
Supana Onikage
Illustrator: Youta
3
Lazy Dungeon Master


3
Lazy Dungeon Master
Supana Onikage
Illustrator: Youta


Dog Loli
NIKU
"MASTER...
ME NEITHER..."
"I CAN'T
WAIT ANY
LONGER..."
PUNISHMENT: MANDATORY
LOOSE SOCKS OR KNEE SOCKS
FORCED TO WEAR THEM FOR TWO,
THREE DAYS WITHOUT USING (PURIFICATION).
Gluttunous Girl
ICHIKA


Apprentice Witch
NERUNEH
Silky
KINUE
"NGH! I'M A VAMPIRE, AND YET I'M WEAKER THAN A HUMAN... WEAKER THAN EVEN A GOBLIN!"
Vampire
REI

CONTENTS

Prologue

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Epilogue

Extra Episode

Clash at Golemhead
Budokai! Ready, Set, Go!



Table of Contents

Cover
Color Illustrations
Prologue
Chapter 1
Chapter 2
Chapter 3
Epilogue
Extra Episode — Clash at Golemhead - Budokai! Ready, Set, Go!
Afterword
About J-Novel Club
Copyright

Prologue

There was a dungeon called the [Cave of Greed].

It opened with a basic floor containing traps, goblins, and a few treasure chests here and there. [First Area: Entrance]. Things proceeded with a labyrinth containing wandering golems and a trial room containing a Magic Blade. [Second, Third Areas: Labyrinth]. Once you got past that, a staircase awaited to take you back up all the way to the second aboveground floor. Said second floor was filled with riddles which tested your knowledge and wit. [Fourth Area: Puzzles and Riddles]. Nobody had ever gotten past that floor.

But if anyone did get past the puzzle area, they'd be greeted by the [Spiral Staircase Area] that would take them from the second aboveground floor to the third underground floor. As the name would imply, you could find Golem Blades—handmade Magic Blades—in the chests of that area.

Beyond all those floors awaited the fourth underground floor... which contained the [Boss Room Area]. (I was planning to keep adding more floors below that one while generally expanding the dungeon towards Tsia City.) This all being relevant because, at the time of me narrating this, the Boss Room was exceptionally crowded.

...That said, aside from the armored golems forming pristine rows on either side of a stone pathway, the only people in the room were me, the Dungeon Master, Rokuko, the Dungeon Core, and my slaves, Niku and Ichika. Rokuko was wearing a white dress that showed off her slender body perfectly. It was modeled after Haku's dress, so Rokuko liked it quite a lot. Niku and Ichika were both wearing maid uniforms, but not their normal ones. I had given them new ones for this occasion.

In other words, we were all in full dress. Of course, I was no exception. I had on a glittering set of full, silver plate armor with a red cape. The golden designs made from a crushed gold coin were a key feature. Though, truthfully, it was steel armor with a surface covering of silver. And, just to be fully honest here, it was so heavy I couldn't move in it on my own. The whole set was actually one

big golem so I could technically move, but a single slip up would lead to me getting hurt pretty bad.

I was sitting on my throne. It was made from heavy stone, which made for some uncomfortable sitting, but I had given up on sitting comfortably the moment I put on a heavy suit of plate armor.

Rokuko was standing right next to me, while Niku and Ichika were one step below on either side of the pathway. Said stone pathway stretched from the door of the Boss Room to my throne, and on either end of it was a row of armored golems with their swords raised dramatically in the air. I was going for the image of a king giving his people an audience. Me being the king, of course. And I mean, I was the Dungeon Master of this dungeon, which basically made me a king of sorts.

I "placed" the three newcomers right outside of the door. With that, the preparations were complete. I had told them beforehand that I'd be holding a naming ceremony for them, but I hadn't said a word about it being this extravagant. *Heheh. I can't wait to see the look on their faces.*

"Enter!"

I called out and a golem opened the boss door... that is, the two large steel double doors with eagle decorations carved into them. The three girls who had been waiting behind the door looked towards me. A look of shock washed over them for a brief moment, but it quickly faded and they entered the room with serious expressions. *Oh? I'm impressed. They know how to carry themselves.*

"Stop there and kneel before me." The Vampire in the center kneeled as ordered. In turn, the Silky on her left and the Apprentice Witch on her right kneeled as well.

The Vampire had silver hair and crimson eyes like glittering rubies. The freckled Apprentice Witch wore a robe and wizard hat, with a simple staff. The Silky was basically just a light green maid. Those three individuals were my dungeon's new recruits.

"The naming ceremony shall thus begin." I tensed my stomach to speak as powerfully and regally as possible. *This is getting pretty fun.* By the way, naming ceremonies weren't actually a thing, so I had no template to follow. I was just

winging it.

"Listen well, for I will now impart thy names upon thee." I stood up slowly, using the golem's assistance, and drew the sword on my hip. It was a sword with a clear blade made from potion bottles. The way it bent light while gleaming gave it a very mystical aura. *Uh... What's its attack power like? I'm pretty sure it'd shatter the second I hit anything with it. What can I say? It's ceremonial!*

"Vampire. Raise thine head."

"As you wish!" The Vampire raised her head as ordered.

...Uhhhh, alright, let's see here. Her new name should be...

"To thee I grace the name of Rei."

"Understood! My gratitude is boundless!"

Man, I sound like a medieval asshole. Hahaha. Well, whatever. Too late to back out of this act now. I based her name on the fact that, due to customizing her spawn a little, she had an attack power of zero. Since "Rei" means "zero" in Japanese, it's really easy to remember.

...Er, she looks really happy about that name. I-I, uh... Now I feel kinda bad for just lazily thinking it up on the spot. Sorry. Anyway. Next up.

"Silky. Raise thine head."

"Understood." This girl looked a lot more calm and gentle than the Vampire... rather, than Rei. I guess the word graceful would fit her better than anything else. She kinda gave off some older sister vibes. Maybe some married woman vibes. Basically, she felt a little mature.

"To thee I grace the name of Kinue."

"I will gratefully accept this name."

Silky. Silk. "Kinu" means "silk" in Japanese. Thus, Kinue. I thought about just calling her Kinu, but Kinue sounded more like a real name in this world, so I rolled with that instead. *Huh? What am I gonna name the next Silky? I'll cross that bridge when I get to it.*

Next up was the last one.

“Apprentice Witch. Raise thine head.”

“Okaaay.” *Yeaaah. Yep. This girl’s a lot more “calm” than Kinue... Really, she’s just totally laid back. She’s definitely the kind of girl that doesn’t give any fucks about anything.*

“To thee I grace the name of Neruneh.”

“Thank you sooo much, Teacher Masteeer.” Her name came from her being a witch, obviously. *Huh...? What does “Neruneh” have to do with witches? Uh, I mean, witches are always stirring stuff in pots, right? Well, the word for “stir” in Japanese is “neru.” Witches stir stuff so much they basically do it all day, am I right? Yeah. I’m right. Also, I haven’t agreed to be her teacher yet. C’mon.*



I pretty much gave them all half-assed names, but since they all came from a language that didn't exist in this world, I should be safe. Though they might actually be happy to know their names come from a different world, like Rokuko was.

Thus ends the naming ceremony. *Alright, all I gotta do now is wrap this up by giving them their first orders.* I went out of my way to set up a naming ceremony this elaborate all to tell them that there's a job I wanted them to dedicate their lives to. A duty so meaningful that they were utterly indispensable. A duty so vital that they would need to give it their absolute all day in and day out.

"Now then. I shall impart upon thee three my orders..."

"Understood! Lay upon us whatever order you may wish, Master!"

I let out a dramatic cough to set the tone. And then, when all eyes were on me, I spoke.

"Hereafter, thou all shall assist this dungeon... by becoming employees of the inn I built near it."

"Understood! As you... wish?!" Rei's stunned voice echoed through the room.

Chapter 1

Day 100

The seasons moved on and it became summer. I was lazing around in my fairly nice room within the Dancing Doll Inn... an inn I built myself, I might add. I looked up out the window and saw a pleasant blue sky reaching off into the distance.

...It's super hot. Even fantasy worlds have seasons too, huh? I stuck my feet into a bucket of cool water. *Aaah, nice and cold. I love it. It'll get lukewarm pretty fast, but for now, I'm in heaven.*

Months had passed since I was first summoned to this fantasy world. Through hilarious shenanigans I ended up as a Dungeon Master, and I had worked pretty hard since then, if I do say so myself. I had worked... pretty, pretty hard. Even though I had finally drilled a tunnel clean through Tsia Mountain and found a way to get free money by charging people for going through it... that just backfired by making my inn so much busier that the passage fee wasn't even worth it. Because, of course, now more people were passing by the area. More people nearby, more people using the inn. Ichika's prediction had been right on the money. *Fuck.*

I even ended up going out of my way to make a recreation room after enough visitors complained about there being nothing to do around here except visit the onsen. It was more of a recreation building, really, soundproofed and built a short distance away form the main inn. A lot of people spent basically all day in there.

To sum the place up, it was a room where adventurers could play with the [Dice] and [Cards] found in the dungeon. Dice already existed in the world before now, but the playing cards were unique to our dungeon. Well, technically a Hero (Soldier of God) made some decks of playing cards before in the past, but no one managed to recreate them. At best they made some metal cards that were so expensive and heavy they never really caught on.

...I'm in the middle of figuring out what else to put in there other than dice and card tables.

Regarding the dungeon I'm actually supposed to be here for, I made it such that very rarely one of the golems wandering the labyrinthine first and second basement floors will have a knife. That knife being, of course, a Golem Blade—a special Magic Blade knife that vibrates and sharpens when you pour mana into it. Any adventurer that successfully takes down the golem gets their Magic Blade knife. *There's only five of them walking around right now, though.*

I also added spawners for Iron Golems. They cost 50,000 DP each, but thanks to Haku visiting so often, I could buy enough to make Iron Golems the standard monster past the puzzle area. It really helped that she paid for her room with Dungeon Points. Oh, and I did put one in the labyrinth area so that adventurers would run across an Iron Golem every now and again. They were too strong of a monster for many, but they were easy to run around and avoid. The temptation of hunting an Iron Golem and selling the materials was strong enough that today, three parties were spelunking in my dungeon (though one of those parties was just there to get battle experience through fighting goblins).

As for the puzzle area on the second aboveground floor... it's been discovered, but not fully solved. One party got there by chance, although they were so worn down that they ultimately backed off and left the dungeon for fear of traps. They got lost on their return trip and despite getting close, haven't managed to reach it again. Apparently, nobody had yet noticed that I was changing the correct path to the exit every hour.

I was getting money and DP from both those staying in the inn and those passing through the tunnel. Thanks to that, things were a lot more stable for me. Especially since I could turn the money into DP if need be. Which is why I had the spare time to laze around in my room.

Which is doubly why I decided to be bold and sleep the entire day. *I wonder if I can get some air conditioning in my room... No, wait, there's gotta be some kinda Survival Magic for making summers more bearable. Wait, wait, wait. Now that I think about it, the only Survival Magic I've ever used is {Purification}. That's a real waste... Alright. I'll try swapping the water in this bucket with some new, cold water fresh from the low-rank magic spell {Water}.*

I toss the bucket of water out the window. I then squint my eyes and concentrate, such that the chant implanted in my head when I used the scroll arose in my mind. *I see, I see. "Oh water, become a small ball," eh? Let's try changing that a little.*

"Oh chilled water, become a small ball. {Water}." I felt a small bit of my mana flow out of me, and immediately after a ball of water appeared before my eyes. As planned, I dropped it into the bucket. *Yep, it's cold. Been a while since I've used any spell other than {Create Golem}. But wow, magic really is convenient.*

"Keima, do that to mine too pleaaase." For some reason, my partner, the Dungeon Core Rokuko, was also lazing around in my room. *C'mon. You've got your own room. I made it super fancy 'cause you're the owner. Way better than this room. The heck are you doing here?* I repeated the chant and replaced the water in Rokuko's bucket with a fresh cold batch.

"Aaah, your magic really is weird, Keima. Niku and I could never make water this cool. No way."

"Normally you can't change spells, huh?"

"Nooope, not at all. Not normally."

I figured that you could decipher some of the words by comparing patterns, but as far as Rokuko knew, I was the only one who could actually modify spells. *Thanks, auto translator!* Though Rokuko was a Dungeon Core that didn't leave her dungeon much, so she didn't actually know that many people. *Wait... Me, Niku, and Ichika. Does she only know three people? Wait, she knows Haku too. Haku, our dungeon's goddess of good fortune and Dungeon Core Number 89. She's a big deal in the Imperial Capital.*

"H-Hey, thanks to the inn and stuff, I've gotten kinda close to the receptionist, too. H-Her name's Shiriana." *That's a few letters too many, but eh, close enough. Rokuko probably doesn't realize that shiriana means "asshole" in Japanese, so yeah, she's not trying to be mean on purpose.*

Speaking of which, we were on good terms with the Adventurer's Guild. Although they had finished building a fairly solid branch office nearby, the receptionist still came over to our place to eat, and once a week she'd buy a room so she could use our baths. And since the Guild office was within our

dungeon territory, we got over 80 DP a day from her. Very, very nice. That amount doubled when she locked her room at night, too.

Alright, time to do nothing but sleep all day. I prepared to get in bed and start snoozing, but at the last moment, something happened in the dungeon.

"Keima. One of the Iron Golems wandering the dungeon got beaten." Iron Golem. As the name implies, they were golems made entirely out of iron. Most of the adventurers exploring our dungeon were D-Rank, or at best C-Rank. Iron Golems were a bit too strong for them. In return, however, their actual bodies were far more valuable than a mere Clay Golem's or what have you. After all, they were made from iron. It should be obvious why they were so valuable if you considered their corpses to be a human body's worth of iron. Heavy as the corpse may be, you could make countless nails and other metal objects with it.

"What kinda group took it down? Let's see here... Oh, there's a C-Rank party in the dungeon. Was it them?"

"Uh-huh. They have this guy named... I think it was Gozou? He's a dwarf that fights with hammers. He beat it by just smacking it with his hammer. They didn't even go for breaking the magic stone." *Right, you can disperse mana with the impact from physical blows. Whew. I'm glad they didn't somehow cut the Iron Golem down with swords. If a guy that strong came by, I'd have no way to deal with him.*

"Guess we don't need to worry too much, then. Are they carrying the Iron Golem corpse back out?"

"Uh-huh. They're carrying it together. Guess they don't have {Storage}, huh?"

A party of C-Ranks could apparently beat an Iron Golem if they worked together. That'd probably end up being a good cash flow for them. *But man, that was kinda fast. I'm gonna have to place some stronger monsters after the puzzle area. Let's take a peek at the catalog... Oh, look, Gargoyles. I wonder what makes them different from normal golems.*

That afternoon, the guild receptionist came to the inn. Apparently, she had something big to talk about. *Didn't you say you've gotten close to her lately, Rokuko? Why did you give me back my Absolute Authority and say "The rest is up to you" the moment you had to talk to her?* And so, I ended up in the

conference room, talking to the receptionist while Rokuko sat beside me with a frozen smile on her face.

"What? Smithery?"

"Yes. The blacksmiths wish to open a smithery here. It will be built some distance away from the inn and the Guild due to the noise, but they do plan to build a branch office nearby just as the Guild did. I assumed it would be best to tell you about this beforehand."

"Man, this sure is coming out of nowhere."

"Earlier today, a party of adventurers returned from the dungeon with the corpse of an Iron Golem. I am sure you know of this already, but it has been confirmed that Iron Golems are residing within the dungeon." Apparently, a dungeon with Iron Golems was treated as a gold mine. Or in this case, an iron mine. They were actually known as Golem Mines or Quasi-Mines to those in the business. *Makes sense. Sources of ore are pretty valuable. And since the entirety of an Iron Golem's body is ore, no actual mining has to be done. A blacksmith can use the stuff right then and there. Of course they'd want to just go ahead and make a smithery here.* Though, apparently, they were planning on making one here anyway to repair the adventurer's equipment and so on. *Nobody told me anything about that. Oh, wait. That's what she's doing right now.*

"Does all this mean that this place is gonna be put on maps now?"

"Maps? It's already been on maps. It was added the moment we started building the branch office here."

"Wait, I thought dungeons weren't put on maps?"

"Dungeons not managed by the Guild are not placed on maps in order to prevent unready adventurers from visiting them on their own. There is no need or point to hiding a dungeon that has a Guild branch office right next to its entrance. In fact, we are steadily advertising it to draw more people here." *Oh... Crap. I might have made a huge mistake here. Soldiers of God will definitely come here if we're on a map... ah, wait. Soldiers of Gods are Heroes here and are automatic S-Ranks in the Guild. They can see information on whatever dungeon they want, whether it's on the maps or not. Though this is still definitely gonna bring us more attention.*

“The guildmaster planned on building a settlement here the moment Magic Blades were confirmed to be found within the dungeon.”

“...Seriously?” *He mentioned something about building a town here before. He was serious about that...? Wait. I guess this means telling the Guild about my dungeon was a mistake from the start... No helping that now, though.*

“I suppose now is as good of a chance as any to ask you a few questions. This inn has a cafeteria, but are you planning on building a bar for alcoholic drinks as well?”

“Not at the moment. We primarily deal in food, so we have no plans on selling alcohol.” I wouldn’t be able to sleep if a bunch of drunkards started stomping around making noises. What a pain in the butt that’d be.

“Then we will set about building a bar ourselves. We might expand in other ways as well. To avoid conflicting with your establishment, I will discuss such plans with you before proceeding with them.”

“That’d be a big help, thanks.” The scale of this operation was getting bigger and bigger, but I was fine with that as long as the Guild did most of the tedious legwork. Anything they build will still be in our dungeon’s territory.

“Excuse me, Keima. There is one thing I would like to ask you about.”

“Huh? What’s that?”

“...When did you construct that recreation room? One day it wasn’t there and the next it was, out of nowhere.”

“A magician friend of Haku’s popped it into existence for me.”

“Aaah, a friend of an A-Rank adventurer... I see, that makes perfect sense.” The receptionist and I nodded together. I was a friend of Haku’s, so I wasn’t lying to her. I just wasn’t telling her the whole truth. The Guild had lie-detecting magical tools, so I tried to refrain from lying to them at all times if possible. It was pretty annoying, to say the least.

I was hoping she’d leave pretty soon after that, but we ended up discussing things for another hour. Having to stay on guard that whole time was exhausting.

Day 129

“Yo, Gozou! Thanks for calling me over. How’s Roppe doing?”

“Kantara! Thanks for coming, my friend! And she’s doing great, you bet!” Two bearded, middle-aged dwarves were giving each other a bear hug in the Guild’s branch office. Gozou was the C-Rank adventurer that had taken down the Iron Golem and retrieved its corpse. And apparently, Kantara was the new blacksmith that’d be working here. A dungeon with Magic Blades and Iron Golems was perfect for a nearby smithery, so Gozou called over a blacksmith friend of his after coming here.

Also, Gozou had hunted two more Iron Golems after the first one. That seemed to have been taken as confirmation that our dungeon was producing Iron Golems regularly. That’s why he called his friend over with utter confidence that it’d be worth it.

“Alrighty, Keima. This is Kantara. Treat’m right, y’hear?”

“Ah, right. Uh... Nice to meet you?”

“Right back at ya, Keima.”

So. Why the heck am I even here? I had decked myself out in equipment and went into the dungeon with Niku to signal that I was indeed an adventurer doing adventurer things, but upon leaving Gozou grabbed me and dragged us to the Guild for whatever reason.

“...So, why’d you bring me here?”

“You’re like the Dancing Doll Inn’s secretary, right? You’re basically number two here.”

“I heard from Gozou that you’ve gotten further into the [Cave of Greed] than anyone else.”

In short, they were saying that I carried a lot of power and influence around here. *Well, they’re not wrong. I am actually the Dungeon Master. But I didn’t expect people to realize how much power I have here. I was trying to stay on the down low...*

“So, I’m gonna be building a smithery near here. I dunno when it’ll be done,

but if you ever need your weapons repaired, you know where to go. Oh, I've got an idea. How about you let me fix up that blade on your hip? No charge this time, 'course."

"No charge, huh? Sounds like a good deal to me." I handed over my Golem Blade with its scabbard.

"...Hm? This is a Magic Blade, ain't it?"

"You can tell?"

"I am a blacksmith, sonny. My dream is to make my own Magic Blade one day. I came here 'cause I heard the dungeon had Magic Blades in it. I gotta praise the fates for lettin' me take a gander at one so soon."

"Yeah. And this is one I got from the dungeon, too. While you're at it, would you mind telling me how exactly you should repair Magic Blades?"

"Sure. It ain't no different from a normal blade. Though it's another story if the Magic Blade is made from water or fire... Hmmm. This blade seems to be in tiptop shape already. You don't use it much, do you? It looks like you ain't really using it at all." *Ngh, he caught me. That's a pro blacksmith for you. He can basically talk to swords. Though this is a golem, not really a sword.*

"W-Well, I am mainly a wizard. I don't usually use my sword if I can help it."

"Really now? That's a waste. But it ain't my place to say anythin' about it. Here, have it back. Hm... Who's that lil' girl beside you?"

"She's my bodyguard. Oh, right. Would you mind repairing her weapon instead of mine?"

"Sure, lemme see it." Niku, who had been staying a little back behind me, stepped forward and handed over her Golem Knife.

"...Well now, this is a Magic Blade, too. Looks like you're getting a lot of use out of this one. I can tell you've repaired it before. Good work, I like a warrior that takes care of their weapons." Kantara gave Niku a toothy smile. That plus the beard made him seem like a nice old man. Not that I knew his real age. It was possible that in dwarf years he was just a friendly guy in his twenties or something. *But wait, when did Niku repair her knife? I wonder if Ichika taught*

her how to do that.

"Gimme a second, I'll repair this right up. Won't be able to do too much without me tools, though." He took out a whetstone and started sharpening the knife. After a bit, he swung it around, looked at the blade from various angles, and then started sharpening it again. He repeated that several times.

After several minutes, Kantara took a good look at the knife and then nodded in satisfaction.

"Right, it should be plenty sharp now. Just gotta top it off with a good ol'... {Revitalize}, and there. All done."

"Huh? Did you just use the Survival Magic spell {Revitalize}? Not the Earth Magic spell {Sharpen}?" According to Ichika, {Revitalize} was a spell that energized the ground's natural state and somewhat helped improve crop growth. {Sharpen}, on the other hand, was a Low-Tier Earth Magic spell that increased a blade's sharpness. As far as I could tell, finishing a blade off would best be done with {Sharpen}, not {Revitalize}.

"You bet. {Revitalize} energizes the ground... so why wouldn't it energize swords, too? They're all made of stuff from the ground, y'know."

...I hadn't even thought of that. Ores were indeed located within the ground. Which made it part of the "earth." *I didn't expect this guy to beat me when it comes to magic... He's good.*

"Just so y'know, only second-rate blacksmiths use {Sharpen}. That magic just hides the flaws in the weapon, it don't fix'm. I'm a blacksmith so I gotta do it if the customer asks me to, but I never like it. Though it's not a half bad spell if you're stuck somewhere and need some extra firepower."

"Your {Revitalize} is basically just a good luck charm, though. I ain't ever seen another blacksmith use it before."

"Hey, fuck you too, Gozou. My family's been using the spell for generations. And you know from experience my swords are sharper and last longer than any other blacksmith's, don't ya?"

"Hahaha! That's 'cause you're a great blacksmith. The spell's barely changing anything. Really though, what would energizing a sword even do? Not like it's

gonna grow legs and run to the enemies or nothin'."

"Good grief. Swords are alive, y'know? You're a dwarf too, Gozou. You gotta learn to show s'more respect for weapons." Speaking of which, the effects of spells could be changed by how you visualized them. Which meant that if you visualized {Revitalize} as actually energizing a sword, that might end up happening in an abstract sort of way. *It might even work like Restoration Magic for Golems. I'll have to experiment some more with this later.*

"Oof, we really got off subject there, eh? My bad. Point being, come to my place if you ever need a blacksmith. I'll mainly be dealing with weapons adventurers bring me, but I can make all sorts of practical things like nails and cutlery, too." *Oh, right. Video games give most people the impression that blacksmiths did nothing but work with weapons and armor, but they actually spent a lot of time making common everyday things as well.*

"Alright. I'll ring you up if I ever need something important."

"Leave it all to me. Though, er, I'm gonna need a forge and whatnot before I can do anything. I'm gonna be making a simple one for myself, but it's still gonna take like a week or two. Come back then." *Huh. That's a long time.*

"What do you make forges out of?"

"Eh? Bricks infused with some kinda material resistant to fire. I got a lot of Red Lizard scales for cheap a while back. I was thinking of using them." *Oooh, that's very fantasy. But yeah, makes sense that you'd make a forge out of fire-resistant bricks. And... speaking of which, I have a lot of phoenix eggshells left over. I bet those would be good for his forge. They resist a dragon's fire, after all.* I stealthily withdrew a single egg's worth of shells and handed them over to Kantara.

"Here, consider this an upfront payment. If you want some fire resistant stuff, these should be perfect for you."

"Eggshells? Let's see here... Yep, they're fire resistant. Shells from fire-resistant monsters are pretty good materials. These'll be great for my forge. I'll gladly take'm."

"Sure. Just do a good job when the time comes. And... if you ever figure out

how to make Magic Blades, give me one."

"Hey now, Keima, you really think some broken eggshells are worth a Magic Blade?"

"Hahaha, it's fine with me. I'm likely gonna be workin' with Keima for a long time now. If I ever get good enough to make Magic Blades, I'll gladly give'm a freebie." *Kantara. Now this is a guy who knows what's up. I dunno how much a single egg's worth of shells will help, but now I really hope he gets his wish of making his own Magic Blade.*

Gozou's Perspective

I'm Gozou. Dwarf. C-Rank adventurer. Lately I've been exploring the [Ordinary Cave]... now known as the [Cave of Greed]. It used to be a shabby old dungeon that even F-Ranks could clear without a sweat... really, it was more of a cave than a dungeon. Only had one room, after all. Not a single hallway.

And now, that cave is a fantastic dungeon.

As far as I've heard, it's confirmed to have at least four floors, but I've only reached the third one. Seems like you've gotta climb up stairs to reach the fourth floor. That kinda smart thing is outta my comfort zone. What I do know is that I've got a knack for remembering any paths I've gone through, and even with that I can't figure out the labyrinth at all. Places I know should've had walls blocking them. I'm starting to doubt my own skills. Though, it's not an actual Skill that's a gift from the gods or anything. It's just a knack. This kinda thing happens with knacks.

In any case, I leave the small stuff to my partner Roppe. All I gotta do is swing my battle hammer around.

"Hyaaaaaah!" The heavy sound of metal slamming together reverberates through the dungeon. I'm fighting an Iron Golem, now confirmed to appear within the [Cave of Greed]. They've been noticed here and there for a long while, but only by E-Rank and D-Rank adventurers too weak to take them on. It'd be hard to bring their corpses back without a cart of sorts, too, and enemies might ambush'm on the way back anyhow.

Though their corpses are worth a lotta money, so they're the perfect foe for

me. All I gotta do is smack'm with my hammer, too. Nice and easy. Yup. The perfect foe.

The Iron Golem collapses after I slam my hammer into its head enough times. Oooh... My hands are feelin' all tingly. I love this feeling. Feels like getting so drunk on beer my hands go numb.

"Alriiight, that's another one down. Sheesh, it's a real pain beatin' these guys when they've got their magic stones buried too deep inside of'm to see."

"Good work, Gozou. Let's get this corpse onto the cart. Doesn't seem like any other enemies are near us." Roppe walks over, pulling the cart behind her. She's my partner. A human woman. She looks a little frail, but she's a C-Rank adventurer just like me. And a good drinking partner, too. We actually met after she came to a dwarf village to get a taste of our beer.

Right. But now's not the time for nostalgia. I put away my hammer for a second and get the Iron Golem onto Roppe's cart. A human's worth of iron really is heavy. Oof.

"Okey dokey, let's get this guy outta here."

"Ya." I'd really like to hunt two or three per trip, but Roppe and her cart couldn't survive that. 'Specially since we gotta take it up and down a bunch of stairs. We're defenseless each time that happens. Hunting one at a time is the best way to go about it in terms of safety. Really, I'd like Roppe to learn the {Storage} spell. We could carry a lotta golems per trip with that.

We head home with an eye out for traps. Goblins attack us multiple times but we beat'm back until eventually we're back outside with plenty of iron. This'll be worth more than a few days of inn fees.

"Y'know, how 'bout we just settle down by this dungeon and just live as miners?"

"That'll be a no thanks from me, Gozou. There's no taverns or bars here. The food tastes super good, but it's all for nothing if we can't get any beer." Aaah, yeah, she's got a point.

There's this place called the Dancing Doll Inn right by the dungeon. Really, there's nothing but the inn and the Guild branch office by the dungeon. It's in

the middle of nowhere. Eh... Guess there being an inn here at all is pretty wild, though. It even has an onsen. That thing is a one way trip to paradise. Makes me feel like a noble or somethin'. I didn't think they were anything special before, but now I can hardly live without it.

Anyway, point being, the Dancing Doll Inn doesn't sell any beer. Though some of their meals use alcohol, you can't buy it. The food's freakin' tasty. The beds are some of the best I've ever slept in. The onsen, like I said, is amazing. With all that in mind, there's just one thing I can say.

...This place would be perfect if it just had some damn beer! Though, it's not banned or nothin', so we've been getting our fix from the traders passing by. Like... What was it called? The [Great Tsia Mountain Tunnel] or somethin'? It's a dungeon too... A new one, difficulty unknown. Thing is, its difficulty is unknown cause it doesn't seem dangerous at all.

New dungeons appear next to existing dungeons all the time, but I've never seen a completely harmless dungeon like this one before. Even the [Ordinary Cave] spat out a few goblins. I dunno how it works exactly, but if you go into a small room right next to the entrance and pay some money, you can go through the tunnel to the other side of the mountain. It's more like a business than a dungeon. The tunnel's wide enough for two carriages to pass each other by, and there's even a convenient resting spot midway through it. Seems so perfect it's kinda fishy, but I haven't heard of anyone having problems inside of it yet.

So basically, lots of guarded merchants have been going through the tunnel and passing by us. Thanks to that, we can get Tsian and Pavellan beer for cheap. Plus salt. That's more than enough for me, really. Though the merchants must not be too happy about paying money to some mountain tunnel.

"Aaah, if only they sold the dang beer here and saved us the effort."

"This place would be paradise if they just sold some beer and let us drink in the onsen..."

"I might just go up to Keima and ask him for a favor. He could get some beer flowing here."

"Ah, in that case I can totally try seducing him for some extra convincing power. Anything for beer."

“C’mon, partner. Don’t do that to yourself. And uh... you’re not exactly his type, if you know what I mean.”

“Aaah... He’s got that Niku, right. Guess he’s more into tiny girls, huh...?”

He’d be a pretty good adventurer if he weren’t a dang lolicon... Actually, no. It ain’t my right to go badmouthing people for their fetishes and whatnot. To each their own. And that girl looks real happy. He’s treating her right. Getting in the way of that would just be selfish.

After resting in front of the dungeon for a while and chatting, the Guild receptionist Cilia walks up to us.

“Mister Gozou. May I have a moment of your time? We just received a letter for you from a Mister Kantara.”

“Oooh, Kantara, huh! Hope he’s got a good answer for us.”

“This is about the blacksmithery, is it not? I would like to know his response as well.”

“Sure, gimme a sec. I’m opening it right now.” I take the letter from good ol’ Cilia and get to reading right away after tearing the envelope open.

...Ooh, he’s interested! Apparently he left to come here the second he got my letter.

“He’s on his way! Aren’t ya glad, Cilia?”

“Quite. Hm... I suppose I will need to contact that carpenter again. I will also need to discuss this smithery with the Dancing Doll Inn’s Rokuko...” Yep, Cilia sure seems busy. If ye ask me, she could really stand to spend some more time relaxing.

“How’s Kantara doin’?”

“Huh? Oh, he’s doin’ fine. Gramps, too.”

“I figured that. If Untara were doin’ bad, Kantara would never leave him to come here.” True enough. But really, it’s been a long time since I’ve seen him. Gotta get some beer ready for our reunion.

Several days after that.

“Yo, Gozou! Thanks for calling me over. How’s Roppe doing?”

“Kantara! Thanks for coming, my friend! And she’s doing great, you bet!” I meet my old friend and give him a hug. Oh right, nearly forgot. I gotta introduce him to Keima. Grabbed him as he was walking out of the dungeon earlier. Keima’s the kinda guy that you gotta know if you’re gonna be living near the [Cave of Greed]. After all, he’s the Dancing Doll Inn’s secretary and he’s gotten further into the [Cave of Greed] than anyone else.

Only two parties have ever reached the fourth floor, and one of those is Keima’s party. His party consists of himself, the owner of the Dancing Doll Inn, Rokuko, and his two slaves. Both of his slaves are registered adventurers. And y’know, it’s not uncommon for slaves to be put in their master’s party, but Keima’s slaves are both happy and full of energy. Easy to forget sometimes that they’re actually slaves. Rare to see slaves like that. ’Course, he makes them work in the inn a lot, but even so. It’s obvious he still treats them more than well enough.

“Alrighty, Keima. This is Kantara. Treat’m right, y’hear?”

“Ah, right. Uh... Nice to meet you?” And so, I finished introducing Keima and Kantara.

Wait a second, he’s a wizard? I thought for sure he was a swordsman, since he’s got that Magic Blade hanging from his hip all the time. Guess I shoulda figured. His lean build’s more fit for a rear guard.

Anyway. We started drinking afterwards to celebrate, but Keima left without joining in. The guy’s no fun at all. All he left behind was the shells he gave Kantara. Apparently, they’d be good materials for a forge.

“Hey, y’know those eggshells he gave you? What kinda egg did they come from?”

“Oof, I was so caught up in thankin’ him that I forgot to ask. Hrm... Gonna have to look some stuff up to figure this one out.”

“Heh, but he sure ripped you off, huh? Some eggshells sure are some way to show gratitude.”

“Woah now. Monster eggs are pretty rare, y’know? Keima did me a big solid

just givin’ me all these shells for free.”

“Really?” Monsters are all over the place. I figure it wouldn’t be too weird to find the eggs of some fire-resistant monster lying around... “Why haven’t I seen any quests for gettin’ eggshells, then?”

“That’s ’cause they’re so rare that the quest’s gonna end up being a B-Rank quest. You’re a C-Rank, Gozou.”

“Seriously? Damn, I never knew that.” But why are they so hard to find? They’re just eggshells.

“Gozou. Have you ever seen a young monster in a dungeon before?”

“Eh? ’Course I... Wait, I haven’t? Huh.” Now that he mentions it, I only ever see adult monsters in dungeons. I’ve seen a couple monster children in my days... but only outside of dungeons, right.

“Not sure why, but child monsters are pretty rare. Worm-type monsters and shit are a different story, but usually, monster children are so weak in a fight you’ll never see them in a dungeon. Usually that’s not a problem ’cause adults have a lot more materials to harvest... but eggshells are a big exception. And y’see, most monsters born from eggs eat their own eggshells afterwards.”

“Now that’s interesting. Never knew that.”

“Eggshells, y’see, are basically protective barriers that a parent pours their energy into for their child. You could call them a crystallization of their power, even. It’s said that child monsters get their start by eating these... Get it now? These eggshells are a fine gift.”

“I see what you mean... but, huh.” If they’re so rare, how’d he get his hands on those eggshells in the first place? Child monsters eat their shells after birth. You won’t just find them lying around.

“Basically, you gotta randomly find some monster egg lying around. Then you gotta take care of the parent monsters somehow. Parent monsters that go absolutely wild to protect their children from dying.”

“Huh, yeah. That’d be rough.” Parents protecting their children really do get ridiculously strong. Monster parents and human parents. It’d be fair to say they

go up a rank or two in danger.

“And Keima’s still got a pretty low rank, yeah? Depends on what monster this egg is from, but even if he found it by luck, it’d still be pretty rare and valuable. Yet all he asked in return was a single Magic Blade. He’s a big shot, no doubt about it.” Kantara chuckled with his gravelly voice.

So. The next day.

“Fuck. Keima is a lot more than a big shot. He’s on an entirely fucking different level from us.”

“Wh-What the hell happened?! Hey, Kantara!” I wake up to Kantara shaking back and forth, face pale.

I fell asleep last night while we drank beer, looked at the stars, and talked about the kind of smithery he’d be building. Oh, and Keima brought us some [Fried Potatoes] for about fifty coppers after I asked for some snacks. They were crunchy and the salt worked perfectly with beer. Couldn’t have asked for a better snack. But now I’m awake and Kantara’s terrified of Keima for some reas—ah!

“Was there something in the fried potatoes?!”

“What are you even talking about?! I mean, they were pretty good, but still!” Oh, that wasn’t it? I’d say it’s pretty scary that Keima can make crazy good snacks like that despite not drinking beer.

“Then what happened?”

“...I’m talking about the eggshells.”

“Huh? What about’m?”

“These eggshells are from... a phoenix...” A phoenix. I’ve heard those’re B-Rank monsters. Seriously? Damn.

“...So, basically... They’re crazy rare? You’re not mistakin’ them for something they’re not, right?”

“Nah. I checked them using a magic tool that displays item names. I’m just gonna say it. These are so rare they’re practically the stuff of legends... Where in the world did Keima find these...?” *Legends, huh? That’s sure somethin’.*

Apparently, a forge made from these would unlock nigh limitless potential. Any blacksmith would water at the mouth for them, to the point even a price of one hundred gold coins would be a steal for them. *That's... Blood and ashes... That's enough money to drink as much as I want for the rest of my life, ain't it?*

"So, what're you gonna do with'm? Gonna give those eggshells back?"

"...I'm gonna use'm. I already took'm, and even made a promise about'm. Only way I can pay back this debt is to make an actual Magic Blade for Keima. He gave me somethin' this rare to make my forge with... He must really be countin' on me. I dunno if anyone's ever shown me this much respect and trust in my life."

Making a Magic Blade is often considered to be straight up impossible. Even the most advanced researchers in the Imperial Capital can make swords that kinda sorta resemble Magic Blades, at best. Normally, a random blacksmith like Kantara making a Magic Blade on his own would be impossible.

"...That's the kinda thing a drunkard would say. How's a single blacksmith gonna make a Magic Blade?"

"Yeah, it ain't likely. I'm just gonna do what I can. These eggshells might be enough to make some magic happen, yeah?" Kantara straightens up, having calmed down while talking to me.

"Really though, this is a damn good chance to make my dream a reality. You can find Magic Blades in this dungeon, yeah? That means I've got some examples to follow. Gozou. Would you mind helping me gather the materials I need?"

"Not a problem, friend. Though the best thing I can do right now is hunt some Iron Golems for ya." I look Kantara straight in the eyes and internally vow to help him.

...Though, I really can't follow what Keima was thinkin' at all. Only thing I know know is that he's no common adventurer... There's somethin' special about him.

Keima's Perspective — Day 132

For some reason, after the blacksmith arrived everyone around me was suddenly all about expansion. The Guild was even talking about building a tavern beside their branch office. *Why? Why is this happening?* But there was no use crying over spilled milk. And people gathering around the dungeon wasn't all bad. We got more DP from them, after all. *But I think we're getting a little too big. Nowadays, there's always at least one adventurer rooming in our inn.*

"Master, we need you to replenish our food stores." Niku, who managed distribution of food in the kitchen, came walking into my room. Summoning a bunch of food was a real pain, but we had to provide meals for our visitors. I bought the meals, fruits, and vegetables we were lacking and handed them over to Niku, who then stashed it all away into her {Storage}—an alternate dimension where time didn't pass.

When she got back to the kitchen, she would withdraw the food and it'd be as fresh as new for the visitors. Japanese restaurant and convenience store food was actually very popular in this fantasy world, to the point that recently some adventurers had started going out of their way to visit our inn specifically to eat our food.

...Rokuko could summon the same food I could, but for some reason, the food I summoned tasted better. It probably had to do with how much we knew about the food itself.

Suddenly, Niku dropped some of the food I handed over to her. Luckily it was just a bread roll wrapped in plastic, so it touching the ground wasn't really a problem.

"...You're not looking so good. Are you alright?" That made me finally notice that Niku looked a little pale and sick. It was hard to notice since her dark skin was akin to a deep tan. I'd have noticed sooner if she had much whiter skin like Rokuko.

"Um, ah... I'm fine, I think..." Niku, as a dog beastkin, had a significantly sturdier body than your average human. But she was still a kid who probably wasn't even ten years old yet. I put my hand on her forehead. It was so sweaty my hand stuck to it, and hot enough that she obviously had a fever.

"...Get in bed and rest! That's an order!"

"Kyah! Ah, u-um, understood..." I laid the sick Niku into my futon and left my room to take her place in the kitchen.

* * *

Crap, I ended up working...! I groaned to myself in sorrow as I wiped Niku's forehead with a wet towel. She had fallen asleep in my futon.

Niku's fever probably arose from exhaustion made worse by the heat. Basically, overworking in the summer. She needed some good rest. Which was fine, but that introduced another problem.

We're understaffed! I mean, yeah. I noticed we were light on staff a while ago. We bought Ichika, started an inn, and lately have been getting more and more customers. We had one receptionist. One "cook" in the in the kitchen. Both roles which absolutely had to be filled once our doors opened. But there were only four people managing the dungeon and the inn, myself included. That just wasn't enough. Especially since two people minimum were absolutely required at all times.

Golems could handle all of the heavy lifting and carrying, so most of what we had to do ourselves involved interacting with visitors. Thanks to the Survival Magic spell {Purification}, cleaning and laundry were so overwhelmingly easy they hardly took any time or effort at all, but interacting with customers drained a lot of mental and physical energy. I only worked in the kitchen for a single day, but despite there being way fewer customers than there would be in a town cafeteria, the fact that Niku usually managed it on her own really impressed me. Like, sincerely.

Plus, people hardly complained about stuff in the cafeteria. Ichika would race out from behind the counter and deal with any issues that popped up, but since Niku was a beastkin, a slave, *and* a child, you could count on one hand how many times people complained. In fact, you could count that on one finger, since there had only ever been one serious complaint with her in charge. And yet, I had been swarmed with complaints the only day I worked there. *The heck's up with that? Things calmed down after I had Rokuko help out in her DP saving form. Seriously? Are they all a bunch of lolicons?*

Not only that, but—and I forgot about this all the time—using magic ate up mana, which was basically like your mental energy in a way. Niku had to cast {Storage} each time she took out food. That must have been a heavy burden on her. I let it slip me by like an idiot since she worked with a calm expression every day, but she must have been pretty tired all the time. And yet... Whenever I used her as a dakimakura at night, she would just smile at me without complaining a single time. *I dunno what to say... I'm starting to think she's too good to just be my slave. What's up with this super loli?*

"...Master?"

"Oh, you're awake? How do you feel?" I rubbed Niku's head. Her dog tail wagged beneath the blanket I had covered her with, signaling her happiness.

"I'm okay now."

"Here, drink this mana potion. And stay in bed. You don't have to be my dakimakura tonight."

"...Ngh... B-But, where will you sleep...?"

"I can just sleep in a random room, I'll be fine. Good thing we live in an inn." Niku sunk visibly after hearing that. She was sad about not getting to work. What a nice, loyal dog (girl).

But really, thinking about it, I hadn't really been thinking about giving anyone days off. I could sleep whenever I wanted, and although I had told Ichika and Niku they could do whatever they wanted when there weren't any visitors, that was pretty rare for us nowadays... Rather, we were in the middle of a long chain of consecutive workdays. Not to mention that Niku had to work as my dakimakura on top of all that. And she didn't even get any days off...? Plus, I was giving her room and board, but she didn't have a wage or anything. Basically, she was working every day for no pay with no breaks. That may sound inspiring, but really it was practically criminal and made me feel terrible now that I had realized it.

To sum things up: We were way, way understaffed. I had to do something about this so Niku, Ichika, and even I could get as much sleep as we needed...

Day 133

Niku must have fully recovered after resting a little more, as once I woke up she had stealthily returned to fulfill her duty as my dakimakura. She apparently snuck into my bed while I was sleeping. *She sure is dedicated to her work. And she even replaced the blanket with a thinner one so it wouldn't get too hot. She's good.*

I had talked a lot about us being understaffed, but we couldn't just hire new people willy-nilly. Our inn was overflowing with secrets about our dungeon. Like how the light in Rokuko's room is actually the Dungeon Core.

What could we do, then...? Well, I could buy slaves, like I did with Ichika, but I really doubted that I would find any hidden gems like her among the other slaves. Even so, I needed to get some extra employees somehow. With our current numbers, I wouldn't really be able to take someone with me and leave the inn for any extended period of time. Despite having tunneled through the mountain, I still hadn't taken Ichika to Pavella, for instance. Though we were getting a few visitors from Pavella traveling through the tunnel.

...They handed us fish and said "make me something with this!" but uh, I didn't actually know how to cook. We were claiming that our inn had a chef named Kyousha doing all our cooking. He was a straightforward kind of guy that only made what he wanted to. Though we hadn't actually told anyone about him yet since nobody was weird enough to demand to see the chef. *Oh, right. It'd be nice if we could employ someone who actually knows how to cook. If they're good enough to mimic the food I make with DP, all I'd have to do is give them some ingredients and the inn could operate without me. That'd give me more time to sleep, too.*

And so, I decided to summon some new employees in the Master Room with Rokuko. The Master Room, a sort of subspace located within the Dungeon Core, was wide and large enough for us to summon a dragon within it. But this time, we were summoning human-sized monsters. So we decided to just do the summoning in a corner.

"Alright, this time, I'm gonna summon some employees for our inn."

"Okaaaay. Basically, you're going to want monsters that look like humans, right?" Chloe, the butler that Haku traveled with, was in fact a monster known

as a Succubus. What I wanted was a girl monster that looked like a normal person, had human intelligence, and preferably could cook. Also, good feet. *And just putting it out there, I'm not summoning any male monsters exclusively out of deference to the sponsor of our dungeon (Haku). I'm not trying to make a harem here. I swear.*

"But human-type monsters are really expensive. Do we have enough DP?"

"They are? Dang. If I wanted to do this cheaply, slaves would probably be the way to go." So why was I intentionally buying expensive human-type monsters? Because monsters with human intelligence might have the power to use DP. Rather, they were probably so expensive precisely because they could use DP.

"Oh, I get it. Monsters that can use DP would be able to take care of the entire inn for us, even if we aren't here."

"Yep, that's the idea. Anyway... I looked at the catalog, and yeah, I'm thinking we should go with some Succubi. They're good fighters, which is nice, and they're just generally competent around the board."

"Not to mention that Chloe proves Succubi can be good helpers. That's really comforting to know. But what about, ummm... Redra, was it? The Red Dragon. I think we could get a dragon too, since they can turn into humans like that."

"That'd be ideal in a lot of ways, but we don't have enough DP to buy a dragon that can turn into a human. Really, we couldn't afford any worthwhile dragon right now. And Redra still had a big tail after transforming. I'd like two or three helpers here, so..."

"Then Succubi won't be an option either. They're super expensive." By the way, they were expensive enough that we'd use up basically all our DP buying them. Though that wouldn't be a huge problem since we now had a stable DP income.

"Oh, I have an idea. Why don't we make Phenny learn how to turn into a human? He's still an egg, but Ittetsu promised to hatch him with Redra's fire breath, right?"

"...Oh crap, I totally forgot about that." About the egg—Redra went into a rampage just from seeing it, so I was keeping the egg with us until her trauma

faded.

“Now should be a pretty good time for that. I’ll ask about it the next time I see them.”

“Hey, Keima? Once Phenny hatches, won’t he just rush you down and try to tear you apart?”

“...I mean, he’s an egg. I don’t think he’ll remember anything I did. Right?” Shivering a little, I shifted the conversation back on topic.

“Well, even if phoenixes can turn into humans, he’ll be a baby. That won’t be very useful.”

“That’s true. I wouldn’t know how to teach him that kind of thing anyway... Ah. These monster helpers won’t need to be good fighters, right?”

“Right. Managing the inn will be their main job, not fighting.”

“What about this, then?” Rokuko pointed at a [Vampire]... *Wait, these things are crazy strong. They cost tons of DP.*

“I noticed this while skimming the Catalog a while ago, but for some reason Vampires have a lot of variants. They’ve got like, pages of variants all on their own. And lower-ranked Vampires are super cheap.”

“A Lesser Vampire would probably be feral or something, so... oh wow, even a normal Vampire is pretty cheap. Only 30,000 DP. I could make that work.” It’d hurt my metaphorical wallet, but thinking about it in terms of how much we earned on a consistent basis, it wouldn’t be too bad. We’d recently stabilized to earning about 500 DP a day, so even if we used all our saved up DP at once, we would still be totally fine.

By the way, higher level Vampires cost a little over 10,000,000 DP. They were called True Ancestors.

“...But don’t Vampires turn to ash when they get hit by sunlight?”

“There’s a lot variants, but there’s even more customization options. See? It says ‘Immune to Sunlight’ right there.”

“Woah, woah, but that’s pretty expensive too. Now it’s 200,000 DP.”

“That’s what these options are for. Like, the option for how much attack power they have. They all change how much DP the changes cost, I think.” The attack power option had a maximum of 100% and a minimum of 0%.

“Okay, now watch when I set its attack to 0% as a test.” Rokuko fiddled with the menu to minimize her attack power, which in turn made the Immune to Sunlight option cost only 1DP. *Woah, what? This is amazing.* Not only that, but all the other weakpoint-canceling options were super cheap as well. Though classic, awesome vampire powers like turning into bats and the ability to use their blood as a weapon remained expensive.

“This is pretty interesting. Let’s test out some more options.”

“Right?”

And so, the result of us customizing the Vampire like crazy:

“...She doesn’t have any special powers, and she can’t fly or grow wings. She does have fangs in spirit, and no weak points, but thanks to that she has zero attack power. Is... Is this even a Vampire anymore?” She didn’t even need need to drink blood anymore. Really, she stopped being a vampire the second we made it such that she only needed to eat meat every once in a while to be fine. This Vampire was basically just a normal human... *Wait, actually, even normal humans can do some decent damage. This girl isn’t even a human.*

But thanks to all that, her cost had gone down from 30,000 DP to 15,000 DP. She cost about as much as a Lesser Vampire. Only weaker. *Well... She wouldn’t be useful at all without human intelligence, so... Whether or not she’s even still a vampire may be up for debate, but I’ll keep her in mind. Might find a better monster, though.*

“What about this Silky thing? Apparently it’s some kind of fairy spirit that does house chores and stuff.” Silkies. House spirits with beautiful appearances that helped the owners of their homes with chores. Good looks were a huge plus for inn employees. They had a reasonable price of 10,000 DP, too, since they weren’t very strong. *This is a definite contender.*

“Oh man, what about this one? A Zashiki-warashi. One costs 50,000 DP, but they look pretty good.” They were a spirit that brought good luck just by existing. *One might even be a good poster girl for our inn, or something. Really*

draw those visitors in.

"That's a luck spirit. But they're invisible to everyone but kids and people with pure hearts, so..." *Oh, man, that's a problem. Our customers have got to be able to see our employees. Rejected. Too bad.*

"There are Witches, too. How about them?"

"Witches, huh? Should be fine. They are human-type, after all... wait. Aren't Witches just, like, straight up humans? What makes these Witches monsters?"

"Eh? Ummm, their magic stones, I guess?"

"Oh yeah. In this world, magic stones are what define a monster. I totally forgot." Witches had a few variants as well. Apprentice Witch, Adult Witch, and Sorceress. Apprentices only cost 15,000 DP. Apparently, they each came with spells memorized from the start. Though Apprentices only got two Low-Tier spells.

"Really though, it might be a bit late for me to be asking about this, but I wonder how summoning these monsters with DP works. Do they get pulled out of some other dimension or whatever like I was? Or does the dungeon actually make the monster somehow?"

"I think it usually just makes the monsters with DP. You're kind of a special exception Keima. And I mean... usually monsters obey when you give them an order, so."

"Woah, what? Then why did I get summoned?"

"Maybe the gacha is just special? Really, I think you're the weird one here, not the dungeon." *Don't call me weird.*

Anyway, I decided on the monsters I wanted to summon. A [Vampire (Customized)], a [Silky], and a [Witch (Apprentice)]. I decided to get one of each kind in order to see which I should summon more of in the future. *I'll just, uh... I'll just pray that at least one of them is intelligent enough to interact with customers...*

"Vampire, Silky, Witch! Summon!" A magic circle swooshed out from the middle of the room and expanded to fill it before shrinking back down to a

circle in front of us about one meter wide. Then, three girls appeared above it.

First was a brown-haired girl with a distinctive robe and staff. *Yeah, this has gotta be the Witch (Apprentice). She looks like a normal girl. I'm gonna be ticked if she looks this normal but still can't talk or something.*

Next was a girl in a green maid outfit with light green hair. *This is probably the Silky. She's got a maid outfit, so yeah. Silky. I doubt a vampire would come in a maid outfit. And really, I'm just glad she's not half-transparent or whatever.*

Last came a silver-haired girl wearing a black bondage suit. *By process of elimination, this must be the Vampire. Though I don't see any bat wings or fangs right now.*

The three of them briefly floated above the magic circle, but soon gently sunk to the ground. The Vampire opened her eyes, silver hair so long it reached all the way down her back swaying behind her. Her sharp eyes, crimson like rubies, shifted to focus on Rokuko and me.

"Greetings, my Master..."

"She talked! She can talk!"

"Yay, Keima! She has human intelligence!"

"Eh? Um?" *Oooh, the vampire's getting confused! That means she's thinking about what's happening! She can think!*

"What about you two? Can you both talk as well?"

"Huh, aaah... Yeeeep. Nice to meet youuu, Master."

"Today begins our servitude under your rule. Please take good care of us, Master." *Seems like the Witch and Silky can talk, too. They can all talk...! They all have human intelligence! Plus, they all look like normal girls. This is a complete and total success. Hell yeah!*

* * *

The Vampire was absolutely devastated. She was sobbing and wailing incredibly loudly. Like, she was crying her absolute heart out. Reason being, she had realized how weak she really was and just couldn't handle it. *I'm not gonna pull any punches here. She's weak enough that a single goblin could beat her in*

a fight.

"N-No way...! Ngh, I-I'm weaker than a human...! Weaker than a goblin! Me, a Vampire...! This is humiliating!" She sat on the ground and started beating her fists against the ground. But her given her attack power of zero, she was really just kinda weakly slapping it. Meanwhile, the Silky tried gently comforting her. *She's got a real motherly spirit. I kinda feel like I should start addressing her as "ma'am" now.*

"...And my master is just a human... He definitely made me weak so he could force me into prostitution or something... I'll never get to fight as a real monster..." *Uh, nah, I'm not gonna do that. Though she's right in that I didn't summon her to fight as a monster.*

Anyway, nothing good would come from leaving her there to be miserable. Having no other choice, I activated my Absolute Authority. Dungeon Masters were much higher on the authority totem pole than summoned monsters.

"Alright, it's time for you three to listen to what I have to say. That's an order."

"Understood." The three of them answered respectfully in unison. *I feel like if I just said "Work at my inn pls, kthnx" they'd get depressed or something... Mmm, alright. I'll just bring it up later.*

"...Uhhh, first of all, I want to check a few things. State your race and names."

"...I am a Vampire. I have no name."

"I am a Silky. I don't have a name."

"I'm uuuh, an Apprentice Witch. Nooooo name here."

Neat. Guess this is what happens when you don't name your monsters. Unlike slaves that just abandoned their names, these monsters never even had one.

"Looks like I've gotta name you three, then." The three monster girls all locked their eyes on me after hearing that. The Vampire in particular was looking at me with a shocked expression.

"Y-You're going to grace us with the honor of becoming Named?!" *Named. I guess that's a thing. There must be something special about having a name.*

Time to ask Rokuko.

"Hm? Ummm, yeah, monsters feel special when they're given a name. It's a sign that the Dungeon Master really trusts them, and they usually work a lot harder to repay that trust. Remember Gobsuke? He worked hard for us, didn't he?" *Gobsuke was a Named Monster, huh? That's a surprise. But, well... He sure did save our butts.*

"Alright. I'm gonna start off by giving each of you names, but I'll need some time to get everything ready. Wait here until I'm done. Rokuko, take care of 'em for me."

"Eh? So, um, what do you want me to do?"

"...It'll take me about half a day to get things ready. Keep them fed until then." I left taking care of the monsters to Rokuko and shifted my focus to setting up an extravagant naming ceremony.

Heheh. I'll give them names in a moment so moving they'll remember it for the rest of their lives, and while they're all emotional, I'll tell them what their real job is! They'll be so happy about getting names that they'll jump at the chance to work in our inn!

Anyway, first thing's first. I really need to spice up the Boss Room a bit. It's just a blank stone cube right now, pretty much.

I decided to start with the throne. I wouldn't be sitting on it very much, so looking imposing came before comfort. Thus, I built a heavy and imposing throne made of stone. I put it on top of a two-step staircase such that one could look down upon invaders while sitting. That was a major point. A Demon King could sit in a throne like this and nobody would blink an eye. It helped that it was a simple throne made of stone as well. I myself wouldn't look bad sitting in it, like I would with a super cartoony and exaggerated throne.

Next was the stone "carpet" leading from the entrance to the throne. Since the room was made out of stone in the first place, I really just had to rearrange the stones to make it look like there was a special path from the door to the throne. *Eh... Yeah, even being generous it's pretty obviously just some stones turned to face the same direction, but that kind of makes this feel like a holy temple? Kind of? Everything's just gray, though.*

I then adjusted the walls and placed pillars throughout the room. They were just for show and not actually necessary, though. I tried making them look like the pillars of the Roman Pantheon... I think, uh... I think I succeeded? Maybe? Kinda?

Finally, I made weapon-wielding golem statues using stone from the walls. I went ahead and turned their weapons into real, usable Golem Blades.

Whew. I got so inspired that I actually worked kinda hard. I gotta get a grip.

"Keima, how's it go—woooah! This place looks super cool now!"

"Honestly, you thinking that makes me lose all confidence in it."

"Eh?! But why?! That should give you confidence, not make you lose it."

"I mean, you're a weirdo who loves goblins, right? For all I know, your standards for what's cool or not revolve around goblins..."

"Now that's just being mean. I think dragons and stuff are cool too, just like everyone else." *Oooh, dragons, huh? Dragons are definitely cool. Now that I've seen a real Red Dragon at work, maybe I should get around to building a Dragon Golem. Though I'd really want to give it the power to breathe fire.*

...Aaah, but it'd definitely be way weaker than the real thing. Especially since the strongest material I have right now is like, iron. That really hurts my enthusiasm. But! I'll keep it in mind. Maybe I should build some practice Dragon Golems so I can make a real good one in the future when I can afford better materials. Plus, I did finish the Iron Haniwa Golem boss recently, so... guess I can make the next boss be an Iron Dragon Golem.

"Oh, right. I should call them over now. Everyooone! Get in positiooon!"

"I'll go get Niku and Ichika while you finish getting the golems ready."

And so, after lining the golems up, I started the naming ceremony for the newcomers.

* * *

I told them their duty at the naming ceremony. Rei, the Vampire, let out a stunned cry. I ignored it.

“M-Master. What do you mean, employees of your inn?” Rei asked for clarification with a shaky voice. *Well, I mean. Anyone with a little brainpower could figure out a monster with zero attack power wouldn’t be summoned to do any fighting. But maybe she’s misunderstanding something. I should explain in a little more detail for them.*

“My dungeon runs an inn for humans, and I needed employees to deal with customers. Basically, you three are all possible candidates for some newly opened positions of power in my dungeon. Keep that in mind.”

“Are you telling us to grovel before the humans and serve them?”

“Don’t take it in a weird way. Now... Let’s be clear. Are you going to refuse my orders? If you can’t bear to work with the humans, say so.” *I’ll need to give her another job if she would really hate working in the inn.*

Rei fell silent to ponder my question. Kinue the Silky remained still with the same peaceful smile as her expression, while Neruneh the Apprentice Witch was staring off into space as if she didn’t understand what anyone was saying. *Uh... I’m getting kind of worried now.*

“No, I won’t refuse. I will accept with honor any order you give me...!” Rei looked at me with determination in her eyes. *Hell yeah, just as planned. I knew holding a naming ceremony would be worth it.*

I told Ichika to step in front of them.

“...This is Ichika. She’s my slave and has been working in the inn for a while. Listen to what she says as if her words are my own.”

“Sup, I’m Ichika. Let’s work the hell out of that inn, my dudes.”

“O-Okay...? Wha? You’re a human, aren’t you? And a slave...?”

“Understood. We will be in your case, Lady Ichika.”

“Ummm, yeah, sounds gooood. Let’s be friends, Lady Ichiiikaaa.”

Rei seems like kind of a hardass. Kinue’s probably gonna be the best worker out of them. Neruneh, uh... I dunno. I just don’t know.

...Huh. I created all three of them through DP, but they’re all pretty different. Is that a species thing or what?

“And thus ends the naming ceremony!” I spun around, cape fluttering behind me, and disappeared into the Core Room. Rokuko could take care of the rest. I, being sleepy, was gonna go to bed. But before that.

“Ichika. Teach them how to manage the front desk first.”

“You got it, boss man. C’mon, girls! It’s time for you all to learn about money!” Ichika walked off with the three monster girls. Ichika should be able to handle training them on her own, more or less. She knew her multiplication tables and all that good stuff. Once she finished teaching them how to manage the front desk, I could have Ichika work in the kitchen instead. Which meant teaching her {Storage} too, maybe. *Right. I’ll think about rewarding her hard work training them by teaching her the spell {Storage}.*

“Hey, Keima. Do you have any uniforms for them?” Rokuko brought that up after we went to the Core Room. *Oh crap... I forgot about their uniforms.* I used DP to buy a few of the [Maid Outfits] that our Dancing Doll Inn was using as its uniform and handed them to Rokuko. I went ahead and got one for Mrs. Kinue too, just in case. She has her own green maid outfit, but... wait, did I just say Mrs. Kinue? Crap.

“Also, are they going to sleep in the inn too? Or in the dungeon?”

“...I, uh, I didn’t think about that either. Good thinking, Rokuko. That’s why you’re my partner. Here. Pat pat.”

“H-Hold up! I’m not Niku, head pats won’t make me happy. Do you think I’m a kid or something?” *Judging by the way you’re smiling right now, yes. You’re pretty much a kid.*

Anyway, guess I need to make an employee dorm or something. Best thing to do here is just expand on the existing inn. I’ll get to work after a nap. Ngh... I just keep losing more and more sleep time...!

Day 134

I took Rokuko and the three new hires outside of the inn.

“This is where you three are gonna be rooming.” The spot was only about a minute’s walk away from the front entrance, in the direction of the dungeon. By

the way, I had them sleep in the inn last night as a means of getting accustomed to where they would be working.

“You’re going to make them sleep outside? They’re monsters, so that won’t kill them or anything, but...”

“Nah, I definitely wouldn’t make my employees sleep outside. I’m gonna be building a little dorm here.”

“Hmmm... So, what’s up with the mask?” I had put on my Narikin mask to hide my true identity while building the dorm. There was the Guild branch office right across from the inn, and I wanted to be safe even if someone in there saw what I was doing. *Okay? I have a good reason for using this mask. Don’t look at me with those sad eyes, Rokuko.*

“You’re using your precious DP on us? Thank you very much.”

“Huh? No way, that’d be a waste. I’m definitely in major saving mode right now since I spent a ton of DP on you three.”

“Eh?!” Rokuko and I started building in front of the monster girls.

First up was making a hallway to to the inn. I manipulated wood with {Create Golem} to open a hole in the inn’s wall and set it up for the hallway. Fast and easy.

Next was the building itself. I had thought about preparing the walls and ceiling beforehand so I only had to connect them, but then I realized if I just built the entire building and hallway within the dungeon in the first place, all I had to do after that was connect it to the inn. In other words, I was using a modular building system. Just like space stations did.

With Rokuko’s power, we could take the fully constructed building and hallway out of the Master Room and place them wherever we wanted. *That’s our Dungeon Core for you.* All we had to do after that was put the pieces together.

What’s the inside of the building look like? A bunch of two-tatami mat sized rooms with a bed and dresser in each. Of course, everything inside was made with {Create Golem}. So convenient.

I had Rokuko take out the modules before connecting them with {Create Golem} and some nearby wood. I put a lot of effort into making this expansion seem like it had always been a part of the inn, and... done. Though that effort was mostly wasted since my mask disguise would hide my identity even if someone saw us.

Construction took about three minutes total. That was probably as fast as possible, given our current restraints.

"...Alright, all done." *This module-based building should let me add to the inn without closing it down or anything. Nice.*

"Your magic is always so useful, Keima. So... About that mask..."

"Really, it's just {Create Golem} that's so useful. I've got nothing to do with it. And you too, Rokuko." *Though, technically speaking, I can only modify spells to do what I want thanks to the auto translating skill that god gave me when reincarnating. With that in mind, {Create Golem} is indeed only so useful because I'm the one using it. Normally it can only make Clay Golems, basically.*

"So, about that mask..."

"I'm Narikin right now. Whenever I put on this mask, I'm disguising myself as Narikin. Try not to break my cover."

"...Ah, right, okay. I'll keep that in mind." *Ah, stop. Don't look at me like I'm a dumb kid.*

Anyway, I hadn't heard anything from the three monster girls since I started. I turned around and saw the Witch Apprentice Neruneh glancing between me and the building with shining eyes. The other two were staring slack-jawed at the building. I meant that literally, too. Their jaws were loose and their mouths were hanging open. I'd probably look like that too if I saw someone construct a building in three minutes from seemingly nothing.

I looked at them and awaited a response. As expected, Neruneh was the first one to snap out of her shock.

"You're amazing, Master! I'll do anything, so please, become my teacher!" *Oh? Anything, hm...? Now, now. Neruneh. Girls shouldn't make promises like that so easily.*

“I’ll even give you my body if you want, so please! Aaaah... Wait, I already belong to you, Masteeer...”

“...Uh, how about you start off learning to work the front desk and we take things from there?”

“Thank you very much, Master!”

...Welp, guess I’m her teacher now. I kinda got caught off guard by how serious she was, but it might be smart to rotate between using her and Niku as my daki. It must be hard on Niku doing that every single night with no breaks. Splitting the load should help her out.

Wait, no. I can’t be a magic teacher, I barely know any magic. The only spells I know are one of each beginner and two Mid-Tier spells, and I’m leaving the actual chanting to the auto-translator. I’m pretty confident I won’t be able to teach her a single thing. Telling her to spend every other night as my daki while teaching her jack diddly squat would basically be equivalent to handing someone a bundle of counterfeit bills where only the outer one is real. That’s not how I roll.

I’m not disappointed to lose her as a daki. I’m not feeling like total garbage right now. I didn’t summon her to do that kind of thing. I’m fine like this. I’m fine. Though this will mean Niku’s still all on her own... I’ve gotta be careful and make sure she doesn’t collapse again.

My thoughts were interrupted by the other two monster girls snapping out of their shock.

“I see that you are no mere human, Master... I suppose that you are a monster summoned by an extremely powerful wizard?”

“This certainly seems like a building worth cleaning. More rooms... More...”

Heh, watch it, Rei. I’m just a normal human. Well, I’m a Dungeon Master, but yeah.

Just like you’d expect from a Silky, Kinue basically lived for doing chores. She said the building was “worth cleaning” likely because Silkies tended to clean everything by hand without relying on Survival Magic simply because they loved cleaning so much. The maid outfit they were born with wasn’t just for show.

Anyway, I successful killed two birds with one stone by showing the newbies my power as Dungeon Master while simultaneously expanding the inn. I could leave everything else to Ichika and finally get to sleep. *Only wake me up if something really weird is happening, please.*

So, working as a receptionist wasn't actually that hard. The hardest part about it was doing the mental math when calculating prices and such. But none of the math was hard enough that you couldn't scrape by with basic counting skills. Or to say it in Earth terms, even an elementary schooler could handle it no problem.

...There was a time when I thought that, anyway. A distant, distant time...

There were people in this world that couldn't read, and there were people that couldn't do elementary school-tier math. Really, more people *couldn't* do math than could.

"Two times two is four... Two times two is four..."

"What is two times two?"

"".....Eight?"

"That's probaaaably it! Now Master will start teaching me magic, yaaay!"

"I'm afraid the answer is six, you two."

All three of the monster girls were idiots. *You were JUST saying it equals four. This Vampire's just treating multiplication tables like a spell incantation, she's not understanding them at all.*

"Well, that's that, Master. Whaddya think we should do?" Ichika had turned to me for help after witnessing their complete failure.

"...Uh. I guess multiplication tables might be too much for them." *Makes sense, the numbers they're saying are technically in Japanese. Must be harder to learn that way. Really, it's impressive that Niku and Ichika memorized them. They must have really pushed themselves.*

"Oh yeah, dude, I already knew a little multiplication, but what really helped is how my collar squeezed harder the longer I took to memorize them. That was hella motivating."

“Woah, what?! Dang, my bad... You can have as many curry rolls as you want today. Seconds, thirds, fourths, whatever.”

“Oooh! You sure know how to treat a girl right!” *I’ve gotta remember to let Niku eat as many hamburgers as she wants.*

Anyway, now my job is to make being a receptionist so easy even these three could handle it. Luckily, they can read, so using the menu to check prices and so on is fully within their abilities. The math is the real problem here.

“...Right. I’ll make a calculator.” I just had to make something like an electric calculator, or a cash register. It’d be nice if I could just buy one with DP, but there was no electricity in this world, and machine-like things weren’t shown in the Catalog in the first place. *Guess I have to make one on my own!*

And so, I made one. It took five hours and ten minutes to build. Just gotta have the three monster girls try it out.

“This is an [Abacus].”

“How does one use it?”

Rather than making it look like the abacuses used in modern Japan, I designed it such that it would be easy for denizens of another world to understand how it works, which meant putting nine balls each on a total of eight rows. It would let them calculate any transaction, as long as it didn’t surpass ten thousand gold coins. Plus, I exploited its nature as a golem to its maximum extent, basically making it a magic tool.

“What’s the price of five people staying the night and ordering four D-Rank lunches and one C-Rank lunch?”

“Th-The balls are moving on their own...?! Six, five, zero... Six hundred and fifty coppers!”

“This is quite impressive... You can read this as six silvers and fifty coppers as well.”

“You’re amaaazing, Master!”

Basically, the abacus would automatically do the calculations after hearing voice commands. Building the abacus took ten minutes. Teaching it the prices of

rooms and meals took five hours.

Ichika nudged my shoulder while the three monster girls became absorbed with the abacus.

“Heeey, Master. Can you make these ball-thingies show the numbers directly?”

“Huh? What are you thinking?”

“Basically, I’m thinkin’...” To summarize Ichika’s idea, she wanted numbers written along a spinning cylinder like a slot machine. *All I can say is, of all people to be familiar with slot machines and so on, I’m not surprised it was the girl who gambled so much she ended up a slave.* However...

“...Slots? What’re those, dude?”

“Huh? You don’t know what slots are?” Apparently, there were no slots in this world. Whiiich meant... she just thought up plans for a slot machine on the spot. *Is she a genius? She must be a genius.*

“So, slots are like... you press a button and bet on all the images matching up. If they don’t match up, you get nothing, and if they do match up, you win.”

“Woah! I totally wanna try that...” Ichika smiled a warm smile. If I didn’t know she was thinking about slots, she would probably look like a young girl smiling gently while thinking of her lover. She must really love gambling.

Hm... Should I try building some? They might help attract more visitors, surprisingly enough. I could put them in the recreation building... but first came sleeping. I worked five hours straight getting that golem thing to calculate numbers on its own, after all.

“Anyway, you three. Get used to using the [Abacus] and work the main desk with it. I’ll make a version with numbers if I ever feel like it.”

“Understood!” All three of them replied in enthusiastic unison. *Looks like our employee shortage has been taken care of.*

Day 137

We had gotten more employees. And not just any employees, but hard

workers that would never betray our dungeon. I would definitely be “hiring” more like them eventually. Which, in turn, meant that we could manage an even larger dungeon. For now, I was just expanding the dungeon around the mountain and towards Tsia City. Basically as much as possible without running into the [Flame Caverns] below.

I was expanding the actual dungeon as well, but if I didn’t separate each floor distinctly, it’d be a lot harder to deal with invaders. The [Great Tsia Mountain Tunnel] initially only had one floor, so the second someone stepped into it I couldn’t modify it at all. I had to hurriedly place a bunch of blocks to separate parts of the dungeon. Apparently verticality wasn’t an issue with defining floors, they just had to be separate. *At this point, I don’t even really know what a floor is.*

But either way, it cost 5,000 DP to set something as a floor. I was making more money than before, but that was a pretty hefty cost. I wonder how many days’ worth of DP that was. Most of the adventurers that came to our dungeon were E, D, or C-Rank. They naturally gave us 30 to 80 DP a day each. A single party had 2-5 people in it, and 2-3 parties would generally be exploring the dungeon at any given time. Their DP intake doubled when they locked their door, and including how much they paid for their rooms... *Yeah, this is too complicated. Should I start making a ledger for all this? Eh... sounds annoying. I’ll just hope that the menu gains some sweet new functions someday.*

Though in the end, calculating income at all was basically a waste of time since Haku would drop tons of money and give Rokuko a huge DP tip whenever she visited. She was really loose with her money. She had also taken a strong liking to Cream Sodas, and would order one after she arrived, one with every meal, one after exiting the bath, and one before bed. She paid an entire gold coin for each one, and if I had Rokuko bring her the drink, she gave a 5,000 DP tip as well. *Basically... She coddles her little sister way too much.*

Anyway, I decided to expand the floor count and get the Boss Room deeper underground. The puzzle area remained undefeated, but if someone did get through, the only defenses I had waiting was a bunch of golems. That wasn’t safe. Like, there could be adventurers specialized in taking down golems. There could be some guy who was literally invincible when it came to fighting golems.

He'd win every time he fought a golem. If a guy like that beat the puzzle area, our little [Cave of Greed] would be completely defenseless.

I was in the middle of worrying about all that when suddenly Rokuko came up and...

"Hey, Keima. I want to play with the dungeon too. Actually, it's my dungeon. You should let me mess around with it too." She came up and said all that, so I let her do whatever she wanted with the next area. *I mean... The puzzle area still hasn't been beaten, so I'm sure this will be fine. I'm sure.*

So, I decided to do something else with my time instead. That being expanding the inn.

I tried thinking about what our Dancing Doll Inn was lacking. I was pretty confident that our beds and food were top-class even on a global scale. People came to our inn for the dungeon, and the onsen was always there to help them recover from a hard day of spelunking. Everything worked together perfectly.

...But we were still missing something. Entertainment. And not in a sexy way, either. We may need brothels or something in the future, but I wanted to avoid that kind of thing for now. We had way too many lolis running around. Think of the children! Plus, Rokuko was Rokuko. Haku would probably kill me if I exposed Rokuko to the horrors of the sex industry or something.

I had prepared a recreation building, but visitors basically had to bring their own things to do. I think it'd be better if I actually put something in there for them to do.

And so, I settled on making some slot machines. They could just sit on their own without anyone managing them, and they'd earn us some cash. Slot machines were a perfect way to entertain people while taking their money.

Visually, they would look like giant boxes with spinning... drum-like things in the top middle. I made all the parts with {Create Golem} and then added a lever to give it spinning power.

I kinda just winged it for the insides and really just half-assed a way to make the lever spin the drums when pulled down. My main focus was making it spin only once you pulled down the lever pretty far, rather than by pulling it at all.

That gave each spin a lot more oomph.

It was the Drum Golem's job to figure out whether or not the images on the drums matched after they stopped. It was also the golem's job to pay money if they did match. As a bonus, I made it such that the drums would stop on their own after slowing down enough. I even included a button that allowed the customer to stop them early. But naturally, I set the drums to intentionally avoid lining up for a big win most of the time. Only rarely would they actually allow the customer to win the biggest prize. It would happen every now and again, but this way, our inn would always earn more money.

...What, you think that's cheap? You think I'm ripping them off? C'mon, I'm not running a charity here. This is how all casinos work. And anyway, let me give a big shoutout to {Create Golem} for making it easy to build such a complex machine. So convenient. Even if someone took one of the machines apart to figure out how they work, the insides are so half-assed that they'd have to conclude they're just magic tools. Very nice.

Anyway, after finishing a test model of one, I called Ichika over. This would be a good opportunity for the newbies to get used to manning the front desk, especially since not many visitors usually came around this hour.

"So. This is a slot machine. Give it a test play for me. Here's five hundred coppers to start with."

"Oooh! So this is a slot machine, huh! Leave everything to me, I'm gonna double your money!" *I mean, we're the ones paying out here, so it's all just our money.*

"I get it, I get it... Just gotta put the coppers in this hole and pull the lever. Here we go..." Ichika put three clanking coins into the machine and pulled the lever with a thunk. The drums started to spin quickly.

"Oooh, they're spinning! Wooow, and if I press this button, they stop. Boop!" Thunk, thunk, thunk. The drums stopped after she pressed the button.

"Ooooh. So... Did I win?"

"Nah, the images don't match up. Try again."

"Mmm, 'kay." Ichika put more coppers in and got to spinning. *Huh. This feels*

kinda bland somehow. Maybe I should try and make everything more flashy? Like get music playing or something?

"UWOOOOOH! MATCH, MATCH, MATCH DAMNIIIIT! GAAAH! SO CLOSE!"

One hour later.

She had gotten a few early successes that put her above the initial 500 coppers, but by this point she had lost enough that she only had 50 left. She was playing the slots so hard I was kind of worried that she would break the machine. *Guess I don't need to worry about making it more flashy. I'll spruce things up if people ever get bored of this model. Aaand... I'll make the next ones out of metal. Ichika's squeezing the box so hard I can hear the wood creaking.*


ER...
ざわ..
ER...
ざわ..
RATTLE
RATTLE

“Ichika. That’s enough playtesting for now.”

“N-No way! I-I still have money left, dude! I-I’m just about to turn things around! L-Like, I was a single image off getting the grand thousand copper prize! Doesn’t that make you wanna roll again?! I’ll win next time for sure! For sure!” *Aaah, yeah, she’s an addict. She’s the exact kind of person who would take out a loan due to gambling too much, and then try to pay back that loan by gambling. And she didn’t get better even after literally getting enslaved because of it. The addiction runs deep.*

“Sorry, but you won’t be winning big. I made the machine such that it actively avoids that. It’ll barely ever let the grand prize images match.”

“You... what...?” Ichika hung her head, crestfallen, face drenched with despair. *Yeah, I honestly never thought I’d see someone so devastated from losing four hundred and fifty-six coppers.*

“...I probably shouldn’t make the machine be so obviously unfair. I can earn money elsewhere, so it won’t be too big of a deal if people win the slots some more. Thanks, you really helped me out here.”

“Ngh... I was just dancing on your palm the whole time, huh, Master...? Gaaah...!”

“Don’t worry, I’m not gonna make you pay back the money you lost or anything. Though I will be taking back what you have left.”

“Aaaah...! Ngh, f-fine, whatever...!”

Seriously though, she really got into it. I doubt most people will be as much of a gambling addict as she is, but anyway, it should be safe to make about three of these and put them in their own room. Slots, dice, and cards should be entertainment enough for now.

Rei’s Perspective

“...Nothing’s happening today, either.”

I, the Vampire Rei... am a monster. A monster’s duty is to be summoned by a dungeon and fight off invaders for it. And yet, my current duty is to serve the invaders.

I recently was given the name Rei, and thus became a Named Monster. To monsters, being Named is something very special. Some monsters are turned into bosses on the basis of their name alone. And yet, my duty is to work as a receptionist in an inn. A junior receptionist, even. I really would like to repay the dungeon for blessing me with a name during such a grand ceremony, but I honestly feel very let down by all this. What I really want to do is mow down these invaders. Crush their skulls and offer their corpses to the dungeon, earning it DP.

However. Lord Keima, the Dungeon Master, is a human. In other words, he very likely chose to survive by sucking up to his fellow humans, rather than fighting them as most dungeons do... No. Surely he is just sharpening his fangs until he's strong enough to resist them in full. He usually acts all sleepy and such, but his destructive aura was truly overwhelming during the naming ceremony. Just thinking about his exquisite yet tasteful silver armor and clear, glittering sword is enough to make me want to swear loyalty to him all over again.

And yet, he ordered me to work as an inn receptionist.

"Haaah..." I open the window in the room given to me and look up to the sky. The weather is poor, with the sun shining brightly.

I think about myself as the sun's rays pour down on me. I'm a vampire, but sunlight doesn't affect me at all. Normally, vampires have many weaknesses. But a True Ancestor is invincible. They display overwhelming physical and magical strength, boldly walking the lands whether it be the darkest night or the brightest day. That is a True Ancestor—the origin of all vampires and an unbeatable monster.

Sometimes, normal vampires will be largely immune to one weakness common to their race. Those are known as True Descendants among vampires. And I happen to be one of them. In fact, I am immune to all weaknesses, much like an actual True Ancestor. That would practically make me a True Ancestor myself... if the blessings were not cursed by the lack of any attack power whatsoever.

Rather, I cannot use any of the powers normally afforded to vampires. I am

the same as a human. No, I'm even weaker than a human. My attack power is lower than even a goblin's, after all.

I sigh to myself again.

At first, I wondered what use our master would have for a monster with no attack power. When he brought up the inn, I assumed he would have me work as a faux Succubus. But in reality, my job is to sit behind the inn's front desk and occasionally inform customers of the price for a room, take their money, and give them back change. That's it. This abacus thing even does all the math for me when it comes to the price and the change. All I have to do is make sure I hand over the right number of coins.

It's a job so easy I have to question whether I'm even important. But in return for doing that job anyone in the world could do, I'm given delicious food and this nice room. The food is apparently the same thing that Master and Lady Rokuko eat. I don't feel that my work deserves such rewards. It might even be accurate to say that I and the other summoned monsters are being given more favorable treatment than our progenitors, as we were given our own rooms in a special building whereas Ichika and Niku sleep within the inn.

...I do not understand what my master is thinking. Are we mere pets to him? No. Even pets have the duty of comforting their owner. That makes me lower than a pet. This is... not good. As a proud vampire, I cannot let this situation stand. My pride demands that I be useful to my master. Yet here I am, doing nothing despite being blessed with a name.

I hear a knock on my door. Who could it be? Who else could it be but the Silky, Kinue?

Neruneh the Apprentice Witch is learning magic from Niku, in order to grow strong enough to learn from Master himself. That's what she must be doing now. If Master or Lady Rokuko had business with me, they would just contact me through the dungeon's communication function. Ichika doesn't know the meaning of the word "knock" and would already be shouting out my name. And finally, this "Employee Dorm" forbids access to non-employees, which leaves only Kinue.

"Rei, I would like to clean your room, if you don't mind."

“...Kinue. You know that {Purification} can clean my room in an instant. Why are you going out of your way to bring cleaning utensils?”

“If all cleaning could be done with {Purification}, cleaning utensils wouldn’t even exist.”

“Well, that is true...” For some reason, Kinue wants to clean without using {Purification}. I’m vaguely aware that Silkies are a race of monsters that like to clean, thanks to the knowledge ingrained in my head when Master created me, but she just cleaned my room not too long ago. Though I don’t mind having a clean room, so I don’t mind too much.

“I will now begin cleaning. Please vacate the premises until I am finished.” And so, I was driven out of my own room.

...I have nothing to do. Mmm.

Now that I think about it, Kinue is both cleaning in the inn and studying how to cook. Neruneh is studying magic... I imagine she will be a big help to the inn somehow once she learns more magic. I’m the only one here who’s just... useless. This isn’t good. At this rate, the only path left to me will soon be servicing him at night...

“Heheheh. You’re a vampire. That makes you a real ‘creature of the night,’ yeah?”

“Aaah, no! Please give my clothes back!”

“Hmph. This is the only way I can get any use out of a waste of food and space like you.”

...Ngh, just thinking about that is making me blush. I couldn’t refuse him either way because he’s my master, but I really do want to help the inn however I can. Nothing will come from standing still in front of my room, so I may as well take a walk around the inn. I dislike being out in sunny weather, but it’s perfect for my gloomy mood right now.

I come across a farm after walking for a little while. It’s one of the farms Master has golems harvesting. He grows several kinds of crops here, but they’re currently harvesting sugar beets to make sugar with. Hm... Maybe I could help with the harvesting? Let’s see.

“.....”

...There’s nowhere for me to help. It’s all simple work golems can easily do. And since I don’t have the authority to order the golems around, I’d just get in their way if I tried to help. Not to mention that helping in the first place would be pointless since golems don’t get tired.

Grrr. I can’t even help here.

I continue walking.

Eventually, I reach the [Great Tsia Mountain Tunnel]. Mmmm... Coming here was pretty pointless. It costs money to enter the tunnel, and there’s no reason for me to enter it in the first place.

...Ah, a trader just came out. He’s carrying a massive bag and looks like a trader-adventurer. Most traders passing through here are bringing salt from Pavella to sell in Tsia. They then buy wooden goods, dry food, and so on, which they then sell back in Pavella.

Maybe I could make money by doing something like that too... wait, or not. I’m not good enough at math for that. I need the abacus’s help to do anything... Ngggh, I really need to study until I can do “multiplication tables,” or whatever those chants were. Ah, but I need to properly learn addition and subtraction before that.

I’m just not good at math... Maybe there’s something else I can do...

I’ll try asking Master if there’s anything I can help with the next time I see him. Aaah, geez. I really hate being useless like this. I don’t want to repay the honor of receiving a name by being a burden on him.

Keima’s Perspective — Day 138

It’s a bit late for me to be realizing this, but did I really need to make them swear loyalty to me when I have Absolute Authority? Eh... I guess it was important. They’ll work a lot harder if they’re actually loyal to me and all that. Definitely. For sure. That naming ceremony wasn’t a waste of time at all... for sure, definitely! Maybe! Anyway, time to check on our dungeon.

As of yet, nobody had died in our dungeon... or at least, that’s what I’d like to

say, but the world was not so kind. Just like you'd expect from a real dungeon, several E-Rank adventurers had already died inside of it. Being rookies, a lot of them had just let their guard down, walked right into a trap, and bam. Dead, just like that. But it was safe enough that you wouldn't die if you kept your guard up, so in many ways it was the perfect dungeon for beginners to get their feet wet and prove themselves in. That was our [Cave of Greed] for you. A nice beginner dungeon.

Anyway, there was a big hullabaloo going on in one of the Magic Blade testing rooms. The first one had been so popular that I added three more, and apparently an adventurer that had come to our dungeon after hearing rumors of it containing Magic Blades had gotten stuck in one. Apparently, he hadn't heard about the trap from the Guild before venturing into the dungeon. I really wouldn't mind just letting him starve to death in there, but it would probably be better to "save" him like I did the others and reap the rewards. Not that I could expect much in return from the kind of idiot who wouldn't even do basic research at the Guild before entering a dangerous dungeon. They were telling anyone who would listen about how to get out of the trap room.

Oh, one of them just said "I'm the third son of the Rich family, Dorasan! I am not going to die in a place like this! Do something!" *Guess he's a noble. I could expect a lot of reward money from him, but I get the feeling nothing good would come from getting involved with him. He'd probably be a huge pain in the ass to deal with. Entering a dungeon means being prepared for the consequences. Including death. I'll just let him starve in there unless the Guild posts a lot of sweet reward money.*

Though judging by how his partners are getting pissed off at him, he might just die mysteriously before starving. I mean, this is a dungeon. There's nothing odd about someone dying in a dungeon. Corpses get absorbed by the dungeon, so there won't be any evidence. There's an infinite number of excuses you could come up with. He activated a trap that killed him instantly, there was nothing we could do. I was busy fighting a monster, and by the time I killed it another had already gotten him. It sure helps that there are no witnesses in the trap room. They've all got weapons, too. Yeah, I'm looking forward to some sweet DP.

Paying customers are God. But we're Buddhists here, not Christians. Praise Buddha.

Oh, but it looks like there are some other adventurers in the labyrinth area, not just me. They might hear all this noise, too. Guess I should subtly modify the dungeon so the room's harder to find. Heheheh. Someone in there just said "Help should be coming soon," but y'know, I'm not so sure about that. I bet a nobleman's guards are worth a lot of DP.

Suddenly, my dungeon monitoring got interrupted by Rei walking up to me with a serious look on her face. She had something important to talk about, apparently.

"So, what's up?"

"Well... I want to help the dungeon more! I'll do anything, so please, give me a noble duty to fulfill!" Rei looked at me straight in the eyes. *Seriously? When did she turn into such a corporate sla—wait, this is a dungeon. Dungeon slave, not corporate.*

When did she turn into such a dungeon slave? This... This must be thanks to the naming ceremony! Though honestly, all I really want her to do is work the front desk. That's more than enough on its own, really.

"I want to be helpful to the dungeon, just like Kinue and Neruneh are. For the dungeon's sake, and for yours, Master!"

"...I mean, you manning the front desk is already a big help, y'know?"

"You do not need to lie for my sake, Master. I am undoubtedly a failure of a vampire. So much of a failure that I cannot even count a few copper coins properly..." *Hey, don't worry about that. I'm just glad I found a way to automate the pricing stuff. It's like a register... Wait, wait. I made the slot machine deposit coins on its own... Maybe I could make an actual, completely automated register...*

But anyway. A job for Rei, huh? I gotta admit, there's not too much a vampire with no special abilities or attack power can do. I know I summoned her that way myself, but I really hadn't planned on her being anything more than an inn employee. Hm... Maybe I can think of something. I looked down from Rei's

serious gaze and noticed that I had left the map up.

...Wait a second. You can order monsters around without being strong yourself. I ordered golems around long-distance back during the last Dungeon Battle no problem. I wonder if Rei could do that too? Actually, can Rei even make the menu pop up? It'd be nice if, like, the menu let me give others restricted usage of it or something. She is a dungeon monster, after all. If you can't let others use the menu too, I have no idea how assigning subordinates to sub-dungeons would work.

"Master, is there truly nothing I can do for you...?"

"Ah. Sorry, sorry. Gimme just a minute. I'm thinking of a good job for you to do." I searched the menu.

...Oh, there it is! I figured it would be here, but I'm still surprised! Leeet's see here, restricted usage privileges... I can choose Gobsuke, Phenny, Rei, Kinue, and Neruneh... wait, why Gobsuke?! The others are all white, why is his grey?! Oh craaap. Can I not remove Named Monsters from lists like this? Dang. We better stop giving away names like candy. I don't want these kinds of things to end up super disorganized.

Since Niku and Ichika aren't in the list, I guess having some kind of connection to the dungeon is essential. Oh, Testle's not here either. Maybe 'cause I made him through {Create Golem}?

"Alright. You're gonna be helping me with a little experiment."

"U-Understood! I am a vampire, so I should have a stronger body than most humans! You may be as rough with me as you like, I do not mind!"

With her permission, I experimentally gave Rei restricted access to the menu. Seemed like there were a lot of specific options I could use to customize how much access she had. I set the range of her access to the dungeon, plus the inn, and... *Wait, "Limit DP Usage?" H-Hold on, this has been here the whole time? This means I don't have to summon all the food myself, right?! Holy crap! I should have looked into this sooner! Though, maybe all this only showed up because I've Named over five monsters.*

Gaaah, permission granted, permission granted! No limits on buying any item

purchasable with existing DP! Permission granted! I'll just treat any monster that can use the menu as like, a dungeon administrator or something. I originally summoned these three monster girls intending for them to be higher ups in the dungeon, so... if Rei does well with this, I'll give Kinue and Neruneh menu access too.

"Alright, let's see it. Show me what you can do."

"Eeeeh?! S-See what... m-my boobs?! You want to see my boobs?!"

"What? The menu. Show me the menu." *Why the heck did this girl suddenly start blabbering about boobs?*

"F-Forgive me. You were staring at my chest while pointing at them and poking the air, so..." *Uh... Oh yeah. Other people can't see the menu. Crap, I just looked like a total pervert.*

Wait. Thinking about this another way... Could I get away with staring at a girl's feet by claiming I was looking at the menu? Ah, nah, ultimately I'd still just look like a guy staring at her feet. Gonna have to give this dream up.

"I brought up the menu! I see, you can make the menu visible or invisible to certain people! You must have been looking at an invisible menu!"

"That's right." And so, she gained the ability to bring up the menu. She could now monitor the dungeon and give orders to the monsters within it. Vampires are supposed to be skilled warriors, so I figured she would probably do a good job directing them.

"Okay. I want you to help me out with the dungeon."

"Yes! As you wish, Master!" *C'mon. You're really starting to sound like a sex slave or something. I didn't summon you for that! I swear!*

Afterwards, I confirmed that I could restrict and expand her access at will. She seemed pretty overjoyed to be helping with the dungeon, so I was pretty glad that the access restrictions didn't end up becoming permanent. *But don't worry. Even if you ended up completely useless and incapable of using the menu, I wouldn't have abandoned you.*

Day 139

“By the way, Keima. Why haven’t we hatched Phenny’s egg yet?” Rokuko dropped that bomb after visiting my room to hang out. *Oh crap. I totally forgot about that.*

“N-Now that you mention it... Redra’s probably gotten over her egg trauma at this point, so now’s as good a time as ever. I’ll go pay them a visit.”

“Oh, wow. She really got traumatized by your egg strategy? I guess it makes sense you waited this long, then.”

“Yep, yep. It makes total sense.”

“...Keeeimaaaa?”

“I forgot. Sorry.” *Crap, Rokuko’s gotten way better at seeing through me. I used to trick her like it was nothing. I miss those times. What happened?*

“...I’m your partner. I’m always watching you, Keima, so I know you a lot better now.”

“What, you’ve been... watching me? Are you a stalker?!”

“I-It’s not like I hide and follow you around. We’re partners, right? One in body and soul, remember? It’s important for partners to pay attention to each other and stuff. I’m not going to attack you in your sleep or anything.” *Good, ’cause I’d be ticked if you interrupted my sleep. Unless you had a solid reason for it, of course.*

Anyway, I gave a letter to a golem and sent him to the [Flame Caverns]. I had built a special tunnel... or really, a special room separate from our main dungeon for use in contacting them. It was a room half owned by our [Cave of Greed] and half owned by their [Flame Caverns]. One could only enter it using the dungeon’s “Place” function, so no adventurers would stumble upon it. We had agreed on using this room when we needed to contact each other.

Also, it didn’t have any windows or anything, but we didn’t need to worry about suffocating since it was inside our dungeons.

“Yo, Keima, it’s been a while... actually, nah, it ain’t been too long.”

“Last time we met was when we built this room, which was about one month ago.”

“That so? Guess that might be kinda long for one of you humans?” Ittetsu the Salamander grinned his lizard grin as if happy about something. He was the [Flame Cavern’s] Dungeon Core. Despite appearances, he was a nice and friendly guy. He wasn’t the sharpest tool in the shed, but he could be surprisingly competent at times. But he wasn’t the sharpest tool in the shed. He wasn’t... the sharpest tool in the shed...

“Alriiight, just gotta get Redra to breath fire on the egg, yeah?”

I brought Rokuko to the [Flame Caverns] so we could have Redra unleash her flame breath upon Phenny’s egg. They took us to the boss room on the fiftieth floor. Apparently, this was the only room that could withstand the full extent of Redra’s fire.

Also, apparently she was still a little afraid of eggs. She was pretty pathetic for a dragon, to be honest. But I could only imagine what a Phoenix born from the fire breath of a Red Dragon would look like.

“Is this really gonna be okay?! It’s not gonna start running around or anything, right?!”

“It might start walking around if you don’t hatch it soon. So hit it with all you’ve got, alright? But uh... don’t break it. I’m talking about your fire breath here.”

“G-Got it!”

I set down a tile I had made from Phoenix eggshells and placed the Phoenix egg on top of it. With everything ready, Rokuko and I took cover in the Dungeon Core room past the Boss Room. Redra’s breath was powerful enough to knock back nearby Stone Golems even if they were just in the vicinity. No way would either of us survive in there with her. But we’d want to imprint the Phoenix on us and all that, so I wanted to stay close. Ittetsu, nice guy that he was, let us use the Core Room.

And so, we were watching the Boss Room through Ittetsu’s dungeon monitor. *Seriously, what a good guy Ittetsu is. Total bro.*

“Okay, here I gooo...! Haaaah... fhoooo!” Redra unleashed her flame breath upon the egg, heating it up. And I mean she *really* unleashed it. Blinding light

was shooting out of her mouth like a star. The ground directly beneath the egg was fine thanks to tile infused with its eggshells, but the surrounding ground was melting a little. Also, Rokuko looked at the monitor directly and screamed "MY EYES!" or something.

"Fhooo, fhooo...! Haaah, haaaah... Y-Yeah, I'm feelin' kinda tired...!" After about thirty minutes of breathing fire as hard as she could, Redra finally took a breather. *Sheesh. That's some crazy stamina. Remind me not to mess with a Red Dragon if I don't have to.*

"I'll give you some ice cream as thanks later."

"Ice cream? What's that?"

"It's a cold and sweet dessert. Kinda like candy. Not sure if you'll like it, but I love it."

"Wow, I'm looking forward to that! Guess I'll really put my all into this! Fhooo, fhoooo!" Redra got back to breathing fire onto the egg.

After about thirty more minutes of Redra breathing fire non-stop...

"Ah? Hey, the egg moved! It's cracking!"

"Oh wow, it is. It's about time for us to go in there."

"Hold up. The room's real fuckin' hot right now. You better watch out."

"...Huh? How hot is it?"

"To say it like you humans would, uh... It's about as hot as a fuckin' oven. Your skin would burn right off." *Holy crap. Guess that's what happens when you breathe super hot fire in a tightly closed room for like an hour straight.*

He opened the door on the other end of the Boss Room and we waited a bit for it to cool. It must have known how to get out, as it was breaking the egg very efficiently. A large crack formed right in the dead center of the egg. Once that crack circled the egg, it'd be out.

Rokuko looked at us, eyes begging to know if we could go in yet.

"...Alright, should be good enough now." The moment Ittetsu said that, Rokuko dashed into the room now cooled to be about as hot as an active sauna.

A wave of hot air flooded into the Core Room from the open door. I slowly followed Rokuko into the boss room, but the air burned my bare skin enough to hurt.

"So hot! Where's the egg?! So hot!"

"Oh, there you are, Rokuko! Over here! The egg's about to hatch!" We went to where Redra was pointing and saw that the crack had just about finished circling the egg.

And so, the Phoenix hatched.

It was like a small duckling, but it had radiant white feathers. *It just hatched and it already has feathers? I guess that's just how birds work. Or maybe it's just how Phoenixes work?*

"Oooh... This is a Phoenix, huh? Feathers don't look red to me... I've fuckin' heard of some Soldier of God adventuring with a blue Phoenix, but I ain't never heard of a white Phoenix." *Blue, huh? That's the color of fire when it gets as hot as it can get. Guess blue Phoenixes are a thing. Which means their color probably changes depending on the kind of fire that hatches their eggs.*

"Heeey, it's me, your owner! Phenny, look over heeere!"

"Scree!"

Right, Phenny. That's what she named the Phoenix egg a while ago. Speaking of which, Phenny was listed as a named monster back then, too. First Gobsuke, now Phenny. Rokuko really does name monsters at the drop of a hat.

The Phoenix responded to Rokuko's calls by flapping his wings. He couldn't fly yet, but he had recognized her as his owner.

"Can I touch him? He's not burning hot or anything, right?"

"Should be alright. Phoenix fire isn't real, hot fire. It's like, fuckin', illusions or somethin'. Same as mine. Pretty sure that Phoenix has some fire shooting skills, but you'll be fine if he doesn't use'm on you. Give'm some orders now to stop him from doing anything dangerous." *Huh. I guess that's how normal dungeons do it.* I followed Ittetsu's advice and ordered the Phoenix to not attack its allies. No friendly fire here.

“That should do it. Alright, let me touch it too.”

“Aw, what? Are you going to try ripping his feathers off this time?”

“Woah, hold up. What kinda guy do you think I am?” *Rip off his feathers... The feathers of a Phoenix... That might not be a bad idea. Wait, no. Uhh. Yeah, no. I’ll just stick to touching him this time.* I reached my hand out to Phenny.

“Screee!”

“Gah?! H-Hey, stop that, it hurts! Ouch!”

“He sure does hate you, Keima.” He had jabbed me with his beak. *Huh? But I ordered him not to attack allies... Does he maybe remember how I broke his shell over and over when he was an egg? Man, I didn’t know Phoenixes hold grudges. He needs to get over himself.*

“Tch, alright. Best thing to do here is win his heart through food. Ittetsu, what do Phoenixes eat?”

“Fire n’ shit. Hey, Redra, feed’m a little of your fire breath.”

“You got it! Step back a little!” Rokuko and I got a good distance away from Phenny and watched as Redra breathed fire on him as hard as she could. *Oh crap... I can feel the heat over here. Hello? I think I’m gonna catch fire.*

“Scree screee♪!” Phenny looked pretty happy getting bathed in fire like that. *Heheheh. That’s right, eat up. Eat up and let your hate for me fade away... Wait. Waaait. Isn’t this Redra feeding him, not me? Crap. I’ve gotta learn some Fire magic.*

* * *

And so, we brought Phenny back to the inn.

“Oh? What kind of bird is that?” Rei, sitting at the receptionist desk, looked at Phenny with a curious expression.

“Phenny the Phoenix. Yeah, Rokuko named him. And also Named him, before we even summoned you. Play nice.” I opened the menu and showed her that Phenny’s name was above hers in the Named Monsters column.

“Ah, I see! Forgive my rudeness, Sir Phenny. Let us serve our Master together

with honor.”

“By the way, he was just born today.”

“Wh-What?! He was just born and you Named him before me?! How?!” *Hey, he was an egg for a while. It happens.*

Chapter 2

Day 142

“Let’s raise some money.”

“What’s with you all of a sudden, Keima? We’re already getting tons of money from the inn and the tunnel.”

“By money, I mainly meant DP. I really need to pay back all the DP I’ve borrowed from you.” I still hadn’t paid back the DP I borrowed from Rokuko during the [Flame Caverns] Dungeon Battle. In fact, I had borrowed a lot more when hastily adding new floors to the tunnel after finding myself unable to make changes to it.

“You don’t need to worry about that. The gold you lent me in return is more than enough, and we’re soulbound partners anyway.”

“I mean, I wanna pay you back and keep things even between us because you’re my partner and I care about you. I don’t want things to get weird or anything.”

“...Well, if that’s what you want, okay. Fufufu, it’s totally fine with me, partner! I get it, you just care about me so much you can’t help yourself!” Rokuko was looking really happy for some reason. *She must be happy to finally have a partner after years of being all on her own.* She brought up the menu and checked our DP.

“Ummm, you’ve borrowed about 53,000 DP from me so far. And you’ve lent me 53 gold coins in return. How much DP do we have, minus my own?”

“Since we just summoned those monster girls... about 9,000.”

I was lending her 53 gold coins, which could be converted into exactly 53,000 DP and pay off the debt at once. The problem was, it’d take 530,000 DP to buy those 53 gold coins back. That unbalanced exchange rate meant it was best for us to keep our debts in DP and golds without converting them. It’d be faster for me to pay off the debt by focusing on earning the DP itself.

“Since you could just sell the gold coins to pay the debt, why don’t you just keep working the inn like you are? You’ll be able to earn it all back eventually. Especially since you’re about to sell all that sugar.”

“That’s not a bad idea, but it’d still kind of bother me. And I can’t sleep well when something’s bothering me.” *Thankfully, I have a plan for earning that DP back. Do you remember those sugar beet fields I planted? Well, I finally harvested them a few days ago and would soon be turning them into sugar. I know they grew way faster than normal sugar beets do, but don’t think about that too hard.*

“Sugar is pretty valuable... and thus, it should be worth tons of DP!”

“Oh, but didn’t you buy those seeds with DP? Won’t they be worth, like, nothing?”

“Golds bought with DP are still worth a lot of DP, so it should work. Not sure how much these beets will be worth, though.” I tried converting a matured sugar beet into DP directly, before turning it into sugar. It was worth... 15 DP.

“Oh, it’s more! It’s worth more than I paid for!”

“Wooow. You bought 10 seeds each worth 10 DP, right?” Turning a seed back to DP would only have been worth 1 DP, so suffice to say, I had found a way to get a good return on DP investment. Now all I had to do was turn them into sugar and see how much more DP that was worth.

.....

Wait, how do I turn them into sugar?

* * *

After much experimentation and suffering, I managed to turn a beet into a sort of brown, clumpy sugar. Two noble beets were lost before Rokuko pointed out we could just buy a recipe with DP and save ourselves the trouble. Thankfully, it only cost 20 DP. Never would I have guessed that you chop the beets into tiny pieces, let them sit in hot water, and then boil the water away to leave the sugar behind. I thought for sure sugar would just come out if you burned or crushed them, or something.

“You seem to have had quite the struggle here without me.”

“Yep. Thanks for helping out, ma’am.” Since it technically had to do with cooking, I was having Kinue help out. She was really doing some good work. Things would’ve been going a lot less smoothly without her help.

“Hey, Keima... Why are you calling Kinue ma’am?”

“I dunno, I feel like I have to somehow. She’s kind of like everybody’s mom, y’know?” Her calm atmosphere and love of cooking made her feel like a dedicated married woman. So much so that I sometimes hallucinated seeing a wedding ring on her finger.

“Alright, time to see how much DP the sugar is worth. It’s all still brown, though. I wonder how you make sugar white.” Unfortunately, the only thing written on the recipe was how to make sugar, not turn it white. Anyway, I tried turning one beet’s worth of sugar into DP.

...30 DP! *Ooooh man, that’s a three times return on investment!*

“The recipe’s already paid for itself. I can let the golems take care of the rest here... Kinue, give’m the instructions they need.”

“As you wish, Master.”

From now on, each field of beets would produce three times as much DP as I spent on them. That should be good enough. I could try selling the sugars to traders and seeing if the profits could be converted into even more DP. But for now, I could turn 10,000 DP into 30,000 DP. *Maybe I should expand the sugar beet farms? Actually, should I just make the fields inside of the dungeon? Heheheh, Dungeon Agriculture... has a nice ring to it. This might just end up with our dungeon being a massive farm where nothing happens, but that could be good for my sleep.*

“It’s nice that we’re earning DP, but how many days does it take for the beets to grow anyway? Sure, it’s three times as much as you spend, but if that means ten beets are worth 300 DP, isn’t it way more efficient to just stick a party of human adventurers in a Magic Blade test room for a whole day?” *Huh... Y’know, that royal party that got stuck in the room the other day is earning us over 500 DP a day. They’d normally only earn us 90 DP all together, but since they’re*

locked in a jail (x3 DP) with the room's exit shut (2x DP), they're earning us six times as much DP as they would just walking around. Plus, one of them has {Storage}, so they won't go hungry for a while.

"Maybe you should just think of some other way?"

"Well, uh... Well... Yeah, I guess..." *Crap, and I thought it was the perfect plan...*

And so, I switched gears and decided to sell more golem statues to Ittetsu instead. I first made an iron dragon statue using the techniques I had developed attempting to make a Dragon Golem. Once I finished, I covered it with a gold coating made from a single gold coin. All in all it was something that took me about three days to make, with an extra five hours of minor improvements.

He ate it up.

I called Ittetsu over and told him I found the statue in Tsia Mountain and said it'd make a good gift for Redra. He saw it, thought Redra would love it, and bought it for the first price I gave. Even though the first number I gave was 100,000 DP, all he said was *Sounds fuckin' reasonable to me!* and laughed while forking it all over.

...Hey, I didn't trick him. I told him it wasn't made entirely of gold before he bought it.

100,000 DP. Compared to the price of some 5 DP food roll sets, he had just paid ten million yen at the drop of a hat. *How much freakin' money does he earn every day?*

In any case, I paid my debt back. It all happened so suddenly I didn't know what to think. *Why did I waste my time on the beets?!*

"Well, it took you three whole days to make the statue. Is it really that big of a deal?"

"I mean, yeah... 100,000 DP in three days? It took how many days of hard farm work to scrape out 300 DP...?"

"I guess you're just not built for farming." *Yeah, you're right. I'm a Dungeon Master, not a Farming Master. Agriculture is just a bonus, a side thing. But I'll*

still have golems farm fresh fruits and vegetables for us. And there won't be any harm in selling the beets' sugar to traders. May as well.

...I-I'm not just a sore loser! The beets may earn next to nothing, but even a molehill can become a mighty mountain if enough moles work together! There's no shame in having two jobs, it all adds up!

Day 143

Haku came to visit the day after I was hit with the brutal reality of my poor farming skills. *Does this woman just have nothing to do all day?* Or so I thought, but she called both Rokuko and me to her room to talk about some serious business. We went with a complimentary Cream Soda, and once we got there, she dropped an absolute bomb on us.

"A Hero is coming." A Hero. In this world, Heroes were Soldiers of God summoned from other worlds. They had cheat skills and the Adventurer's Guild gave them an automatic S-Rank. Their main job was conquering Dungeons, as destroying Dungeon Cores brought them great rewards. Some guy claiming to be a god basically wanted me to do the same thing, but I don't count because I became a Dungeon Master.

"Woah, a Hero...? Seriously?"

"I wouldn't lie about this. Though I do understand how you feel."

"Wait. Sister, a Hero is coming? Not one of the Soldiers of God you always talk about?"

"My my. Aren't you clever, Rokuko? Indeed, a Hero. I've already brainwashed him into a loyal servant, so you have nothing to fear." *Whew, that's a relief. I'm not sure what she means by him being a loyal servant, but at least he's not out for her blood. I'm pretty sure she mentioned brainwashing him. I'm not going to think about that.*

"Some fools in my Empire held an unauthorized Hero summoning ritual. They were a minor noble house, and thanks to them my plans to visit Rokuko got all messed up. I confiscated their wealth and executed the head of their house." *Uh, you executed them and confiscated their wealth because of the Hero summoning ritual, not because they got in the way of you visiting Rokuko, right?*

“Wait, is it really that easy to summon Heroes?”

“That is a reasonable question, Keima. Under normal circumstances, no, no it is not. In terms you might understand... the materials to hold such a ritual would normally cost about one hundred billion DP. But there is a certain, special item that circumvents all that.” Apparently, some item called a [God’s Tear] could reduce the cost of a Hero summoning ritual to basically nothing. The item itself was worth basically nothing, but you could use it to have God pay for the cost of summoning a hero, or something. Essentially, it was a “Free Hero Ticket.”

“Why did the nobles summon a Hero?”

“They wanted fame and honor, I suppose. Their land borders Demon King territory, so I imagine that he intended to throw the Hero at them and hope he killed a Demon King for them.” *Demon King. Oh boy, here comes the biggest fantasy cliché in the world. I figured there would be Demon Kings since Heroes are a thing, but dang. They really do exist.*

“By the way, Demon Kings are actually Dungeon Cores. They can be women, too.” *Wow. Thanks for the huge spoilers. Demon Kings are just Dungeon Cores? She said something about that a long time ago, but I didn’t think it was true. Wait, doesn’t that mean a Demon King’s already been killed?*

“Ah, you must be referring to Number 66. Their dungeon was named the [Demon King’s Castle]. It was a castle-shaped dungeon, though not all Demon Kings have dungeons like that.”

“Not all Demon Kings? You mean there are more?” *I guess it makes sense that in a world with tons of Heroes, there’s also tons of Demon Kings.*

“The Great Demon King, also known as Dungeon Core Number 6, rules over many other Demon Kings. I believe most refer to them as the Demon King Faction.” *The Great Demon King, huh? Wow. And there are factions of Dungeon Cores? I guess that means we’re a part of the Haku Faction. She’s giving us tons of DP, so I don’t really mind that.*

“Well, putting that aside. As I said, a Soldier of God... rather, a Hero was summoned.”

“That past tense kinda makes me curious. When did he get summoned?”

“I’m glad you’re quick on the uptake. He was summoned about three years ago, and they claimed to have trained him ever since. Thankfully, they did raise him according to my *Hero Training Manual*... but at that point I wish they would have just properly reported his existence. I wouldn’t have had to punish them, then. Their plans were to report him after receiving the honor of having summoned a Hero that defeated a Demon King, and well, that’s treason. They were led by a much more proper man two generations ago. Why must humans change so drastically every generation?” Haku sighed to herself. *I’m not wondering how old Haku is. I’m not worried that she’d kill me if I thought about her age.*

By the way, Haku’s *Hero Training Manual* was a very convenient (for Haku) book that taught Heroes which dungeons were okay to destroy, and which dungeons were not okay to destroy. Dungeons managed by the Guild like our old [Ordinary Cave] and our current [Cave of Greed] were, of course, dungeons that were not okay to destroy. Needless to say, Haku’s [Ivory Labyrinth] was included, given that it was the literal foundation of the Empire.

“So, that Hero heard about the playing cards and such produced by your Dungeon. He immediately started wondering if it had something to do with the world he came from. In other words, he fell for your plot to lure Heroes out hook, line, and sinker.”

“...Alright. I get it now.” *Yeah, makes sense. A Hero summoned to this world would definitely find a dungeon filled with Earth loot pretty suspicious. Uh... Haku seems to think that was some genius plan I hatched to lure in Heroes, but really, I didn’t intend for this at all. It was just a mistake. I’m sorry...!* Hiding my inner panic, I grinned and passed it all off as something I had indeed planned for.

“In any case, I don’t know for what purpose you would attempt to draw a Hero out, but do remember that this Wataru Nishimi is my servant. Hide the truth in accordance to what’s written in *Intro to Dungeonology* and do return him alive, if you would.” *Intro to Dungeonology* was a book for humans Haku had written to teach them about dungeons. Naturally, it was filled with lies and half-truths that benefited dungeons. The best example of that was the Safe

Zone. The book claimed that no monsters could enter certain special light-filled rooms, but in truth, that was all an act on the dungeon's part to make adventurers let their guards down.

"I understand completely. Don't worry, I won't kill him."

"Fufu, I appreciate men who know how to strike a deal. Here, state anything you want. I'll see what I can do." *Okay, here's a nice garter belt and some socks. Please wear them, thank you. Eh... Yeah, I really want to say that, but I probably shouldn't.*

Hey, Rokuko, why are you glaring at me? I'm not gonna say it. I'm not.

"I would like some DP, then. I'll need to modify the dungeon a little to capture the Hero alive."

"Then as thanks for accepting my request, I will preemptively reward you with 200,000 DP." Haku was a terrifying person that would casually hand out more DP than we currently made in a year. She wasn't actually a person, but you get the point.

Not to mention, she also gave Rokuko a tip and paid for her inn room. Haku's generosity had no bottom, much like her dungeon. Because her dungeon was so massive.

Day 144

Haku returned to the capital after enjoying a full night's stay at our Dancing Doll Inn.

So... It was nice that she gave us 200,000 DP, but I had no idea what to do with it. *Also, just gonna throw this out there, she transferred the DP to Rokuko through a kiss since "this is so much DP, we really don't want any to leak out and be wasted." I'm glad you're enjoying yourself, Haku.*

I thought it might be fun to summon a slime and raise it or something, so I checked the DP catalog. Which thereby forces me to address a topic which has heretofore been the massive elephant in the room: There were two different kinds of slime monsters in this world.

First, Jellies. They were weak in every way imaginable. They were squishy,

jiggled when they walked, were mostly transparent, and died nigh instantly. Of course, they had next to no attack power either. The only positive thing about them was their abnormally low cost of one jelly per 1 DP. That, and the fact they could be eaten. *I wonder if I could turn these Jellies into actual gelatin or something.* They were the lowest of the low. Even goblins got extermination quests, but pretty much everyone ignored Jellies.

The other kind were Slimes. They had squuuuishy and stiiiicky bodies that could deform so easily that physical blows barely hurt them. They cost 10,000 DP each. Each was especially weak to a certain element, but they were omnivores that could eat basically anything. Including humans, of course. These were the monsters people would think of if you brought up slimes. There were Magma Slimes in the [Flame Caverns] beside us, for example. Those were definitely weak to water.

Oh yeah, and speaking of which, I had already set up Jelly Spawners to serve as food for goblins.

For no reason in particular, I called a Jelly over. I then squeezed it. *Oooh... Yep, it's just as squishy as I expected. Squish squish.*

Suddenly, a flash of inspiration struck me from nowhere. I got onto the ground and rested my head on the Jelly like a pillow. *Ohoooh, this is perfect. Nice and squishy. It's not as good as my heavenly pillow, but it's not half bad. And it only costs one DP... fwaaah...*

* * *

I woke up from my afternoon nap to find that I had fatally crushed the Jelly, with its death juices covering my face. The weight of my head must have been squeezing its inner body juices out. *Now that's a problem I'm gonna have to fix. Maybe I could cover it with a layer of plastic or something. Though, uh, the Jelly would still end up getting crushed that way. Oh well. The road to a good night's sleep is paved with the corpses of a thousand Jellies.*

...Oh man. Now I'm really like one of those Dungeon Masters that use their monsters like disposable tools. Anyway, maybe I'll try out Jellies of different colors next, like Red Jellies or something. They're apparently a stronger kind of Jelly, but they're still super cheap at 2 DP for one and 200 DP for a spawner. I'm

sure the goblins would love to have more than one kind of food, too. Though I don't know if they taste any different. I wiped off my wet face with a towel and placed spawners for Red Jellies (Fire), Yellow Jellies (Earth), Blue Jellies (Water), and some others. Rokuko walked in right as I was finishing up.

"Hey, Keima. Shouldn't we be planning for the Hero?"

"Meeeh, honestly, we don't really need to."

"Eh?! Really?! Haku gave you 200,000 DP and you aren't even going to use any of it?!" *Yeah, I mean, I already have a plan to deal with the Hero and I honestly don't think we'll really need to do much.* Even if he got all the way through our dungeon, all we'd lose is some of our homemade Golem Blades after he beat the Iron Haniwa Golem. Thanks to Haku's teachings (brainwashing), we didn't need to worry about him destroying the Core. Not to mention that the Core inside the dungeon was just a Dummy Core, with the real one being inside Rokuko's room. Though I was starting to think that leaving it in her room was actually not exactly the safest thing in the world. No invader could sneak up on us, but still. *Hm... Since we can use the Castling function at any time, I think I'll put the Core back inside the dungeon and only swap it out once the Hero gets close or something.*

Anyway, it was important that we didn't take things too far and end up drawing too much attention to ourselves. Now would be a good opportunity to lean back and see just how strong Heroes really were. The only preparations we really needed to make were building a backup Iron Haniwa Golem and some Magic Blades. Basically, I was pretty relaxed.

"But yeah, it'd be a waste to just sit on this 200,000 DP. I'll strengthen the dungeon a little. Specifically, now seems like a good time to build a new area."

"Okay. What kind of area?"

"I've got two ideas. A coliseum area and a grasslands area." I would put the coliseum area right before the Boss Room, and I would make it so you could reach the grasslands area through the storeroom area. If you went through the coliseum, you'd reach the boss fight; if you went through the grasslands, you'd hit a dead end.

Also, the grasslands area would have the Terrain Modifiers [Sky (50,000 DP)]

and [Grasslands (500 DP)]. Haku told me about them when we were discussing human farms. I was pretty sure that Terrain Modifiers weren't in the Catalog until Haku brought them up, so I imagine they had some requirement for showing up that we skipped.

Terrain Modifiers worked on the entire floor they were placed on; for instance, the [Sky] would simulate a working sun all the way down to the hot sunlight. There were even nights and rainy days too, making it a real [Sky].

Other modifiers existed too, like the [Beach] and [Volcano] modifiers. The [Volcano] modifier was a super cheap 100 DP, but the [Beach] modifier cost over 100,000 DP. I figured it was more expensive because oceans existing inside of a volcano just wasn't natural.

You could use DP to shape the ground and make a miniature world within your dungeon. Apparently these modifiers originally existed to help monsters live as comfortable a life as possible, but according to Haku, they could also be used to help lessen the stress of humans living in human farms, which led to them living longer.

Though even with a [Sky] in place, it only worked on the ceilings of rooms in the floor without being any wider or taller. Therefore, it was best to use it with a large room on the floor. *I'll, uh, keep it small enough that they don't try building a village inside of it. Having a sky just near the entrance should be good enough.* Really, I had mainly decided to include the grasslands area because I wanted to see what the heck a fake [Sky] constrained to the ceiling of a room would look like.

"I'm also gonna put a Safe Zone in the grasslands area. It'll basically be like a break zone, a place for adventurers to relax and get some rest... Hm... Maybe I should spawn some rabbits around here, too."

"You sure are nice to the adventurers."

"Yep. 'Cause this is gonna be a place that does what Safe Zones are *actually* supposed to do." That being, encourage adventurers to relax such that they're more susceptible to surprise attacks that wipe them all out. Safe Zones aren't actual safe zones at all. Of course, this one will normally be a safe place to camp out without any monsters. A trap sprung constantly would get caught in no

time. Traps only work when they're rarely sprung.

"So like, adventurers will stop here to rest before the boss, and then bam! We get'm when their guard is down!"

"Yep, that's the idea."

And so, I got to work really overhauling the dungeon. But first came golems digging out space for the new floors, so it'd be a while until everything was ready. Plus, I had to keep an eye on the map to make sure we didn't run into the [Flame Caverns]. Thankfully, though, I didn't need to worry about anyone noticing these changes since nobody had gotten past the puzzle area. At most, they'd notice the new colored Jellies.

Day 145

The day after I placed those colored Jelly spawners, the Guild receptionist came to see me.

"Keima. I have some news for you. Although you may have already heard of this, the dungeon is showing signs of a Paradigm Shift. I request that you either avoid entering the dungeon or otherwise stay on the first floor."

"Aaah... Th-Thanks for the heads up." *Right, Paradigm Shiiiifts... People think that new monsters showing up is a sign of a Paradigm Shift. I don't have any plans for holding a Dungeon Battle, so... dang. I forgot.*

By the way, they were apparently going to place a defensive line by the entrance in case monsters came rushing out. I was on call to join the line at some point. It was basically in the form of a personal Guild quest, but one I couldn't really refuse. *I dunno how to say this, but... uh, I'm sorry everyone.*

"Wow, Keima, you don't usually make big mistakes like this. Did you not get enough sleep?"

"Maybe not..."

Maybe not indeed. The scale of the dungeon was getting so big that I was having trouble keeping up. It was impossible not to forget things. *This calls for some more subordinates I can delegate important things to. Pretty much all physical labor can be handled with an infinite stream of golems, but I really need*

some more intelligent underlings I can trust more administrative functions to. Guess I should summon more monsters specifically for that purpose.

Unlike the three monster girls, they didn't have to be human-shaped since they'd only ever appear in the dungeon. *Maybe an Arachne, a half-spider half-woman...? Ah, looks like basically any monster both mentally and physically strong costs 100,000 DP. That kinda gives me a little pause. I could buy two with all the DP Haku gave me, but...*

"Come on. Get a grip, Keima. You're the real heart and soul of this dungeon now. Everyone's counting you."

"Yeah, I'll be more careful. I didn't talk to anyone about the colored Jellies first so I can't blame you for not noticing, but seriously, don't hesitate to tell me when I'm making a mistake. I mess stuff up and forget things like anyone else."

"Ahaha, you? Making a mistake? What kind of joke is that, Keima?"

"I'm not joking. If you forget that I'm a Dungeon Master summoned from another world, I'm basically a normal human without any cheat skills, y'know?" Rokuko sighed and looked off into the distance.

"Weeell, yeah. I knew that. I've known it the whole time, and I'm okay with that. I wasn't totally serious when I said it, but I honestly was okay with leaving the dungeon to you after you got rid of those bandits." *Wait, what? When did I become a hard worker and Rokuko a lazy slacker? This is just messed up.*

"But recently I've been practicing moving golems around a lot!" *Oh, wait, she hasn't just been slacking. She's been practicing and stuff, nice.*

...But really, I didn't know she trusted me that much. I think I've spent most of my time just sleeping and lazing around. I've gotta start asking Rokuko what she's thinking more often.

"I'll try expanding the dungeon with my own ideas, too. So for right now, just look forward to what I'm going to build!"

"Yeah. I'll leave that whole area to you, so go ahead and fill our dungeon with as many goblins as you want."

"I seriously don't like goblins that much, okay?!"

“...Yeah, I know. I know that, Rokuko. Just follow your heart.”

“It sure sounds like you don’t believe me at all!”

Well, either way, it’s all yours. I’ll just focus on my Guild work as an adventurer for now... I know this is all my fault, but man, working sure does suck.

Day 148

I was guarding the dungeon’s entrance against a Paradigm Shift that wasn’t ever gonna come. It sucked and was totally pointless. That said, the only people who knew that were those involved with the dungeon. The Guild had done their due diligence and ordered a barricade built around the entrance and sent out mandatory quests involving guarding the front door and investigating any changes within the dungeon. Although only a few adventurers were actively guarding the barricade at any time, a large number of fairly skilled adventurers were gathered in the inn just in case they were needed. The result? A ton more DP for me, the one good thing about this whole mess.

Anyway, today I had guard duty with the C-Rank adventurer Gozou. It really wasn’t so bad once you got used to it. *Where’s Rokuko? She’s the owner of the inn, so she gets a free pass.*

“Hey, Gozou. The only thing that changed was some colored Jellies, right? What’s the problem with that?”

“Keima, it’s a pretty fuckin’ big deal for a bunch of monsters to start appearing outta nowhere in any dungeon. Even Jellies.”

“...Hey, Gozou. Mind if I go to sleep?”

“Get a grip, Keima. You’re only a C-Rank in this dungeon. If things get too bad that might change. Keep a close eye on that entrance, your future depends on it.” *Yeaaah. But I already know what’s up, so it’s hard to care at all. Cause I know there’s nothing to worry about.*

I kept up the conversation with Gozou.

“So, how’s that blacksmith friend of yours doing?”

“Kantara? Pretty good, seems like he’s making a good living here. Those eggshells were pretty rare, he said.”

“...Oh, really? I did get them from Haku, so yeah.” Phoenix eggshells really did have a huge resistance to fire. It’d be a pain if people started asking where I got them, so I decided to just pass it off as if Haku gave them to me. And yep, Gozou nodded to himself after hearing it. You can never know what to expect from A-Ranks.

Oh, and by the way, we made an oven out of phoenix eggshells just for the fun of it. It ended up being pretty much the best oven I had ever seen in my life. Kinue, being a chore-loving Silky, was super pumped about it. A small ember was all it needed to cook juicy meat, apparently. It’d burn if you let your guard down for a second, but to her that just meant it was the perfect place to show her skills.

“Alright, I think I’ll have him make some kitchen knives in that forge. Just for Kinue.”

“Oh? Givin’ a present to that cute green lady, eh? I thought for sure you had a thing for little girls, but looks like you have a thing for nice ’n’ curvy women too! Gahaha!” *Hey, don’t get the wrong idea. I’m a foot fetishist, not a lolicon. And despite my love of feet, I haven’t used my Absolute Authority to order any of my underlings to give me their socks and shoes. I’m an absolute gentleman. Each of those three monster girls have delicious, delicious feet and I wo—ahem. They have shapely feet, so if I weren’t such a gentleman, there’d be some seriously R-rated stuff going on right now.*

“That girl’s cooking your inn’s food, right? I bet Kantara would be stoked to be makin’ knives for a cook that good.”

“I’d hope so. Oh, how much do knives cost? Dunno if I could buy them if they’re too expensive.”

“You could buy plenty no problem if you bag an Iron Golem in the dungeon. If you’re really pressed for cash, you could just ask for a favor. Just pay’m back by letting us buy beer in the inn.”

“You guys want to drink that much...? Inn workers don’t want to deal with drunkards causing a lot of problems. Get the Guild to build you a tavern or something.”

“Who knows when we’d get to drink beer, though? How many days does it

even take to build a tavern?”

“Aaah, alright. Maybe I’ll ask the wizard who built the employee dorm next to the inn to make a tavern next. He’d finish it in no time, but his work is expensive.”

“...Oh yeah, that dorm did pop outta nowhere. Your inn growin’ all the time is one of the seven big mysteries of the [Cave of Greed], y’know.” *Wait, what? Seven big mysteries? Since when did that become a thing?*

“...When did people start talking about those?”

“Huh? You haven’t heard of ’em before? Hey, you’re one of them. People are always talking about an adventurer who barely works staying at the inn night after night somehow.”

“Oof. What about the other five?”

“Other than the dorm built in a night and the lazy adventurer, there’s ‘the spots beloved by A-Rank adventurers,’ ‘the mysterious blonde loli,’ ‘the impossibly cozy onsen,’ ‘the legendary S-Rank meal,’ and the ‘ever-working golems.’” *Every single mystery of this dungeon just has to do with our inn. And hey, the onsen being cozy isn’t a mystery, that’s just a fact.*

“And apparently the owner of the inn slips into your room at night all the time. Some people are sayin’ you get to stay at the inn for free ’cause you’re leeching off her.”

“Woah, woah, woah! Don’t say things like that, man! None of that’s true!” *If people learn that’s true, Haku’s gonna find out too and kill me!*

“Huh? But we’ve got plenty of eye witnesses who saw the owner sneaking into your room.”

“Rokuko is in my party and we have tactical strategy meetings sometimes. There’s nothing mysterious about it.”

“Really now?” Gozou cackled to himself. *This jerk’s just messing with me.*

“But y’know, Keima, you’re a dude too. Don’t’cha ever wanna just let loose or somethin’, know what I mean?”

“Sorry, but the only thing I lust for is sleep.”

Oddly enough, maybe due to being a Dungeon Master, I didn't really get as horny as I used to. *Maybe it was when Ichika first joined the crew? Before that, I could barely stop myself from jumping at Rokuko and Niku's feet. Nowadays? Eh... it's not so bad. Though I still check out their feet when I get the chance.*

At this rate, if I can just conquer my sense of hunger, I'll be free to do nothing but sleep constantly.

"Oh, what about that little dog girl, then? Guess I don't have to worry about her, huh?"

"That's right. You don't need to worry about Niku at all." *I'm not the kind of guy who'd go into full horndog mode in front of a little kid. As long as Niku's around keeping watch, I'll never become a pervert. So yeah. No worries, my man.*

"But y'know, I can't shake th' feeling that you might be working her too hard."

"Heh. She actually starts pouting if I don't let her sleep in the same bed as me, man. If she's working too hard, it's because she wants to."

"...Yeah? She must really care about you. You treat her right, ya hear?"

"Of course."

We kept on chatting and continued guarding the dungeon entrance against monsters that would never be coming.

Day 152

You might not think so, but sitting down all day during guard duty was surprisingly tiring. I went back to my room and fell asleep the moment my shift was over. And thus was my life for an uncomfortably long time.

But now that's finally over. Nothing had happened after a solid week, so the Guild concluded everything was safe and took down the barricade.

"...Haaah, finally, I can take it easy again." I returned to my room in the inn and let my tired body collapse onto my futon. *Haaaaaaah... Time for bed. Ah, but first, {Purification}. Man, magic sure is handy.*

But just as I had snuggled into bed, Rokuko suddenly threw the door open and

burst inside.

“Keima, I finished my part of the dungeon!”

“...Uhhh, can you hold that thought until I finish sleeping?”

“Which is more important, sleep or our dungeon?!” *Really? You’re gonna question my love of sleep like that? You should know how this works by now, Rokuko.*

“Sleep.”

“But why?!”

“Think about it. I can look at our dungeon whenever we want, but I’m super tired right *now*. It’s not even a contest. Sleep wins with a knockout victory!”

“Ngh, you just had to say it again, huh?! Fine, whatever! I’ll show it to you tomorrow. You won’t believe your eyes!”

“Yeah, looking forward to it. But right now I’m satisfying my biological human urges.”

“...Geez, you really love sleeping, don’t you?”

“It’s not about loving or hating it. Little ol’ me is just super tired. Okay? So lemme sleep already.” *One of the greatest biological urges we humans have is sleep. Just like we’ll die if we don’t eat, we’ll die if we don’t sleep. How could I not care more about getting sleep than rushing to look at a dungeon I see every day?*

“I can’t believe you just said ‘little ol’ me’... A-Acting cute won’t get you anywhere, okay?!”

“And I mean, if you showed me right now, I’d be so tired I’d probably just give a deadpan ‘woooow, awesome.’ Is that really how you want your area’s grand debut to go?”

“You’re definitely taking a look at what I did tomorrow, okay?! Goodnight!” Rokuko left my room, having been convinced by my brilliant logic. *Alright, time to sleep... zzz...*

Day 153

“Keima, it’s morning! Wake up!” Rokuko swung my door open and rushed in again the next morning. *Guh... Did I never teach her how to knock? Meh. Whatever.* I closed my eyes and let myself drift along the pleasant sleepy waves.

“Morning, huh...? Mornings are for sleeping through... zzz...”

“I know that you humans are actually supposed to wake up in the morning. Wait, now’s not the time for joking around! The Hero is here, the Hero!”

“The Hero? Alright, got it. I’ll get up... in like, five minutes...”

“Wake up now! The Hero’s already here! He’s busy in the Guild’s branch office right now, but he’ll be coming our way any second!” Rokuko beat her fists against me through my blanket. That didn’t really hurt, but it was pretty annoying. *Guess I should get up already... and I mean, the Hero is here, so...*

“Fwaaah, aaaah. Alright, alright. The Hero’s here, huh? Let’s check him out.” I opened the map and zoomed to the Guild branch office. I checked his /DP (how much DP he earned us over a day) and saw... *Holy cow, 1000/DP! That’s how strong Heroes are? Dang, they’re in a league of their own. I could roll the 1,000 DP gacha every day with this kind of income. Or in goblin terms, I could summon fifty a day. I want him to get out of here ASAP but I also want him to stay for a while... What a tricky guy.*

“Keima, aren’t you being a little too calm?”

“I mean, Haku already told us that a Hero would be coming. We’ve finished preparing for him and everything. What’s there to panic about?”

“...So, what are we going to do?”

“Nothing. We’ll just treat him like a normal guest if he visits our inn. Just play it completely cool.” I opened the monitor from the menu and checked out what the Hero himself looked like.

He was a guy with short black hair. He looked Asian and was almost definitely Japanese. According to Haku he had been summoned to this world three years ago, so he had been here a lot longer than I had. *But wait... I can tell he’s Japanese just by looking at him. Doesn’t that mean he’ll figure out I’m Japanese too the second he sees me? A Japanese person near a dungeon producing Japanese stuff. Yeah, nothing good would come from that.*

“I don’t think this guy should see me, so I’m gonna stay in my room and sleep. Just treat him like a normal adventurer, okay? If he asks about the food or the cards, just tell him they’re stuff an old Hero left that we got from Haku. Tell him that Kinue’s the one cooking all the food. That’s all. Night night. I’ll leave the rest to you, Rokuko, my most trusted and dearest partner.”

“O-Okay, got it. I just have to do what I normally do, right? You can count on me!” Rokuko hurriedly left the room.

Alright... Time to go back to sleep.

“Oh no, Keima! The Hero said he’ll stay in the grand suite! And he wants an A-Rank meal! Also, he tipped me with a gold coin.”

But just when I was starting to fall back asleep, Rokuko swung my door open again. *She freakin’ opened the door with her foot, didn’t she? Don’t kick the doors! I might have to take some time out to really educate Rokuko on the importance of knocking.*

“...We’ve been treating the grand suite like it belongs to Haku, but it’s just a normal room like any other. We’re an inn, we gotta let the visitors sleep in the room they pay for. As for the children’s deluxe lunch, well... whatever. Just give him the same thing we gave Haku.”

“Okay, but um... I don’t have to eat with him, right? I only did that for my sister.”

“Yeah, don’t worry about it. Now I’m gonna go back to sleep so the Hero doesn’t see me.” I laid back down after watching Rokuko leave my room. *Okay. Finally, time to sleep.*

“O-Oh no, Keima!” But the moment I started falling asleep, Rokuko yet again kicked my door open, this time so hard it broke off its hinges and flew inside my room. *So she finally broke it, huh? Now I definitely have to teach Rokuko about knocking. I must avenge my noble door’s death.*

“Hey. The door. Seriously. Don’t kick doors open. Don’t break doors. I’m the one who has to fix them, alright?”

“Who cares! They take you, like, two seconds to fix!”

“That’s true, but still. Anyway... What happened this time? Is it something so bad you really can’t handle it without me?” I got out of bed and started fixing the door, but upon hearing my question, Rokuko blushed bright red and lowered her eyes before finally responding while fidgeting.

“The Hero, p... p-p-p-p... proposed to me! Wh-What should I do, Keima?!”

.....He what?

Wataru’s Perspective

“So this is the [Cave of Greed]...”

Wataru Nishimi. That was the name of the Hero who had been summoned from Japan to the String Province of the Laverio Empire. Despite being summoned when he was still in his third year of high school, he had been thoroughly trained by the String Province’s chivalric knight order from the moment of his summoning until only recently. When he asked why he had been summoned, they told him that they needed his power to defeat a Demon King.

But apparently, the Duke of String had performed the Hero summoning ceremony without permission from the Empire. He thought that it wouldn’t be a problem if Wataru could defeat a Demon King and bring honor to his house. Unfortunately, the Empire learned about his existence—before he finished his training. Before he brought them any honor. As a result, the duke was executed for hiding a Hero from the state and trying to monopolize his power.

Heroes were geopolitically equivalent to a weapon of mass destruction, as they were by default strong enough to earn an S-Rank in the Adventurer’s Guild. Summoning a Hero without permission was basically the same thing as stealing government secrets and building a long-range nuclear warhead. Yeah, you would need more than a firearm license to do something like that.

And although the Laverio Empire was by no means on good terms with the Demon Realm, invading another country without authorization from the standing Emperor would be an act of clear treason. Wataru could hardly blame the Empire for the execution: the duke was clearly at fault. Not to mention that his exclusive goal had been to gain more power, since he considered himself more suitable to the throne than anyone else. In fact, his introduction to

Wataru had been: *Greetings, Hero. I am Brie String, future emperor of these lands. Though as of yet, I am still a mere duke.* There were a lot of problems with that introduction.

Wataru didn't even understand how he planned to become the emperor in the first place, given his status as a duke. He didn't have imperial blood, so his only option would be a bloody coup d'etat. Not much chance of that succeeding.

In the end, the real Emperor executed the duke and entrusted Wataru to Haku Laverio, his ancestor. Despite looking by all accounts like a human, her massive life span and immense beauty had led many to believe that she was actually a High Elf. She had acquiesced the throne to her children long ago and was in the middle of retirement, with an imperial villa as her home. Though she remained just as powerful and influential as she was when she founded the Laverio Empire. Both her influence and beauty hadn't changed over the years. And, on top of that, she was also an A-Rank adventurer known as the White Winged Goddess. She involved herself in both the politics of the Empire and everyday affairs across the lands. Some said she was the most important person in the entire Empire, even more so than the Emperor himself.

...Wait. Isn't she supposed to be in retirement? The definition for retirement must be different in this world, thought Wataru.

Under Haku's protection, Wataru became a Hero known throughout the Laverio Empire. He formally left the String Knight Order that had been training him and became a direct subject of the Empire itself. A noble title was still being prepared for him, but in the meantime he was being considered one of Haku's personal bodyguards.

And why did a Hero such as he go to the [Cave of Greed]? Simple: He had seen one of the decks of cards brought to the Imperial Capital by a trader. The cards were made of a much higher quality paper than almost any he had seen in this world, and they had pretty pictures imprinted on them. The moment Wataru saw the cards, he couldn't help but remember the world he had almost forgotten... Earth, and his home, Japan.

On top of all that, the container for the box of cards had a barcode on it. It

was a clear, nostalgic sign that the cards were from his original world. Although residents of this fantasy world would only see it as a meaningless pattern, to him the barcode was an undeniable link to Japan. Wataru immediately considered finding out where the cards came from, or rather, where he could get them himself, to be his most important goal. He was Haku's bodyguard in name only, after all.

Completing that goal was surprisingly simple, as if his path had been prepared for him. After requesting leave from Haku and explaining why, she informed him that he was looking for the very place that she often snuck off to on private business. As she had no reason to stop him from going there, she granted his request and even prepared a carriage for him.

After about half a month of riding within the bumpy carriage, Wataru finally reached the [Cave of Greed].

"...This is the place, right?" Before him was a shabby Guild branch office and an inn. Nothing else. (He later heard about a nearby smithery, but he couldn't see it from where he was.) Wataru immediately headed for the inn... but right before going inside, remembered that he should probably visit the Guild first to announce his arrival. Unfortunately, they offered him a cup of tea that he couldn't refuse, which took more time than he would have liked.

...Being an S-Rank's not as easy as it sounds. This kind of thing never happened to me back when I was a C-Rank. But he couldn't go back to being a C-Rank even if he wanted to. Heroes are an automatic S-Rank within the guild. Automatic.

He headed back to the Inn.

"W-Welcome to my inn!" A girl in a dress greeted him immediately upon entry. Her long blonde hair fell to the ground as she bowed in greeting to him. She then glanced around the room before finally stammering out the rest of her greeting.

"Th-Thank you v-very much for vishiting... visiting our Dancing Doll Inn. I'm Rokuko, its owner."

The owner herself was greeting him. They must have been contacted about his arrival beforehand. But seriously, she was stammering so much. And she bit

her tongue midway through her sentence. Somehow... That felt very calming. Wataru subconsciously smiled. For some reason, he couldn't take his eyes off Rokuko. He felt something very familiar, very nostalgic about her.

"Sir? Wh-What is it?" Rokuko, confused by Wataru's staring, peered at him.

"Ah, e-er, nothing. I'm Wataru Nishimi. Ummm, I heard from Lady Haku that you have a suite room she recommends. She also said the food is really good."

"Bwuuuh?! O-Okaaay! Gimme just a secooond! Um, there's a chair right over there, go ahead and sit!" She left it at that and dashed into a hallway. Wataru noticed that she stopped being very polite by the end of her greeting, probably due to not being very used to interacting with visitors, but he didn't mind.

He sat in the recommended seat and took a deep breath. The air smelled slightly like Japan, he thought.

"Yeah... There's definitely something special about this place." He thought back to the past three years. A lot had happened. He started to wonder how his old buddies from the String Knight's Order were doing, but stopped before he remembered the traumas he had associated with that time in his life.

It wasn't long before Rokuko came back. Something about her definitely drew him in.

"The grand suite is this way. Please follow me." He followed after Rokuko. Before him were her swaying blonde hair and cute butt. He knew she wasn't trying to seduce him or anything of the sort, but for some reason, he couldn't look away from her butt. Its swaying form captivated him. *I don't get it. This has never happened to me before.* His heart beat faster as he felt something similar to lust mixed with nostalgia.

I want to try squeezing it... Wait, what am I thinking?! Wataru shook his head to get rid of his lustful thoughts.

"Sir?"

"Ah, uh, I-I didn't mean it!"

"Um, rather, this is the grand suite. And here is your key."

"...Thank you." Before he knew it, they had reached the grand suite. He took

the key from the owner and looked around the room.

The glass window, wallpaper, and furniture were all reasonable. He felt as if he had seen furniture exactly like it before, but it wouldn't be odd if they had been made within this fantasy world. But the massage chair in the middle of the room was a different story, especially since it would vibrate if you put money into a box beside it.

"...I don't see any power outlets or anything."

"Ah, sir. When will you be eating? We're serving breakfast right now, and... aaah, but you have to buy a food ticket first. Aaah, but I think visitors staying in the suite can order from their room?" It was very clear from her constant confusion that she wasn't used to dealing with customers. Thankfully, Wataru found that more amusing than anything.

"Hmm, I'll have whatever you recommend. I heard you have lots of delicious bread rolls here."

"My recommendation? Well, I'll have to recommend a [Melon Roll]... o-or at least, I would to other customers, but the white bread is the best we have. Yes. White bread." Melon Roll. Rokuko had said that entirely by accident, and Wataru didn't miss it.

"...Your name's Rokuko, if I remember correctly. Who are you, really?"

"Th-The owner of this inn, of course." Rokuko glanced away, but Wataru had more or less already guessed the truth. Haku liked this place. She recommended it. The design of the inn. After mulling everything together and drawing a conclusion, Wataru spoke.

"...Will you become my partner?"

"Eh? No way." She rejected him so fast and hard she didn't even try to be polite.

Keima's Perspective

Proposing to Rokuko? What, does this guy wanna die? Haku's gonna execute him the second he goes home if she hears about this. And I mean, that won't be a problem for me or anything, but I don't wanna abandon a Japanese brother of

mine like that. I'm in the middle of trying to live like a good person.

"...So, what should I do, Keima?"

"First of all, what exactly did he say to you?"

"Eh? Mmm, um, he said 'please become my partner,' or something like that." Rokuko blushed and fidgeted, but... was that really a proposal? Partner was a word with lots of different meanings. It certainly was often used to denote a married couple, but it could also just mean two people working together, like Rokuko and I. *I've called Rokuko my partner more than a few times, after all.*

...Ah...! Wait, is Mr. Automatic Translation playing some major tricks on me again?

"Hey, Rokuko. Would you mind defining 'partner' for me real fast?"

"Well, obviously, I turned him right down! You're the only partner I need, Keima!"

"Th-Thanks. So, you turned him down. What's the problem?"

"Hold on! Ummmm, well. He's being really pushy about it. He wants to eat breakfast with me so we can talk. You come too, Keima." *An invitation from a mighty S-Rank adventurer, huh? She could just turn him down like anyone else, there are no rules about obeying their every command or anything. But I guess we're gonna have to talk to him at some point; we may as well do it over a meal. And yeah, uh, I get the feeling letting Rokuko talk to him alone would be a huge mistake. She'll definitely let something major slip. Maybe she's already let something slip. It's possible. Like, what did she do that led to him asking her to be his partner? I can't even imagine. Was it just love at first sight?*

"I think I need to introduce him to you and really show him that I already have a partner."

"Yeah? Uh... I guess?"

"Come on, be more serious about this. You're my partner, aren't you?"

"Yeah, I'm your partner. Yep. Sure am." *Crap. Now I can't ask her what 'partner' means without sounding like a jerk.*

...Yeah, I'm just gonna pretend I never noticed this problem. Putting off

problems to deal with later is the classic Japanese solution to things. Glad to see I haven't forgotten my roots. Oh, right, and I can just ask the Hero what he thinks the word means.

* * *

And so, I ended up talking directly with the Hero. It was hard to turn down an invitation to eat together. We were in the grand suite, sitting at the table as Kinue laid out the A-Rank kid's lunch in front of us. I was sitting opposite to the Hero, wearing my Narikin mask so that I could pass myself off as the mysterious Earth Wizard adventurer. Rokuko was beside me.

Also, since I was trying to hide my black Japanese hair, I had converted the mask into more of a full plate helmet with slits for eye openings. I could lift up the mouth plate to eat. It was pretty convenient, so I planned on replacing my mask with it entirely. Dying my hair entirely was another option, but I didn't know how to dye it, and it'd be annoying to dye my hair whenever I had to do anything special in public. But most importantly, I didn't want to impact the quality of my sleep by messing with my hair.

"Greetings, lord Hero. I am Narikin. This is my partner, Rokuko. It is an honor to meet you."

"It's nice to meet you too. I am Wataru Nishimi... um, Narikin. Rokuko. I'm sorry to be so rude despite inviting you to this meal, but the food's so different from what I expected I don't know if I'll be able to say much for a bit. I'm sorry." The plan had been to talk while eating, but despite worrying if the children's lunch would be enough for him, the Hero had completely fallen head over heels for it. He had been staring at the food and the Cream Soda ever since Kinue started setting the table.

Maybe it had been a mistake to give him the normal A-Rank meal? Since he grew up in Japan, he knew how much a meal like this would actually cost. Even still, I thought that it was a bit ridiculous to ask five gold for it.

And so, the Hero became absorbed in silently eating his food. He had a deadly serious expression on his face the entire time. *Uh... You're like twenty years old, so it's kinda awkward watching you silently eat a lunch for children like this.* Rokuko and I ate silently as well. Even if we tried talking to him, he just shot us

down so hard it kinda felt like he'd murder us if we got in the way of his eating. *I knew it, he must be friggin' pissed about the price. Curse you, Ichika!* ...or so I thought, but apparently, I was wrong.

"...Thank you for the meal." Wataru, after drinking down all the Cream Soda and leaving not a single crumb on his plate... started crying.

"I'm sorry, this food just reminded me of my hometown... the home I'll never be able to return to." Three years. Haku said that Wataru had been summoned to this world three years ago. That's as long as it would take to enter and graduate from a Japanese high school. It wasn't a short time frame at all, and a lot must have happened to him over those years. I didn't know what, but judging from his reaction to the food, it wasn't hard to imagine that his life here had been a lot, lot harder than his old life.

"You can't go home?"

"Right. My home is in another world, and there's no way to reach it from this one. I'm still looking for a way to return, but... even if I do find one, I won't be able to use it. I've... I've killed people with my own hands since coming to this world. That is an unforgivable crime where I come from." He had killed people since coming to this world, and thus considered himself incapable of returning to Japan. He wouldn't be arrested for murdering fantasy people or anything, but I imagined he was talking from an emotional perspective.

"If you can't go home, why are you searching for a way back?"

"So that if I find someone else in my situation, I can help them return home. Well... That's one reason, but I guess homesickness is what really drives me. I miss my home more than I can describe." *This place is so much easier to live in than Japan that I don't really feel like going back myself, but maybe I'll start missing home eventually? As long as I get to sleep, I'm happy.*

"I understand why Haku recommended this inn to me. There's definitely a connection between this place and Japan. I have a lot of questions I want to ask you two. Is that okay?"

"...If they're questions I can answer, I will try."

"Okay... Rice. Where did you get the rice used in that meal?" *Oh crap, already*

throwing a hardball. Normally I'd just blow this question off and say Haku got it for me so I don't know, but this guy is a Hero who can ask Haku questions directly if he wants. If Haku says she doesn't know either, a clear contradiction will arise. Things would get pretty bad for us if he picks up on that contradiction.

"...Well, we are a business. I don't want to share all my secrets."

"Please, can't you do anything about that? I swear I won't tell anyone where you get it. I just want to eat rice again."

"Then I will provide it to you. I can't offer too much, but I should be able to sell you cleaned rice."

"Thank you so much...! Oh, right. But where does the rice come from?" *Give it a rest already, pal. I can understand why he's obsessed, though. Rice is the soul of any Japanese person. I get the feeling he'll just keep begging me for an answer forever until I cave in. Guess I should name some random country to get him off my back. Uhhh... I feel like Haku mentioned a country called Wakoku once. She said that's where cherries are grown or something? Alright, that's what I'll roll with.*

Wataru was quietly waiting for my response, likely thinking that I was debating on whether or not to tell him.

"Have you ever heard of the country Wakoku?"

"Yes, actually, I'm planning to go there someday. Because I mean, it's an eastern country and 'Wakoku' was an old name for the country I come from. It's a bit suspicious." *Oh... Oh crap! I never noticed that!*

"Er, well, Haku brings me cherries and stuff from there."

"Oooh, that must mean there are sakura trees there! I'm looking forward to that!" *Ah. Right. Sakura trees. Cherry blossom trees. Cherries. Makes sense. They probably don't look like the ones from Japan, but yeah. This Hero is making tricking him a lot easier for me. There might actually be rice ther—wait. Haku said she didn't know what rice is. I doubt she'd know what cherries are but not rice. Which means it probably isn't there.*

...Eh, I never said the rice came from there, so I'm still all good. Bring out all the lie-detecting magic tools you want. I've spoken nothing but the truth!

“That’s all I can say about where I get the rice.”

“Thank you. Next, I would appreciate it if you took a look at this.” Wataru thanked me and placed a box of cards on the table.

“I’ve heard that boxes of cards like this can be found within the [Cave of Greed].”

“You’ve heard right, they’re all over the place on the first floor. We buy them from adventurers for five coppers each.”

“...Narikin, take a look at this.” The Hero pointed at the corner of the box. *Uh... What? Is there something on it? Looks like a normal box of cards to me.*

“Hm? It looks normal to me. Are you showing us a card trick or something?”

“Wait, um, what’s this weird pattern thingy?” The Hero grinned. Rokuko’s comment made me realize what he was pointing out. I felt the blood drain from my face and a shiver run down my spine.

...It’s a barcode. These things have barcodes on them?! That’s it! We’re done for! No way out of this one!

“That’s what I’m talking about. This pattern is called a barcode, and a special technique allows one to extract information about a product through it.”

“Ah, now that you mention it, I have been wondering what this pattern meant. Very interesting.” I played it as cool as I could. *Yeah... This guy’s definitely thinking I’m Japanese. My reaction just now may have sealed the deal for him. We might have an ace detective on our hands.*

Oh, right. He definitely asked Haku about the barcode too. That must be why she was so sure I had some genius plan to attract Heroes: the barcodes were perfect bait. Sorry! It was just a dumb mistake!

“...So, basically, I think that this dungeon might be a key to finding my way back home.”

“I see. Well, investigate it all you want, but keep in mind this is a dungeon for beginners. Don’t tear it up too much.”

“Right. I’ll keep that in mind. Either way, I would like to rent this room for the next week.” With that said, the Hero Wataru bowed to us deeply. *Hm. He seems*

like a nice enough guy, but what should I do with him...

Oh. Right. I should follow up on that whole 'proposing to Rokuko' thing. Pretty sure he was just asking her to be his investigation partner or something, but yeah.

"By the way... I heard something about you proposing to Rokuko?" Wataru spat out his drink.

"E-Er, well, er... yeah, I did. She turned me down, though. But... I'm not giving up on her. I'll definitely make her fall for me."

"You do know that Rokuko is Haku's little sister, right? You're definitely gonna have an, uh, 'accident' if you lay your hands on her."

"Don't worry, I won't do anything without Rokuko's consent. I care about what she thinks." *If you care about what she thinks, why didn't you give up on her after she turned you down?*

"I also happen to be her partner already, so..."

"Oh, but she's not wearing a ring. Have you not given her one yet?" *A... ring?*

"I guess where you're from, Hero, there's a custom of giving a ring to one's partner? We live out in the country as you can see, so it's likely that our cultures differ in that respect."

"In that case, I can gift her a ring myself. I'll have one sent to her tomorrow if you can tell me her size."

"Hahahaha, no need. I can find a ring for her on my own. This isn't the kind of gift to leave to another person, I think." I glanced at Rokuko and saw that she was grinning, her cheeks flushed. *I feel like this conversation's going down a bad path. I was just saying what came to mind, but really, what the heck does "partner" actually mean to these two? He brought up a ring... Does he mean, like, a wedding ring?*

"That's right, we're definitely partners. Mmm... These kinds of rings go on the ring finger, right?"

"Yep. That's why it's called the ring finger." *Hey, I'm not so sure that's true. And... crap. Looks like they are talking about wedding rings. Or something like*

them, at least. I shoulda just manned up and asked what "partner" meant when I had the chance. I'm pretty bad at just going with the flow.

"Well, either way, I don't intend to give up on her."

"Uh, c'mon dude, you're obviously being dumb here. But anyway... Why Rokuko? You're a Hero. You should be drowning in girls."

"Well, it's a lot more complicated than that. You see..." Wataru lowered his gaze and began to tell his tale.

* * *

It all started three years ago. Wataru Nishimi, summoned to this world as a Hero, was assigned to the String Chivalric Knight's Order and led a soldier's life as part of his training. He had been only seventeen years old, still a high schooler—a teenager who loved video games and didn't have any particular fantasies about being a fantasy hero.

Defeating a Demon King. To achieve the goal he had been summoned for, the Hero Wataru hunted monsters and trained to grow more powerful. He trained and trained until one day, it finally happened. While raiding a bandit camp with his fellow knights... he killed for the first time. He took another human being's life. Wataru was struck with immense guilt. Although he knew that the bandit would have killed others had he been left alive, although he had swung his blade in a panic after seeing the bandit about to kill one of his comrades, Wataru was a civilized Japanese youth. The guilt and self-loathing he felt over murder was more than he could bear.

Wataru locked himself in his room. He skipped training for days in a row, so crushed by hatred for himself that he couldn't even move. But right when he resigned himself to a peaceful death through starvation, someone kicked down his door and forced him outside.

"Wataru, you idiot! If you die... who would I have left?!"

His fellow knight Pamella had saved him at the last possible moment. From that day on, Pamella actively hung around Wataru, spending as much time with him as possible. He talked to her about Japan. He talked to her about a lot of random, meaningless things. And Pamella listened to it all. She never pushed

him away or rejected what he had to say. She took everything with a gentle, kind smile.

Over time, Wataru gradually fell more and more in love with Pamella, until one day... he confessed to her.

“I feel the same way about you!” She accepted his feelings. Wataru was on top of the world. He was so happy that he worked as hard as he could to earn enough money to marry Pamella. He took any quest the Guild offered, no matter how hard or dangerous. Not even quests no other adventurer would even think about taking could make him balk.

However. Right after he settled on spending the rest of his life with Pamella...

“...Eeeh, no way. I like men with lots of muscles like you, Captain.”

“Hahaha! Yeah, Wataru’s a real bean sprout, huh? Alright. Come on, let’s go to my room.”

Wataru saw Pamella entering a room alone with another squad’s captain.

The next day, she smiled at him the same as ever. She hadn’t changed at all. Wataru tried to forget what he saw, convincing himself that it had all been just a dream. But then it happened. The duke got arrested and everything changed.

“...Pamella’s gone?!”

“Hey! There’s a note on her bed!” The note said, “Sorrryyy! The duke’s been arrested, so I’m out of here! Have a good one, friends!” and was signed Pamella Zan. The duke was arrested, so she left. At first, Wataru didn’t understand the connection. But he soon learned.

“Hey, I know shit’s real right now, but none of you jerks should be in my Pamella’s room.”

“Huh? YOUR Pamella? Quit jokin’ around, jerkface. Pamella’s my girl.”

“Hold up, you two. We were keeping it a secret, but Pamella and I had plans to get married soon.”

“No, we did! Pamella’s my fiancée, not yours!” Countless knights had secret relationships with Pamella. And when she disappeared, so too did all their savings.

An investigation afterwards discovered that she had spent all their money buying more mobile precious stones which she took with her when she fled. The investigation also revealed that Pamella was actually an assassin the duke had hired to keep the Hero under check... an assassin, and a con artist who tricked men into fake marriages for money.

Somehow, she had taken Wataru's savings as well. She even stole the few precious items from Japan that had come with him during the summoning process. He did manage to buy them all back from a nearby pawn shop, but it hurt to know that she had viewed even his most precious belongings as nothing but a source of quick cash.

"Pamella... I understand that she's a criminal. But surely, surely there's some tragic explanation to all this. There must be some reason she did all this." Wataru clung to an imperial investigator, having some slim hope that his relationship with Pamella had been real. But the next words that investigator said shattered that hope to dust.

"You know that the con artist Pamella Zan is a man, right? Women aren't allowed within the String Chivalric Knight's Order to begin with."

Oh God.

* * *

"...And that's how it happened."

"W-Well then. You have my deepest condolences." *Holy crap. This guy sure had a hard life. That's all I can say. Though if Pamella's a guy, I gotta wonder what happened in that room with the captain... wait, no. This isn't a path I want to walk down.*

"So, what does Pamella have to do with you proposing to Rokuko?"

"Nothing really. I just fell in love with Rokuko at first sight." *Nothing?! Then why'd you tell us all that?!*

"Ah, wait! It's not completely irrelevant, it's just, I think it's important to follow your heart with romance. Even if it's something as simple as falling in love at first sight."

“...That’s all?”

“Yes, that’s all.” *I listened to that whole story just for that? This Hero really needs to learn to get to the point.*

“...If you really care that much about Rokuko, I would like you to prove it.”

“Huh? Prove it...?”

“Yes. If you can prove that you two really are that close, I might find it in me to give up on her.” *Yeaaah, I don’t know what’s wrong with this guy. But I think I get what he’s saying.*

“So basically, Rokuko and I just have to kiss in front of you?”

“Hyaaahiiih?! N-No, h-h-hold on! N-No way, no way! I-I’m not ready for that yet, no way!” Rokuko shook both hands in front of her face, blushing bright red. *Seriously? If you turn a kiss down that intensely the Hero’s definitely not gonna drop this. Though if we did kiss, Haku would probably execute me later, so... This is fine too.*

“Hah, seems like Rokuko’s not up for a kiss. Which means I still have a chance to win her over and take her from you.” *Seriously? You’re just gonna say it like that? What a guy.*

“Now, now, Rokuko’s just a little shy, that’s all. We may not look it, but we are partners in body and soul.”

“Oh? Okay, let’s do it this way. I fell in love with her at first sight. Show me that you have what it takes to protect Rokuko. For instance... If you’re a better adventurer than me, I’ll be confident leaving her to you.”

“Hahaha, surely you jest. Isn’t it a little much to ask that I be a better adventurer than you, an S-Rank?”

“Don’t worry. I was a C-Rank before the Guild automatically boosted me up to S-Rank.” *C’mon, that’s gotta be because the duke was putting pressure on them. He didn’t want you shooting up the ranks and getting noticed by Haku, since she actually runs the Guild. Though, all that effort was wasted since he still got found out and executed.*

“Well, you do have a point. Let’s have several little competitions instead,

then. That way we can find out who's the better adventurer withou—wait, wait. Maybe you'll get more into it if I say it like this?" Wataru stood up and spoke in a deeper, "cooler" tone of voice.

"Narikin! I'll fight you for Rokuko!"

"No thanks." I shot him down.

"...Narikin! I'll fight you for Rokuko!"

"No thanks." *Saying it twice won't change anything.*

"But why?!"

"Because there's absolutely no reason for me to do so. Judging from everything you've said up to this point, what you're doing now is nothing more than trying to wrap me up in your failed confession. You're being a nuisance."

"Ngh! You're right!"

"Aw, why not? Go ahead, fight him over me." Rokuko, however, was pretty into the idea for whatever reason.

"Very well. But tell me, Hero, what's in it for me if I win?"

"Wha? Er, ummm... How abooooout... I keep quiet about you being a Japanese person, Narikin? Does that sound fair?"

".....Why would you suggest that I am Japanese?"

"Aren't you?" *Yep. I totally am, but saying that here would just be sealing my fate. And if I say no, he might have a lie-detecting magic tool that would likewise seal my fate. The only thing I can do here is change the topic and get him confused.*

"Let's assume I am a Japanese person. Why would you telling others that be a problem for me?"

"I don't know, but it must be problematic to you since you're wearing that mask to hide it. If it's not a problem, why don't you take off the mask so we can talk as Japanese people face to face?"

"It's possible that my face is just so scarred and hideous that I don't want anybody to see it. I would prefer it if you did not press this subject."

“Ah! I-I’m sorry! I didn’t think about that!” Wataru bowed in apology, accepting his mistake. *Dang. This guy’s a lot nicer than I thought he’d be.*

“Man, I really thought that you had made this inn, and that the name ‘Narikin’ came from the Japanese word for someone earning a ton of money really fast. I was totally fooled.” *Close, but no cigar. I took it from the shogi definition of narikin, since I share part of my actual name with a shogi piece. Better luck next time.*

I mean, technically, you pretty much got it already, but I’m not actually gonna say that.

“I see. That’s just... a coincidence, I suppose. It might be an odd name from your perspective, but it’s normal where I’m from. Also, this inn was built with designs from a past Hero as reference. It has peculiar magic tools within it excavated from the [Cave of Greed] which might have given you pause, such as that massage chair.”

“Hahaha, wow. Interesting. Do you mind if I take the chair apart to see how it works? I’ll even buy it if I have to.”

“I already gave that one to Haku. You’re going to have to give up on it.”

“Ngh, guess that means I have to find one in the dungeon, huh...?” *And finding one there is entirely up to luck... or rather, it’s up to me. Right now, at least.*

“...Very well, I have a suggestion. If I win, you give me a magic tool that can detect lies. I’ll consider accepting your challenge if you can agree to that.” A lie-detecting magic tool cost 50,000 DP. That meant I only had to convert fifty gold coins to DP in order to buy one. The grand suite cost twenty-five golds a night, so two nights would be enough. Getting it wouldn’t be a problem. I asked him for one anyway both because I wanted to actually get my hands on one and experiment with it, and because I wanted to see how easy it would be for him to get one. If I learned something about how rare they are, this little gambit would be more than worth it.

“Ah, w-well, I have heard of magic tools like that, but... sorry. I don’t have one. Countries force adventurers to sell those kinds of magic tools to them.”

“Even an S-Rank adventurer like yourself?”

“...Ah! That’s right, I’m an S-Rank now, it might be possible...! Aaah, but wait, I might need Haku’s permission... A-ah, but maybe Rokuko’s permission will be enough... U-Um. I’ll look into it. If it doesn’t work out, I hope you’ll be willing to change your terms.” *Eh, I’m a Dungeon Master. Nothing too bad should come from me breaking the law a little here. And man, this Hero really is a nice guy. That’s making it harder for me to mess with him.*

By the way, I only said I’d “consider” accepting the challenge. Don’t get ahead of yourself, bub.

“So, what’re you gonna do? Are you going to fight him for me?”

“Might I ask what will happen if I lose?”

“...Errr, please let me court Rokuko and all that.” *Wow, talk about restraint. I thought for sure he’d talk about bringing Rokuko back with him to the Empire or something.*

“Well, as long as you show respect for Rokuko’s feelings and don’t aggravate her, that’s fine.”

“Yes, of course. I wouldn’t forget to show a lady the respect she deserves.” Wataru glanced at Rokuko. She was grinning really wide. *Yeaaah... She’s super happy that he just called her a “lady.”*

“In any case, I refuse your challenge. There’s just no reason for me to accept.”

“I see, that’s unfortunate.” *Yeah? Well, you don’t look too sad about it. Mmm... I bet he’s planning something.*

But despite my suspicion, the meal ended without him pulling anything funny. *Anyway... I’m gonna hide out in the Master Room for the next week and pass it off as Narikin going off on a business trip or something. That should help me avoid having any more difficult conversations like this one.*

Day 156

And so, three days passed. We got about 4,500 DP from Wataru staying those three days. Plus, his room fee had totaled to seventy-five gold coins, with an additional twenty-five gold coins for food. We were making the big bucks. The

big bucks! Oh, and ten of those gold coins from the food came from a tip he gave Rokuko and me for eating with him. We were repaying the thanks by giving him a free sandwich each morning.

But man, the grand suite really is something special. We're making as much now as we do when Haku comes over. The Hero's not tipping Rokuko like Haku does, but he innately gives us DP just by existing. That's a big help, since Haku's passive DP value is 0 a day for whatever reason.

"Hey, Keima. When are you going to give me that ring? I've been waiting for it, you know."

"Huh? Ring? What're you talking about?"

"You forgot...?! L-Like, the partner ring?"

"Aaah, aaaah... That thing. I remember. Yeah, the ring. Right. So, what kind of ring do you want? Gold? Silver? Something flashy?"

"I just want whatever ring you think would fit me the best." *That kinda hands-off advice is the hardest to deal with... eh, whatever. This is a present, after all. Rokuko has blonde hair and blue eyes, so a bright red ring would probably look good on her. Roses would definitely look good on her. Might be smart to fit a nice gemstone in the ring... ah, I wonder how strong I should make it. Maybe I should look for some fantasy metal to make the ring with. Orichalcum costs a lot of DP, but a ring's worth of the stuff wouldn't set me back too far.*

"It'll take a bit before it's ready. Is that okay?"

"Eeeh, um, uh-huh. I'm looking forward to it." Rokuko left my room while fidgeting. *Is she holding in pee or something? Wait, no, she's a Dungeon Core. Must be something else.*

By the way, I asked Ichika what *partner* meant, and she told me it meant *companion* with a strong nuance of "two being as one." Married couples were often called partners, but so were parties of two friendly adventurers. It was common for such partners to wear matching accessories (not just rings). Rokuko and I were both adventurers, so it made sense for us to be considered partners. Though we had Niku and Ichika in our party as well.

Basically, Rokuko was just being a little silly when she thought the Hero was

proposing to her... yeah, nah. He doubled down on calling it a proposal during the lunch. Yeaaaah... Yeah. Unless I'm just being cocky here, I think Rokuko might be a little in love with me. I'm not sure what there is to love about me, but yeah. Honestly, I wouldn't mind if she was. She has the exact kind of cute feet that I love, after all.

But let's say that, theoretically, she and I got together... oh crap. Haku just murdered my theoretical self. How did that even happen? My imagination's too powerful for my own good...

I checked the monitor and saw that the Hero was talking to the current receptionist, Neruneh.

"Aaah, got some good loot today. Check these cards out! I got two boxes!"

"Wooow, that's awesome. By the way, what kind of magic can you use, Mister Hero?"

The Hero hadn't made any moves on Rokuko since we last met. Even if they crossed paths within the inn, all he would do was give her a wave and a nod. *Hmmm. This guy's definitely planning something. I'm so caught up tracking this guy I can barely sleep... Crap. How dare he get in the way of my rest like this.*

"So, would you like an A-Rank meal again tonight?"

"Mmm, nah, three days in a row is enough for me. I'll have a B-Rank tonight, please."

"'Kaaay, I'll bring it up to your room later."

"No need. I want to try eating in the cafeteria today. The whole food ticket system you have here seems pretty interesting." *Looks like he's not getting an A-Rank meal today. Too bad. Goodbye, money. But I guess a B-Rank meal is still worth a solid gold coin. I wonder how much money Heroes... or really, S-Rank adventurers make. They sure drop gold coins like they're nothing. Not that I'd ever risk my life working for money like that. All I want is a good night's rest each day.*

* * *

Right after I finished taking my pre-sleep nap, Rokuko came walking in, eating

a purin.

"Keima, the Hero is looking for you."

"...Me? Not Narikin?" *I dunno why, but I've got a bad feeling about this. I'm pretty sure he's never met me as anyone but Narikin before. Why's he looking for me, specifically?*

"Mhm, he's looking for you, Keima. He wants to talk to you about Niku, or something." *The Japanese Hero wants to talk to me about the dog-eared loli slave working in my inn. Yeah, alright, I can already guess what he has to say.*

"Euuugh, this feels like it's gonna be annoying... Can't you tell him I'm not here?"

"Weeell, the regulars in the end were all like 'That guy's always sleeping in the inn,' 'Keima? Oooh, that lazybones?,' 'I know the guy. He knows more about this dungeon than anyone,' and so on. They told him pretty much everything, so I think you're kind of stuck here." *Apparently, he gave them all free purins. That was pretty nice of him. Makes sense all the adventurers opened up to him. My inn has the best purins in the world, though they're cheap and only cost 1 DP each.*

Tch. I let my guard down. But a conversation about Niku, huh... Oh man, wait. Did he fall in love with Niku since Rokuko rejected him? Man, this Hero is a real playboy.

"...Alright, alright, I'll talk to him... Is he in his room?"

"He's waiting in the cafeteria." *Seriously? He's gonna have this talk in front of others?*

"He wanted to bring Niku to his room, but she turned him down, so he gave up and decided to wait there instead."

"Yeah, that Hero doesn't seem like the kind of guy to drag an unwilling girl to his room. But... he tried to bring Niku to his room, huh?"

I shook myself awake and headed to the cafeteria. I wanted to avoid meeting the Hero like this, but eh, whatever. Meeting him as Narikin had just been a cautionary step while testing the waters; my true identity wasn't a huge secret

or anything. Though I had hoped to hide it from him if possible.

The moment I entered the cafeteria, Niku came running and clung to me. Everyone turned to look at us.

“Master.”

“Hey. Good girl, good girl. What’s up?” I rubbed Niku’s head, causing her to happily wag her tail and ears. She was so sweet it warmed my heart. *Alright, time to take her back to my room and sleep.*

“...Are you Keima?” The Hero stopped us. *C’mon, man, read the friggin’ mood.*

“That’s right. Who are you?”

“Wataru Nishimi. I wanted to talk to you about that little girl, but now I have other business with you.” Judging from the direction of his gaze, Wataru was probably looking at my hair. *Sooo, did he figure out I’m Narikin? I didn’t use a fake voice or anything back then, so it’s possible.*

“It’d be a little hard to talk out here. Would you mind coming to my room?”

“Sure. I guess Niku should come with us?”

“...Errr, well, sure.” Wataru kind of hesitated there. But either way, I headed to the suite room with Niku in tow. Some of the crowd booed as we left, but I ignored them. Mob characters like them weren’t important enough to eavesdrop on a conversation with a Hero.

Wataru talked to me on the way to his room.

“...You’re Narikin, aren’t you?”

“Nope. I’m Keima.”

“You sound exactly the same! How are you here when you said you were out on a trip?!”

“Didn’t Narikin mention the horrible scars on his face? I don’t have a scratch on mine.”

“Ah, that’s true... Wait! I didn’t see the scars with my own eyes! I knew it, you just dressed up as Narikin to hide your black hair, didn’t you?!” *Tch. Couldn’t manage to trick him.*

“Um! You’re a Japanese person too, right?! You look like one, and the only people here with black hair are Heroes! Which means Japanese people!” *Oh really? I didn’t know that.*

“My parents were Japanese, and I know a lot about Japan. I don’t know everything about it, though.”

“...Oh, I see.” *Man, he sure looks disappointed. Guess he didn’t notice I never said I’m not Japanese.*

We finally reached his room.

“So, what did you want to talk to me about?”

“Errr, I said half of it on the way here, but... Is this girl Japanese too? She has black hair too, I mean. Not sure about the dog ears, though...” *He did just say that only Japanese people have black hair. There might be people with black hair that live a long ways away, but around here, it’s pretty rare. Honestly, I want to know where Niku came from too.*

“I found Niku recently, so I don’t know. Have any ideas, Niku?”

“...I don’t know anything about my past. All my memories are blurry. But... I’d be happy if I were the same as you, Master.” *What a little cutie.* I rubbed Niku’s head.

“...Er. You really are Japanese, aren’t you? Narikin.”

“I’m not Narikin. I’m Keima.”

“Alright. Keima. You named her Niku knowing what that word means, didn’t you?” *Huh? Knowing what “Niku” means? I know it’s slang for slaves, in this world at least. I learned that when Niku told me “I’ll do my best to be a good niku for you, Master.” a while ago.*

I double checked with Ichika to be sure and she confirmed that it was a slang word with a wide variety of meanings, from “pet” to “dakimakura.” Adventurers in particular often used it to mean “meat shield” or “enemy bait,” too. With harsh definitions like that, it didn’t seem like the best name in the world. But when I asked Niku if she wanted to change it, she told me that she didn’t want to change the first name she had ever been given. Either way, it wasn’t a

problem because she would do her best to live up to her name and be my shield in times of need. *Uh... Don't worry, I'm not going to use her as bait or anything like that. She's too important to me. Doubt I'll ever find another dakimakura as good as her.*

And since I was a Dungeon Master, a little bad publicity came with the business. If she wanted to keep her name, that was fine by me.

"Yeah, I know what it means. Is that a big deal?"

"I see... You gave her that name knowing what it means, huh?" *Crash!* Wataru hit the table so hard it broke.

It all happened in an instant. I had built the table to be pretty strong, but Wataru split it in two with a single slam of his fist. It collapsed in on itself like a V-shape.

A moment later, I broke out in a cold sweat. *Wh-Why the heck did he break the table?!* Or so I thought, but Wataru immediately grimaced like he had a made a mistake. And Niku had jumped in front of me protectively with her Golem Knife brandished, glaring at the Hero. *Oh geez, this girl's super cool.*

"...I didn't mean to hit it that hard. I will pay you back for the table. But aren't you ashamed to hide behind a little girl like this?!"

"...That'll be five hundred gold coins for the table." Wataru immediately started stammering after hearing that and asked if he could pay in installments. *Heh. Five hundred gold coins get. I'm gonna charge you extra for emotional distress, too.*

"Ahem... I didn't think you were the kind of guy to lay your hands on little girls! I can't leave Rokuko with you! Don't get near Haku's little sister!" *What? Lay my hands on her? The hell is this guy saying? He must think that all slaves are sex slaves or something. What a pervy dude.*

"All the lolicons I knew followed a strict philosophy of *Yes Loli, No Touch*. They would never lay their hands on an actual child. In some ways, they were better men than all of us...! Men among men!" *What are you even talking about...?! Oh, wait, I guess I technically am touching her. But only as a pillow.*

"Master, should I take him down?"

“Nah, we better play it cool. He is a Hero.” *Man, Niku’s ready to friggin’ go. She’s one hundred percent confident that she could beat an actual Hero. My little girl sure has grown... sniff...*

But anyway. Putting that aside, I gotta deal with this pissed off Hero somehow.

“Y’know, I heard something about you trying to bring Niku to your room, Hero.”

“Wha?! Hey, hey, that wasn’t anything sexual! I just wanted to talk to her about her black hair.”

“I wonder about that... Seems fishy. I’ve heard you’re the kinda guy to propose to a girl the day you meet her.”

“Th-There’s a deep reason for that...! Ngh, nevermind.” *Oh? There’s a deep reason for it, huh...?*

.....

Did Haku tell him to figure out what kind of relationship Rokuko and I have or something? That would make everything come together. Why he was so calm after getting turned down, why he said he couldn’t “leave” Rokuko to me, why he broke the table, and so on.

Wow. This Hero is Haku’s mole. Which means he might not just be here for a visit. He’s probably trying to find any excuse he can to take Rokuko back to the capital with him. I can already imagine Haku accepting Rokuko home with open arms... maybe even open legs. She might even buy a professional chef to mimic melon rolls. I wouldn’t put it past her to keep Rokuko metaphorically trapped with a room stuffed full of melon rolls. And since I promised Haku I would send the Hero back safe, I can’t take him down myself. Was this seriously all a Haku setup?

Alright, time to counterattack. Just not in a way that’ll end up hurting him.

“Alright. Let’s have a duel.”

“What? A duel? Wait... A duel! You’ll finally duel me?!” Wataru ate the bait in no time.

“That’s exactly what I wanted! I accept! Well, it’ll have to be a duel where we agree not to kill each other, but sure. I think the open area in front of the cave will be a good spot. When will the fight begin? I’m ready now if you’re ready.”

“Wait, wait, wait. I’m obviously not gonna challenge a Hero to a head-on fight, c’mon. Take a look at this.” I showed him a dice. It was a normal, six-sided dice.

“That’s a six-sided dice. Oh, are we going to play a tabletop RPG?! No way, do you have a rulebook here?!”

“Stop jumping to conclusions already, sheesh. Think a little more before you say something.” *No way are there tabletop games in this world. C’mon, dude.*

...Actually, it might be a good idea to try spreading them around. I can already smell the profit.

“I’m talking about some nice and simple gambling. We get an equal amount of chips and then fight to see who can end up with the most. We can play Tower and Dice, Cee-Lo, Chou-han, or anything like that. Do you know the rules?”

“...I feel like I read about them in some manga a long time ago. I don’t recognize Tower and Dice, though. What are the rules for it?”

“You roll the dice and make a stack of chips as big as the number you rolled. Repeat three times and whoever has the biggest stack of chips wins. And that’s that. It’s a simple numbers game where the best out of three rolls wins. We’ll play ten rounds this time and whoever wins the most chips wins the duel. How about it?”

“That’s simple enough to understand. Let’s do it.”

“You agree to this being our duel, then?”

“Yes.” Wataru nodded. He seemed oddly confident.

“What about the dice? Want the inn to give us some dice?”

“No, I have some dice I found on my own. I may as well use these.” Wataru took some dice out of his nearby bag. He probably found them in our dungeon.

“Okay, let’s decide on the stakes. If I win, you give me a lie detecting magi—

actually, never mind that. I'd rather have another five hundred gold coins."

"Fair enough. If I win, I'm taking Rokuko back to the capital with me. And this girl, too." Niku glared at the Hero after he pointed at her. Her eyes were saying that she wouldn't be going anywhere with him. *Don't worry, Niku, I'm not giving you up.*

"Woah, now, Rokuko? I'm just her employee, I don't get to gamble her away. She's not my slave or anything like that."

"Wha?! B-But aren't you partners?!"

"Huh? Are you mistaking me for someone else? I'm Keima. An adventurer she hired." *As long as I pretend to not be Narikin, I can't gamble Rokuko away even if I wanted to! Rokuko and I may be party members, but we're not adventuring right now!*

"...Or what, can you gamble on Haku's freedom? You can't, right?"

"There's no way I could gamble her!"

"See? Same for me with Rokuko. And you already said you'd be dueling me. No backing out now."

"Whaaaat?! Th-Then, errr... That girl, and a discount on the table's repair fee...?"

"...Eh, sure. Niku's worth way more than five hundred gold coins, but whatever." I took out the crystal dice I'd be using. They were Golem Dice I had made out of empty potion bottles. Of course, I'd be using them to cheat.

* * *

"Looks like I won. That'll be an extra five hundred gold coins, thanks."

We had dragged in a smaller table than the one Wataru broke and played a game of Tower and Dice. Unsurprisingly, I won.

...But the Hero had some pretty incredible luck, almost always getting at least one 5 and one 6 in each of his three rolls. He had such good luck I started to question if he was cheating. I even checked his dice midway through the game, but it wasn't fake with only 4s, 5s, and 6s on it or anything like that. It was a completely normal dice exactly like the kind you could find in our dungeon.

Nothing suspicious about it at all.

But after intentionally losing and piling on some minor victories, I won anyway by a narrow margin.

“Aaah, so close. Too bad for you.”

“...I-I want a rematch!”

“Hmmm, alright, if you insist. Let’s bet on one thousand gold coins next. It adds up, so you can pay back your whole debt in one go if you win this one!”

“Ngh... No, I’ve got a bad feeling about this. Let’s play again, but gambling one hundred gold coins each this time.”

“Alright, one hundred gold coins.”

* * *

“Aaah. I lost. Dang, I lost pretty hard. Oh well. That’s one hundred gold coins from me, so you only have to pay me nine hundred now. Congratulations!”

“Th-Thanks.”

We rolled the dice again and I basically got crushed. *Yeah... His luck was amazing. He got a 5 and a 6 almost every round. He must be cheating somehow. I played this game without cheating and lost hard. I only won like two rounds.*

“Alright, you’re probably satisfied by now, so let’s call it a day.”

“No! Hold on. This time for sure, I’ll save that girl!”

“What? Okay, if you really want to play again, let’s gamble one thousand and four hundred gold coins each. I’m not gonna gamble on Niku while you still owe me money.”

“Alright, let’s do this!”

* * *

I was honestly starting to feel bad for him, so I decided to end it there.

“Okay, that’ll be two thousand and three hundred gold coins.”

“.....Um, that dice is fake, right?! I don’t know what you’re doing, but you’re obviously cheating somehow!” Wataru came clawing at me with utterly false

charges.

“What do you mean, fake? I let you take a good look at it earlier. It’s specifically made of crystal so you can see the inside of it and confirm with your own eyes that it’s just a normal dice.”

“What do you think the chances of getting nothing but 1s or 6s each time are?!” *Considering the fact the fact that this dice always lands on the side I pour mana into before rolling it, I’d say one hundred percent.*

“I could ask you the same thing, oh great and mighty Hero. What’re the chances of getting at least two 5s or above literally every round? My good luck probably has something to do with your good luck.”

“But the {Ultra Good Fortune: Level 1} skill I got from the god is a unique skill only I have... The only way something could beat it is... ah! You are a Japanese person who got summoned here, aren’t you?!” *Friggin’ Wataru had a skill like that...? Whew, I never would have won if I fought him fairly. I guess I should have expected a Hero to have some kind of cheat skill like that. Other than the auto translator. Too bad for him that he told me about it all on his own. That saves me a lot of trouble.*

“My powers only come into effect when I’m protecting my friends. That’s why they ended up stronger than yours.”

“S-So that’s how it works...” Wataru nodded to himself as if it all made sense. *And hey, I’m not lying. I would have gambled fairly if Niku hadn’t been on the line.*

“And here’s the other reason I wasn’t worried about this duel. Hey, Niku. This is an order. Tell me honestly whether you dislike being my slave or not. Don’t hide anything.”

“Understood. Master treats me very well and I’m living a very, very fulfilled life. If I ended up separated from Master I would fight to the death, unless Master ordered me to go.” Niku let it all out without hesitating for a moment.

“Ummm, er, is that true? Your master doesn’t hurt you or anything?”

“He does not. Master saved me.” Wataru looked between Niku and I, mulling over the word *saved*. He seemed to have figured something out.

“Well, there you have it. That’s the last freebie I’m giving you, so yeah. Do you know why you lost now?”

“...Um, two thousand and three hundred gold coins is a bit much, don’t you think?”

“You better pay up. Nobody forced you to take those gambles.” *He was summoned three years ago when he was seventeen, which makes him twenty now. That makes him a legal adult in Japan. Yeah, I’m not letting him off easy here. That many gold coins would be worth over two billion yen, which would take a normal Japanese person multiple lifetimes to pay back, but he’s an S-Rank adventurer here. He’ll be able to pay me back easily if he works a little hard.*

“Like I said, you can pay in installments if you want. Pay one hundred golds a month and it’ll take a year and eleven months. You’ll be done before two years are up. Simple, right?”

“Eugh... That’d be completely impossible if I weren’t an S-Rank adventurer, seriously...”

“As a favor to Haku, I won’t charge you any interest. Be grateful that I’m not threatening to use this debt to enslave you.”

“...Right. Thanks so much...” *It’d be impossible if you WEREN’T an S-Rank, huh? That means you can pay it back. Good luck, Hero.*

For safety’s sake I had him sign a contract guaranteeing that he would pay us one hundred gold coins a month for next year and eleven months. *Go forth, my piggybank, and complete countless valuable quests fit for an S-Rank adventurer. Ask Haku to introduce you to some high-paying jobs if you have to!*

“By the way, this isn’t counting the table fee.” The Hero was close to tears. *Yeah, maybe squeezing two billion yen out of him is a bit much.* That thought crossed my mind while picking up the chips and dice off the table, but I shook it off after seeing the broken table. *Fixing things is annoying, even if {Create Golem} does make it easy. I’ve gotta redraw the furnishing and everything, not to mention making it even more sturdy.*

“But if you care about your friends enough to have a skill like that, Keima, why

did you name this girl Niku?” Wataru looked at me with a confused expression on his face.

“She likes the name. And that’s what her name was when I found her.”

“But still, leaving her with a lewd name like this is a bit...”

“Huh? A lewd name...? Doesn’t it just mean like, meat shield and stuff? That’s what I was told.” The Hero smacked his forehead after hearing that.

“Ahhh... I get it now. I knew something was up here. The word is generally only used like that towards male adventurers. When used towards small girls like this one, especially cute ones, it means something totally different. Well, it’s slang and can get pretty different depending on where you are, but still.” *Hm. Interesting.*

“...Alright, let’s hear it. What does ‘niku’ mean when it comes to girls?”

“Master, ‘niku’ refers to tools and things. Like shields, walls, and so on.” I asked the Hero, but for some reason, Niku responded instead. *Yeah, that’s what Ichika told me too.*

“...Aaah, er... That’s not quite right either. It does mean meat shield and so on for men, but uh, when it comes to women, er... it means like, a sexual tool.”

...I looked at Niku. She averted her gaze.

“And using it to mean ‘sexual tool’ is very common. Almost anyone will think of ‘sex slave’ if they see a girl being called a niku.”

“Hey. Niku.”

“Umm... Ichika told me that it meant a girl who takes care of her master at night.”

“Geh. Alright. Niku, bring Ichika to my room. I’ve got something to talk about with you two.”

“U-Understood.” Niku dashed off on her short legs to get Ichika.

Having seen all that, the Hero timidly asked me something.

“...Er, what are you going to do with them?”

“Ask them what’s up and depending on the answer, punish them. Might give

them a good spanking or something.”

“Oh, that’s pretty nice of you. I’m glad to hear you’re not going to sell or murder them.” *I wouldn’t do anything like that. Niku and Ichika are invaluable to this inn and the dungeon.*

“Aaah. Guess I gotta give her a new name.”

“That’d be for the best, I think.”

...I wonder what kind of name I should give her. I don’t really want to change it from Niku... but I’m not planning on using her as a “sexual tool” or anything like that, so...

In any case, I successfully got the Hero out of his room, warding off his questions about whether or not I’m actually from Japan. He was still curious despite his massive debt of two thousand and three hundred gold coins. *I’ll get some helper golem to carry out this broken table. I’m sure Kinue would love to clean this up.*

When I went back to my room, I saw Niku and Ichika prostrating in front of me. Or rather, below me. They were right beside each other, on their knees with their heads lowered.

“I-I’m sorry, Master...”

“I’m super duper totally sorryyy!”

“Alriiight. You can lift your heads up for now. First, I wanna know how things ended up like this.” Despite me saying that, Niku kept her head lowered, which meant I was stuck talking to Ichika who had lifted her head while awkwardly laughing.



“Weelll, ummm, ’kay. I knew what ‘niku’ actually meant. I totally did. But like, I couldn’t really go around saying it. I mean, I’m a girl. It’d be super embarrassing, and liiike, you know, I used to be called a ‘niku’ at my old place, sooo...”

“Didn’t I tell you to warn me when I’m misunderstanding things?”

“...Buuut I totally thought you knew already, Master. ’Cause like, you were bringing Niku to your room every night, and you kept talking about her being your dakimakura, how she’s taking care of you at night... I thought for sure you knew what her name meant.” *Ngh. Yeah, I’m pretty sure I said things like that when Rokuko wanted to barge into my room too. And even though I’m just using Niku as a pillow, I definitely am sleeping in the same bed as her every night.*

After a moment’s pause, Niku timidly lifted her head.

“...I knew that you wouldn’t make a mistake, Master. So... I wanted to do my best as a niku...”

“R-Really. Well, uh... Alright. I’ll just have to give you a new name now.”

“A-A new... name...?”

“What name do you want? I’m open to requests.”

“I want to keep my name.” *Yeah, that’s not the kind of request I was looking for.* I sent Ichika a glance, requesting her help.

“...She’s a beastkin, dude. Names are important to beastkin... especially, like, the first name they’re ever given. Niku, you can’t remember your original name, right?”

“Right. Because my name is Niku.” Niku spoke with pride in her voice. *I’m, uh, I’m impressed she’s so proud of her name even though she knows what it actually means.*

“Errr, so, about your new name.”

“I don’t want to change my name.” Niku responded immediately. *Aaah... I can already tell she’s not gonna listen no matter what I say. She’s got that determined look in her eyes. What a paaain.*

“...Alright then, I’ll just give you a last name. How about Kuroinu? It means ‘black dog’ in my language.” I decided to give her a nice and innocent last name that wouldn’t give anyone pause.

“Niku Kuroinu.”

“Yup. I’ll call you Kuro for short in front of people.”

“And you’ll call me Niku when we’re alone?”

“...Eh, sure. If only Rokuko, Ichika, or other people we know are around, sure.” I rubbed Niku’s head. She looked really relieved that she wouldn’t be losing her name. She must really like it. *Guess I should go to the Guild and update her name tomorrow. It’ll cost thirty silvers, but thanks to a certain gullible Hero, we have plenty of leeway with money now.*

“Okay. I’m a human too. I don’t know everything, and I make mistakes. I’d really appreciate it if you’d point out when I’m misunderstanding something.”

“...Understood.”

“Alrighty dude. You can count on me.”

“I’m partially at fault here, so... yeah, no punishment for either of you.”

“Wheeew... Er, what kinda punishment were you thinking of, anyway?”

“I was planning on making you two wear knee socks, or maybe loose socks. Of course, you’d be forbidden from using {Purification} on them, and you’d be wearing them for about three days straight. And naturally I’d have you wear loafers while working, and sneakers while exercising or what have you.”

“That’s just you being maximum horny!”

Heh heh heh. What a fearsome punishment. Though only fellow foot fetishists can really appreciate how fearsome it really is.

“Oh yeah, and you’d each have to give me a foot-stomping massage daily for about a month. There’d be a ban on gambling, too, and I’d lower the quality of your food to what’s standard in this world. No more hamburgers.” Niku and Ichika both paled in horror.

“Geez, that sure was close. That kind of punishment would totally kill me...”

“Th-That’s Master for you... S-Scary...”

...They were even shaking in fear. *Are knee socks really that scary?*

Wataru’s Perspective

Wataru Nishimi was a Hero. But even so, two thousand and three hundred gold coins was a little... no, was pretty... no, was extremely rough for him. So, he canceled his stay in the grand suite and started getting cheaper food. Haku was paying for his stay, but having no other choice, he shifted to using those funds to help pay Keima back.

...Embezzlement? No, it was just using funds where they were needed. *A-And I’ll tell her about it later.*

But despite switching to a cheaper room, Wataru didn’t have any problems at all. In fact, he quite liked his new futon. So much so that he even decided to stay in a cheaper room from the start if he ever came to the inn again. Plus, he could still enter the onsen as much as he wanted, not to mention the recreation building. He’d want to visit again just to experience the onsen. Forget about the dungeon.

“...But man, being in debt sure is rough... Haaah...” Wataru sighed to himself while eating cream stew in the cafeteria.

“Oh? What’s wrong, friend?”

“Ah, hello. Mister... uhhh, Dwarf?”

“I’m Gozou. Thank ye for the purin yesterday. So, what’s having you sigh all over the place?”

“Ah. I’m Wataru. Err, well, some things happened. Aaand now I’m in debt.” Wataru laughed and smiled slightly to hide his sorrow.

“Are ya now? That’s one fall from fortune. I’m guessing that happened after you took Keima to your room? What the heck went on in there?”

“Hahaha, well, this should tell you all you need to know.” Wataru showed him his dice. He rolled it around in his hand a bit. It landed on a 6.

“I’m a little confident when it comes to gambling, but well, luck wasn’t on my

side this time.”

“Watch yourself, man. You’ll ruin yourself if you’re not careful. Y’know the receptionist here, Ichika? She got turned into a slave ’cause she piled on gambling debts. Though looks like she’s pretty happy workin’ here despite all that.”

“Ahaha. I’ll be careful.” Wataru forced a smile. If he weren’t an S-Rank adventurer, a two thousand and three hundred gold coin debt would already be enough to ruin him. He’d be a slave for sure. Never in his dreams did he expect to get bundled with so much debt in less than an hour of rolling dice. *Gambling is scary. So, so scary.*

“But Keima, huh? I’ve never actually seen him gambling before... Between you and me, I go way back with Keima. I could ask for a favor and see if I could get him to lessen your debt a bit if you need me to.”

“Hahaha, thank you, but I think I’ll be fine. He told me I didn’t have to worry about paying back interest, so yeah. I should be able to manage.”

“Oooh, really now? That’s good t’hear.” Gozou took a chug from his mug of beer as he spoke.

“Oh, is that beer? I thought that this inn didn’t sell beer.”

“Ye heard right. I bought this from a passing merchant. The inn doesn’t deal with beer itself, but there’s no rules against bringing your own in. Long as you don’t get drunk and break anything, that is. Hm... Want some? Ye did treat us to those purins yesterday.”

“Sure, I’ll have some. Thanks.”

In truth, Wataru had never drunk beer before. He had been summoned to this world when he was seventeen, and in Japan it was illegal to smoke or drink alcohol until you were twenty. But thinking about it, Wataru was already that old. There was no problem with him drinking, he just had never been given a good opportunity to do so.

Wataru took the beer mug from Gozou and took a swig. It was thick and smelled strongly of alcohol, but Wataru didn’t dislike it.

“Whew, laddie. That was a good swig.”

“I’ve never had beer before, but this is actually pretty good.”

“Never had beer before, eh? Hrm, ye might be a natural. Go ahead, lad, drink up. I’ll just drag ya outside if ye start goin’ wild.”

“...I think I’ll take you up on that offer. Thanks.”

“Anytime. Nothing’s so bad that drinking beer won’t make you feel better.” Gozou took out another beer-filled mug and took a swig.

After the two of them drank together for a while, Gozou’s partner Roppe came inside. Gozou was a dwarf, but Roppe was a human female.

“Oh, a drinking party, huh! Haven’t seen you around these parts, boy. You a newbie?”

“I’m Wataru Nishimi. A Hero.”

“Yer a Hero? Color me surprised.”

“A Hero?! That makes you an S-Rank, doesn’t it? Wooow. You were drinking with him and you didn’t know that...? Here, I’ve got some too!” Roppe took out her own mug and started drinking too. For better or worse, there was nobody to stop them.

“Eeeh?! Two thousand and three hundred gold coins?! He sure wrung you dry, huh?”

“Yeah, he did! Keima’s a monster! A demon! Friggin’ Keima!”

“Woah now, yer bein’ rude there. A demon woulda let you off after just fifty gold.”

“Ngh... I’m gonna have to work hard for half a year to pay this back...”

“Eeeh?! You’re actually gonna pay it back?! Wow, S-Ranks are amazing!”

“Hey, if I pulled out all the stops and did every job possible, I could pay it back in a month! I won’t do that since I’d make enemies, though.”

“Good call, ye don’t want to go around making enemies. Anyway, friend, drink up. This is all on me today.”

“Thank yooou!” Wataru drunk down all the beer Gozou put in front of him.

“Hey, hey, Wataru. What in the world did you do to Keima anyway? A debt that big just isn’t normal.”

“Haha, wellll, it was just a little mistake... You know that dog-eared girl who was working in this cafeteria yesterday? It had something to do with her.”

“Aaah, that little girl. Yer not a fan of that kinda thing, then?”

“Hahaha, yeah, pretty much. Just thinking about a little girl like her being enslaved and suffering made me want to save her. You know what I mean? As a man, I felt like it was my duty to help her.”

“Wooow! You’re so cool, Wataru. But sorry, you really shouldn’t do that kind of thing. Slaves are the legal property of their owners. And that girl’s, like, completely head over heels for Keima. She’s fine being his slave.”

“Seems so... Haaah. I stuck my head where it didn’t belong and got a two thousand and three hundred gold coin debt as thanks. Haaah... That’s 23,000,000 Lyons...”

“Alright, it’s settled. Drink up! It’s all on me today. There’s plenty of beer left!”

“Thank yooooou!” Wataru kept drinking all the beer Gozou set out. He drained his mug dry and slapped it onto the table with a satisfied, groggy nod.

“Hey, Gozou, shouldn’t we just head to Kantara’s place? You’re talking about how much beer you have left, but isn’t it all at the smithery? And we can be a lot more festive over there than here.”

“Oooh! You’re pretty smart, Roppe! ‘Scuse me, Kinue! Bring out all the best snacks you got. C’mon, Wataru! We’re going to the smithery!”

“I’ll follow you to the end of the world, Gozou!”

“Kinue, girl, here’s some money to cover the bill. Would you mind bringing the snacks to the smithery?”

“That won’t be a problem at all. I’ll have Rei bring them to you. I imagine fried potatoes will be acceptable?”

“The crispier the better. Thanks!”

And so, the three of them found themselves great friends in the midst of all their drinking and Wataru’s complaining. They would later form a party called “Team Bacchus” that would travel across the world, but that’s another story. As an aside, their main objective would be to spread the joy of drinking beer throughout the world. Conquering dungeons? That was a side thing.

* * *

Wataru woke up the next day completely refreshed, having no hangover whatsoever.

“Maaan, I had no idea that beer tasted so good.” Perhaps due to his natural endurance, or perhaps due to his buffed strength as a Hero, he didn’t have to worry about drinking too much and waking up trashed. He could count on waking up feeling totally fine, which was a good thing since he planned on going to the [Cave of Greed] again. He thankfully wouldn’t have to postpone his trip due to a hangover.

Also, it was about time for him to return home—however briefly—so this was the last day that he could thoroughly explore the dungeon. He intended to go as far as he could.

“...Time to get started.” Wataru put on his Hero equipment and headed for the dungeon.

The Hero Wataru entered the dungeon. He quickly passed through the first floor and entered the labyrinth area. Normally, he’d spend the rest of the day exploring the labyrinth, but this time he passed through it as well and finally reached the puzzle area.

“Okay. Nobody’s gotten past this floor yet. It’s all unexplored territory from here on out. I’ve gotta be careful.” Despite there being no one around to hear him, Wataru murmured to himself and glared at the door in front of him. It was a puzzle door. In this world they were known as [Gates of Wisdom], and Wataru knew them very well.

“...Okay, this one’s math. Looks like some simple multiplication and division will do the trick.”

He conquered the first gate.

“Oh man, this match stick puzzle reminds me of Japanese quiz shows. I just gotta flip this triangle upside down, I think.”

He conquered the second gate.

“Aaah, this is a pretty famous riddle. In my world, at least. ‘A hole in a bucket.’ Yeah.”

He conquered the third gate.

“...Er, is it just ‘simple’”

He conquered the fourth gate, and thus all the gates in the puzzle area.

I guess that was a little hard, Wataru thought to himself, not knowing that Haku would probably headbutt him if she heard him say that. And so, he reached the spiral staircase area. The Guild had absolutely no information on this area or any area following it. Keima might have known something, since he had apparently gotten further into the dungeon than anyone else, but Wataru found it hard to ask for help from someone he owed a debt to.

In this world, it was normal and expected to hide information if it benefited you. Asking someone to reveal that information would be indebting yourself to them. In Wataru’s case, he couldn’t afford any more debt. Of course, information related to conquering a dungeon was no exception. Excluding any information related to extremely deadly traps, that is, such as one that would lock people in a room unless they return a Magic Blade to its pedestal. The Guild would buy that kind of information and publicize it. They didn’t want adventurer after adventurer walking to their deaths, after all. That would only hurt their organization.

The spiral staircase area was like a giant vertical cylinder with a spiral staircase in the middle. Wataru peered down the center and saw the floor.

“...Looks like the center’s a hole straight down to the floor. Maybe just jumping down would be faster?”

The thought crossed his mind, but he tossed it out after seeing that the floor was so distant he’d break his legs if he tried.

He descended the staircase, taking a close look at each step on his careful way down. When he reached the halfway point, a wall suddenly jutted outwards. However...

“Woah, that’s dangerous.” So he said, but the wall wasn’t actually that dangerous to Wataru, so much so that he avoided it by nimbly jumping on top of it. He thought about how he would’ve been pushed into the center had he been a little slower, and thus finally realized why the center of the staircase was a big hole. Not that his realization particularly changed anything.

After reaching the bottom of the stairs, he encountered a new area that felt sectioned off from the rest. It reminded him a lot of historic ruins left behind by past human civilizations. He advanced into it while checking for traps and soon came across a room, which he entered. There was a treasure chest in the room.

“Oh, a treasure chest! Heheheh. I wonder what’s in this baby. I hope it’s some manga or something...!” Wataru had hoped that the chest would contain something from another world—that is, from Japan—but all he found within it was a sword. He was a little disappointed, but upon closer examination, he saw that it had a magic stone embedded within it.

“Ah, right, I remember people talking about finding Magic Blades in this dungeon. Mmm, I guess it sharpens a lot when you pour mana into it? Not that great, but it should help with my debt... I wish it had been something from Japan, though.”

Within the hierarchy of Magic Blades, those that sharpened themselves were among the worst. Higher tier blades would have much more powerful spell effects. To an S-Rank Hero, this Magic Blade was just a third-rate piece of equipment that at best would help pay back a little of his debt. Ironic, considering how desperate he would have been for something like it back when he was a C-Rank.

He advanced onwards, defeating Iron Golems as they came, and found more Magic Blades within other rooms. They all had the same sharpening effect. He was putting them and the corpses of the Iron Golems into his Space-Time Magic {Storage}, but it was filling up fast.

“Maybe I should’ve emptied it out a little before here... Wait, nah. I adventure

alone, I need all my equipment all the time. Nothing I can do about that."

After finding about twenty Magic Blades lying around, he stumbled upon stairs leading downwards. He considered turning back for the day, but he wasn't just feeling fine—he was feeling great. Worst case scenario, he could take out the Iron Golem corpses and replace them with something more valuable. With that in mind, Wataru decided to go ahead and check out the next floor.

Keima's Perspective

I know I'm intentionally holding back here, but it doesn't feel great to see him crushing our dungeon like this. Nothing I can do about it, though. If I killed him with an insta-death trap Haku would be pissed, and he's so strong that summoning monsters powerful enough to fight back would just be a huge waste of DP. I mean, holy cow, he cuts Iron Golems in half without even trying. What's up with that?

I had hoped that he would get stuck at the "Four Room Hallway of Puzzle Doom," but he crushed it in no time too. It was really just bad luck. I swapped out the puzzles regularly, and it just so happened that today's puzzles were easier than normal... *Okay, yeah, that's just a lame excuse. Sorry.* The subsequent spiral staircase area was filled with Wall Golem traps that more than made up for the lack of enemies. Getting hit by one of those and falling down the middle would lead to broken legs at best. Most people would just turn into a red splat on the ground... but he got past them like they were nothing. *Dammit. This is the first time anyone's gotten this far and none of it's working. Maybe I should rethink this area a little.*

In any case, Wataru was actually a fairly skilled adventurer. I shifted gears into loading the next area with treasure to hopefully encourage him to head home faster. Also, although I had made a bunch of unique and cool golems to wander around this storeroom area, I didn't want Wataru to see anything he didn't have to see. I replaced them all with normal golems. *Yep. Splitting them right in two. Those are some cleaaan cuts.*

"You sure are putting a lot of Magic Blades out today."

“Yep. This is the first time anyone’s reached the storeroom. I want him to get tons of stuff and spread the word when he gets back. Free advertising.” *With the lower tier Magic Blades our dungeon was producing, I don’t think we’ll have to worry about any particularly High-Rank adventurers being drawn in.*

“He’s killed a lot of Iron Golems by now, so his {Storage} should be filling up soon... wait, what? Did I put that staircase there?” After watching Wataru wander around for a bit, he suddenly started climbing down a staircase I had never seen before. *Uh... What’s with this staircase?*

“Eh? No, I made it... oh, riiight! I forgot all about this ’cause the Hero came, but I made the next area of the dungeon!” *Ah. Aaaah. I forgot about that, too. I let Rokuko make the next area... Right...*

“...So, what kind of area did you make?”

“Heh heh, juuust wait and see! It’s super cool and revolutionary! This will prove that I can be just as creative and clever as you, Keima!”

The timing was pretty much perfect, so I decided to just watch Wataru go through the floor and see what would happen.

Wataru’s Perspective

Wataru went down the stairs and was greeted by a floor of magma. It radiated such heat that it felt like his skin was starting to burn.

“...The atmosphere of this place sure changed in no time.” The sea of magma was dotted with flat, floating rocks to use as stepping stones. If he accidentally stepped in the magma, his boots would burn through in an instant despite being a pair of magic tools.

“This is a volcano and there is an onsen, so this kinda makes sense. Guess this is like... a natural sauna or something.” In reality, the magma was so hot that it’d melt flesh and bones in no time, but Wataru was a Hero. It wasn’t that much of a threat to him. He manipulated his mana to form a shell-like barrier around his body. Now, he’d be fine for about thirty seconds even if he slipped and fell head-first into the magma. But that would drain a lot of mana, so he advanced carefully, measuring each step.

“Screeee!”

“Huh?” He heard the screeing of a bird. He glanced around and saw a small white bird flying straight toward him like a dart.

Wataru held up his sword and the bird flew straight into it. With a smack, it bounced off the blade and fell into the magma. He wondered what kind of bird it had been, but it was already engulfed in fire, so he ignored it and looked around for monsters or whatever golems might have been lurking around. But he couldn’t sense any monsters other than the little bird burning alive behind him. Naturally, though, he wouldn’t be able to notice an immobile golem hiding its presence.

...Guess I’ll keep going.

But the moment Wataru took his next step, something hit him lightly on the back.

“What?! Woah, that was close!” He almost lost his footing, but he managed to keep his balance. Turning around, he saw the still-burning bird flapping its wings.

“A fire bird... oh, a Phoenix! I get it, he wasn’t burning because of the magma, he’s been burning the whole time!”

“Scree!” The little bird... the Phoenix crashed into him again, but without the element of surprise, it couldn’t do much. Wataru cut it down while thinking about what a rare monster it was. The Phoenix let out a pitiful cry and was engulfed by flames.

...But seconds later, it revived again and came back fighting. Wataru, surprised by how fast it had revived, cut it down again. Undeterred, the Phoenix repeatedly revived and kept coming back for more. It was incredibly weak, but the cool down time between revivals was short and killing it wasn’t accomplishing anything. However...

“Ah! Maybe I could get some materials from it? Kantara was talking about wanting some rare flame-resistant materials! Heck yeah!”

“Scree?!” As if sensing some kind of danger, the Phoenix flew away from Wataru.

“Sheesh. You’re lucky you’re smart,” murmured Wataru. In truth, he wouldn’t know how to harvest materials from a bird that caught fire when it died, so he was stuck anyway. Deciding to research more on the subject before returning to the dungeon, Wataru got back to advancing through the floor.

Some of the stepping stones broke along the way, but he somehow managed to reach the end of the floor. Before him was a door. He pulled it open and was greeted with a red hot cave very similar to the one he was already in. The floors weren’t made of lava, but he could already see Red Lizards and Magma Slimes all over the place.

Seems like this is where things get serious.

Keima’s Perspective

I was holding my head in my hands.

“Am I right?! Totally revolutionary! I got him out of the dungeon!”

“It’s so revolutionary I really wanna smack you. Can I? Just one good smack on the head. It’ll be fine.”

“But why?! Also, I don’t know what would be so fine about that!”

Rokuko’s area was centered around the floor being lava. If it ended there, it wouldn’t be so bad. The collapsing stepping stones were actually pretty good.

Also, to be clear, I wasn’t even that upset by Phenny being the only monster in the whole area. He was probably the only monster she could actually use. We could add more later.

The problem was the door at the end. It led outside of our dungeon... or to be more clear, it connected directly to the [Flame Caverns]. Probably around the fifteenth floor, judging by its location in the mountain.

“...Why does it connect to the [Flame Caverns]?!”

“So it’ll be easier for Phenny to go and play there? Redra gave me permission, you know.”

“You getting permission first is the only good thing about this.” Though if she had made that door without permission, they would have come complaining

and I could've noticed before it was too late.

"...Also, why is Phenny the only monster there?"

"This whole floor is for Phenny. It's his home. And once I save up enough DP, I'll make another floor and summon a dragon for it!"

Apparently, Rokuko made her area a big pet house. *Is... Is this really the dungeon you want, Rokuko?*

Wataru's Perspective

He pumped himself up and kept advancing into the dungeon. The first thing he found was a staircase going up. After hours of exploration and climbing so many staircases he actually lost count, he found himself beneath a big open sky. The sun was falling, indicating that he had been underground for a very long time.

Wataru the Hero spun around, looking in all directions.

".....Light? Huh? Is this an exit? What?"

He took some steps away from the dungeon and looked around the area again. Apparently, he was on top of Tsia Mountain. Tsia City was visible in the distance, and the Dancing Doll Inn right by the [Cave of Greed's] entrance was even closer. There was a forest between them, but as a Hero, he could run back in no time at all. Especially since he'd be running downhill.

"This doesn't look like an illusion or anything. I guess I really am outside... What is this place? Does the dungeon have two entrances?" Deciding to report this to the Guild, Wataru headed down the mountain to the inn. He raced down the grumbling side of the mountain. It would only take a brief run since he knew where he was going.

Wataru got through the forest and reached the [Cave of Greed] from above. Coincidentally, he emerged right by Kantara's smithery, where Gozou was drinking some beer. Wataru shook his head at how he was still drinking, but at the same time decided to join him later.

"Oh? Look at you, Wataru. Weren't you headin' to the dungeon? What were you doin' on top of the mountain?"

“Hello, Gozou. There was another entrance over there... by the mountain peak, I mean.”

“The peak...? I’m only sayin’ this cause you’re an S-Rank, but I’m pretty sure that’s the entrance to the [Flame Caverns]. ’Nother dungeon entirely. Pretty old one, too.”

“The [Flame Caverns]? It’s not a part of the [Cave of Greed]?”

“Pretty sure it ain’t... But, eh, there’s lots we don’t know about dungeons and there’ve been cases like this before. Who knows what might be goin’ on in that mountain.”

“This isn’t a new thing?”

“Yeah, I’ve heard of nearby dungeons connectin’ here and there before. Most famous example I can think of is the [Ivory Labyrinth] by the capital. Part of it connects to the [Ivory Cave] nearby.”

“I see. That makes sense to me.”

“So, anyway. How far’d you get in that dungeon?”

“Right. I reached some new territory. I don’t know when things turned into the [Flame Caverns], but at some point there was like, a magma floor.”

“Oooh, really now! That’s an S-Rank for ya! Did, uh... Did ye find any beer in there?”

“Unfortunately not. Ah, but I did find some Magic Blades.”

“Ohoooh, well count me jealous.”

“Speaking of which, wasn’t Kantara researching Magic Blades? Think I should give him one? I found twenty in there.”

“Twenty?! That’s way too much! Heeey, Kantara! Wataru said he’d give you a Magic Blade! Let’s drink tonight in celebration!”

Wataru swallowed hard in excitement at the thought of getting to drink again.

“A-Anyway, I’ll go on ahead and report this to the Guild! Wait until I come back to celebrate, okay?! Promise?!”

“Gahaha, you’re gonna be the star of the celebration! Don’t worry, just hurry

on back.” Wataru rushed to the Guild.

After reporting to the Guild, Wataru decided to sell the Magic Blades to them in order to help pay back his debt.

“...And after that, I left what I believe to be the [Flame Caverns]. Here are the Magic Blades I found. There’s nineteen here, but there was another exactly like them; I gave it to Kantara, the blacksmith. I would like to sell the others to the Guild.”

“...Yes, certainly.”

In many ways, Wataru’s report and lineup of Magic Blades were very positive. He had explored parts of the dungeon no one had reached before, discovered that at some point the [Cave of Greed] connected to the [Flame Caverns], and along the way discovered twenty Magic Blades. Every part of his trip had been a success.

“So, how much will all that information be worth?”

“Twenty silvers, as is the standard. Would you like to sell the Magic Blades through an auction?”

“...I feel like putting up nineteen identical ones at once would hurt their value, so just ten. I’ll sell the other nine directly to you for two gold each. Once some time has passed, you can auction them off as well. Ah, and can I get the money immediately?” That got him eighteen gold, and his cut of the auctions would bring him to about forty gold in total.

...That was far off from his debt of two thousand and three hundred gold, but it was equivalent to about forty million yen. It felt pretty insane from that perspective. But more insane than that was Keima, who was actually demanding that he pay back a debt over fifty times that size.

Either way, Wataru decided to celebrate with Kantara that night and then head back to the Imperial Capital the next day. The celebration will not be detailed. Suffice to say, it was the perfect kind of beer: The kind that didn’t give him a hangover.

＊ ＊ ＊

“Okay, I think I’ll say goodbye to Rokuko and the others.” He headed to the inn’s front desk.

...Sitting there was the female magician he had gotten to know quite well over the past few days, Neruneh.

“Eeeh, you’re already going hooome?! Nnn, but I wanted to talk to you about magic some moooore.”

“Hahaha, I’ll come visit again. Is Rokuko here?”

“Ah, yeees. I’ll go get heeeer.” Wataru waited while Neruneh went off to get Rokuko. Eventually, Rokuko came over looking pleased.

“I heard you’re leaving? Say hi to my sister for me, Wataru.”

“Yep. So, did I help out any?”

“Mmm, pretty much! Thanks to you, my partner’s gonna give me a ring.”

Wataru and Rokuko had made a deal. It all happened after Wataru asked Rokuko to become his partner.

“...Will you become my partner?”

“Eh? No way. I already have a partner.”

Rokuko’s response made Wataru realize that his request had been interpreted as a confession. He hurriedly corrected the misunderstanding.

“...Ah! No, sorry. I meant that as in a research partner. Not a romantic partner or anything.”

“...Hm? Really? Well, okay then.”

“Please help me research a way back to Japan! I just noticed, but the clothes you’re wearing right now have nylon in them, right?!”

“Nylon? What’s that?”

“It’s a synthetic fiber made from oil, a burnable black liquid...! Ahhh, I can’t believe I’m seeing nylon fabric in this world...!”

“Aaah, this dress? My partner found it in the dungeon for me. Aha, isn’t it wonderful?”

Indeed. Wataru the Hero had discovered the Japanese fabric in her dress with his bare eyes. He had been staring at her clothes specifically as a subconscious reaction to the fabric. Not because he wanted to stare at Rokuko's butt. He just couldn't see any other part of her clothes due to her long hair.

However, he would never say that Rokuko's butt wasn't attractive.

"It certainly looks good on you. Hmmm... So you can find nylon fabric in this dungeon too. I had heard rumors, but this is really impressive... I hope your partner can help me with my research too. He must be a pretty great adventurer, right?"

"...Aaaah, well, um, he has gotten further into this dungeon than anyone else. He found that massage chair over there in the dungeon too."

"Ohhh, this too...?" He wanted to dissect it, but Rokuko shut him down since it was so valuable. He hadn't even said anything. It must have been that obvious what he wanted to do.

"Ngh, guess I'll just ask your partner to help me with the dungeon... Can I talk to him?"

"Mmm, let's see. I can set up a meeting between you two, but I want something in return."

"Errr, okay, how about I buy you a meal? I can get you the one that costs five gold."

"I own this inn, I can eat anything we sell for free." *Makes sense*, thought Wataru. There wasn't much he could offer to someone he had just met. Or at least, he couldn't know what it was she wanted.

"...Okay. Is there anything you're worried about or struggling with? I can help you out."

"Worried about? Mmm, nothing really..."

"Er, it could be anything! Like... Is everything okay between you and your partner?!" Wataru was just grasping at straws, but Rokuko seemed to realize something from that.

"Okay then. I want to get closer to my partner, so do what I say."

“Wha?”

“I’m going to tell him that you confessed to me and invited him to dinner with us!”

“Huh?! Wh-What?!”

“Okay, it’s settled. See you in a sec!”

...And that’s how it happened. As a result, Rokuko ended up telling Keima that he had fallen in love with her, and his roundabout story of failed love (a disguised way of saying “I’ve lost trust in women and couldn’t confess to Rokuko even if I wanted to”) fell on deaf ears, so ultimately he didn’t learn as much about the dungeon as he’d like.

“...But uh, I kinda ended up with a massive debt thanks to all this.”

“Eh? I didn’t have anything to do with that.”

“...That’s true.” Rokuko certainly had nothing to do with it. Although the setup had led to him developing a “rivalry” with Narikin, to him, Keima was supposed to be an entirely different person. He knew for sure that they were the same person, but he couldn’t argue if told otherwise due to his position.

“Ah, you can probably just have Haku pay back your debt. I wouldn’t worry about it too much.”

“I do want to see Gozou and Neruneh again, so I think I’ll be coming here again eventually. I’d rather not bother Haku too much if I can help it.” *Feel free not to come back*, Rokuko muttered to herself.

“Oh, right. That reminds me. I have some letters from Haku.” Wataru took out two letters from his {Storage}.

“...Shouldn’t you have shown us those when you got here?”

“She told me to wait until I left. And she also said to read this thinner one first.” It was a letter with a red wax seal. The seal had the Laverio Empire’s crest imprinted on it. As only the imperial family were permitted to use that crest, the seal itself was particularly valuable on its own and considered by many to be a symbol of honor.

Rokuko took that letter and tore apart the wax seal to take out the letter and

read it. Wataru thought that was a waste at first, but then remembered that Rokuko was Haku's little sister anyway.

"Geh... Uwaaah... Okay, that's that. Thank you." Rokuko's faced clouded over. The letter had definitely not been a positive one.

"Well, see you later."

"Say hi to my sister for me."

"Sure. Oh, and just ask if you want my help again."

"I'll give you a discount on your room fee next time if I do. Maybe like five coppers off."

And so, Wataru the Hero left to return to the Imperial Capital. As an aside, Keima told Haku everything that had happened from his perspective, so she forced Wataru into doing all sorts of ridiculously dangerous jobs that were deadly even to an S-Rank adventurer, but that's another story.

Keima's Perspective

"Haku sent us some letters. Here, take them before I forget."

"Hm?" Rokuko pulled two letters out from the chest of her shirt and handed them to me. They were warm. *Guess I'll read the opened one first. Leeet's see here...*

"There will be a Soldier of God heading your way very soon. I suggest preparing yourself. You can kill this one if you want." That was all the first letter said.

"...Another friggin' Hero! So many Heroes! Sheesh!"

"I know how you feel. Like, I'm definitely not happy about this either."

"Hahaha, Haku said I can kill him 'cause he's not her pawn this time... What a lady. Ahhhh. This is a pain. I wanna sleep, but I feel like I'll actually have to prepare hardcore for this one..."

"Mmm, well, um... At least we have my floor of the dungeon now!"

"...Yeah, time for me to get to work."

“Are you making fun of me? You don’t mind if I hit you, right? Just once?”

“You’re gonna hit me even though I worked up the motivation to do things? C’mon...”

Suddenly, Ittetsu contacted me and said he wanted to talk. *This timing seems pretty calculated. Wait, actually, he probably just waited for Wataru to leave before sending the message. I can imagine what he wants to talk about. This is gonna suck, but I can’t just ignore him. Crap.*

“Alright, Rokuko. Are you ready to beg for forgiveness?”

“I don’t mind genusnoozing if that’s what you’re talking about! You’ll get a futon for us, right?” *Seriously? I worry about this girl sometimes.*

We went to the shared room and saw that Dungeon Core Number 112, the Salamander Ittetsu, was already there. His wife and Dungeon Master Redra the Red Dragon was also there, in her human form.

“Hey, Keima! The fuck do you think you’re doing?!” Itettsu barked out the second he saw us. He glared at us as hard as he could with his lizard face.

“I’m pretty sure I already know the answer to this, but I’ll ask anyway... What are you mad about?”

“I’m talkin’ about you sending a FUCKING Soldier of God into our dungeon! You declarin’ war on us or something?! Fucking hell!”

“It was an accident. Sorry about that.”

“Oh, it was just an accident? Alright then.” *Really?! That’s all you needed to hear? I’m pretty sure the temperature literally just dropped in here.*

“...’Cause it seems like we’re at fault too, y’know?” Ittetsu shot a glance at Redra, who then looked away awkwardly. *Oh, I get it. He asked Redra about all this first. Makes sense.*

“Uhhhh, kinda weird for me to be saying this, but did everything go alright?”

“Huh? Yeaaah, we were fine. The fuckin’ Soldier of God headed straight for the exit.” Apparently, the Hero had repeatedly gone up the stairs to the exit while intending to go deeper into the dungeon. Ittetsu had let him ignore the boss room so he could go straight outside.

“So, Keima. Why’d you connect our dungeons like that?”

“Ask Rokuko, not me. And I’m impressed you even let it happen, Ittetsu.”

“Redra did it all on her own. Man... We sure have it rough, huh?”

“Yeah... We really do.”

...It happened on my end ’cause I left Rokuko on her own, but Redra’s Ittetsu’s master. He can’t defy her when it comes to things she really wants. With that in mind, Ittetsu probably has it harder than me. His dungeon has fifty-one floors. It’d be easy to not notice the Dungeon Master fiddling with things. Sounds like he first learned about that door the moment the Hero invaded his dungeon through it.

“Rokuko met with me and said she wanted to connect our dungeons, so yeah!”

“This way makes it easier for Phenny to come over and play, right? Redra and I want to play together sometimes, too.”

“But you know, I never expected a Soldier of God to come play!”

“It’s just a little thing. Keima and Number 112, I really think you shouldn’t be so uptight about it. Okay?”

“Uh, wait, Rokuko?! Even I couldn’t beat a Soldier of God without trying really really hard! They’re super dangerous!” The one truly at fault, Rokuko, and her accomplice, Redra, were chatting like good friends.

“Uh, I’ve got a question... When did you and Redra get so close, Rokuko?”

“When you were sleeping, obviously.” *Ah... Yeah. Okay.*

“Ummmm, Rokuko and Phenny come over to play all the time! The few adventurers we still get here never make it to the bottom floor so I have a lot of free time!” *Well yeah, your dungeon’s huge... I could sleep pretty easily if I had a dungeon with over fifty floors, too. Though I am getting plenty of sleep already.*

“Anyway, Keima! You should spend more time with Rokuko! Learn from my husband!”

“Yeah! That’s right! ...Wait, Redra?! Th-The way you put that makes it sound

like Keima and I are m-m-married!” I decided to not comment on that. Ittetsu prodded me with one of his toes.

“So, whaddya think about that door?”

“Ahhh, uh, want me to just seal it up?”

“Mmm? What’s the problem with just leavin’ it like it is? Fuckin’, our side of the door’s disguised as some rocks, so only adventurers from your side will be goin’ through.” *Hm? Doesn’t that mean adventurers going to our dungeon will slip into theirs, but we won’t get any from them?*

“Basically, I’m sayin’ I’ll take care of the fuckin’ adventurers invading your place. You better thank me.”

“Hahaha! That’d just be cutting into our revenue and sending more DP your way. I’m gonna disguise my side of the door, too, and only send Soldiers of God I can’t handle your way. Thanks. And there might be another one coming soon!”

In the end, we both disguised our sides of the door and left it as it was. Also, we decided to punish Rokuko and Redra individually in our own ways. *A week without melon rolls should be good enough.*

Chapter 3

Day 158

According to the letter Wataru gave us, another Hero would apparently be coming soon. The other letter had more information in it.

His name was Dragon Suzuki. In Japanese it was written with the normal character for “dragon,” but was apparently read as literally Dragon instead of as the more normal “Ryuu.”

According to Haku, he was a Hero who had been summoned within the kingdom of Daide, a country neighboring the Laverio Empire. This had happened about four months ago, but apparently he had dull blond hair. It was well known that all Heroes had black hair, and historically there were very few exceptions to this rule. Very few, but nonetheless very real exceptions. However, Daide did not know of those exceptions, and thus drove Suzuki out, calling him a fake.

Three months after that, an adventurer appeared within the Daide Adventurer Guild and began completing quests like mad. He was incredible, and indeed, he was Suzuki. Despite his blond hair, he was unmistakably a Hero with a cheat skill. Not to mention that over the past three months, he had grown about three centimeters of hair, and all of it was black. Daide interpreted this as him having awakened as a Hero and called him back to the royal castle to welcome him as they originally should have.

Rokuko, looking at the letter along with me, poked me in the side.

“But I thought hair could only really change colors into white.”

“...Yeah, he probably dyed it. He always had black hair, but he dyed it blond. That’s why he grew out more black hair. Where I’m from, people who dyed their hair blond and then grew black hair were called purin-heads.”

“Purin-head... That sounds kind of weird!” She seemed to get it, so I continued reading.

Naturally, kicking someone out and then welcoming them back after learning they're actually powerful was a pretty infuriating thing for them to have done. But Suzuki accepted their request. He headed to the castle, and upon his arrival, they showered him with equipment and skills such as {Storage} that they had prepared for him before the summoning ritual. He took all their gifts without complaint.

Once that was done, Suzuki met the king once again in the throne room. He asked the king for a handshake to symbolize their repaired friendship. The king, supposing from Suzuki's accepting the gifts that all had been forgiven, agreed and allowed Suzuki to approach him.

The moment the king of Daide held out his hand, Suzuki thrust his sword through his chest. It was a blow so deadly no Restoration Magic could save him in time. Suzuki sneered as the king collapsed into a pool of blood. The guards surrounded him and stabbed every inch of his body with their spears. Suzuki didn't try to resist. He just fell over as the spears went through him.

And so, Suzuki was executed then and there, as a Hero gone mad. The Kingdom of Daide fell into a temporary panic, but things calmed down quickly after the heir apparent rose to the throne.

"...Wait, Keima. Isn't Suzuki supposed to be coming here?"

"Yeah. The story's not over yet."

Suzuki had been stabbed with countless spears, but his body disappeared without anyone noticing. Furthermore, he was later seen using his Adventurer's Guild card to leave the country. In short, Suzuki hadn't died. Reason being, of course, the cheat skill given to him by the god. According to the Guild papers Haku sent us, he had the {Ultra Healing: Level 1} skill. *Welp... Guess I'm gonna have to think of something more clever than a spear trap to take him down.*

Anyway. Why was Haku so informed of all of this? Because after leaving the Kingdom of Daide, he went to the Laverio Empire and showed up at the capital. About half a month ago, the Laverio Empire accepted him as a Hero with plans to execute him if he caused any trouble. And how would they be executing him?

...Sending him to our dungeon, apparently. Enjoy all the DP he gives?

Seriously, Haku? C'mon.

Haku had this to say: *"You prepared your dungeon to counter a Hero, but all your effort was wasted on an innocent and sweet Hero like Wataru, wasn't it? I'm sure you want someone you can kill without restraint. You're welcome. If he proves to be too... difficult, feel free to send him back alive. I can take care of him myself."*

According to the letter, Suzuki had arrived at the Laverio Empire half a month ago. She expected that she would need to have him executed. He had committed regicide, and she couldn't let him live if he hadn't turned over a new leaf.

In other words, it was safe to assume that she had indeed settled on executing him, and he was indeed on his way here to be killed. *My head's starting to hurt.*

"Ummm... Are you okay, Keima?"

"Sheesh... I just wanna sleep..."

"You're getting weirdly down about this. Don't worry. Even if we can't beat him, Haku will take care of it if we can just survive until he's gone." *Aaah, yeah, that's true. If we wait out the storm, it'll blow over on its own later.* Rokuko's encouragement cheered me up a little.

I stood up.

"Alright! We're gonna work hard to ignore the crap out of him! I'm not gonna fight a Hero that can survive getting stabbed by a thousand spears!"

"Now that's the enthusiasm I'm looking for! That's my partner, Keima!"

With that settled, first comes... spreading out my futon and sleeping. I'll work hard tomorrow.

"Wait, what? You're not going to do anything?"

"I don't need to rush when I can finish in time tomorrow!"

"Don't blame me if you don't finish in time, okay?!" *She's right. But being right means jack shit in the face of the sleepy Sandman.*

“I need to digest all this new info and make a plan, which means I need to lay down and get some sleep. Nothing good will come from panicking and trying to rush out an idea.”

“I think you could do with a little more urgency, Keima.”

“Pass. I’m gonna sleep. In the first place, I’ve been working a lot more lately than I want to, so...” Rokuko kept throwing a little tantrum, but in the end I successfully slept the rest of the day away. Saying my head hurt probably helped a lot with convincing her.

Day 162

Several days passed. I experimented more with the dungeon’s functions, powered up the Wearable Golems with data retrieved from footage of Wataru fighting, and increased the number of combat golems within the dungeon. According to information retrieved from a passing trader, Suzuki the Hero was in the middle of staying at Tsia City with several women. He was kicking up quite the stir and there was no end to the rumors about him. He was stealing prostitutes from brothels, groping waitresses in bars, cutting down and killing children who bumped into him in the street, et cetera. I didn’t know how much of all that was true, but if it all was, he was a real monster.

Apparently, he was shouting about being a mighty Hero who had awakened to enormous power or something. He dragged along over ten slaves with him wherever he went, which made him stand out just walking through town. And all those slaves were girls, too.

He’d be arriving at our dungeon soon, by today at the earliest. *Who should I have deal with him... I don’t want to have any girls at the front desk when he gets here, but dealing with him myself would end badly. Wataru figured me out in no time. There’s no hiding that I’m Japanese from any other Heroes. That’s not good.*

“So, who do you think I should have at the front desk when he gets here?”

“I think someone like him would be too much for the new workers. But Niku’s a kid, so he won’t take her seriously. That just leaves me and Ichika. Which means! I, the proud little sister of Haku, am the only choice!”

“Yeah, there was only ever one choice here. I’ll leave it to Ichika.”

“Um, what about me...?”

“Not a chance. If you die, I die. Remember?” Indeed. If Dungeon Cores die, so too do their Masters, and I’m Rokuko’s Dungeon Master. That wasn’t metaphorical death, either. It was real, physical death. On top of that, if Suzuki laid his hands on Rokuko or something, Haku would actually kill me. Also physically. She wouldn’t hold back since Dungeon Cores don’t die even if their Masters do.

“...Hahaha. You sure worry too much, Keima. But okay. If you’re that concerned about me, I’ll let Ichika handle this.” Rokuko smiled, clearly happy.

I mean, I’m worried about you cause I’ll literally die if anything happens to you. I’ll literally die!

* * *

That evening, Suzuki the Hero came with his ten female slaves. *I knew he was coming soon, but I didn’t expect him to actually get here today. Glad I settled on who to put at the front desk.*

“He’s here... Are you ready? I’m counting on you, Ichika.”

“Leave it to me. Brats like him just need some tough love.”

Just as the rumors said, he was a purin-head with a pierced nose and ears. His personality was pretty bad too, so he was pretty much the definition of a bad dude delinquent. I checked the map and saw that he earned us 600/DP a day. He was a lot weaker than Wataru.

I had heard rumors about him bringing around at least ten slaves, but... wow, it was exactly ten slaves. That’s a lot. He’s completely surrounded. It’s quite the sight. I see humans, elves, and even beastkin in there. Lots of variety.

Though, it looked like there was a sort of hiearchy within the slaves, judging by their appearances and whatnot. One of them was hugging Suzuki’s left arm with a smile, not perturbed at all by her skimpy outfit. Three others were dressed well enough, and the final six were dressed in rags. It didn’t look like they even had underwear on. Worst of all were three of those ragged six. They

had chains on their collars and they were clearly being dragged along. They even had bruises on their face and black eyes.

Huh? Wait, that elf, the one dressed okay... Long, blonde hair... Sad look in her eyes... And those wonderful feet. I remember her. She was the girl next to Ichika at Docosp's Slave Market. Might be able to get some good info from her if Ichika can find the chance to talk to her.



Suzuki led his squad into the inn.

“Welcome. Are you staying overnight?”

“Hey, you’re pretty hot. Come to my room later. The most expensive one.” Suzuki sneered and threw several gold coins onto the counter. *That’s the first thing you’re gonna say?*

“Sorry, but our inn doesn’t do that kinda thing. So, are you staying? Our grand suite costs twenty-five gold coins a night, thirty with the most expensive food. That’ll be three hundred and thirty gold coins with your party of eleven.” Ichika stacked the gold coins on the counter and shook her head. It wasn’t even enough for one person staying one night.

“That’s pretty damn expensive. The city’s inn only cost one gold coin, y’know?”

“Well, this price was recommended by an A-Rank adventurer, so. If you want to to stay with your entire party for one gold coin, then you will need to stay in normal rooms. Those don’t come with meals, but given the size of your party, we will give free bread rolls if asked.”

“Hmph. You’re pretty cocky, charging that much. Whatever. Suite room for five, then. Don’t sweat the food. This inn’s so far in the mountains it’s probably just grass and vegetable shit, right? These guys may eat that crap, but I won’t.” Suzuki took out a gold-packed bag from his {Storage}.

“Will the other six be staying in a normal room?”

“Nah. They’re staying outside. All of you, get out of the inn. Stand outside all night.” *Uh... Outside? And if you order a slave to stand, they have to literally stand. They can’t sit or lay down. He’s telling them not to sleep all night? No sleep? All night...?*

“Hold up. That’s naturally not gonna fly here. It’d hurt our business.”

“You complaining about what I do with MY slaves? Fuck you.”

“I mean, you can do what you want if you pay us for the lost business. Though I think it’d be cheaper to just let them stay in a room.”

Suzuki glared at Ichika. She simply gave him a business smile.

“...Tch, whatever. Where’s the nearest bar?”

“There’s no bar here. We do have a cafeteria, though. The owner of the inn declines to sell alcohol, but you can bring your own, or trade for beer that others brought in themselves.”

“Bleh. What a shitty place. C’mon, slaves.” Suzuki spat on the ground and headed to the cafeteria with his slaves. Several adventurers staying at our inn were eating there. They were basically all men and their gazes all settled on Suzuki after he entered with his throng of girls.

“Yo, shitheads. I’m Dragon Suzuki, an S-Rank Adventurer, and I’m better than all of you. You wanna hear stories of my adventures? Heh, too bad. The only things I’ve done are kill goblins and an evil king. Actually, I’ve killed some ogres, too. They were weak as shit, but I bet you fuckers could hardly manage one all together, eh?” He pulled back a random chair and put his foot onto it.

“When I was first summoned to this shitty world with no electricity, I thought about fucking killing everybody I saw. But, y’know, I’ve changed my mind. This is a good world. All I gotta do is kill weak monsters and I get enough money to buy actual women. Hah! It’s fucking hilarious!” Suzuki cackled all on his own. Two or three people gave some awkward pity laughter. The poor reaction immediately pissed Suzuki off.

“Tch. Buncha buzzkills. That woulda made any other crowd laugh like hell. Guess you’re all idiots... Whatever. Time to get to the point.” Suzuki pulled the six poorly dressed slaves—the “low-tier” slaves, according to him—up forward.

“Heheh. Listen up, you sad lonely sacks! Anyone here wanna buy one of these girls for the night?!” A stir went through the crowd.

“C’mon, it’s an open offer! Anyone can buy one! Ah, forgot the price, huh?! Alriiight. You over there. Yeah, you. The dwarf. That beer you got there?” Suzuki called out to Gozou, who was in the middle of drinking some beer.

“Gimme some of that. I’ll let you pick whichever of these slaves you want for the night.”

“...Yeah? Eh. Here, have a glass.” Gozou poured a glass of beer and held it out to Suzuki.

“And that’s that. Which one you want?”

“Hey man! Give it a rest alre—!”

“Stop.” A young adventurer tried rushing Suzuki down, but Gozou grabbed onto his shirt and held him back. He was looking at Suzuki, whose hand was on his blade.

“Damn, one step more and I coulda cut him down. Too bad.” Suzuki grinned without a trace of remorse.

Heroes, adventurers strong enough to be given an automatic S-Rank. They weren’t people to defy lightly, and not just due to their deadly strength. Heroes generally were given a noble title and the accompanying political authority. A Hero who cut down civilians in the street would rarely be sent to court or punished. Whether the civilian had goaded them or whether the civilian was just minding his own business, almost nobody could punish a Hero who killed them.

Gozou knew that.

“More importantly. Yer gonna lend me one of the girls, right? I’ll take that one. The smallest one.” Gozou pointed at one of the slaves with bruises on her face and a chain on her collar. Suzuki yanked her chain and practically threw her over to him.

“Look at you. Big softie, huh? Or maybe dwarves are just all lolicons. Heh, take her. You can do anything you want with her, s’long as you don’t kill her. I bought her last week, so she’s still pretty new.” Gozou gently caught the girl and let her sit down in a chair, far away from where Suzuki was.

“Here, have a drink.”

“Th-Thank you.”

Suzuki gulped down Gozou’s payment, the beer, while watching them.

“Hah! This is pretty intense stuff. Didn’t know there was any beer like this around here. Hey, how about you buy another one?”

“Normally I would, but I ain’t got that much beer on me right now. You’ll have to ask someone else.”

“Sure. C’mon, everyone! You get one night with a slave for just one cup of beer! You’ll never get another sale like this! Hey, girls, go get some customers. Anyone who comes back empty-handed gets a switch and the usual punishment.” The slaves all paled after hearing *a switch and the usual punishment.*

“P-Please! Buy me, I’m begging you!”

“I-I need you to help me! Please, I beg yooou!”

The slaves rushed forward and practically clung to the adventurers to try and sell themselves. Suzuki guffawed while watching them, as if seeing the most hilarious thing in the world.

By the time Ichika heard about what Suzuki was doing and got there, the slaves had all found buyers. Suzuki put four cups of beer into {Storage} and gulped the fifth one down. She had been a little busy talking to the elf slave Suzuki had brought with him, but even with that in mind, the slaves had found buyers very quickly. Though some of those buyers were glaring at Suzuki while hugging the crying slaves close to them.

“Sir. Please don’t sell slaves like that in our inn.” Ichika came from the front desk to complain to Suzuki.

“Huh? Oh, it’s you. The receptionist. Who gives a shit? It’s just a little trading. Plus, not like we’re fighting or nothin’. I’m bringing some entertainment here. You should be thanking me.”

“That’s not the problem. It has to do with the integrity of our inn.”

“Huuuh? The fuckin’ integrity?” Suzuki glanced down at Ichika’s neck.

“Oh! Didn’t notice until now, but damn... You’ve got a slave collar on. Who’s your master? I’ll buy you from him. Be honored.”

“Eh? No thanks, dude. I have the right to choose my master, so yeah, no chance.”

“Yeah?” Out of nowhere, Suzuki punched Ichika. He drove his fist into her stomach and knocked her so far back she slammed into a table surrounded by eating customers.

“Nghaa! Ngh... ugeeeh...” Ichika fell to her knees, holding her stomach. Suzuki briskly walked up to her, grabbed onto her hair, and pulled her up.

“Y’know, you’ve been a fucking cheeky bitch to me all day.”

“Nghaah! O-Ouch! The heck are you doing?! Let... go of... me...!” Ichika tried to pull his hand off her, but he just punched her again.

“You’re a fucking slave! Didja think I wouldn’t fucking hit trash like you?! Huh?! Piece of shit!”

“Nghooh! Ngh, guh...!”

“You fucking threw up. Disgusting. Clean it up. Crawl on the ground like the slave you are and lick it up.” Once again, he punched her in the stomach. *Oh crap, this is bad. I gotta stop him.* But the second I thought that...

“Would you please stop there, sir?”

“Ah? Who the fuck are you?” I looked over on the monitor and saw Rokuko standing by the cafeteria door. *The heck is she doing?*

“I’m the owner of this inn. What do you think you’re doing to my employee?”

“Hah! She turned me down, y’know. A fucking slave! Turned me down! So, I’m educating her a little for ya.”

“Obviously she would turn you down. She belongs to me, not you. Not ever.”

“Yeah...?” Suzuki looked Rokuko over, licking his lips.

“Whatever, I don’t give a fuck about this slave. Take her.”

“Guah!”

“Ichika!” Rokuko picked up Ichika, who had been thrown onto the ground.

“...Soz, Rokuko. I’m not helping at all...”

“You don’t need to talk. Just rest. If you can’t handle him, then there’s no one left but me.”

“...I was so cocky and now look at me. Ahaha... ngh!”

“I’ll call Kinue... no, Rei would be better. I’ll call Rei to help you to your room. You need to get into bed.”

“Sorry...” Rokuko returned Ichika’s weak responses with a reassuring smile.

“Hahaha, I’m close to fuckin’ tears here. Aaah, by the way, where’s the grand suite? Take me there.”

“...It’s over here.” Rokuko walked up to Suzuki and led him out of the cafeteria.

* * *

“Hey, you. What’s your name?” After meeting up with his four slaves and heading to the grand suite with them, Suzuki started talking to Rokuko. After briefly considering whether there would be a point to lying, she responded to him honestly.

“It’s Rokuko.”

“Thaaat so? Alright, Rokuko. You’re gonna be coming with me. That slave crossed the line and you’re gonna take responsibility.”

“Huh? What’re you even saying?” Rokuko tried to turn around, but Suzuki roughly hugged her from behind. He grabbed onto her chest with his right hand and squeezed tightly with clear ill intent.

“Hiiih?!”

“Yours are smaller than that slave’s, but they’re still pretty fuckin’ nice. C’mon, what’s the problem? I’m a Hero, y’know?”

“S-So what? Let go of me...! Ngh!” He squeezed her soft chest while running his left hand all over her butt. It felt so gross that Rokuko let a scream slip out. It was like bugs crawling over her body.

“Oh? That was a pretty sweet cry. You into this? How about you become my slave, then? You’ll be a mid-tier slave for sure, not a low-tier. C’mooon, even just one night’s fine with me. I’ll let this all go if you stay with me tonight.”

“What are... you even saying?!”

“Hahaha! Look, I’ll spell it out for you. I’m a fuckin’ Hero. An S-Rank adventurer. Basically, I’ve got enough power that I could smash this whole shitty inn to bits if I felt like it. Alright? You know what you gotta do if you don’t want your inn broken, right?! Yeah?!”

“S-Stop...!” Suzuki squeezed her soft butt and then tried to stick his hand under her clothes.

“Hey, you. Stop. Now.”

“Ngh, Keimaaa...” Rokuko looked at me tearfully. *I... Sorry, I was a little late.*

“Ah? The fuck are you? I’m a...”

“Japanese person, right? I can tell by looking at you.” I stared directly into Suzuki’s eyes.

“...Tch. Fuckin’ seriously? You’re Japanese too? Shit sucks.”

“And that’s my girl, too. Let her go. Now.” Suzuki glared at me with seething anger in his eyes, but he let Rokuko go. I hugged her close to me. *We’re both Japanese, which means we’re both Heroes. I don’t have a cheat skill, but he doesn’t know that. We should look like equals here. Though he might have some kind of status buffs or whatever.*

“Tch. If you care that much about her, put a collar on her.”

“This whole inn is a like a collar. ’Cause I own it. And what were you gonna do to my inn again?” I emphasized the *my* in “my inn.” If he was gonna wave his Hero status around like a club, I’d use my faux Hero status as a shield.

Suzuki fell silent, not knowing what to say. I kept on the attack.

“On top of all that, this inn is backed up by a higher up in the Laverio Empire. You should know what that means if you’re a Hero. And just to be clear, you just groped that higher up’s little sister. You might be dead, man.”

“Tch, you sure are fuckin’ cocky. Trust me, I’m not gonna die.” Suzuki pulled one of the four slaves from the row behind him and pushed her our way.

“But it’d be a pain if you snitched. Here. I’ll let you fuck this girl tonight, so keep quiet about it.”

“Ah...!” It was the elf slave. The one that had been lined up next to Ichika all that time ago. Although this was a perfect opportunity to get her alone for information gathering purposes, I had just declared that Rokuko was my girl. Taking his slave would make me look weak and indecisive. I had to avoid that.

“No thanks. I’m already gonna be busy tonight.”

“A-Ah!” I squeezed Rokuko tightly to drive my point home. Rokuko responded in turn by pressing against me.

Suzuki clicked his tongue.

“That a fact?! Guess nobody wants this girl then!” Suzuki took out his blade.

Stab.

A sword sprouted from the elf’s stomach. It looked almost like a joke.

I had seen several people die through the monitor, but it felt so much more intense seeing it in real life.

“Ah...? Ngh...” Suzuki pulled back his blade, allowing blood to flood out of the gaping wound.

“Eh? Oh no... My stomach...! Please, help! Someone help me!”

“I don’t give a shit about her anymore. Was pretty fun fucking an elf, but she was some cheap shit. Didn’t even cost ten gold.”

“Gyah! Aaaaah!” Suzuki stabbed his blade through her back again. He then swung it horizontally.

The elf collapsed onto the ground. The insides of her stomach spilled into the hallway. Her gushing blood spread like a growing puddle. Her long, flowing hair fell into that puddle and got filthy with blood.

Suzuki looked at me, challenge in his eyes. He wasn’t even looking at the elf anymore.

...I’m not innocent myself. As a Dungeon Master, I’ve killed several adventurers. Seeing someone die in front of me wasn’t enough to scare me anymore, and it was too late for me to go around complaining about other people murdering. But he had killed someone just to intimidate someone else. To show that he was capable of killing. He cared nothing for the lives of other people or even life itself. He was far worse than I was.

...Either way, I’d just be playing into his hands if I acted afraid. He was the kind of animal that would pounce the second he saw any weakness.

“Hey, who the heck do you think has to clean all this? You’re gonna have to pay for the clean up.”

“...Hah, whatever. This should be fuckin’ enough!” Suzuki took out his wallet and flicked a single gold coin at me.

“The room you’re staying in is straight up ahead. The door is fancier than the others so you’ll recognize it on the spot. Get out of my sight.”

“Hmph. You better not snitch on me. You snitch, and I’ll kill you next.” Suzuki took his other three slaves and walked off.

Rokuko pulled on my shirt.

“Keima, this elf is still breathing. What should we do?” The Dungeon Core could tell whether someone was alive or not by whether or not they had turned into DP. If Rokuko said she was alive, she definitely was.

“I’d save if her I could... but her wounds are too bad. Can you at least patch her up a little?”

“If you say so... I’ll try and see what I can do.”

But the elf was already at death’s door. After all, her guts were on the floor and she was gushing blood. Honestly, she was in such a bad state I couldn’t think of anything that could save her.

“...My stomach feels... hot... So... cold... I don’t want... to die...” Her voice was weak. Not even shoving her guts back into her stomach would save her.

I suddenly realized that Restoration Magic might be able to help, but despite spending 100,000 DP on a {Healing} scroll and casting it on her, it was too late. I changed the chant to be effective even if someone was about to die, but it didn’t even activate. I think... I think it didn’t work because the aura of death around her was so intense that my visualization of her getting healed wasn’t strong enough.

In the end, we had no choice but to watch over the elf as she died.

“Mmm, she turned into DP. What do we do now?” I let out a sigh. By *turned into DP*, Rokuko meant that she had died.

...Nothing we can do. There’s no way to bring someone dead back to life. It’s

impossible. Or at least, it's impossible to me. This is a pretty template fantasy world with magic and stuff, there might be some weird way to get her back.

Though maybe I could have saved her if I thought of using Restoration Magic faster. I had gotten more thrown off than I expected. It was too late to worry about that, though...

"...No point crying over it now, though. Guess I'll ask Ichika about her. She might know a name we can put on a grave for her."

"Makes sense. Rei should have taken Ichika to her room. I'll go ahead and put her corpse into my {Storage}. Your {Purification} should clean up the hallway." Rokuko took care of things without missing a beat, completely calm. *That's a Dungeon Core for you, I guess. I respect her a little more now.*

I cast {Purification}, and the pool of blood that had been spreading through the hallway disappeared in an instant as if nothing had ever happened. A faint metallic smell briefly remained drifting through the air, but the wind soon blew it away.

Rokuko and I went to see Ichika, who was resting in her room.

"Hey, Ichika. You okay?"

"Nooope, not at all. Rokuko was so hella cool when she saved me, I'm like, head over heels for her now. Sploosh!"

"Seems like she's fine." It had looked like he hit her pretty hard, but she seemed to have mostly recovered already.

"There's a trick to gettin' hit, y'know? Looked pretty real though, huh? I'll be back behind the front desk tomorrow, for sure."

"Yeah, you definitely tricked me. But still. I gave you a rough job, I know."

"Dooon't sweat it. I'm totally your slave, Master. It's normal. But anyways. About Suzuki."

I had given Ichika a certain job. I wanted her to figure out just how strong Suzuki was and report back. Though only if an opportunity arose, and I had emphasized that she shouldn't put herself in real danger.

"Eh, what? Did I get in the way or something?"

“...That stomach punch was actually hella brutal, so nah, you saved me. And between us three, swear never to tell, but I definitely got a little wet when you swooped in to save me. You were so cool, Rokuko!”

“H-Hmph, well, at least you know I’m not all talk now!”

Aaah, yeah. Rokuko was pretty cool there.

“So. Suzuki. That {Ultra Healing} skill you told me about is definitely the main thing here. He’s prolly using it to remove his sense of pain and heal his wounds constantly. I scraped the crap out of his hands with my nails, but he didn’t even flinch and the scratches vanished in seconds.” *Removing his sense of pain and healing his wounds constantly. Yeah... I guess he’s using this skill to ignore the internal limits we humans have to stop ourselves from breaking our bodies.*

“Also, this is kinda just a guess, but I’m thinking his healing cures his exhaustion, too.” Curing his exhaustion meant that at all times, he was in a state of perfect health and readiness.

“...I’m impressed you caught all that so fast.”

“Aw, you’re just saying that. There were tons of hints, I didn’t do anything that special. I heard some of it from one of the slaves he was with, too. Remember that elf slave I was being sold with? Er... What’s up? You seem kinda down, Master.” *Oh, she noticed?*

“You normally glance at my feet all the time while we talk, but you’re not this time.” *She uh... She notices that? I’m gonna have reel it in a little bit.*

“Alright, well... Hey. Do you know the name of that slave?”

“Elulu, yeah. Why...? Did something happen to Elulu?” The smile vanished from Ichika’s face after she guessed from my attitude that something was wrong.

“...Suzuki killed her.” Ichika briefly froze after hearing that. But then, after a pause...

“Oh.” That was all she said.

“You seem pretty calm.”

“...I’m obviously not okay, yeah? But y’know, what can you do? She was a

slave. Nothing to do about that. But really, what a waste. Her tits were like melons from heaven... Aaaah, I shoulda made her let me squeeze them one more tiiime!" Ichika rolled on top of the bed, wiggling. Before long, she stopped with her face in her pillow and let out a murmur.

"...Hey, Master. Will you get revenge for Elulu?"

Honestly, I didn't know if I could beat Suzuki. But even so, there was only one thing I could say to Ichika.

"Leave it to me."

* * *

"Fucking hell, what was with that jerk?! Doesn't he know how to respect women?!"

"Is he seriously a Hero?! I can't fucking believe it! Right, Gozou?"

"Yeah, I feel the same way. But he's the real deal. I heard about him from Wataru, but damn."

"He and Wataru are nothing alike! Scum like him doesn't belong in this world, strong or not!"

I went back to the cafeteria and was greeted by a bunch of adventurers complaining about Suzuki while taking care of his six "low-tier" slaves. Gozou called out to me while softly patting the sobbing slave he had chosen.

"Hey, Keima. We're gonna need a room for these six girls."

"Aaah... Yeah, don't worry about paying for that. A single room for six should be enough, right?"

"I'm glad you're quick on the uptake." *Weeell, I did see everything myself. And it's pretty obvious something's up here.*

"Gozou, you know that crying little girl?"

"Yup. She's Roppe's little cousin, Rippe. Last I heard she was living in a town close to Tsia... Guess she got caught and forced into slavery or somethin'."

"Wow, Gozou, and you're gonna sleep with her? That's brutal."

"Ye lookin' to get punched? Not a single one of us bought these slaves

plannin’ to do that.”

“Huh? Actually, I was thinking about...” *Smack!* The adventurer who spoke up got punched in the mouth.

“Not a single one of us. Nothing’s gonna happen while I’m around.”

“R-Right on.” *That’s our Gozou for you. A real gentlemen. Though he’s probably just acting cool since he’s in front of his partner’s cousin.*

“I’m just following the inn’s rules. It’s a great place, I don’t want to get kicked out.”

“The bread rolls taste great! And there’s purins, too.”

“Not to mention rice! And purins.”

“There’s no taverns or brothels, but y’know what? There’s purins.”

These guys sure like purins.

“Alright, alright. I’ll give you all free purins for being such gentleman. Up to three each, got it?”

“Hell yeah, Keima! You know what’s up!”

“I’m more into tasty fried stuff meself.”

“I’ll keep that in mind, Gozou.” I went to the kitchen to give Kinue their food orders... or at least, I pretended to before secretly buying the purins and fried food with DP.

“Actually, come to think of it, Suzuki’s hair was black at the top and gold everywhere else. I heard Wataru say this, but apparently people with hair like that are called purin-heads.”

“Why’d you have to say that, Keima? You’re gonna make us lose our appetites.”

“You all want fried food too?”

“Nah, gimme a purin. I’ll eat it with rage in my heart!”

“I still want a purin, obviously. I’ll pretend to rip that jerk to shreds with my teeth!”

“Purins themselves are free of sin, they have done no wrong to us. But I’ll still eat Suzuki!”

That last guy’s eating Suzuki. Oof.

“What about Suzuki’s slaves? If we give them food that’s too tasty, they might have problems getting used to their normal food again.”

“They’re the slaves of an adventurer, any meal might be their last. Iffin it be possible, I’d like them to have something nice to eat.”

“Alright, guess I’ll make them some stew or something.”

I prepared some random meals for the slaves and they chowed it all down, sobbing.

“Thank you so much, it’s delicious... So delicious, but... We’re going to die, aren’t we?”

“That’s... Well, it’s up to luck, I guess.” *The only thing I can do now is feed them. Tomorrow, I might end up killing them alongside Suzuki. Yeah... I don’t know how to feel about this.*

Day 163

The sun set and rose again. I checked on Suzuki in his room through the monitor. Since the grand suite was part of the dungeon, I could peep inside of it as much as I wanted to. *Am I invading his privacy? He’s an enemy I’ve decided to kill. I don’t need to worry about that kind of thing.*

The six low-tier slaves who had slept soundly together in a common room seemed somewhat refreshed, but those who had stayed in the grand suite with Suzuki were all still tired. Suzuki himself was wide awake despite having stayed up all night, so Ichika’s theory about his exhaustion being “healed” seemed to be right on the money.

Suzuki, asshat that he was, put as much of the grand suite’s furnishings as he could into his {Storage}. He tried leaving just like that, so I—sitting at the front desk for specifically such a reason—stopped him. *I had to wake up early for this, too. Sheesh.*

“Hey. That’s gonna be an extra seven hundred gold coins.”

“...Huh? The fuck do you think you’re talking about?”

“We cleaned up the room you trashed and discovered plenty of things missing. Ten towels, one hundred gold coins. Small table, one hundred gold coins. Massage chair, two hundred gold coins. Mattress, three hundred gold coins. That’s seven hundred gold coins in total. Don’t like it? Give the stuff back. Otherwise, pay up.”

“Tch, you noticed? Fine, fine, take it all back. Whatever.” Suzuki opened his {Storage} and dropped all the stuff right onto the ground.

“And didn’t I tell you I owned this inn? Are you not planning to stay another night or what?”

“Huh? Why the fuck would I stay another night?” *This guy’s planning on conquering the dungeon in one day and going straight home, huh? Alright. If that’s what you want, I’ll finish this all today.*

“You’re going to conquer the dungeon and go home before the day’s over, then? I guess you’ll be staying outside tonight. That’s fine with me.”

“Tch.”

“I’m not gonna let you stay in the grand suite again. I’ll be nice and let you use a normal room, though.”

“What?! I’m a fucking Hero! A customer!”

“Really now? That’s swell. But I’m the owner of this inn. This place is my home. My home, my rules.” I was grappling with him through sheer force of will. I’d lose in a fight for sure, but authority and connections were everything.

“Aren’t customers supposed to be gods?!”

“Customers are piggy banks that bring me money. Anyone stealing from or hurting my inn isn’t a customer. And I’m pretty sure you already met a god when you came to this world.” I grinned at him.

...If I let this tough guy facade of mine crumble, I lose. I gotta keep it up no matter what. Aaaah. My stomach hurts.

“I gave you your stuff back, so who cares?! I’m still paying you!”

“Don’t you realize how much someone dying in this inn is gonna hurt our profits? This is an inn for adventurers, too. Lots of our customers are touchy about bad luck and whatnot. Nothing’s less lucky than someone dying. That’s the worst omen there is. So, can you guess how many customers we’re going to lose because of you? We’re gonna be operating constantly for years. One gold coin? Don’t be stupid. You cost us over 100,000 gold coins. Are you gonna pay that?”

“Huh? Fuck n—”

“Are you going to pay 100,000 gold coins?”

“Quit th—”

“Are you going to pay 100,000 gold coins?”

“.....”

“Are you going to pay 110,000 gold coins?”

“You’re raising the price! Tch, fine, whatever! Shut up! Dammit!”

“Yeah, and don’t come back.”

Suzuki left with his slaves in tow. *I won. Hell yeah.*

Suzuki’s Perspective

Suzuki was headed to the dungeon.

“Shit...! I need power. I need more power...!” He clenched his fist so hard that his nails ripped his skin apart. Blood started gushing out, but his wounds were already healing.

Suzuki’s skill was {Ultra Healing}. More specifically, it was {Ultra Healing: Level 1}. It was strong enough that he would never lose to a simple adventurer or monster under any circumstances. Reason being, it stopped him from feeling pain or exhaustion. It even healed his wounds instantly, such that he would never die. All he had to do was keep on fighting hard until he slaughtered his foe.

But even with an unbeatable skill like that, Suzuki felt hesitant to fight another Hero.

{Ultra Healing: Level 1}. Indeed. In terms of being a Hero, he was only level one, which put him on the very bottom rung when compared to other Heroes. His skill's level didn't raise no matter how many monsters he slaughtered. Though he did get stronger in general.

...That Japanese person in the inn. The guy who called himself Keima or whatever. He was likely a Hero as well, which meant he had a cheat skill that Suzuki didn't know about. Indeed. An unknown skill that was at least level one.

Suzuki was confident that he, having been through the hell that he had endured, could beat anyone at his level. But that guy has perfect form, almost like a puppet manipulated into the optimal standing posture for fighting. He must have studied martial arts or something equivalent. And he hardly reacted to the slave he killed in front of him. He was used to other people dying.

...But most intimidating of all was his girl. Keima at least flinched after Suzuki stabbed the slave to death, but that girl ignored it completely. She didn't just miss it, either. She glanced at the slave and immediately chose to ignore her. She didn't scream. She didn't shout in anger. She didn't pale or start trembling. She ignored her. That could only make sense if she was used to killing her own kind—if the death of fellow humans meant absolutely nothing to her.

His opponents were two experienced killers on their home turf. Suzuki wasn't incompetent enough to start a fight he didn't know he could win. He only assassinated the Daide king because he knew he could do it with his {Ultra Healing}.

Power. It all came back to needing more power.

Then he remembered what the god had told him. Dungeons interrupt the flow of mana. Destroy their Cores and become stronger.

"Hah, that's right. I just gotta raise my level. Killing monsters might not get my level up, but smashing those Dungeon Cores that god talked about might! That's right! I'm gonna crush this dungeon!" Suzuki descended into the [Cave of Greed], heart burning with determination. His nine slaves followed after him.

Keima's Perspective

According to what Ichika heard from Elulu, the slave Suzuki showed the most

affection toward was Coriane, his only high-tier slave. The three better dressed slaves were mid-tier slaves, and the five poorly dressed slaves were known as low-tier slaves. Those with chains still on their collars were called the “chained” and he treated them the worst of all. Though Elulu had once been a mid-tier slave and he killed her without a second’s hesitation, so it was fair to assume he only truly cared for his high-tier slave.

Right after Suzuki got into the dungeon, his slaves circled around him defensively. Their formation was structured such that Coriane was in the middle beside him and the three chained were at the front. The remaining slaves spread around him in all directions. It was a formation built around the idea that no matter where a monster came from or where a trap awaited, his slaves would encounter it first. Also, although his mid-tier slaves had swords and shields, all his low-tier slaves—both normal and chained—had nothing but their bare hands.

“So, what are we going to do? Guide him into the [Flame Caverns] like we did with Wataru? Or kill him along with his slaves?” Rokuko offered two choices that were on completely opposite ends of the spectrum. Let them live or kill every one of them. She was really going in all or nothing here.

“...I didn’t expect you to say something like that, Rokuko. Why those two choices in particular?”

“Mmm, well, I thought about it for a while, but I couldn’t think of a way to just kill Suzuki without killing his slaves too. Especially with them in a formation like this. The best thing we could do is try to separate them somehow, but as a dungeon, we can’t really bring the separated slaves to safety or anything.” *A very reasonable position. Is this really the same Rokuko who thought having a dungeon with just one room was a good idea?*

“Um, please? I can grow as a person too. Of course I’ll get better at this kind of thing with you around, Keima.”

“Dungeon Masters have buffing effects?!”

“...I can’t completely deny the possibility, but I’m probably just learning from example.”

“It all comes back to me, then.”

Now, what to do here. The enemy had just entered our dungeon, but before I could put my thoughts together, one of the chained slaves up front fell into a pitfall. It was a simple pitfall without any spikes on the bottom, intended to be a simple trap for beginners that at worst would twist an ankle and leave one unable to advance further.

“Nghaah, uwaah...”

“Woah, I sure didn’t notice that pitfall. Good job. Now hurry up and get out of there.”

“U-Um, Master, my legs... my legs...!”

“You gonna make me repeat myself?” Suzuki glared at the slave, causing her collar to tighten.

“Aaah! I’m sorry, sorry, so sorry...! Please don’t squeeze... my neck...!”

“Then get the fuck out of there! Trash!” Suzuki gave a maniacal grin while shouting his orders. The slave that fell into the pitfall shakily stood up and crawled out of the hole. Suzuki then made her walk in front, despite how obviously hurt her legs and feet were. The chained slave flinched in pain with each step.

“This man is awful!”

“So this is the man who spat in the inn and made such a mess of the grand suite?”

“Aaah, you know, I thiiiiink this guy is just totally incompatible with me. Like, physiologically?”

Even the three monster girls I had brought with me as assistants found it hard to watch. But I could hardly blame them. Honestly, I was surprised that the three of them were responding like humans despite being monsters. *Have they learned some empathy from working in the inn?*

“If he wants the slave to die, he should just hurry up and finish her off himself. This is shameful.”

“I wonder if it would be acceptable for me to clean the insides of his skull with my broom.”

“He’s wasting sooooo much mana, it hurts to watch.”

...And thus were the opinions of my Vampire, Silky, and Apprentice Witch. In a way, it was relieving to hear that they hadn’t gone soft. None of them seemed bothered at all by the idea of someone using their slaves as disposable tools. *Makes sense.*

“We learned from Ichika that the slaves of adventurers are normally used like this.”

“Wait, really?”

“It’s common for dungeons to be conquered upon the backs of slaves and others sent to die. Though of course this primarily refers to convict slaves.”

“I see...” It was a blunt force strategy equivalent to suicide bombing. *Can’t say I’m a fan of making normal girls participate in something like that.*

“Hmph! Keima’s strength through numbers strategy was way smarter. Suzuki’s not better than us!” For some reason, Rokuko was feeling competitive. *I guess my rat strategy was pretty similar to this. Maybe the rats hated being forced into Haku’s dungeon and stuff. Wait... Am I actually a pretty garbage person?*

Suzuki’s party encountered three goblins.

“Go on, get them!”

“Yes, sir...!” The three chained slaves in the front—including the one with the hurt feet—charged at the goblins. They punched the goblins with their bare hands, lacking any weapon. They just kept punching and punching.

Eventually, the battle ended. Even a weak female slave was apparently enough to beat a goblin in a one-on-one, but... they all ended up covered in wounds. Suzuki laughed at them while groping his beloved Coriane’s body.

“Ew... That’s so gross.” Rokuko paled and trembled in place.

“Oh yeah. Suzuki forced himself onto you a little, I forgot about that.”

“He did, it was awful. I bathed so much yesterday and I still feel gross... Oh, I know. You touch me too, Keima. I feel like that’ll definitely make me feel better.”

I decided to ignore half of what Rokuko had just said.

“Ichika asked me to get revenge and he laid his hands on you. Guess it’s time for me to get a little serious.”

“What was that...?! Keima, getting serious?!”

“Our master, who usually sleeps all day... getting serious?!”

“Are you feeling quite alright, Master? Should I prepare a futon for you?”

“My mind is too weak to even imagine what this could meaaan!”

Seriously? Is it really that big of a deal? Never mind then. I don’t feel like getting serious anymore.

...Or at least, that’s what I’d like to say. But nah. Time to give some orders.

“First, we’re gonna get rid of those slaves.” I had put traps in the labyrinth area before Suzuki and his squad first arrived. Though I couldn’t place anything too serious, since there were other adventurers still exploring it.

“Does that mean you’re going to kill them?”

“Mmm, I can save them if they’re lucky. Otherwise, they’ll die. You’ll see.” I moved the Wall Golems around in the labyrinth to guide Suzuki’s party into a trap.

The trap activated right as they entered a crossroad. Several arrows shot out from all four directions.

“Nghaah!”

“Kyaaah!”

Three slaves let out short cries and collapsed. Two in the back and one in the front. They were all low-tier slaves. The mid-tier slaves on the left and right blocked the arrows with their shields. Of course, Coriane and Suzuki were both entirely unharmed.

The fallen slaves remained on the ground, completely still. They weren’t even twitching.

“Hey. The fuck’s wrong with you three? Stand up...! Tch, must be poison.”

Indeed, the arrows were poisoned, though merely with a paralyzing poison. They were specially customized poison arrows that knocked afflicted humans unconscious for exactly ten minutes, a customization that made them cost 3,000 DP a pop. I had bought fifteen of them. *Heh. I'm not cheap with DP when I get serious.*

So, what's he going to do? If the slaves have bad luck and Suzuki decides to stab them in anger, they'll die. Things would be a lot easier for us if he just left them on the ground and moved on, but...

"Tch. Fuck it. Looks like they're dead." Suzuki gave one of the unconscious slaves a hard kick and kept moving on. Guess things were going to be a little easy for us. I moved the Wall Golem around again, such that it would be easier for the nearby adventurers to find and rescue them.

"Just three, huh...? Oh, and be sure to grab the arrows that missed. Don't wanna waste them."

"Each one *did* cost three Keimas." *Oh yeah, I got summoned through the 1000 DP gacha. Okay.*

There were six slaves left.

"I thought we'd have to either kill them all or let them all live, but wow. I didn't think about having adventurers rescue the slaves at all." *I probably can't save all of them, but still. Three down.*

Since two of the slaves leading the formation had been left behind, the remaining slaves shifted around such that there was one mid-tier slave on either side of him, plus one behind, with two low-tier slaves in front. Coriane remained beside Suzuki, as always. The low-tier slaves in the front were still barehanded, but the mid-tier slaves around him had swords and shields. *Alright. Now things are a little more tricky.*

Suzuki's Perspective

Even when a golem came forth, Suzuki forced his low-tier slaves to fight it. But naturally they had no chance whatsoever of beating a golem while barehanded. Especially since the remaining chained slave was a fairly small girl.

Suzuki took out two clubs from his {Storage} and handed them to the two low-tier slaves. However, they still struggled quite a bit fighting the single golem. That was to be expected. Their master may have been ordering them to fight, but they were still village girls who had their hands full just fighting goblins. Even the weakest golem of all, a Clay Golem, would be a difficult foe to them. And yet, they were fighting a more powerful Stone Golem. The best they could do was buy some time, if that.

Their lack of success soon ticked Suzuki off to the point that he drew his sword and slammed it against the Stone Golem. He hit the golem over and over until it collapsed.

“Phew. This sword ain’t cutting at all. What kinda piece of crap is this?” Suzuki swung his sword at the chained slave standing near him.

“Eh?” The blade cut about halfway into her arm.

“G-Gyaaaaah! M-My aaaarm! It huuuuurts!”

“Huh? Damn, it actually can cut. Eh... But it only got halfway through. Yeah, this sword must be a piece of crap.” Suzuki kicked the screaming slave away to pull his sword out of her.

“C’mon, we’re going.”

“My arm! My aaaarm! MY AAAAARM!”

“Fuck, you’re loud. Shut up.”

“Ngggh...!” Her collar tightened, and although she fell silent as a result, she simply squirmed in place silently with blood gushing out of her arm.

“Haha! Fuckin’ hilarious. Here, I’ll heal you... {Ultra Healing}.” Suzuki cut his own hand and rubbed it against the slave’s wound such that their blood mingled before activating his skill, whereupon both of their wounds began to close. The slave’s arm patched itself up and all her wounds from the fight with the goblins vanished. Even her black eye disappeared.

“Haaah, haaah...”

“Hey, where’s my thank you? Aren’t you grateful you’ve got a master kind enough to heal you?”

“Th-Thank you, very much... Master...” The slave bowed so deeply she practically fell to her knees before him.

“Bwahaha! I used my precious {Ultra Healing} on you! Be more thankful! More!” Suzuki cackled and stepped on the healed slave’s head, grinding his foot against her hair.

{Ultra Healing} was fundamentally a skill that could heal only its user. It wouldn’t work on other people. After much experimentation, Suzuki found a loophole: he could heal others if he mixed his own blood in with theirs. However, that would violently exhaust the other person in accordance to the severity of their wounds. Some even died from exhaustion after getting healed. Raising the skill’s level might possibly make it such that he could naturally heal others without such issues.

“C’mon, stand up! We’re moving on.”

“Yes, sir...” The slave stood up shakily, out of breath.

Five golems approached them. A sizable number that Suzuki could beat given a bit of time. But he just sighed in annoyance. Any amount of time spent fighting monsters was less time to use for progressing through the dungeon. Enough time wasted and he might not be able to clear the dungeon in a single day, which meant leaving early.

“Tch, this sucks. We’re just gonna run past them.” Suzuki and his squad ran forward, around the golems. But the chained low-tier slave was so exhausted from being healed that she tripped on her own feet and fell over.

“The fuck do you think you’re doing, trash...?! Tch! Whatever, you just stay there and hold off the golems!”

“Haaah, haaah... N-No way!”

“See ya! You can brag about helping me in the afterlife! Ahahahaha!”

She couldn’t defy Suzuki’s orders. The slave, having no other choice, turned to sacrifice her life holding back the golems. Suzuki ran off further into the dungeon with his remaining five slaves.

Keima’s Perspective

“Okay, that’s one more... but don’t we have to kill her now? I think it’d be really unnatural if we just left her alive. Do you have any tricks up your sleeve?”

The slave had been left to hold the golems off all on her own. Despite barely being able to stand, she charged at them with her club. It’d be very unnatural if the golems were to stand there and take her blows without reacting.

“Nah, we can make this work. We just gotta knock her out and let some other adventurers find her.”

“Oh, I didn’t think of that. Buuut I don’t see any adventurers near her. Knocking her unconscious is one thing, but won’t adventurers find it suspicious if they come across her unconscious with a bunch of golems just standing around doing nothing? What can we do about that?”

“I have an idea. I’ll save her and bring her to the nearest adventurers.” I was the only one of us that could move within the dungeon freely as an adventurer. Naturally I couldn’t send Rokuko out, and Niku was busy working in the inn—not to mention that as a slave, she couldn’t enter without me anyway. Ichika was busy resting, and the three monster girls weren’t even registered as adventurers... *I should do that eventually. Guild cards count as ID, after all.*

Once the slave fell unconscious and collapsed, I ordered the golems to disperse. I then went into the dungeon alone and retrieved her. Unconscious people are pretty heavy, small or not, and I definitely would have struggled to carry her if not for my Wearable Golem’s power boost. *I’m so glad I made these Wearable Golems.*

I checked the map to find the nearest invaders... rather, the nearest adventurers so I could hand off the slave to them.

“Heeey, is anybody there? I know you aaaare!”

“Oh, Keima? How ye doi—wait, that’s!”

“Rippe!” The nearest adventurers were Gozou and his partner Roppe. *Oh... Right, this is the girl who Gozou mentioned being Roppe’s cousin. Perfect.*

“She was being attacked by some golems, but I managed to save her. She’s still alive, just unconscious.”

“Well ain’t that something! He musta used her to stall the monsters or somethin’.”

“Thanks for saving Rippe, Keima. Hey... Gozou.”

“I know, I know. Keima. Would y’mind hiding Rippe in your inn for a bit?” *Isn’t that illegal? Pretty sure stealing slaves is illegal.*

“As long as we say her master’s dead, nobody will figure out the truth. And it’ll take some time and money, but there’re some proper ways to get that collar off her.” I must have looked pretty thrown off, since Gozou answered my question before I even asked it.

“Go ahead and rent a room for her then, I won’t say anything about her. But would you mind going ahead and taking her from me? She’s actually pretty heavy.”

I had Gozou take Rippe from me. *Alright, time to get back to business.*

“I’ll leave the rest to you two. I’m gonna keep following after them.”

“...What’re you planning, Keima?”

“Can’t give many details, but let’s just say a certain person gave me a certain request. That’s all.”

“Alright. I didn’t hear nothin’.”

“It’d be a big help if you didn’t see anything either. Would you mind passing it off like you and Roppe saved Rippe?”

Basically, I was acting like I had some mysterious job to do while simultaneously setting it up such that people would think I wasn’t the only one doing things here. Now, even if I saved all the remaining slaves, nobody would get suspicious of the dungeon. They’d think it was me or someone like me working in the shadows. Which wasn’t even wrong, really. What mattered was just making people think it was humans getting in Suzuki’s way, not the dungeon itself.

“...Alright. But know that I’ll repay this favor, ye can be sure of it.”

“Then buy a B-Rank lunch next time or something. I dunno why, but that’s the least popular lunch of them all. It hardly sells.” I couldn’t think of anything in

particular I wanted from them, so I just blew it off with a joke that made Roppe giggle.

“You’re a nice guy, Keima. Is that really all you want? I don’t mind paying with my body, you know.” Roppe showed off her muscular, very adventurer-like body to me.

“I’m not interested in other people’s women.”

“...You sure have been glancing at my feet a lot for someone not interested.”

“You’re just imagining things. Oh, whoops, I gotta get going. See you two later.” I cut the conversation short and ran off. *I think I might just have a habit of looking at feet now. I gotta fix this or people will find me out in a second if I try acting like someone else. Crap.*

I returned to the Master Room and checked the situation with Rokuko.

“They’re in the middle of the puzzle area. They just got past the simple door.” The simple door, of course, referring to the [Gate of Wisdom] with the riddle of ‘The answer is simple,’ where the answer is literally the word simple.

“Wataru got through that one pretty fast too. I wonder how he’ll do with the other doors?” Each gate in the puzzle area had a different riddle or puzzle, and I switched out their order. This time, the simple puzzle had coincidentally been the first gate.

After a brief pause, Coriane rose her head in front of the second gate.

“I have solved it. The answer is ‘one step before the end of the world,’ Master.”

“Good work as always, Coriane. You were worth the eight hundred gold I spent on you. Keep it up. I hear there’s two more gates after this.”

“As you wish, Master.” Coriane, the highest ranked slave, respectfully bowed her head. *Yeaaah... I get the feeling she’s gonna crush the rest of the gates.*

Suzuki, Coriane, and the other slaves went through the gate one by one.

...Ah. They’re totally splitting themselves up here.

“Here’s our chance! Hurry and shut the gate!”

“Rei, the door! Kinue, change the puzzle!”

“Understood!”

Rokuko heard my order and immediately shouted out directions. The two monster girls sped through their menus and quickly did the jobs they were given. The door shut and its puzzle was immediately changed.

“Open the fuck up! What’s going on here?! The last gate took fucking forever to close!”

Two sword and shield wielding mid-tier slaves had been cut off and left behind in the last room.

“Hey, what’s the puzzle?! Will it open with the same answer?”

“I’m sorry, Master, but the puzzle seems to have changed...”

“You better not be fucking lying. I’ll kill you if that’s a lie.”

“I-I swear to God that I am not lying!”

“She’s telling the truth, the puzzle is different! This one seems to involve moving parts... Um, what might the answer be, Lady Coriane?”

“Naturally, I cannot solve a puzzle without knowing what it is...”

Heh, lucky us. The new puzzle is one where you have to slide blocks around and guide a particular block to the exit, known to some people simply as ‘sliding block puzzles.’ Good luck answering that through a door.

“Tch. This happened because you two didn’t move fast enough! Pieces of garbage!”

“Master. Might I make a suggestion? I believe it would be more efficient for us to proceed without them and, upon conquering the dungeon, retrieve them on our way back.”

“Yeah, that sounds like a good idea. Alright. We’ll roll with that... Hey! I’ll pick you two up on the way back if I feel like it, so wait there! Got it?”

“U-Understood!”

“We will be waiting for you, Master!”

...We don't need to rescue them right now either. They won't die waiting there or anything.

"We were lucky that Neruneh was in charge of those gates. She took so long to close the gate that the enemy let their guard down!"

"I-I'm sorry for being slooow."

"Don't worry about it, you actually helped us here. That's two more slaves separated from him." Which left three more slaves. His favorite one, the mid-tier one, and the low-tier one. There was a slave left for each category. Very nice.

The third gate and subsequently the fourth gate took a bit of time, but Coriane brilliantly solved each of them. They reached the spiral staircase area of the dungeon without getting separated again.

"I'm super impressed, Keima."

"Huh? With what?"

"I really didn't think that you'd be able to separate so many of the slaves from Suzuki while keeping them all alive."

"Heh, me neither. Things are pretty rough now, though. Not sure if I'll manage to save another one."

"You're not going to aim for a perfect game?"

"I've really gotta start focusing on taking Suzuki down now. I might try and save the others if an opportunity arises, but it'll all be up to luck."

I just need to think about killing them now. But just thinking about that made me sigh.

"...What's wrong, Keima?"

"Eh. I'm just wondering if I'm doing the same thing Suzuki is. I hate Suzuki. I don't like him. And I don't like what he's doing, so I'm going to kill him. Doesn't that sound familiar?"

"I don't think so. The thing is, ummm, well... You're doing this for my sake, Keima." Rokuko patted my head. *Hey... You trying to embarrass me or*

something?

"Suzuki put his hands on me, so you're going to kill him. I mean, I am your woman, right Keima?"

"You're gonna say that now?" *This is getting more embarrassing. I can't let Haku hear what Rokuko just said, now or ever. The fewer witnesses the better. Yeah, now I'm really motivated. Sorry Suzuki, but in this world, it's kill or be killed.*

Putting aside the details, Rokuko really had cheered me up.

"Thanks, Rokuko. Now I'm motivated again."

"I helped, right? Okay, then make me a ring once this battle's over. It's a promise, okay?"

"C'mon, Rokuko. That's called a flag. Anyone who makes a promise before or during a battle is doomed to failure. I wanna win, so I can't make that promise."

"Eh? O-Okay, fine."

Alright, bought myself some time.

Suzuki's party was traveling down the massive spiral staircase. This part of the dungeon was like a massive tube with a staircase growing from the walls. The middle of the staircase was an empty hole that reached all the way to the bottom. The gimmick here was that walls would shoot out and knock adventurers into the hole. Plus, chunks of the stairs would fold inward and make holes for people to fall down through to the next floor. Neither gimmick worked on Wataru, though.

...Their current formation was the low-tier slave in the lead, the mid-tier slave in the back, and Suzuki with Coriane between them. They slowly walked down the staircase, taking care with each step downwards.

"The walls don't go out too fast, but let's give it a try anyway."

"Okaaaay. Leave it to meee." Neruneh casually fiddled with her menu, and soon a Wall Golem started slowly pushing out. Suzuki noticed that and hurried his slaves onward.

"Hey, hurry up! We're gonna get pushed off, idiot!"

“A-Ah! Understood!” Suzuki kicked the low-tier slave from behind and forced her to rush down the stairs without any caution whatsoever. But there was a trap chunk of stairs right ahead, through which the low-tier slave dropped like a rock.

“Ah... ngggh!” She fell straight to the next floor, a height equal to one revolution of the staircase.

“Hey, mid-tier! Get in front!”

“U-Understood, Master!” The mid-tier slave took the lead and went down the staircase to the low-tier slave. Upon reaching her, Suzuki kicked her up and forced her to take the lead again despite her hurt feet. The pain was so bad tears welled up in her eyes, but Suzuki just kicked her onward.

By the time they reached the bottom, the low-tier slave had fallen through so many traps that she could barely even walk anymore.

“Good work. Damn, your ankles are a really funky color now.”

“Hghiiiih! P-Please don’t poke them... It hurts, ngggh...”

“Aaahahaha! This is hilarious.” I had no idea what was so hilarious about it, but Suzuki kept prodding the low-tier slave’s ankles until eventually getting bored and getting back to the dungeon.

The low-tier slave leaned heavily on the mid-tier slave’s shoulder and advanced slowly.

The storeroom area. This floor had Golem Blades all over the place, plus some experimental golems I had created during tests. I decided to go ahead and have Rei, Kinue, and Neruneh each control different golems to really see the strengths of each one. Some were shaped like animals, some had four arms or four legs, some had bows, and some had spears. I had prepared golems of every shape and size. They weren’t necessary for Wataru, but now was the time to go all out and use them all.

“Okay, use this one first. The others can gang up on them afterwards.”

“Master, what kind of golem is this?” Rei asked me about the golem I directed her towards.

“That’s a Net Golem. It throws a net that locks an enemy down. You should be able to immobilize the low-tier slave with him. Then, just hit her a little until she falls unconscious. Thanks.”

“You certainly are being soft, Master. You still intend to save them?”

“I feel like if she dies like this she’ll haunt me like a ghost. I just don’t want anything interrupting my sleep.”

...The, uh, the dead elf slave won’t haunt me, right? Did you give her a proper funeral, Rokuko? What? You turned her corpse to DP right after burying her and saying a short prayer? I’m not sure that’s gonna fly.

“Okay, here we go! Kinue, Neruneh, back me up!”

“Fufufu. I’ll do my best.”

“Yay yay! Oooh!”

The experimental golems marched out.

Suzuki’s Perspective

“This dungeon feels like a castle basement or some shit.”

“A castle basement? I wouldn’t know, I’ve never been to one. I imagine you’ve been to one before, Master?”

“I’m talkin’ about the feeling here, the feeling. I’ve never been to one either.” Suzuki and Coriane were chatting casually with one another as the low-tier and mid-tier slaves walked in front of them. They were paying attention to their surroundings somewhat, but there didn’t seem to be any monsters around.

The two slaves quietly talked to one another, whispering so that the two behind them couldn’t hear.

“...Are you okay?”

“Haaah, haaah... I-I don’t think so... I’m going to die here... Aaah, oh nooo...”

“It might be easier for you if you think about this as an opportunity to die, rather than being forced to die.”

“An opportunity to die? As in, I should think of it like I’ll finally be free from

living in fear while the Hero Dragon rapes me whenever he wants...? That's true, but I at least wanted to die as a person... Not as property like this."

"I... see... I'm lucky he still treats me with a little decency."

"Aah... I wish he would just die. Maybe I could go home if he were dead..." So murmured the low-tier slave, but she couldn't even imagine him dying with the god-given skill of {Ultra Healing} that healed any wound in seconds.

"Hold on, say any more and your collar will..."

"Ahaha. I'll die anyway, so who cares? He'll probably throw me at a monster if one shows up. I hope it at least kills me fast... I don't want to suffer any more than I already have." The mid-tier slave lowered her head sadly after her companion turned a pained smile her way.

"Hey, there's monsters here!" She lifted her head immediately after hearing Suzuki's yell. Before her was an animal made of rock and a Stone Golem holding something in its hand. There was also... something ashen gray and wiggling between them.

The mid-tier slave briefly worried about what to do. Should she throw the low-tier slave at them, or take her and run away together? But her worries were crushed in a bad way by Suzuki's next orders.

"Hey, throw that bitch at them. She's a slow-ass walker now. We don't need that dead weight." In other words, he was telling the low-tier slave it was her time to die.

Suzuki walked up to the low-tier slave and grinned cruelly.

"By the way, you just said you wanted to die, right? I heard all of that, fucking idiot. Live a long life and distract those monsters. That's an order!" He snatched the low-tier slave away from the mid-tier slave and literally threw her at the approaching monsters as if she were bait. He saw something like a net swallow the low-tier slave up whole. It was easy to imagine the monsters beating on her, stabbing her, and even eating her now that her movements had been restrained. Or perhaps she would be turned into the seedbed of that especially human shaped golem. Either way, she would die or suffer so much that she would wish she had died.

“Hahaha, man, I’m glad she’s taken care of.” Suzuki walked away, stretching a bit and not worried at all.

“And I am as well, Master. But what shall we do now? You have lost most of your slaves. Shall we turn back for today?”

“Huh? Nah, I’m a Hero, y’know. I can conquer dungeons on my own if I want to. I just brought them cause it’d be fucking boring otherwise. We’re obviously gonna keep going.”

The mid-tier slave had a few thoughts about that. *If you could conquer it on your own, I wish you had done so from the start. That way, none of the other girls would have had to suffer so much.* But her thoughts were interrupted by Suzuki.

“Hey, mid-tier. From now on, you’re a low-tier. Okay? Okay. Good.”

Aaah. It’s my turn next.

The moment she thought that, the mid-tier slave’s... no, the low-tier slave’s vision went dark and she collapsed.

Keima’s Perspective

“Huh? Why the fuck did this one pass out? Hey, wake up! Wake the fuck up! Aaah, this ain’t gonna work. She’s broken. Tch. Guess I’ll leave her here.”

The mid-tier (now low-tier) slave collapsed completely on her own and stopped moving. She had probably snapped after being demoted to a low-tier slave after seeing with her own eyes the horrible, horrible treatment that this Hero’s low-tier slaves experienced.

Suzuki and Coriane marched on, leaving the fallen slave behind as they clung to each other and flirted. *...This leaves one slave.* The low-tier slave that had been thrown towards the golems had fallen unconscious after experiencing a quite rocky sleeper hold.

“Good job with the net and sleeper hold, Rei. You’re the best at really precise movements like that.”

“Yes, sir! Your praise is the greatest honor I could ask for!”

“You did good too, Kinue. Take the unconscious slaves to a nearby storeroom. I’ll grab them later and pass it off like I saved them myself.”

“Understood, Master. Leave it to me.”

“What about me, Masteeer?”

“Neruneh, uh... You tried your best?”

“Yaaaay, you complimented meee! Please teach me your magic lateeer.”

Rei had commanded the golem with enough precision to not hurt the slave. Kinue-san quickly recovered them and even cleaned the area. Neruneh, well... Neruneh had enthusiasm. She didn’t scare them, at least.

I praised the three monster girls and checked the slaves to see if they were safe. One of them was a physical mess, while the other was a mental mess. *Well... At least they’re alive.*

“We’re finishing them off next time.”

“Mmm, Keima. Maybe we should just kill that last slave with him?”

I thought about that for a bit. Coriane was clinging to Suzuki as we spoke. It would be impossible to tear them apart and rescue her. Plus, it seemed like she actually was staying with Suzuki by choice, unlike the others.

“You did super great saving the other eight slaves. I really didn’t think it’d be possible.”

“Even I didn’t expect to rescue so many of them. At this point... I’ll be fine as long as Suzuki goes down.” There’d be no point in separating Suzuki from his slaves if he survived to leave the dungeon in the first place. Haku would take care of him eventually if he escaped, but who knows how many people would suffer until then. *I really need to take Suzuki down, here and now. Nothing will come from worrying too much about the final slave.*

With that decided, I activated the trap.

Suzuki’s Perspective

It all happened in a single moment. Suzuki suddenly saw a spear flying toward him out of the corner of his eye.

“Master, watch out!”

“Coriane?!” In a split-second decision, Coriane pushed Suzuki away and took the spear that was aimed at him. Its metal tip ripped through her torso. Blood gushed out of her mouth.

“Are you... okay, Master...?”

“The fuck did you do that for, shithead?!”

“I did it because... you are a Hero...” Coriane smiled while spitting out blood.

“As a former Daide noble... I am proud to have protected you...” The light faded from Coriane’s eyes, until... her arms fell heavily to the ground.

“Welp, she’s dead. Hahaha, shit. Guess she was an idiot too. She shoulda known I can’t die.” It would have been hard to move if that spear shot through his body and impaled him. But that was all. He wouldn’t die, so he could just pull the spear out of him and that would be that. If Coriane survived, she could have pulled the spear out for him. Her mindless decision to block the spear with her body had made him lose a slave worth eight hundred gold coins.

“Tch. Women really are dumb. But there’s no point to buying dudes, so I guess I’ll just buy another one worth about as much. This time I’ll buy a younger one, about as young as that inn’s owner... Actually, maybe I’ll just kidnap her. If I can make her mine, the rest should take care of itself. Who cares if I have to leave another country? She may be used goods by now, but hey, stealing that smug fucker’s girl would be pretty fun.” Suzuki had a lot of confidence in his endurance. After all, thanks to his {Ultra Healing}, he never had to eat or sleep and he never even got tired. If he could kidnap her, he could rape her not just for a day straight, but for a week or month straight without any breaks.

He licked his lips. He was looking forward to that. So, so much. He needed more power, for that end and others. Even more power, enough to dominate any of his enemies.

“Yeah. Level 2 is twice as big as level 1. Heheheh. I can’t wait to see how much stronger I get.”

The power he wanted was right in front of him. He wanted to destroy the Dungeon Core as soon as possible to raise his Hero level.

Suzuki thought about his future and laughed. Coriane's corpse watched Suzuki lovingly, her dead lips forming a gentle smile.

Keima's Perspective

"I really didn't expect Coriane to save him like that."

"Me neither." I didn't know what kind of dramatic past she had, but in the end, Coriane definitely thought of Suzuki as a real Hero. She mentioned being a former noble, and Suzuki did seem to treat her like she was special. Coriane had acted with pride, protected Suzuki, and died as a result. Even if Suzuki trashed her in the end, Coriane had died satisfied. This was the kind of scene where you respect and wish a former enemy well despite them being on the other side, I guess.

But really, it had nothing to do with us.

Her death was completely, absolutely irrelevant. What mattered was that Suzuki, our prey, was now walking through our dungeon alone and I wanted him dead. I already had all the information I needed to beat him. All that was left was acting on it. Hesitation and irrelevant information were unnecessary. At most, the knowledge that he was still talking about kidnapping Rokuko was confirmation that I didn't need to hold back. Not that I intended to in the first place. My plan had been to lock him down with that spear and finish him from there... but since that failed, I had no choice but to go with plan B.

"I've got it. I know how to beat him."

"Oh, are you talking about that thing you've been fiddling with for a while?"

"C'mon, don't say that. You're gonna kill the dramatic tension." *Yeah, I hadn't thought up a plan B on the spot. I just wanted to say that cool line.*

"What are you even talking about? You're being weird, Keima... Wait, actually, I guess you're always like this."

"Whaddya mean by that? I always act normally and properly. What's weird about me? Nothing."

"Right, right. So, what are we going to do? What can we do?" *She just blew me off. Well, whatever. I'll explain my plan.*

“When invaders are on a floor, you can’t make new walls. But you *can* repair existing walls. So, I’m going to bury him alive within the walls.”

Dungeon walls were special. You could repair them even if an invader was on the floor, and in a single moment too. But they wouldn’t heal if the Dungeon Core ignored them. The golems with pickaxes could dig through the dungeon to empty out space specifically because Rokuko let them. And I had preemptively had such golems dig about three meters into one of the walls within the storeroom area.

“How are you going to lure him into that dead end?”

“I’ve already finished setting it up. All I’ve gotta do is spring the trap. Rokuko, keep an eye out and repair the wall when he’s in there.”

Alright, time to activate that thing I prepared last night. “Operation ‘Cask of Amontillado,’ begin!”

Suzuki’s Perspective

Suzuki walked through the dungeon alone. He wasn’t very on guard for traps. Which made sense, given that most traps didn’t really work on him. Even those that did work on him would at best slow him down for a bit.

He noticed something out of the corner of his vision. Turning, he saw the ends of long blonde hair disappearing behind a corner.

“Who was that? A girl?” Suzuki chased after her. He turned the corner and saw a figure much more clearly, advancing down the corridor. It was a girl with blonde hair and the clothes of a slave.

“Huh? Is that one of my slaves? I don’t remember bringing anyone with long blonde hair down here...” He didn’t remember bringing anyone. But the girl did look like someone he knew.

“Hey! You!”

The girl kept walking even after Suzuki called out to her. She turned a corner, and Suzuki chased after her, being cautious so as to not activate a trap that would slow him down.

“Those were elf ears, weren’t they?” The moment she turned the corner, he

definitely saw that her ears were pointed. Suzuki thought back and recalled with certainty that he once had a slave just like that. He thought he had killed her, but there she was, still alive.

“Hah! This world is like a fuckin’ video game, no surprise that dead shits can come back alive!” Her seeming revival didn’t throw Suzuki off whatsoever. After all, he had {Ultra Healing}. It wouldn’t be odd at all for Keima to have a skill that could bring the dead back to life. Maybe she had been reborn as a ghost or something, but it didn’t matter to him either way.

“Guess that means she’s still my slave! Heheh.” Suzuki chased after her. After the elf slave, after his property.

“Wait! Hey, I’m telling you to fuckin’ stop! Bwahaha!” He continued to chase after her for a while. She wasn’t listening to his orders, perhaps due to her collar coming off. Not that it mattered to him, since he had plenty of spare collars. He just had to catch her and put another one on her.

“Fuckin’ seriously though! I’m telling you to stop, so stop! I’ll let you be a mid-tier slave if you stop right now! But if you keep going, you’re gonna be low-tier! You fine with that?!” Suzuki’s shout stopped the chase. The girl stopped at a dead end and sat down.

“That’s right. Just be nice and obedient.” He slowly approached her. There was blood on her hair and clothes, plus a scar on her back. Suzuki grinned; it really was his slave.

“Caaaught you. Now, turn around and look at... me...?” He noticed something odd after putting his hand on her shoulder. She was hard. And not rigor mortis hard, either. She was... made of wood?

“Hey, look at me!” The moment he tried to force her to turn around, his vision went black and he lost the ability to breathe.

(Shit, poison?!) He was still conscious. But he couldn’t talk, and he couldn’t move. He couldn’t even move a single finger.

He hurriedly cast {Ultra Healing}, but his vision remained dark and he still couldn’t even breathe.

(The hell is going on here?! {Ultra Healing}, {Ultra Healing}!) He couldn’t

breathe, but he was still alive thanks to his skill.

({Ultra Healing}! Fuck, was it a trap? The hell is going on here?) No matter how many times he healed himself, his vision remained dark and he remained unable to move. But he wouldn't die as long as he kept using {Ultra Healing}. That calmed Suzuki down a little. Staying alive was key. He decided to keep himself alive with {Ultra Healing} until help arrived.

However.

...Who would come to help Suzuki? His one ally, Coriane, had died before his eyes moments ago. At most, there were the three slaves he left in the puzzle area. Their collars might have a way of telling them that their master, Suzuki, was still alive. But would any of them come help him? Thinking about that suddenly made Suzuki very scared.

(Of course somebody will! I'm a fucking Hero! Heroes don't die in fucking dungeons like this! I don't wanna fucking die!) But the more he thought, the more he realized that no one would come help him. He hadn't ordered his slaves to save him if something happened. In fact, they would probably just laugh if they knew the situation he was in.

(Fucking damn it! Someone, someone help me! Someone! FUCKING HELP MEEEE!) Since he was repeatedly using {Ultra Healing}, he couldn't use any of his other skills.

Suzuki just kept using {Ultra Healing}, again and again.

(I'm asking for fucking help! Anyone, come on! HELP MEEEEEE!) But nobody came. All he could see in his mind were the frightened faces of his slaves and Coriane's smile, as if they were inviting him to the realm of the deceased.

(No no no no no no NO NO NOOOO! I DON'T WANNA FUCKING DIIIIE!) Suzuki, fearing death, continued to cast {Ultra Healing}. He would likely continue to use {Ultra Healing} for as long as possible, too afraid of death to stop. But nobody would come.

Keima's Perspective

I had made a Mannequin Golem that looked exactly like Elulu, the elf slave.

The wig cost 50 DP and I used her actual bloody clothes. *Oh, and I asked Rokuko to take the clothes off. I didn't do it myself.* The blood on the wig was just paint.

I figured that finishing Suzuki off with such a golem would help Elulu rest easier, but it ended up being the perfect bait for him. Thanks to it, Suzuki was now in the middle of a wall, completely incapable of movement. And although the wall was a destructible object, it still had the strength of a normal stone wall. Suzuki wouldn't be able to break free with his own power.

...And since he was locked inside somewhere, his DP income was doubled. He was giving us 1,200/DP a day. My one regret was that I couldn't lock him inside of a jail as well. That would triple it, too. *Oh well. I'm gonna lock that area off and make it uneditable so nobody ever accidentally frees Suzuki.*

"He's earning us over a whole Keima a day! We're getting six Keimas every five days just from him!" *Yeah, please stop using me as a unit of currency.*

"By the way, why'd you call this plan Cask of Armadillo-whatever?"

"Aesthetics." It was a reference to an old short story, but my real inspiration came from a certain game about conquering dungeons. In the game, you would make a party of adventurers and develop them while conquering dungeons. Whenever you hit a trap or something that made you warp randomly, you had a chance of teleporting into a wall that you normally couldn't move into. Naturally, your entire party would die. Under normal circumstances, you could recover your party's corpses later and revive them, but it's impossible to move inside of walls. This resulted in permanently losing characters, a phenomenon which gave more than a few players some serious gaming trauma.

"And that's how I came up with this plan."

"I didn't really get that story, but now I get just how horrible and evil your plan was." *I'm glad you understand.*

"Also, couldn't you have made her actual corpse into a golem? Why'd you go out of your way to make a Mannequin Golem?"

"Man, Rokuko, and you call me horrible? Turning a corpse into a golem would be some pretty gruesome stuff. You don't wanna get cursed or anything, do you?"

“How could a dead person curse us?”

“Wha?! Uhhhh... They could come back as ghosts, or...”

“Ghosts are just monsters, you know. If one tries to mess with us we can just kill it again. Nothing can hide from us in our dungeon, so it’d be easy.”

I looked to Rei, Kinue, and Neruneh for confirmation.

“I believe that Lady Rokuko is correct. You could have even summoned a ghost-type monster to possess the corpse for you.”

“Corpses still rot, though, so they should preferably still be kept out of rooms.”

“Masteeer, magic is really effective against ghost monsteeers.”

Whaaat? Am I the weird one here? No, no no no. It wasn’t a waste to cut down on my sleep time to make that golem. No way.

Really though, all I did was make an elf-shaped mannequin and put a wig on it. Took about thirty minutes to make in total. Also, I wasn’t confident enough in my craftsmanship to make a face, so I left it blank. Totally flat. *Kind of a waste that it ended up getting buried in the wall with Suzuki, though.*

“Master! Ummm, like, Gozou and his dudebros are talking about some slaves they found in the dungeon. They wanna secretly rent a room for them or something.” *Oh, right. My job’s not done here yet. I’ve gotta get the slaves from the puzzle and storeroom areas too.*

Through the dungeon monitor, I looked at the wall Suzuki was buried in one last time.

“...Have a long life. You’ll live for as long as those people you killed didn’t.”

I closed the menu and the monitor with it before heading out to rescue the slaves.

Epilogue

Day 169

Haku came over. The Guild receptionist was stunned since she had only contacted her yesterday. *Yeah, Haku was just waiting for this to happen.*

“I’ve come to rescue Dragon Suzuki, the Hero.”

Or so she said, but that was of course a front. She wouldn’t actually rescue him. She would bring back a [Doppelganger (500,000 DP)] that looked exactly like him. Suzuki was, as expected, labeled a criminal and this Doppelganger would be taking his punishment for him. Haku had brought with her several carriages for the sake of this performance, including one with a dramatic cage. *Waaait... But isn’t the road from here to Tsia a tiny mountain road? Oh, you used magic to expand the roads? Holy crap.*

“So, what happened to the real Suzuki?”

“He’s not dead.”

“Oh, you captured him alive, then? I’m impressed.” Thanks to the Doppelganger that Haku prepared, everyone thought that Suzuki had already been rescued from the dungeon. The real Suzuki, however, was still inside the wall. And there he would stay forever.

“I also rescued the slaves that he brought with him.”

“Oh my. You didn’t kill them? I suppose you might intend to make a human farm with them, alongside Suzuki.”

“...The only farm I need right now is Suzuki. Would you mind taking the slaves back to where they come from? Or at least, to wherever they want to go now.”

“My my, Keima. Is that perhaps a quest you’re giving me? A-Rank adventurers are quite expensive, you know.”

“Would a free Cream Soda cover it?”

“Easily.” The deal was made with Haku smiling in amusement. Since Cream

Sodas were worth one gold each (a price recommended by Haku herself), a single one of them was only a little cheaper than the average payment an A-Rank adventurer could expect for such a quest.

“I’ll bring it to you later, sister!”

“I am looking forward to that, my sweet little Rokuko.”

And so, Haku agreed to take the surviving slaves and return them to their home villages and whatnot.

Day 170

“See you later. I’m counting on you.”

“Certainly. Count on me all you wish. I am an A-Rank adventurer, after all.”

There were no convict slaves among the surviving slaves, so they were all freed from service. All it would take was some simple paperwork and they could have their collars removed in Tsia City. Not to mention, every single one of them jumped at Haku’s offer to take them home after she mentioned having already been paid to do so.

And so, Haku left the inn with Doppelganger Suzuki and the original Suzuki’s former slaves. By the way, several adventurers that had been staying in our inn went with them willingly as bodyguards. Suzuki had made a lot of enemies the one night he stayed over.

...But about those former slaves. Should they really be going on a trip with Suzuki, fake or not? Maybe they don’t mind since he’s just sitting in the cell with his arms around his knees, murmuring quietly to himself every now and again. Maybe it’s just me, but that’s pretty scary, even knowing it’s just an act.

Haku finally left with Gozou and a surprisingly large number of adventurers seeing her off. Once that was done, Gozou stealthily called out to me.

“Hey. Yer the one that paid Lady Haku’s fee, ain’t ya?”

“Huh? Yeah. I gave her a Cream Soda for her efforts. Pretty cheap.”

“Cheap?! Those cost a gold each...”

“From our perspective, they’re only worth as much as they actually cost to

make. Between you and me, we're definitely way overcharging for them."

"Seriously? Yer not helping yerself here, man."

After all, a single Cream Soda only costs 8 DP. A goblin costs twenty DP, y'know? Though according to Haku, the only way in this world to get Cream Soda is to buy it for DP in my dungeon, so it is relatively valuable.

Gozou scratched his head awkwardly and kept talking.

"Aaah, hey, err... I owe a lot to ye for all ye did today, Keima."

"Huh? Don't sweat it, I didn't do all that much. I just gave a room to the slaves and a Cream Soda to Haku."

"...Right. That's what we're passin' this off as."

By the way, our dungeon's difficultly rank would remain unchanged despite Suzuki the Hero failing to return from within and ending up incapacitated. The Guild thought that Suzuki had just lost his mind within the dungeon, and Haku had stated upon "rescuing" him that the dungeon was the same always. No changes necessary. Not to mention that all of his slaves, excluding Coriane, had abandoned him and somehow ended up within the inn. *Wait. Doesn't that make it extremely, painfully obvious that there's some subterfuge going on here?*

Ultimately, everyone agreed with Haku's proposed theory that Coriane had separated Suzuki from the others, then betrayed him in such dramatic fashion that he became traumatized towards slaves and his mind shut down. I got the feeling that Coriane wouldn't be too happy to hear that, given that she had died to protect him, but eh.

"Y'know, truth is... A few of us adventurers had relatives among those slaves. I... No, we were planning on surprising Suzuki and knocking him out to rescue his slaves. Maybe even kill him and stash the body in the darkness of the dungeon, iffin luck were on our side. But... It weren't. We went into the dungeon that day with as many as we could, and not even a single one of us managed to find him." *Wait, what? That was a thing? Now that he mentions it, I do kinda remember the adventurers sticking together more than usual, as if they were searching for something.*

“Guess y’could say luck actually was on our side, though. An S-Rank adventurer woulda killed a few of us for sure, and we’d be doomed the second he held one of his slaves hostage. Plus... Thanks to a certain someone, Suzuki ended up gettin’ taken down anyway. Dunno who that someone is, though.” *Uhhhh, you know that the official explanation is that Coriane did it, right?* I almost said that, but read the mood and kept it in my head.

“I was gonna invite ye to come with us, Keima, but I figured yer place was with Ichika and the owner.”

“Really? I didn’t notice at all.”

“Ye, really.” Gozou nodded to himself abut something.

“Hey. Just sayin’. I dunno who took Suzuki down, but if ye ever get the chance, would ye mind thankin’ him for me?”

“...I don’t know who did it either, and I don’t think I’ll know it’s them if I do meet them, but sure.”

“Thank ye, Keima.”

“No problem.”

Gozou, having said what he wanted to say, walked away. *Welp... Gozou definitely thinks I’m some super skilled subordinate of Haku’s now. My reputation’s getting so far ahead of how strong I actually am. Guess this is just my life now.*

Day 171

Rokuko came to my room the day after Haku left.

“Keima. I think it’s about time for you to give me it.”

“Give you what?”

“Didn’t I tell you I wanted a symbol of our partnership? You promised to make me a ring.” *Oh yeah... That was a thing that happened. I never told her when I’d make the ring, though.*

“You didn’t forget about it, right?”

“Uh, of course not. I remembered. I was just thinking about what kind of

design I should roll with. While sleeping."

"Really? Then go ahead and make it. I'd like one made of orichalcum, I think. Do you mind me saying that?"

"Sure. I'll try finishing it by tonight. Uhhhh, I'd feel pretty awkward making it while you watch, so... I'll call you when it's finished."

"Okay! I can't wait!" Rokuko left my room.

Alright. This sucks. Guess I'll think about the design while I make it. I'll start off with a simple ring and then decorate it from there.

First, I bought [Orichalcum (10cm of 1mm diameter wire: 10,000 DP)]. *Holy crap, it's so expensive! But I've gotta buy it. This is what Rokuko wants, and I wanna see what it's like too.*

Orichalcum was colored like a mix of gold and silver. It radiated a rainbow-like light, making it feel exactly like a fantasy world metal. A mere ten centimeters of it in wire form alone was ridiculously expensive, and it wouldn't bend no matter how hard I tried. I even experimented with a pair of pliers, but it showed no signs whatsoever of bending. *The heck is this? Is this stuff really metal?*

Ultimately, I used {Create Golem} to work with it... but it took a lot of time and mana just to morph the wire into a ring. *It's been a long friggin' time since {Create Golem} was enough to tire me out, holy crap. I even said a proper chant and it still sucked a crapload of mana out of me. It got easier to mold than iron once it was filled with mana, but I have no idea how anyone could make a whole sword or something out of this stuff.*

I looked the orichalcum ring over. *Man... It cost me ten gold coins' worth of DP to make this. Talk about excessive. That makes this ring worth ten million yen already, y'know? Maybe I should have ignored what she wanted and just made it out of gold or silver.*

Next, I bought a [Synthetic Ruby (Unprocessed Boule: 30 DP)]. It was way cheaper than the orichalcum. Not to mention that the resulting oval-shaped crystal was about as big as a finger. *But, uh... The heck is "boule" anyway?*

I had thought about just morphing some natural gems into a crystal, but the synthetic ruby was cheaper and looked better. Plus, synthetic crystals had fewer

impurities in them, so you could argue that they were in some ways superior to natural crystals. Though the argument between natural and synthetic kind of falls apart when buying both with DP. A gem merchant would probably want to cut off my head, but really, it was all the same in the end after I used {Create Golem} to mess around with them.

...Oh, now this is easy to work with. Barely takes any mana. Maybe 'cause it's a gem, synthetic or not? In any case, I completely enveloped the orichalcum ring with the ruby. A ruby coating for an oricalcum ring... *There's a ton of this ruby left over. Maybe I should make a hair ornament out of it too?*

Either way, I completed the ruby ring with an orichalcum core. It was a double ring with ruby on the outside and orichalcum on the inside. It'd probably look like candy if you cut it down the middle. The orichalcum shined through the clear, crimson coating. The overall design was simple, but I thought it would suit Rokuko perfectly. *And it probably looks like I put a lot of work into making it, too. Good thing I told Rokuko to leave my room. Though, to be fair, the orichalcum wasn't so easy to work with. Maybe I'll ask Kantara how smiths usually forge stuff with it. He's a dwarf blacksmith, after all. He probably knows. Probably.*

Anyway, guess I just need to make a box for it now. Handing this to her is gonna be preeetty embarrassing. But I know that when it comes to things like rings, you either give them right away or get stuck with them forever. So, I'm gonna swallow this embarrassment and give it to her ASAP. I can't let myself think "Oh, this isn't worth calling her over here. I'll get it to her eventually," or something. I've decided to give it to her, so I'm going to make it happen.

And so, to prevent any chance of me not giving it to her, I sent a message asking her to come to my room so I could give her what we were talking about.

"Keima! I'm here!" It took her three seconds. *That was fast. If she were Niku, her tail would probably be wagging like crazy right now.*

"So, Rokuko. Here it is." I took out the box with the ring in it and handed it to Rokuko.

"A box...? Ah! Can I open it?!"

"Yep." Rokuko rapidly took out the ring the moment I said that.

“Oooh... Did you make this ring out of gems? This red is super pretty. Something really shiny is inside it too. Okay, I’ll go ahead and...” Rokuko started to put the ring on, but stopped midway.

...Then, she began glancing at me. *What? You want me to put it on you or something? I don’t remember agreeing to anything like that. I’m already plenty embarrassed here.*

“...Keima. I heard from Wataru that partners usually put the rings on their partner after giving it to them. S-So, um, would you?” *She’s actually gonna ask me to do it...? Crap, I don’t have a choice now. Let’s do this thing.*

I took the ring from Rokuko, clasped her left hand, and steadied my aim. A glance at her face revealed that she was fixated on the ring, nervous. Certain that Haku would kill me if she saw all this, I slid the ring onto Rokuko’s finger. It was... loose. *No helping that. I made it without measuring her first, after all.*



But this was within my calculations. I had {Create Golem}, so this kind of thing was no problem at all. In fact, I had intentionally made the ring loose so I could fit it properly later. Better loose than completely unable to fit.

Rokuko fiddled with the loose ring, spinning it around her finger.

“Mnn, it’s kind of loose... Oh, I know!”

“Huh?” Right before I could try resizing it with {Create Golem}, Rokuko transformed into loli mode... her DP-saving form.

“Okay, that fixed it.” Surprisingly enough, the red ring now fit her white left ring finger perfectly.

“Hold up. You got smaller. I could understand the ring getting even more loose, but not this. Why’s it a perfect fit?”

“I’m not totally sure, but my clothes and stuff change to fit me when I transform, don’t they?” *Right, right. Rokuko is a magical and mysterious Dungeon Core. No point asking about these kinds of things. It’s magic, she ain’t gotta explain shit. And I’m not gonna think about it too hard. If I get too uptight about the law of conservation of mass, everything might break.*

“Heave ho.” Loli Rokuko transformed back into teen Rokuko. The ring remained a perfect fit on her. *Magic is mysterious and all-powerful. The end!*

“Ehehe, it’s so pretty. This is made from gems, right? It’s red and clear, so pretty.” Rokuko looked at the ring on her finger with blissful eyes.

“Yep. I’m pretty proud of it.” She must have liked it a lot, judging by how she was twisting her hand around to look at the ring from every possible angle. *And I’m finally calming down myself. Sheesh, this wasn’t my style at all.*

“There’s something shiny inside the gemstone. What is it?”

“That’s orichalcum.”

“This is orichalcum?! Really?! Isn’t orichalcum like, super duper rare? I heard it’s crazy expensive.”

“Hey, it’s what you wanted, isn’t it? Gotta follow up on a lady’s request. By the way, a ring’s worth of the stuff cost 10,000 DP.”

“Wooow... This ring cost ten Keimas... or one Phenny...” *Hey. You’re not wrong, but seriously. I don’t wanna be a unit of measurement. It feels weird.*

“Eheheh.” Rokuko stroked the ring tenderly.

“Well, I’m just glad you like it.”

“Uh-huh! Thank you, Keima! You’re the best!” Rokuko hugged me. *I’m just glad she likes it.* The moment after I thought that, I felt something soft briefly press against my cheek. Rokuko’s face was right up close to mine. We looked into each other’s eyes, so close our noses almost touched. Rokuko began to blush. She probably had just gone with the flow without really thinking about what she was doing.

Soon, she ran away talking about how she needed to show the ring to Niku. Now alone in the room, I touched my cheek as the prior sensation lingered, reflecting on what had just occurred.

“I heard that partners usually put the rings on their partner after giving it to them. S-So, um, would you?”

“Eheheh.”

“Keima! You’re the best!”

...I hate to admit it, but Rokuko was pretty cute just now. Wait, no. I know what this is. I’m just feeling good about her liking my gift! There’s nothing more to it than that! I got into my futon while making excuses to myself.

Between you and me... That night, I kept thinking back to Rokuko’s smile so much it took me longer than usual to fall asleep.

Extra Episode — Clash at Golemhead - Budokai! Ready, Set, Go!

“We should practice controlling golems sometimes.”

The thought suddenly struck me. There were many different ways to command golems, or rather, the monsters of our dungeon.

First was commander mode, where you could make platoons of monsters to give general orders too. This mode was generally used in Dungeon Battles to move large armies around.

Second was leader mode, which let you give more precise orders to individual monsters. The specifics of how to execute the orders were left to the monster, such that you could say “Go forth, golem!” and it would fight however it wanted.

Last was possess mode, which used a controller. This mode let you control a monster directly and gave you the most freedom. The monster would become stronger depending on the skill of the one controlling it, but the reverse was also true in that the monster would become weaker if someone inexperienced was controlling it. As one might expect, it was pretty fun to control monsters like video game characters. More controllers became available as time went on; some were simple game pads, others had control sticks. I preferred the one with two control sticks.

Different modes of command could be combined as well. For example, it was pretty fundamental stuff to use possess mode on the leader of a squad of monsters while ordering the platoon around with leader mode. It was like giving instructions to other players through voice chat in an online game.

Anyway, back to golems. Golems were the main monster in our dungeon. They felt like super robots in a good way when possessed, and with the menu monitor fashioned to look like a cockpit screen, it really did feel like riding in a mecha. For a guy who liked mechs more than anything else in the world except sleep and nice feet, commanding golems was some quality entertainment.

“Oh, Keima. You’re practicing with golems? I think I might join you.”

“You wanna join, Rokuko? Alright. Let’s spar with the golems.”

“Okay. Want to make things more interesting? Let’s say... Whoever loses has to do whatever the winner wants at least once.” *Oh...? Gambling like that against me, the Golem Master? You’ve got guts, Rokuko.*

“Alright, I’ll take you up on that challenge.”

“Are you sure? It can be anything, you know...? I’m going all out now.”

We headed to the coliseum area, sparks flying between us. It was an area we built right before Wataru the Hero came, and as you might expect, it consisted entirely of a fighting arena styled after the Roman Colosseum. We were just using it as a place to practice fighting and controlling golems.

Rei and Ichika were already at the coliseum, fighting each other with a platoon of five golems each. *I like their enthusiasm. Good, good.*

“Oh, Rokuko. And Master too, huh. You guys also wanna practice with golems?”

“Yes, so get those golems out of the way, please. Keima and I are going to duel. Whoever loses has to listen to whatever the winner says!”

“...For real? Well hold up then, I can’t just ignore that. Let me join in!”

“Um! Please allow me to join as well, Master!”

Hm. Ichika and Rei want to join too, huh?

“Stop it, you two. This is a promise between me and Keima. Nobody else gets to join, obviously.” Rokuko turned them down, but... *Yeah. Ichika and Rei. This could be good.*

“Wait, wait. This sounds fun. Let’s all do this together. We could make this a tournament, and everyone has to listen to whatever the strongest person wants.”

“Wha?! Keima?!”

“Oooh, all of us, huh? Guess I gotta get Niku in on this.”

“Hello, Kinue? Neruneh? Master just proposed that we...”

Oh? This is definitely getting good. This could be the perfect opportunity to

establish my dominance as Dungeon Master.

And so, after many twists and turns, the first Golem Fighters—Cave of Greed Tournament was established. The following rules were established: 1) If your golem's head gets destroyed, you lose. (The heads will be made out of clay.) 2) No directly attacking the other player.

3) If any part other than the head gets destroyed, you are allowed to repair it before the next round.

That should be good enough. If Golem Fighters spreads across the world, I'll make these rules official or something. Maybe we'll award the winner of the tournament with the title "Golem of Golems." Not that there'd by any point to that.

...Not that Golem Fighters is actually gonna spread when I'm the only one who can make abnormal golems.

"Okay. We all agree that the participants must work together to grant whatever wish the victor has, right? We're all on the same page?" Everyone nodded together.

"That's right, Keima. And I'm going to win no matter what!"

"Geheheh. Dunno bros, should I spend my victory money on curry rolls or the slot machines?"

"I have already decided on what I want. I'll do whatever I can to win."

"Master, I will not hold myself back."

"In order to *mop up* any invaders who infiltrate our dungeon, I will *polish* my golem commanding skills."

"Masteeer! Please teach me new magic if I wiiin!"

Rokuko, Ichika, Niku, Rei, Kinue, Neruneh, and finally, me. The higher ups of the [Cave of Greed] have all gathered.

We determined the order of the tournament through a raffle. There were seven of us, so I stepped out of the first round.

Round One, Neruneh vs Niku.

Round Two, Ichika vs Rokuko.

Round Three, Kinue vs Rei.

The winner of Round One would fight me, then the winners of Round Two and Round Three would fight each other. Then, there would be the final battle.

First up was Round One. We walked to the spectator stands and prepared to watch Neruneh and Niku fight. Nobody else was watching, so we got front row seats.

“Do your beeest, Spiky Spiky Turtleee!”

“Here we go, Swordsman Golem.”

Neruheh was controlling a turtle-shaped Stone Golem with a spike covered shell. It was visually intimidating to adventurers and used tackles as its main form of attack. On the other hand, Niku was controlling a plain Stone Golem wielding two standard Golem Blades. To fit with regulations, its head was made of clay. In addition to the two Golem Blades in both hands, it also had one on its back.

“Gooo!”

Neruneh attacked first. Her golem retracted its head within its shell and charged forward with its spiky body. She was apparently using leader mode. Since she just wanted him to do a simple tackle, it was faster to give the golem a command and let it work than take control and manage all the specific movements. However... a speedy attack wasn’t enough to take Niku down.

“Weak.”

Niku was using possess mode with a dual-stick controller. She rapidly twisted them around to dodge the tackle and even sliced off one of Spiky Spiky Turtle’s legs with her Golem Blade.

“Aaah?! O-Oh nooo, he can’t move well anymooore!” Spiky Spiky Turtle ran circles in place. Niku’s golem jumped onto its back, easily avoiding the spikes, and thrust its Golem Blade through Spiky’s shell and subsequently through its head.

“The head has been destroyed! This round’s winner is Niku Kuroinu!” Niku

gave a small victory pose from within her control seat.

“Awww, I knew I couldn’t beat Nikuuu...”

“There’s years of experience separating us.” *Years? I’m pretty sure it hasn’t even been a year since Niku came here. Same for me, but still.*

The first round was exciting enough, but up came Round Two.

“Listen up, Rokuko! I’m gonna mess you up with my totally rad Iron Golem!” Ichika entered the arena first with her Iron Golem. It wielded a bow, making it a deadly combination of strong defense and long range attacks.

“Hmph, I’ll show you who’s the boss of this dungeon!” Next entered Rokuko with a Haniwa Golem. It was a Clay Golem, wrapped in stone armor, riding a Horse Golem, and wielding an iron Golem Blade. What made it a real crowd-pleaser was the blank expression on its face. Also, it was the first Dungeon Boss I made, the one that never ended up seeing any action. The current Dungeon Boss was an Iron Haniwa Golem made with this one as a base.

“H-Hold on, this totally isn’t fair! It’s two versus one! Ref, reeeeef!”

“Didn’t I tell you? I’m the boss of this dungeon!”

It was a brutal, one-way fight. They were on totally different levels, mainly because Rokuko was basically cheating. A normal monster had no chance of beating a former Dungeon Boss. It had the combined speed of a Horse Golem and the attack power of a Haniwa Golem. *Ichika? Winning? Not a chance. Hahahaha!*

The Haniwa Golem swung its naginata and sliced off the Iron Golem’s head like it was nothing.

“Ngh! I didn’t lose to the golem fight... I lost to authority...!”

“All that matters is winning! And I won!” *Yeaaah, Rokuko’s definitely taking the lead here. Thanks entirely to her golem.*

With the brutal execution over, it was time for Round Three with Kinue and Rei.

“Ahaha. If I win, I’ll make you let me clean every corner of your room, Rei.” Kinue’s golem was a four-armed Stone Golem. However, it didn’t wield swords

and shields. It had a broom, dustpan, duster, and mop. The legendary Cleaning Golem.

“Forgive my rudeness, but... Kinue. Those are not weapons. They are cleaning tools.” On the other hand, Rei’s golem was an Archer Golem with four legs for stability. It was also made out of stone. This would be a better showdown between four arms and four legs.

“Here I come!” Rei’s Archer Golem struck first. It used its four legs to dodge from side to side while shooting out a storm of arrows onto the Cleaning Golem.

“I will show you the power of cleaning.” But all those arrows were knocked away by the dustpan. Not only that, but they were put into a trash can on the golem’s back with the mop and duster.

“What in the world?! I underestimated you, Kinue.”

“Ahaha. I will use this Cleaning Golem to clean the entire inn, no, the entire dungeon!” *Oh man, Kinue’s letting her ulterior motives shine! Her greatest ambitions!*

“Unfortunately, you won’t be able to use the Cleaning Golem within the inn due the presence of our visitors.”

“What?!”

Rei’s sharp observation threw Kinue off hard enough that she briefly froze. Not missing that opening, Rei’s Archer Golem launched an arrow directly through the Cleaning Golem’s head. *Oh yeah. Rei has zero attack power, but that doesn’t apply to golems she controls. Makes sense. She’s just ordering the golem to attack, after all.*

“The head has been destroyed! This round’s winner is Rei!”

“...Very well, I will clean the inn on my own.”

“Isn’t that just what you always do?”

It was a pretty good fight. And with it, the first wave of rounds was complete. Neruneh was the only one who used leader mode. Everyone else used possess mode. *Uh... And they were pretty good, too. I’m starting to get a little worried*

about my chances of winning. But don't worry. I'm the protagonist here. I make all the golems. Naturally, I know more about golems than anyone else. And I can control them better than anyone else too!

Round Four began, pitting me against Niku.

"Master or not, I cannot let myself lose." Niku was using the same Swordsman Golem as before. In contrast, I was using...

"Bwahaha! I'll show you who the TRUE boss of this dungeon is!" Thump, thump. A horse-riding golem entered the arena with each footstep resulting in a resounding thump.

Indeed. I was using the Iron Haniwa Golem. Our one and only Dungeon Boss, the unmistakably strongest monster in our entire dungeon.

"Keima?! Um, I'm pretty sure that's not fair at all!"

"Don't worry. Its head is made of clay, fair and square... Though it is hidden behind a full-faced iron helmet!"

Of course, I was the referee, so we were playing by my rules. Now you know why I didn't say anything about Rokuko's haniwa.

"I don't mind. Let's start."

"I'm definitely gonna win! I can use golems better than anyone else!" I struck first. The all-iron Horse Golem charged forward and the Haniwa swung its naginata. Naturally, the naginata was a Golem Blade. And to make things better, there were actually three arms buried within each of its main arms, giving it three times the power of a normal golem. Indeed. Iron Golems are superior to Stone Golems, and this strike was launched with three times the power of an average Iron Golem. It would shatter a mere Stone Golem in an instant!

But Niku's Swordsman Golem easily avoided the swing with a deft jump.

"Hmph! Little tricks won't get you anywhere!" I used the golem's triple arm power to change the angle of the swing. Even a glancing blow would be equivalent to getting hit with an iron mace head on!

"I'm sorry, Master, but you're full of openings." Niku murmured to herself.

Her Swordsman Golem caught the naginata with its feet. It expertly killed its momentum to minimize damage while landing solidly on the blade. Immediately, it started rushing down the naginata straight towards my Iron Haniwa Golem's face.

"Wh-What?! You used my attack as a stepping stool?!"

"It's over." Her Swordsman Golem dug its Golem Blade beneath my golem's helmet and thrust upwards, destroying its clay head. My Iron Haniwa Golem stopped moving.

"...Crap! The head has been destroyed...! The winner is... Niku Kuroinu!"

"I did it."

I can't believe this. I went out of my way to use the Dungeon Boss and I still lost...?

"Master. Please repair the legs and feet of my golem. I have a long way to go if I'm still letting them get cracked."

"Right, sure." I used {Create Golem} to repair her Swordsman Golem. *I guess mechanics can't be ace pilots, huh...? Damnit.*

Regardless of my failure, it was time for the next round. Rokuko vs Rei.

"Ahahaha! I won't lose, Rei."

"It is true that your Haniwa Golem is a fearsome foe. But it was just proven in Master and Niku's fight that the capabilities of one's golem are not the sole determiner of victory. Isn't that right?" *Stop! Don't dig into my wound! Don't rub salt onto iiiit!*

"That doesn't matter at all. Listen, Rei, you can never beat me. Why? Because I'm a Dungeon Core and you're a monster!"

"Where are you going with this...?"

"Rei! This is an order! Lose to me!"

"Wh-What the?! I-I've lost!" Rei bowed to the ground and forfeited.

"Ah. Rokuko, you lose. No breaking the rules."

"Eh?! Why do I lose? Rei just forfeited."

“Rule Number 2. No directly attacking the other player. Your ‘order’ was basically a direct attack. Therefore, you’re disqualified. You can raise your head, Rei. You’ve won this round.”

“Eh? Whaaat?”

“A-Ah... Wh-What have I done...?! I snatched away my own victory...!” Rei looked like she didn’t really understand what was going on. Rokuko, on the other hand, was throwing a tantrum and pounding the ground with her fists. *And she probably woulda won if she just fought fairly, too.*

Next was the final round, but we had a brief breather beforehand. We were all tired and I wanted them to fight in their strongest condition. *But man, I really didn’t expect these two to get this far...*

“I totally knew Niku would get this far, but like, Rei? Wowzers, talk about a surprise. Too bad Rokuko basically shot herself in the foot.”

“Huh? You expected Niku to do well?”

“Totes, dude. Niku spends a hella long time practicing with golems after we spar and stuff. Didja know that that Horse Golems can fly? She figured it out.”

“...Can’t say I remember giving them wings.”

“They kinda, like, launch themselves. Niku, would you mind showing him?”

“Oh, okay. Rokuko, may I borrow your Haniwa Golem?” Niku borrowed Rokuko’s Haniwa Golem. It tensed up for a bit, but then *boom*! The Horse Golem burst forward and flew through the air like a missile. I thought it was going to crash through the coliseum wall, but it actually kicked against it to spin around before trotting back to us.

...Seriously? I had no idea Horse Golems could launch themselves like that. I did make them such that one could use internal gears to speed them up at the cost of horsepower (heh), but uh, what? How’d you do that, Niku?

“You just need to push all of its body weight forward and move all its joints simultaneously at their maximum power. The acceleration can be improved by having the rider kick at the same time, which gives us the speed you saw. Rokuko has practiced this move too.” I looked at Rokuko and she nodded.

Seriously?

"Isn't it ideal for a boss to have special moves like this?" Niku tilted her head a little, as if she were stating the obvious. *When did these three get so strong...? Oh, right. When I was sleeping. I guess it was just cocky for me to think I was the best at using golems when they spent more time practicing than me.*

With that lesson learned, it was time for the final battle to begin. *Niku's definitely gonna win this. She even beat me, after all. And what was even with that Horse Missile attack? I've gotta make more Horse Golems.*

"Alright! The final battle will now begin! Fighters, take your positions!"

Niku had her Swordsman Golem. Rei had her Archer Golem. The dual-wielding swordsman faced the archer.

"Do your beeest, Rei! Show them what we monster girls can dooo!"

"I'll clean your room for free if you wiiin!"

"Niku! We've been using golems for longer than them! Don't lose!"

"Niku, I, like, totally believe in yooou!"

Cries of support rained down from the audience. *Waaait a second... I just realized. Who's taking care of the inn right now? What? You put a golem behind the front desk, so everything's okay? Uh. Is that really gonna be okay?*

"Rei. You did well getting this far, but it all ends here. I will win."

"Niku. You'll regret looking down on me!" And so, the battle began.

The Archer Golem shot an arrow while running horizontally. Its aim was perfect thanks to a steady bow, but the Swordsman Golem easily knocked aside each arrow with its Golem Blades. I said "each" arrow because the Archer Golem had in fact shot two arrows, the second one having been launched stealthily from a blind spot.

"I'm not surprised you caught my trick, Niku. Though I had spent much time perfecting that move."

"It was obvious from the movements of its hands. I recommend adding a hidden arm in the future for that kind of thing." *If her golem's just gonna shoot*

arrows, I don't see the problem with using crossbows instead...

My thoughts were interrupted by the Swordsman Golem rushing down the Archer Golem.

"HYAH!"

"Kyaaah!"

Her golem's swords flashed through the air. She was swinging both of its Golem Blades one after the other, pausing not even for a moment. Its movements were so smooth and fluid it was hard to believe it was just a golem. Rei was no slouch, either. She bent the upper body of her golem backwards using the stability of its four legs and fled by running along the walls. Neither golem had taken a solid hit yet.

"...Is running on the walls like that normal?"

"Totally standard stuff in Golem Fighters. 'Cause, like, fights in dungeons are almost always in corridors 'n stuff. Can you imagine fighting in a dungeon corridor and NOT running along the walls or ceiling? Nah." *Seriously? No wonder I lost.*

"You're pretty good, Rei."

"Thank you! If I'm skilled enough to receive your praise, Niku, I see that my time spent training was not wasted!"

One golem ran away while fighting with arrows, the other charged forward while cutting arrows out of the sky. It was a stalemate... until a turning point came.

"Ngh!"

"What's wrong, Rei? Have you already run out of arrows?" Niku sounded like she already knew the answer to that question.

"...Out of arrows, huh? Why's Niku so sure that's what happened?"

"Well, obviously 'cause she was counting. Rei's got four quivers, and each one can hold twenty-five arrows. You've gotta be careful about running out of arrows when using Archer Golems, so like, obviously we're all super used to counting arrows. Nothing different between that and counting your enemy's

arrows, yo.”

“Seriously? I think you guys play this game a little too much.”

Archer Golems could carry a limited number of arrows. Even with multiple quivers, they maxed out at about 100 arrows. If we assume she held her first two arrows since before the match began, that’s 102 arrows. Niku counted how many arrows Rei’s golem shot and thus knew with confidence—her quivers were now empty.

“I won’t let you escape.” Her Swordsman Golem charged forward to exploit the opportunity. And yet...

“Same to you!”

The Archer Golem launched an arrow. An impossible 103rd arrow that shouldn’t have existed. Rei’s lips reflexively curved into a grin, proud of having caught her opponent completely off guard. But the Swordsman Golem easily knocked that arrow aside as well.

“Didn’t I tell you? Your movements lack any subtlety. I saw you pick that arrow up.”

Rei had picked up a single arrow she already shot while running around. She hadn’t picked up more than one to hide what she was doing, but nonetheless, Niku noticed. Not even the stealthiest movements in the world could fool Niku’s sixth sense.

Her Swordsman Golem threw the Golem Blade in its right hand at the Archer Golem, which was slow to dodge due to having just shot an arrow. The blade tore through its leg and locked it to the ground. It could flee no longer.

“...It is my loss. Well done, Niku.”

“I’m looking forward to our next battle, Rei.”

And then, she gripped the Golem Blade on her golem’s back with both hands and swung it down with all her might.

“The head has been destroyed! This round’s winner is Niku!”

“I did it.”

The Archer Golem's head and even body was split in half. *Uh... You know I'm the one who has to fix these things, right? It's pretty easy, so whatever, but still.*

"Congratulations, Niku. You did well."

"Yes... nmm!" Her tail wagged hard as I rubbed her head. *Seriously though, I really didn't expect everyone was taking their golem training so seriously. Maybe I should just become a dedicated mechanic?*

"Sheesh, I knew Niku would win... So, what are you going to ask for, Niku?"

"Now that you mention it, I do remember Niku mentioning that she had already decided on what she wants."

"Yuppers, she totally did. So? Give us the scoop, sister."

"Umm..." Niku glanced at me. *What? You want some hamburgers? Alright, I'll buy as many as you want!*

* * *

"...Hey, Niku?"

"What is it, Master?" Niku clung to me.

"Er, I mean... Isn't this what we always do?" Niku and I were lying in bed together, just like always.

"No. Today you are my dakimakura, Master." Niku's request had been simple. *Master, please be my dakimakura for one day.* That was it.

Well, I am glad that she asked for this instead of something crazy, but still. For some reason, I really feel like this is the same thing that we always do.

"Nmmnfuuu..." Niku buried her face in my shirt and rubbed it against me. *Mmm... Yeah, there's nothing different about this. Wait, maybe Niku's moving more than she usually does? It's kind of ticklish.*



“Are you really okay with this?”

“Yes, I am okay with it. Very okay with it.” She smiled a little. For someone as expressionless as Niku, that was pretty much a full-faced grin.

...Well, alright. If she insists.

As an aside, everyone else decided to hold a second Golem Fighters tournament later. They were forcing me to participate, too. I swore to myself that I would practice controlling golems more. *I’ll prepare some insta-kill gimmicks and crush everyone else before they realize what’s going on!*

Afterword

So. Volume three is finally out. Honestly, I don't know what I should write in this afterword. But I know I should start with a warning towards people who read the afterword first. This afterword has spoilers, so if you keep reading, you only have yourself to blame! Though I do understand that a lot of people here read the web novel version, so the afterwords are the most interesting part.

First of all, I'd like to express my thanks to everyone involved with this book and everyone reading it. I'd also like to thank my friend "S" who repaired my computer after it broke for some reason. It's thanks to all of you that volume three safely got published. Okay? Did you see that, S? I wrote about you fixing my PC in the afterword just like I promised. We're even. Feel free to buy me a cake later. I wouldn't mind a small two-pack from the supermarket.

Anyway, assume that everything after this point is spoilers for volume three.

I intentionally introduced Gozou, Roppe, and Wataru Nishimi together this volume. Gozou and Roppe are actually names I got from readers of the web novel version when I asked for mob character names. It was only later that I came up with Wataru Nishimi.

...And about Wataru. I originally envisioned him as a kind of nasty Hero, but decided against it later. Thankfully, my plans didn't go to waste. Indeed. The nasty Wataru was reborn as the second Hero introduced in this volume. I crammed basically everything I might dislike about other people into Suzuki. He's a light novel original character that didn't exist within the web novel.

Basically the same thing for the sad slave elf that didn't even get a name in the web novel or volume two. I noticed how cute she looked in the volume two illustration she appeared in, and got inspired to write what happened in this volume. Youta-san, the illustrator, definitely never expected what horrors the cuteness of his art would cause.

The differences between the light novels and the web novel have been piling up, but this volume I wrote an entire new chapter. I also put more effort into making Rokuko act like a main heroine, so to speak. Reason being, the editor

asked me to make the main heroine more cute. Hopefully I accomplished that. To be honest, though, I like Niku the most out of all the heroines. What about Ichika? She's okay. If only she wasn't a gambling addict...

Oh, look at the time. There's a lot more I want to say, but I'm running out of page space here. Afterwords can only be two pages. In conclusion, thank you very much. I hope we meet again at the end of volume four. Thank you.

...Volume four is coming out, right? Right?



Sign up for our mailing list at J-Novel Club to hear about new releases!

Newsletter

And you can read the latest chapters (like Vol. 4 of this series!) by becoming a J-Novel Club Member:

J-Novel Club Membership

Copyright

Lazy Dungeon Master: Volume 3

by Supana Onikage

Translated by Quof

Edited by K. “Kitty-tama” Jordan

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author’s imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

Copyright © 2016 Supana Onikage

Illustrations by Youta

Cover illustration by Youta

All rights reserved.

Original Japanese edition published in 2016 by OVERLAP, Inc.

This English edition is published by arrangement with OVERLAP, Inc., Tokyo

English translation © 2018 J-Novel Club LLC

All rights reserved. In accordance with the U.S. Copyright Act of 1976, the scanning, uploading, and electronic sharing of any part of this book without the permission of the publisher is unlawful piracy and theft of the author's intellectual property.

J-Novel Club LLC

j-novel.club

The publisher is not responsible for websites (or their content) that are not owned by the publisher.

Ebook edition 1.0: December 2018