”

Gregore muttered something to himself.

A flash of magical power was let loose.

Emile, who had been hammering the Fallen with his attacks, was blown back.

He skidded along the stone pavings, finally coming to a stop when the other Adventurers caught him.

Gregore stood before them, arrogantly sticking out his chest.

Rem knew that he had used magic. And not summon magic either, but elemental magic like Diablo used.

While being supported by those around him, Emile stood back up.

His Sorcerer comrades chanted healing spells, eventually getting him back in fighting condition.

“Ngh... What did you just do!?”

“That was magic, Human! I’m the most powerful Sorcerer in the Man-Eating Forest!”

“What did you say!?”

Him fighting like a Bruiser had been just a feint.

Gregore opened his right hand, and a magical light started to gather within it.

“You sure ’bout this? If you ain’t getting over here, you’re all gonna fall prey to my magic!”

“Damn it all! Sword Smite!!”

Getting close to the Fallen in a flash, Emile unleashed his side slash.

However, Gregore easily stopped the attack with his left arm.

“Gufufu... Even as a Bruiser, I’m way stronger than any Human!”

“Like hell I’ll lose!”

Gregore’s spell was faster than Emile’s follow-up attack, and while swinging his right fist at Emile, he invoked his magic.

“How ’bout this!《Dark Bullet》!!”

Right when Emile had barely managed to deflect the fist, Gregore mercilessly shot a bullet of black light into Emile.

A sharp noise sounded as a hole was punched through the left shoulder of Emile’s armor. Fresh blood danced in the air.

“Gwah!?”

“C’mon! Next is your right arm!!”

As Gregore delivered a kick to Emile, he released another wave of magic.

Emile’s armor crumpled, and pure red blood gushed from the cracks.

The Adventurers watching this unfold screamed.

It wasn’t that they were being cold-hearted. If even Emile’s attacks couldn’t land a telling blow, then they didn’t possess any kind of combat technique that would allow them to fight against this enemy.

All they could do was keep sending support and healing magic to Emile from afar.

They would only get in the way if they got any closer. Emile was the kind of person who would risk his own body to protect his comrades.

Rem yelled.

“Emile, please! Run! Your opponent is too great an evil to face!”

His legs shaking, Emile still stood back up. He flashed his normal pretentious smile.

“Me, run? And leave women behind? Hey now, don’t say such foolish things, my dear Rem.”

Emile ran his fingers through the one long part of his bangs, combing it upwards once more.

“I will never turn my back on an enemy when I am in front of women! Never! My name is Emile Bichelberger, the Superhuman Warrior of the Adventurer’s Guild—and the protector of all women!”

Gregore’s eyes narrowed.

“Noooow then, how ’bout I really get serious! All Humans ditch their friends once it seems like they’re about to lose, ya know...”

He turned his reptilian eyes towards Rem and Celes.

If Rem were to run away now—

Gregore would most likely ignore Emile and attack her and Celes with magic.

If the girls seemed like they were going to flee, he had been capable of launching extremely powerful long range magic from the very beginning.

—He has just been playing around with us!?

With bloodied hands, Emile let out a yell and raised his sword overhead as he charged forward.

Taking a stance more akin to a Bruiser, Gregore gathered magical energy within his fists.

“Time for you to die, Human! 《Dark Press》!!”

The monstrously powerful Fallen went to crush Emile’s body.

But, Emile did not back down.

He would never back down.

†

The Bridge of Ulug—

The location: the large stone bridge above the river that served to separate the city of Faltra from the Man-Eating Forest.

There were Fallen lying at Diablo’s feet.

Several of them had already disintegrated and turned to dust. After he had defeated about twenty of them, he had given up on counting his kills.

Making the remaining Fallen step back, the Dragon Knight who seemed to be

the commander came forward.

They were covered from head to toe in jet-black armor.

Their body was small when compared to that of the other races, but Diablo wasn't going to fool himself into thinking that would make fighting with them any easier.

—Is it finally time for the boss to show up?

The Dragon Knight came down from their mount.

Taking their lance with them, they slowly walked along the stone bridge.

"Why did you dismount?"

"Because... Won't move?"

It was a girl's voice.

The tone of her voice sounded mature, but her choppy manner of speaking also made her sound a bit childish.

The commander removed their helmet.

A wave of long, silver hair gently unfolded, coming down to her waist.

The exposed face was that of a brown-skinned girl. The pupils of her golden eyes were slanted vertically, like you would see in reptiles. Because her eyes were a bit large, she had a youthful vibe to her.



She parted her purple-colored lips.

“Usually, he’s a good boy, listens to what I say... But, after seeing you, won’t move. Probably, your fault? That’s why, I came down.”

“Hmph, I think that your beast understands it better than you, so nonchalant as you walk towards me... That is, the fact that you cannot win against me.”

“Won’t know, unless I try, right? Amongst other Fallen, Edelgard is the strongest spear-user. Won’t lose, to a Demon Sorcerer.”

The commander, Edelgard, took a stance with her spear.

The distance between her and Diablo was about eight-and-a-half meters. This was already way too close, but he had managed to prioritize gathering information through his conversation with her.

—I’m doing my best to keep my MP consumption down to a minimum, but I’m already starting to feel strangely tired...

As if facing the dawn after pulling an all-nighter, his concentration slipped for a moment.

Against an opponent like her, this could prove to be fatal for him. But if he could take down the commander, then there was a good chance the rest of the Fallen would retreat.

Now was the time to dig in and give it his all.

“Let’s just see if you really are weak or not!”

“Do it? Don’t do it? .....I’ll do it!”

She spoke, still in position with her spear.

She rushed forward at a blinding speed, reminiscent of an arrow released from its quiver. She was fast enough to make you think she was still riding on her mount.

—Looks like that’s《Lance Charge》.

It was a rush-down Martial Art similar to Sword Smite. It was the bread-and-butter technique for any spear-user.

After getting in close, the user would execute a series of two jabs with their spear. Just like Sword Smite, it was necessary to cancel that as well.

Diablo side-stepped to dodge the attack. Though they may have been on top of a stone bridge, there was still quite a bit of space.

No matter the attack, it was a basic tactic of battle to dodge to the side.

Quickly noticing that her attack had been evaded, Edelgard canceled her charge.

At almost the exact same time, she followed up with a huge side sweep.

—Now she's using《Swing Spike》. She's surprisingly faithful to the basics.

It was a technique where the user would spin their whole body while brandishing their spear. They would be vulnerable during the start-up, but once they started rotating, it was possible to continue spinning multiple times.

He already knew the trajectory of the move, so it wasn't that hard to get out of its way.

"Hmph... Is that the extent of the techniques you possess? That seems to be a trivial amount for a Fallen who wields a weapon."

"Still more. Then, I will use this!"

Edelgard thrust her lance into the sky.

A black haze surged from the weapon. Eventually, a black aura enveloped the lance, making it appear enormous.

—Oh hoh! So you're using《Sacrificial Charge》!

It was a bold technique that drained a portion of the user's HP. You could learn it once you reached level 80 or above.

Not only was its power in a league of its own, but the aura that covered the weapon was capable of dealing damage as well. Since the aura's shape was uncertain, avoiding it was no easy task.

The movement for the technique was comprised of three things: first, the user would charge in and follow up with a thrust; then, they would make a circle, performing a spinning side swipe; finally, they would jump up in the air

and perform a downward slash. Diablo didn't know if Edelgard was going to use it exactly like that, though.

Throwing out a barrage of spells while keeping his distance should bring him close to a victory against her. However, it wouldn't be enough to diminish the enemy's fighting spirit.

He was unsure that he had the MP to take on the remaining Fallen, over half of which were still present.

—If I can just endure this!

Diablo planted his feet, spreading his arms out wide.

"Interesting! I will take your technique head on! Just try and cause me damage!"

"Yeah, I will.《Sacrificial—"

Taking her spear covered in thick darkness, Edelgard thrust herself forward.

"—Charge》!"

A heavy pain ran throughout Diablo's abdomen.

He had taken the thrust.

Before he could prepare himself, the side swipe smashed into the side of his head.

—She's fast!?

Edelgard leaped into the air. With a mighty swing, she brought down the spear with all her strength.

As the pain closed in on him, it felt like he might back down—

But Diablo kept his feet in place, taking the blow on his shoulders.

His body had become heavy, making it feel as if it was made out of lead.

There was a sharp pain in his stomach. He couldn't tell from over his equipment, but it might have been possible he was bleeding.

"So *this* is damage...!"

Since coming to this world, this was the first time he had taken damage from

someone else and not been able to ignore it.

Rather than taking on external wounds like a hit or cut from a normal attack, he felt that the real damage from Martial Arts was the sensation of his stamina being robbed from him.

The pain wasn't so bad that he couldn't move, but it was a possibility he could be made tired enough that he wouldn't *want* to move.

Just like the game, it was dangerous to keep going until you reached critical health. It was better to give yourself some breathing room.

Pleased with the information he had managed to gather, Diablo couldn't help but smile.

Edelgard's breathing had become hoarse.

"...Can't...be. I gave it, all I had... For you, to be standing, not possible."

Sacrificial Charge was a Martial Art that required the user to use 15% of their HP to unleash it.

In the game, all it meant was that a measly percentage of your life bar was taken away. Here, it might be that an equivalent amount of your own stamina would be taken away all at once.

Diablo now felt like he wanted to keep testing things out with Edelgard.

However—

"Mr. Diablo, sirrrr!"

All of a sudden, someone came running from the bridge's checkpoint. Even though Diablo's opponent wasn't moving at the moment, this was an extremely reckless thing to do.

It was Boris; he had an urgent expression on his face.

Diablo shouted out so that Boris would be able to hear him.

"Do not come any closer!"

Screeching to a halt, Boris shouted back.

“I have a report from the town! Rem and Lady Celes are under attack by the Fallen! There’s Fallen in the middle of Faltra!”

“What did you say?”

Diablo felt a chill run across his spine.

Edelgard narrowed her reptilian eyes and smiled.

“Gregore, did well? He’s stupid, but tries hard.”

Diablo started to piece together the situation.

Faltra was protected by a barrier, and if the gate used to allow anyone to pass through was closed, the Fallen would have no way of getting inside.

If the brigade of Fallen were to push their way to the town, then this invasion would just turn into a siege.

That’s why they had this Gregore guy sneak in beforehand; it was obvious the enemy would be aiming for Celes.

But what about Rem?

—Had the Fallen realized that the soul of the Demon Lord was inside her? No, if they had, they would have attacked us when we had come close to the Man-Eating Forest.

—In any case, I have to make it back to the town!

Diablo looked at his enemy.

Edelgard’s breathing was returning to normal.

“Since Gregore, is doing so well... If I finish you off, this a victory, for the Fallen? Shall I play with you, a little more?”

“Boris!” Diablo yelled out in a deep voice.

“Y-Yes!”

“Tell those sightseers over there to get their heads down; I’m going to use my ultimate spell! If you don’t want to die too, then go curl up behind the stone wall over there!”

“Y-Yesshir!! Right away!!”

Shouting his response, Boris made his way back.

“Everyone, heads down! Something big’s coming! If you don’t wanna die, get behind the wall! Double time!!”

Diablo raised Tenma’s Staff as he turned to glare at Edelgard.

“I’m terribly sorry... But I no longer have the time to perform experiments with you.”

“Experiments?”

“I have no intention of showing compassion to a Fallen, but I praise you for managing to harm me. I would be willing to let you go if you retreated now.”

It took 30 seconds for Diablo’s ultimate magic to activate. He had begun chanting as soon as he heard what Boris had to say; but it would still take some more time.

After pondering Diablo’s proposition for a bit, Edelgard spoke.

“Saving the Demon Lord, is Edelgard’s duty, you know? That’s why, I try hard. Even if I die.”

“Hmph, save the Demon Lord? *You*?”

Diablo laughed heartily.

Edelgard puffed out one of her cheeks.

“...I don’t like, being laughed at.”

“You understand nothing. There is only one true Demon Lord—and that is I, the Demon Lord Diablo! Yet you, unknowing of that, devote yourself to a false master!”

“True, Demon Lord...Diablo?”

“That ignorance deserves to be met with certain death!”

—I made it.

He had finished his preparation for the spell while talking with her.

“《White Nova》!!”

A sphere of pure white, about the size of a ping-pong ball, emerged from the

tip of his staff. Slowly and softly, it drifted to the ground.

The instant the sphere touched the stone tiles—

It burst into blinding white light.

A thunderous roar completely overtook his sense of hearing.

His vision was white; he was unable to hear anything; and because the spell had locked him in place, he was not even able to move. Maybe it was because it was just that kind of spell, or maybe it was the effect of the Demon Lord's Ring—but while he himself took no damage, everything within the spell's AoE should have been repeatedly breaking down on a molecular level.

A combination of both fire and light elements, this was the final spell Diablo had learned once reaching level 150.

The fact that it took so long to activate, along with the huge MP cost to use the spell, were both drawbacks—but it carried tremendous power. It was capable of felling colossal, high-level monsters in one shot.

The AoE of the spell spread out in a 20 meter semi-circle in front of its caster. The fortress should have been outside the spell's range, but because the power of the spell was so overwhelming, Diablo didn't know what was going on.

For a moment, he thought of Shera.

—She is hiding herself, right!?

She wasn't the brightest bulb of the bunch, so he was a bit worried about her.

Color gradually returned to the world that had just been dyed white.

"Whoa..."

Magic in the game wasn't able to change the terrain, but in this world, it was definitely enough to carve out a distinctive scar in the landscape.

The stone bridge in front of him had been vaporized.

The area beyond where Diablo was standing had been cleanly erased. It looked as if it was just about to come under construction.

Even his own footing had started to crumble away.

He quickly made his way back to the fortress.

In the game, having pieces of the ground become gouged out was just a visual effect that disappeared once the spell was finished. This world was different. Even if he wasn't trying to damage something, it would end up being destroyed if he hit it.

The fortress was safe.

At first, he was shocked to see the guards not moving, but it turned out they were only shaking because of the blast and the noise. It seemed that there had been no casualties.

Most of the Fallen army had been obliterated.

Surprisingly, even after using up 15% of her HP and taking a White Nova head on, Edelgard was still standing.

—Is she one of the Fallen you would find back in the deepest parts of the Demon Lord's territory?

—I don't know whether to praise her with, "As I should expect of a commander," or to hit her with a "Don't just come rolling up out of the Man-Eating Forest! What the hell are you, a friggin' glitch!?"

She had lost her armor, her war dragon, and even her spear.

"...Not... Not possible... Making everything, disappear..."

"Finish me off, you said? *Play* with me? Do not push your luck, you damnable Fallen. I have said it before: I am a Demon Lord."

"...Demon Lord...Diablo."

She was still moving, but it didn't seem like she had the strength to keep fighting.

Just to be sure, he left her with a threat: "If you wish to do battle, then come to the town. Next time, I will utterly annihilate you using a different ultimate-level spell."

There were still some Fallen stragglers around, probably because they were out of the spell's range. All Diablo could do now was leave them for the guards

here.

Right now, the town was his main concern.

Looking past the fortress, he stared in the direction of Faltra.

Shera ran up to him.

“Diablo! Are you all right!?”

“It is needless to worry about me.”

“Then let’s get going! The town’s in trouble!”

“Hm... Then I shall test my Return magic.”

He firmly grasped Shera’s hand, whose body had stiffened up in surprise.

This spell was the utmost of basics, and would warp the entire party back to the last town they had visited.

...But he didn’t have any scientific reasoning to base this one on.

—But if the Celestials and the Mage’s Association in the royal capital can use it, then I should too!

Diablo clearly imagined the procedure for using the return spell in his head. Never before had he been so anxious about using magic.

—Please, let me be able to use it!

—Please!

“《Return》!”

Back in Faltra—

A pillar of light appeared in the center of the western plaza.

Frightened by the sounds of the unexpected fighting that had broken out, the people who had been trembling in fear there panicked and ran away.

The surrounding air shook, and the particles of light took the form of two people’s silhouettes.

When the light disappeared, in its place stood a Demon clad from head-to-toe in black, and a visibly shaking Elf girl with her eyes wide open.

Diablo scanned his surroundings.

I've never been here before—he thought as he looked around the plaza.

The familiar stone walls proved without a doubt that this was indeed the city of Faltra.

The most basic of all transportation spells—Return—had activated.

He was feeling a bit of motion sickness, but other than that there wasn't anything significantly wrong with him.

Whenever you teleported in the game, there was a small animation of the scenery rushing by you at high-speed. Having just experienced it himself in real life, it was exactly that.

It felt like he had turned into incredibly fast-moving particles of light and flew through the sky.

They had only walked through them before, but watching the grassy plains fly by; it moved him in a way that he had never experienced in-game. It was a feeling he would never forget.

But he didn't have time to celebrate his success in using some new magic.

He had been anxious about where he would end up, but just like the game, they had been transported to the town plaza.

Weak in the knees, Shera was clinging to Diablo.

"Fa-Faltra!? What!? Why!?"

"I'll explain later! Right now, saving Rem takes priority!"

"Oh yeah, that's right!"

"Damn... Where is she!? The inn!? The Adventurer's Guild!? The Mage's Association!?"

If this were the game, you would be able to send messages to any player you had registered as a friend.

Apparently, you could also chat between party members as well...

But Diablo had never used it, since he had no one to talk to.

For Diablo, in this world...

—There's a pretty good chance I can't use that here.

Teleportation was something established to be a part of this world's lore. The message and chat systems, on the other hand, were things programmed by the devs.

The same went for item storage and trading. Anything not established as being a part of the world itself wasn't able to be used.

Diablo was panicking.

—Where should I go?

Shera pointed towards the main road, which led to the inn and the Adventurer's Guild.

"I'm getting some really bad vibes coming from that way, Diablo! It feels the same as what was coming from the Man-Eating Forest!"

"I'm counting on those words, Shera!"

Diablo took off at a sprint.

Hearing the voices of people fleeing, he knew that Shera's intuition had been correct.

He reached the front of the inn—

And found a mountain of corpses.

†

The inn was half-destroyed.

The walls had been knocked out, and it wouldn't be strange for the second floor to come down at any moment. It was just barely keeping itself from crumbling apart.

In the surrounding area, fragments of the walls and beams were scattered everywhere. Amongst the damage, a sea of people laid on the ground, covered

in blood.

They were all dead.

And it wasn't from wounds caused by arrows or swords; they had all been crushed to death.

Corpses of guards could be seen as well, with some other victims who wore the robes of the Mage's Association.

There were several Adventurers as well, all who risked their lives to protect the townspeople.

"...This is awful."

Shera's voice was shaking.

There had never been a disaster this horrible in the game before.

"So, *he's* the one who did this..."

Diablo had found the grotesque-looking Fallen, and shot a piercing glare at him.

Rem and Celes had been pushed up against a wall.

Rem was on her knees. Her shoulders heaved as she gasped for breath, while blood was trickling down from her forehead.

Celes was unharmed, but if that Fallen had managed to get his hands on her, then she likely would not have been alive.

Standing in front of the two girls was a man, covered in blood.

His golden armor now full of holes, it was no longer able to fulfill its purpose.

His sword was broken, and he did not seem to have the energy to keep up the fight.

And yet, he was still standing.

"...I... I will not fall... Never, while in front of women..."

"Stop, Emile!" Rem shouted. "Why are you pushing yourself to keep fighting!?

You are going to die!”

“...I will...protect women... No matter what... That’s, what I swore to do...”

“Hah! Hey, hey, you still haven’t gone down yet!? Damn, Humans sure are persistent, aren’t they! Just hurry up and die!!”

It was a giant Fallen with the head of a lizard.

A ruined robe was wrapped around his lower body. Though originally white, it was now stained a dark red.

His exposed skin was covered in shining black scales, like they were made of obsidian.

He brandished his fists, each the size of a human head.

Without mercy, he went to strike Emile, who was already on Death’s door.

“《Air Shot》.”

Diablo’s magic sent a gale of wind that flung the Fallen backwards and blew him out of range to use his fists.

“Woah-ho-hoh...!?”

For now, Diablo had sent him back about ten meters.

Diablo slowly made his way over to Rem and the others.

“Hmph... Looks like I made it, though I wouldn’t say just in time... Are you still alive, Rem?”

She opened her eyes wide.

“Diablo!?”

Celes also wore an expression of disbelief on her face.

Shera ran forward. She threw her arms around Rem and embraced her.

“Waaaah! Rem, I’m so glad you’re alive!”

“...Are you an idiot, Shera!? Why are you running out in front of a Fallen!?”

“B-But, I was so worried about you!”

“...Even though you say that... There’s no need for you to throw yourself into danger too, right!?”

Diablo went over to Emile and laid a hand on his shoulder. He was in such bad shape, it was a miracle he was still standing at all.

“Hey, boy. You’re still alive, aren’t you?”

“Ugh... I will...protect women...”

“Hm. You certainly have protected Rem and Celes. I acknowledge your battle... Now get some rest, Warrior. I, Diablo, will take on the rest for you.”

Hearing those words, Emile crumpled to his knees.

Diablo reached into the item pouch around his waist and pulled out an HP potion.

Looking at Rem, Shera was still clinging to her, keeping her unable to move.

He offered it to Celes.

“Use this. Even without drinking it, it should take effect if you just pour it on his head.”

“Wait, are you... Are you going to fight that Fallen? To protect us?”

“...Ah, no, you see... I was just going to give this insolent intruder an appropriate punishment for invading my territory, that’s all. Do not get the wrong impression.”

“You called yourself a Demon Lord, did you not?”

“Hm? Hmph, so what if I have? Do you not want to rely on the power of a Demon Lord, even after things have come this far?”

“No... It seems that there are good Demon Lords out there, too. Forgive me for having doubted you. Please, I humbly ask you: save Rem—and this world.”

Celes deeply bowed her head.

It was the first time anyone had ever asked something of him like this; he didn’t know how to feel about it.

Diablo turned his back to the girls.

“I’d do it even if you didn’t ask... This Fallen has made me angry.”

He went to confront the enemy.

†

“You really messed up now, didn’tcha?”

“I could say the same to you. Do not think you will be able to leave in one piece after invading my domain.”

“Kuhah! You ain’t a filthy Human and you ain’t a Fallen; you’re just damn halfsie *scum*!”

Diablo hadn’t been expecting Demons to be discriminated by the Fallen.

—If I remember right, Edelgard said this guy was “Gregore.”

He had a vulgar way of speaking, but the wounds he had inflicted on Emile weren’t just from physical damage.

“...Hm... So you’re a Sorcerer who has developed his skills as a Brawler. Hard to believe there is an actual Brawler-Sorcerer amongst the Fallen.”

“Haaaah? What the hell you mumblin’ about? I don’t care how you beg for your life, I’m gonna kill you either way! I don’t got any more time to play around; I’m gonna smash this barrier, and fast!”

—Time? Oh yeah, if things were going according to plan, then the Fallen army would be showing up at the edge of the town right about now.

Diablo shrugged his shoulders.

“If it’s Edelgard you’re waiting for, I’m afraid she won’t be showing up.”

“What!?”

“I have already defeated about half of the one hundred Fallen. Edelgard also took some serious damage from me, you see.”

“Hah... Kuhaha! What the hell are you saying? That’s a pretty transparent lie there...”

“You will understand if you fight me. We’ll see who will be the one begging

for their life... No matter how you beg for yours, however, I won't be forgiving you."

Even though they couldn't reach Diablo, Gregore thrust his fists towards him.

"Diiiie!《Dark Bullet》!!"

It was a rudimentary dark-elemental spell. It wasn't supposed to be all that powerful, but possibly due to Gregore's abnormally high stats, the cast spell looked completely different.

Pitch-black bullets of darkness sped towards Diablo.

—This guy really is a Brawler-Sorcerer.

In close-combat, which would normally be the bane of all Sorcerers, a Brawler-Sorcerer would just use his fists to fight. When his opponent was far away, or if he wanted a bit of extra firepower, that's when he would use magic.

It was enough that people might think that it could be the perfect Sorcerer style. But, put simply, it was a "Jack of all trades, master of none" kind of class.

But, more than that, Gregore had used magic.

—Looks like this item turned out to be the most dangerous thing here after all.

The effects of the Demon Lord's Ring activated. The black bullets were sent back to their sender, lodging themselves in Gregore's chest.

"Gohah!?"

—I bet he's never been hit with his own magic before.

Completely shocked, Gregore was clueless as to what had just happened.

Diablo held up Tenma's Staff.

"What's wrong?"

"Ngh... Wh-What did you do!?"

"I have done nothing; my attacks are just beginning. Here, Dark Bullet!"

The air trembled.

Dark-elemental magic was powerful, but it would put an immense strain on one's MP, which is why he had been holding back in using it.

But now, he would use the same spell to show Gregore just how big the difference between them was. If you wanted to crush your enemy's fighting spirit, this was the most effective way to do it.

Bullets— No, massive payloads three times as large as the previous attack were sent flying through the air.

Their speed was the same, however.

Gregore raised his thick arms to defend himself. His obsidian scales were obliterated as the damage was carved into his body.

"Guwaaaaaaah!?"

"Do not scream. I did not use any magic of great significance."

Gregore's arms, now devoid of scales, were shaking.

His reptilian eyes glared at Diablo.

"What... What's with this power...!?"

"A Fallen Sorcerer would not call Dark Bullet their most powerful spell, right?"

"Grg... Don't you look down on me! Dark Press!!"

Above his head, Gregore raised a hand into the air.

A sphere of darkness about the size of a baseball appeared within it. He threw it towards Diablo It would be easy if he just wanted to dodge it. However, the AoE for this spell spread out in a five meter radius, which meant that just dodging the sphere wasn't enough to get away from it.

According to the game's setting, it was a spell that manipulated gravity to crush everything within its affected area.

It also had a special effect where it would inflict a "Bind" status on your enemies.

Though this was a dark-elemental spell, there was also an earth-elemental spell that had a similar effect.

—But, magic is magic.

His ring's passive reflection effect activated once again, and the Dark Press

was sent flying back towards Gregore.

The lizard-head Fallen once again took his own attack, falling to his knees.

“Gwah!?

“You still don’t understand? You really are just a lizard after all. But your magic is a bit weaker than I expected. You should be able to put out at least *this* much force with that spell you just used. Dark Press!”

A black sphere about the size of a basketball appeared from the tip of Tenma’s Staff. Diablo casually tossed it towards Gregore.

Even though he was still bound by his own spell, Gregore managed to take two steps away—but still was not able to escape the magic’s area of effect.

The spell activated.

Gregore’s body was slammed against the stone tiles, which smashed apart as he sank into the ground.

“Gugaaaaahh...!!”

“Hm, it seems like it is quite effective against giant Fallen like you.”

“Uguh... Gh... A-All right, I got it! I’m standing down! I’ll leave the town! I’ll also believe that you beat back Edelgard!”

“I see.”

“Y-Yeah...”

“But I said it at the beginning, didn’t I? No matter how much you begged for your life, you will not be forgiven.”

“Eek!?”

Gregore was shaking. Though it was hard to tell what expression he was wearing because of his reptilian face, it was obvious it was tinged with fear.

Diablo launched one spell after another at him.

“Your specialty is dark-elemental magic, is it? Let’s see how much of it you can take yourself. 《Dark Flare》, 《Dark Burst》, 《Black Lance》, 《Darkness Rain》!”

A black burst of hellfire, a silent explosion, a jet-black lance, and a deluge of

dark arrows rained down upon Gregore— Tinged with dread, Gregore screamed in agony.

—This guy's different than the other hundred Fallen.

If his specialty hadn't been attacking with magic, then there was a chance that Diablo would have had a much rougher time dealing with him.

He might have even been the same level as Edelgard.

—Even after hitting him with all these spells, he still isn't disappearing.

Gregore groaned.

"...N-No... Please, don't...kill me..."

Diablo's voice was frigid enough that he even surprised himself.

"Is that what the people begging for their lives said before you killed them?"

"Ughhhh..."

"You have killed too many. Repent for your sins with death."

He touched the tip of his staff against Gregore's body.

"《Naraka》."

This was a dark-elemental spell learned at level 130.

It's effective range was by contact—basically, it meant that it would only activate if you were touching your opponent.

It was, however, incredibly powerful.

Gregore's body was being sucked into the spot where Diablo had touched him with his staff.

"Gwah!? GAAHHHHH!!"

It was a miniature black hole.

The official description was: "A spell that takes your enemies and forcibly traps them within a realm of darkness."

Its effects were tremendous, but...

For Sorcerers, getting in close enough to make contact was extremely

dangerous. On top of that, there was a 5% chance of the spell failing.

But this time, it hadn't failed.

—Man, dark spells are pretty hard to use. They're in a borderline "looks cool, but useless" territory.

Gregore was completely absorbed into the sphere.

Shortly after, having served its purpose, the black orb disappeared.

He had won.

The moment he felt that relief come over him, he almost lost consciousness. Planting Tenma's Staff in the ground, he used it to hold himself upright.

—Using all those spells one after the other really did a number on my MP.

Rather than feeling tired, he felt depressed.

He just didn't care about anything, and lost his will to go on.

By his calculations, he had used over half of his total MP.

—Whatever.

—No, I can't be like that.

He couldn't keep his thoughts straight, and was on the verge of thinking he didn't need to.

—It's gonna be a problem if I let my MP get this low. Gotta be careful from here on out.

†

The sound of footsteps rapidly approached Diablo.

Turning around, he was met with Shera's bright smile as she threw her arms around him.

"All right!!"

"Wo—ah...!?"

Behind her stood Rem, her eyes glistening with tears.

Diablo was more bewildered than when he had taken Edelgard's attacks from

earlier.

“Wh-Why are you crying?”

“...I thought... That it was too late, to be saved...”

”Waaaaaah! Diabloooo!”

Now Shera had started crying, too, even though she had been smiling just a second ago.

Looking around, he saw Celes a short distance away, her head bowed in a sign of appreciation for what he had done.

Next to her, looking like he had just woken up, was Emile, with a pained smile on his face.

—As long as he’s still alive, then I’m going to say that’s a good thing.

Shera began to cry again.

Rem came closer to Diablo and reached out to him. She laid her small, fair hand on top of Diablo’s, which was still gripping the staff.

It was soft, a little cold, and yet still warm.

”...If it’s you, then you really might be able to save me.”

“I made a promise to do just that.”

“Yes. Yes you did.”

“But do not get the wrong idea. That Fallen invaded my territory, so I just made sure to give him the appropriate punishment for that. It wasn’t that I was fighting for all of you. If you want to show your gratitude, then I’m sure there is someone else you should be saying it to.”

“...Of course. I’m also grateful to Emile, and a lot of other people as well. But, Diablo... Please, let me show my thanks to you... Thank you for protecting me.”

—It’s embarrassing when she stares straight at me like that...

—What would a Demon Lord say right now?

He had never seen a girl give thanks to a Demon Lord before, so he had no idea how to respond. Nothing like this had ever happened when he was putting

on his Demon Lord act, either.

He looked at Rem, his eyes stopping at the collar around her neck.

“The collar.”

“...What?”

“You have an enslavement collar on you, don’t you? In other words, that makes you my property.”

“...Huh? B-But, this was an accident.”

“Right now, you are my property! Of course I would protect you; I was not fighting for you or anything! I have no need for your gratitude!”

Rem blushed.

“...I-I’m your property. I see... For as long as this collar stays on... I’m yours...”

After murmuring that, for the first time in a long while, she smiled.

—Wasn’t that hard for you to say?

—Personally, I would want to die after saying something so embarrassing. This is why I hate talking with other people.

Shera, who had been clinging to Diablo this entire time, watched in silence as Rem smiled happily at Diablo.

Then, she called out in a panicked voice.

“Huh? Excuse me, Diablo? Just Rem? What about me!? I’m your possession, too, right!?”

“What? Oh, yeah, I guess you are.”

“Isn’t that too mean!? You say that like I’m some kind of afterthought or something! Diablo— Hey! Look at me!”

While still holding onto Diablo, Shera started to rub up against him.

“Hey, stop that.”

Diablo had made it seem like he was annoyed with what Shera was doing.

What he really meant: “Agh, please stop! Pressing that outrageous chest of yours against me is going to destroy any sense of reason I have left!”

It seemed that Diablo’s troubles would only continue from here on out.

Epilogue

The mental exhaustion from using magic was dragging on longer than Diablo had expected.

In the game, as long as you got a good night's sleep, your HP and MP would be fully restored...

But thinking about it, just like it was impossible for any grave injuries to be healed in just one night, there was no way this fatigue would suddenly disappear in the morning.

In the end, he just spent his days lazing around.

The room he stayed in was similar to the one they had previously occupied.

According to "the idol of the inn, Mei~♪ Kyaha!" the "Peace of Mind Inn" was actually a chain of stores.

Diablo and the others had rented out a room in the franchise's second location.

By the way, Mei was safe and sound, and was cheerfully working the counter at the Peace of Mind Inn #2.

Three days after the Fallen attack, a memorial service was held for the victims of the incident.

Diablo was bad with ceremonies, so he had avoided going. It seemed Shera and Rem had attended, however, while wearing completely black outfits.

When a person died he felt like he should see off, that's when he would be there.

His life of depravity continued for ten days.

Diablo was lying in bed today as well.

—Man, this reminds me of when I didn't play games and lived my life like I was already dead.

He felt like he might turn into mold on the sheets at this rate.

With a thud, Shera had come and thrown herself on top of him.

She was soft.

"Diablo, it's morning~ I'm bored, so wake up~"

"Mm."

"Let's go somewhere! Don't you think it's about time we took on a quest or something?"

"I'm thinking about it."

"Oh come on, you're always saying that! Are you really thinking about it!?"

The only thing in Diablo's head at the moment was how soft Shera's chest felt against his arm as she pressed up against him.

It was amazingly soft.

—Hold on, doesn't this feel a bit more amazing than usual!?

Lifting his head up, he turned to look at her.

Her outfit consisted of only thin pieces of cloth; one wrapped around her chest, and another around her waist.

"Wha!?"

"Ehehe, do you think you'll feel better now, Diablo?"

"Hng!?"

"Well, you see, Sylvie said that wearing this would make a guy feel better."

—What the hell are you teaching her, you irresponsible Guildmaster!?

Now that he was thinking about it, these clothes that showed off an excessive amount of skin were just like what Sylvie wore. Since she was a Grasswalker, and she still had a child-like appearance, there was kind of an innocent beauty to her when she wore this...

But if Shera was the one wearing it, then her slender body and massive rack unbefitting of an Elf had a much more voluptuous and lewd feeling to it. If this were a game, it would be rated for “Adults Only” for sure.

—This isn’t good! Cross Reverie is going to turn into an eroge; I have to make sure to give her a strict warning here!

—Well, maybe after this.

The sensation pushing against his arm completely washed over him.



Right then, Rem, who had been out and about since early in the morning, had just come back.

Her eyes were as round as dinner plates.

“...What in the... What in good graces are you wearing, Shera!?”

“Huh? Ahaha... Um... It was kinda... Hot?”

“...Of course it would be hot if you threw yourself all over Diablo like that. Get away from him! Get at least 30 meters away from him!”

“But that’s gonna make me leave the inn!?”

“...That’s a good idea for someone like you. Living outdoors is more suited for people who don’t work.”

“Ugh... I-I did a quest too, you know?”

“...All you did was go on an errand for Celes ten days ago. She only gave that to us in lieu of flat out giving us money to compensate us for our troubles. It is silly to call that a quest. If you keep on like this, your qualifications as an Adventurer will be revoked.”

“Whaaat!?”

Diablo couldn’t ignore what Rem had just said.

“What are you talking about?”

“...If an Adventurer has earned less than 10,000 friths in a month, then they are given a warning. If they are given warnings three months consecutively, then they are stripped of their Adventurer title, and cannot re-register with the Guild for a one year period.”

“What!? Why!? It’s a question of money!?”

“...It’s a counter-measure to keep fools who spend their days not working from calling themselves Adventurers.”

Even in another world, there was no relief for a NEET.

Diablo propped himself up.

“Hmph... I get it now.”

“Ah, do you feel like doing something after all?”

“...Did you finally decide that you are actually going to do some work, Diablo?”

“Yes! I will give it my all...starting tomorrow!”

“It’s still morning, you know!?”

Rem sighed. “...It is almost noon.”

Shera had a serious expression on her face.

“What should we have for lunch?”

“...Just get working.”

They still had some of the reward they had received from Celes’s quest left over. But when that amount was used up, Diablo would probably end up losing his Adventurer’s license.

And more than that, he would lose his sense for battle.

—If I can get my head working like this, then I guess that means my MP has recovered.

If he used enough MP to put him on the verge of complete lethargy, then it would take ten days to recover.

Diablo made a note of this in the “Cross Reverie Other-World Ver. Strategy Guide” in his head.

I’ve got a pretty good grasp on my abilities as a Sorcerer,—he thought to himself.

Another thing he had to look into were his skills outside of combat.

Diablo had invested some time into his Combiner sub-class, but he had no idea how to capitalize on it in this world.

In the game, you would just click on the items to be used as ingredients to combine them, which is how you would make potions.

But there was no such thing as a mouse cursor here.

The specifics to how each potion was made wasn’t written anywhere in the

game. At best, there was just a list of items you needed to make them.

For now, he would have to collect ingredients and test things out. As long as he was using the Demon Lord's Ring, he had to rely on health potions.

—I did end up using one of my HP potions when I told Celes to use it on him, didn't I.

He didn't regret doing that, but from now on it would be good to stock up on potions, even if they weren't super high-grade ones.

He also wanted MP potions, too, if possible.

If using a little over half his max MP meant that he was out of action for ten days, then what would happen if he completely ran out...? He doubted he would be able to continue fighting if that happened.

Not only that, but he had to conduct some research about some of the unique magic found in this world: one of them being how to remove these enslavement collars; and the other magic, a way to extract the soul of the Demon Lord Krebskulm from Rem.

By the time he had noticed, it wasn't just Shera, but Rem was on the bed as well.

"Wh-What is it?"

"Ahaha, now that face is more like you, Diablo."

"...I was worried that you would eventually become mold on those sheets. You're all right now, I take it?"

"Hmph, I was fine since the very beginning."

He had acted tough, but it looked like the girls had been more worried about him than he thought. Enough to make Shera wear an outfit that might as well have shown her naked.

She held on to Diablo while still in that very outfit.

"Let's go on another quest!"

"H-Hm."

“...Ngh... Why must you always go out of your way to push your chest against him!?”

“I mean, if I try holding onto him, they just kinda do that.”

-“...Then just don’t cling to him! Have you no shame!?”

“Well, if you were to try and hold him, Rem, then probably all that would touch him is your ribs.”

“Th-That is not true! See!”

Eyes full of tears, she pressed herself against Diablo.

—Rem’s right! Though I think her rib cage may be hitting me a little...

That being said, no matter how small, slim, and child-like Rem’s body may have been, the slight bulge that could be called her chest was indeed soft when she held onto him.

They heard the sound of someone snickering.

Turning his gaze, the door was open, and there was the Guildmaster Sylvie, leaning against the doorway.

“Mornin’. You all seem to be getting along well!”

“Kyaah!?”

With a scream, Rem leapt away from Diablo.

Shera kept holding on to Diablo, without any reservations whatsoever, as she greeted Sylvie.

“Ah, Sylvie, good morning!”

“Heya, Shera. Is Diablo feeling better now?”

“Yeah!”

Shera happily nodded, pressing her breasts which were only covered with a thin piece of cloth against Diablo.

—I’m feeling better in a completely, how should I say, more physical way.

Actually, I won't even be able to get out of bed at this rate; what the hell are you doing to me!? Do it more!!

Since he was stuck like that, Diablo put on his Demon Lord persona with the sheets still covering him from the waist down.

"What do you want, Sylvie?"

"I have a message that might be of interest to you, Diablo."

"Is that so? Speak, I shall allow it."

Sylvie wore an unusually serious expression on her face.

"...The governor of Faltra received a request from the Kingdom of Greenwood to hand over one Shera L. Greenwood. The deadline is in ten days. If we don't comply by then, they will declare war."

"Declare war!?"

"!?"

Shera's body stiffened.

Rem narrowed her eyes.

"...A war between races... Are they in their right mind?"

"Who knows? Though, the governor asked me if I would be able to solve this peacefully..."

"So that means you accepted the quest with the intent of handing Shera over to them, is that it?"

Diablo ran his eyes across the room.

—Tch!

Tenma's Staff was laying on the ground off in the corner.

As of late, he would take off almost all his equipment before going to sleep. Lethargy was truly a terrifying thing.

Shera was shaking in Diablo's arms, while Rem grasped a Summon crystal inside of her belt pocket.

Sylvie raised both her hands in the air.

Just when Diablo was wondering what kind of magic she would come at them with— She had surrendered.

“Hold it, hold it... There’s no way I could fight with you, Diablo.”

“Weren’t you taking this as a request from the governor?”

“I mean, as the governor, of course he doesn’t want to go to war with the Elves. But just think about it: you’re a Sorcerer who managed to fend off an army of Fallen, Diablo. Do you think that I could take Shera away by force?”

“Hmph, so it seems you aren’t stupid after all.”

—I was suspicious that you’d get me with a surprise attack while I was bumming around like this, though!

A smile spread across Sylvie’s face.

“Then here’s a quest from me and the troubled governor of Faltra: stop us from going to war with the Elves, Diablo!”

To be continued.

Afterword

Thank you very much for reading “How NOT to Summon a Demon Lord.”

I’m the author, Yukiya Murasaki.

This is the story of a gamer protagonist who is summoned to another world, and begins life (acting like) a Demon Lord. He starts getting to know the girls who summoned him better (in various meanings of the word), gets to know the other people living in the town, and even saves Faltra from a danger never before seen in the game.

When I wrote everything down that I wanted, I ended up with a ton of material, and the book ended up being pretty thick. That said, I wrote it with the intention of it being easy to read. How did you like it? I’d be glad if you enjoyed it.

In the next volume— It hasn’t been decided if we can publish it yet... But I’m planning on having the Elf King and Prince (Shera’s dad and brother) make an appearance. How is Diablo going to deal with them!? (...I hope I can write about it.)

Special thanks—

To Takahiro Tsurusaki: Thank you for all your wonderful illustrations, and for being there since the planning stages of this book, as well as all the advice and ideas you gave me.

To the designer from Afterglow, Ooishi, thank you for the amazing cover design.

To my editor, Shouji: This is the first time that anyone has put so much faith in me. I want to do my best to meet your expectations, and I will keep giving it my all!

Thanks to all the staff at the Kodansha Light Novel Editing Department, and to the family and friends who supported me.

And a huge thank you to all of you for reading this far!

Yukiya Murasaki

I'M TSURUSAKI, THE PERSON IN CHARGE OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS FOR "HOW NOT TO SUMMON A DEMON LORD." NOW THAT I'VE MANAGED TO DRAW AN ELF GIRL FOR THE COVER OF A BOOK, I CAN DIE HAPPY...! (LOL)

BECAUSE I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH YUKIYA SINCE THE INITIAL CHARACTER DESIGN STAGES FOR THIS NOVEL AND BOUNCING IDEAS BACK AND FORTH AS WE MADE THE CHARACTERS, I WAS ABLE TO DO MY JOB IN A WAY THAT I'VE NEVER DONE BEFORE. I'M ATTACHED TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THE CHARACTERS, SO I HAD A REALLY FUN TIME DRAWING THEM ALL.

I HOPE YOU ENJOYED IT!

TAKAHIRO TSURUSAKI



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How NOT to Summon a Demon Lord: Volume 1

by Yukiya Murasaki

Translated by Garrison Denim Edited by Kris Swanson

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