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Lazy Dungeon Master

4



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Dungeon Core Number 695
ROKUKO
"STOP! I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO GETS TO PLAY WITH KEIMA LIKE THAT!"
Dungeon Master
KEIMA MASUDA
The High Priestess
ALCA
"NOW THEN, TO SEAL OUR HOLY BOND... PLEASE GRANT MY FOOT A KISS."
...ALRIGHT, LET'S HEAR WHAT THE LADY HAS TO SAY.


A slave's day starts early.
Dog Loli
NIKU
Guild Receptionist
CILIA
A Normal Day
in the Life of
Niku Kuroinu


"GRAAAAAAAAH!"
IRON HANIWA, GO!
Mysterious Monster
RIN

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Prologue

Day 250

Autumn turned to winter. It felt like summer was just yesterday, but at some point both it and autumn had slipped by, leaving us in the middle of winter. Anyway, they made a town.

...Yep. They made a town.

I'm not sure exactly how it happened, but I think it started when the adventurers too poor or cheap to buy a room in our inn got too cold in their tents and began building little houses. I let them do it, but thinking about it now, that might have been a mistake. Reason being, they were actually living there now. They say crap like "Hey, Mr. Keima, how ya doin'!" while jogging by in the morning like neighbors. And they said "little" houses, but they made pretty big ones! Nice ones, too! Ones so nice other adventurers latched onto the idea and started building houses of their own.

What's that? Your name's Kuusan and your father was a carpenter who built tons of houses with you? Alriiight! I'm not gonna forget your name, punk!

Along the way, they built the bar that a certain subsection of adventurers had been begging for. The Adventurer's Guild sent another worker over, meaning two people now ran the branch office. All that gave off the scent of progress, which attracted merchants who built stores. That made it harder for us to sell potions and stuff in our own in-house store, but that wasn't a problem. Money wasn't our priority here. The merchants staying in one place was practically them paying rent with DP, which was perfectly fine with me.

That turban sure suits you, man.

Oh, you own the Dyne Company? Alright, I'll send some customers your way.

Ohohoho. Good luck.

I did nothing and they all just built a town around me. Really, you could say the town was built precisely because I did nothing. Things went so smoothly I

genuinely started to question whether someone was manipulating things from behind the scenes. *Probably the Adventurer's Guild. I bet Kuusan's a mole sent by the Guildmaster. Right? Right.*

You might think that since so many people had houses now, our inn would be lacking visitors, but that was not the case. Reason being, a lot more merchants were passing by. The road Haku had metaphorically and literally paved was actually pretty nice, encouraging more travel. Those with carriages had something of a bumpy ride, but it was a far cry from before. The ultimate result was increased trade between Tsia and Pavella, which in turn increased how much DP I got from the tunnel. *Though it's a lot harder to use that golem carriage I made now.*

On another note, the Guild started posting requests for lumber. I let Ichika and Niku take care of them to increase my total number of complete quests. It wasn't long before we had advanced to D-Rank.

Also, Wataru the Hero came visiting every now and again to pay back portions of his debt. He usually ended up in the bar with his dwarf friend Gozou.

"This place's definitely better with a bar around! Yeah, Wataru?!"

"Sorry, but I'm not drinking until I pay back my debt! I'm glad there's a bar now, but no alcohol for me!"

"Don't worry, this is just apple juice."

"Really? That should be fine then... Wait, isn't this beer?!"

"Huh? The heck're you talking about, Wataru? This is juice. Might taste a lil' like beer, but it be apple juice and nothin' else. Yeah?"

"Ooooh, it's just juice, okay. If you say so! I have no reason to doubt you! Ahahaha."

Yeah, he wasn't fooling anybody. *Well, not that I care. He can drink as much as he wants... as long as he pays back his debt.*

Haku, however, hadn't visited in a while. Or to be more specific, she hadn't visited a single time since I gave Rokuko her ring. Wataru said that she was so busy that she just didn't have the time to visit. Still, I felt like a prisoner on

death's row waiting for his execution.

Oh, right. I was selling cards and dice to the bar, plus renting them slot machines. Light gambling was a perfect fit for bars, where people could bet the price of their drinks. Since we were earning money just from the rental fees, I set them to be forgiving and more likely to pay out. Just enough that the bar would still profit a little, even after the rental fee. But even if they weren't profitable, eh, they'd bring the bar more customers.

Again, you might think that since the bar had dice, cards, and even slots that our entertainment building would be a ghost town, but that wasn't the case. *Let's take a peek.*

"Uwooooooh! Go, goooo! Number three! Land of Dreams! Aaaah, don't stop there!"

I heard heated yells and shouts. The entertainment room was in the middle of holding a rat race. Of course, people were betting on the results. Both customers of the inn and those who had built their own homes were participating.

"Number one! Blue Avenger! Go forth! Chaaarge! C'mon, goooo!"

"This is your chance, number four! Take the lead, Nazzy Nazzy! I'm betting everything on you! Wait, why are you just sniffing around?! Keep moviiing!"

"Aaand we have a winner! Speed of Sound Sonic reached the finish line first! Number five, Speed of Sound Sonic won! Our champion has won again! Payment being distributed over heeere." Cheers and groans filled the air as the failed tickets were thrown into the air. A rat race was a game where rats were put into a race course and the first to find the exit won. To avoid unnecessarily complex calculations, second place and beyond was awarded no prize whatsoever.

"The next race will be held in one hour! It will be the last race of the day! You can see the list of competitors here!"

"Depper is showing up, huh? He always rushes to the end when you least expect it, can't let your guard down around him."

"C'mon, you've gotta go with Elec-Mouse. He can go at lightning speed!"

“Hold up, hold up. Battler’s got crazy determination. Who knows who’s gonna win this race?”

“Walky Walker’s smart and tough, but he’s just not forceful enough. That makes him a dark horse. Alright, I’m buying ten tickets on him! One whole silver!” As the gamblers started betting on the next race, the rats who had just performed chomped happily on their reward cheese. They were the same rats who had been summoned for the Dungeon Battle with Haku before sending them off to the forest.

To be honest, I had accidentally turned them into Named monsters by giving them stage names for the races, which had in turn made them more intelligent than before. They obeyed my orders and worked together to make the races more interesting. *Ahahaha. Now I can use these guys as spies and whatnot. Just as planned... not really. I didn’t actually mean to Name them. Also, pretty much this whole area is within my dungeon’s region, so I can just use the monitor to spy on whoever I want.*

* * *

And so, basically, a town ended up being built around my inn.

On one winter day, Gozou called me over to the bar. I brought some food with me since I figured he was planning on partying, but that wasn’t the case. I lightly stepped into the bar and saw before me:

Gozou, the bearded dwarf who kept the other adventurers in line.

Kantara, another dwarf, but a blacksmith instead who made weapons, armor, and even everyday utensils.

Kuusan, the mohawked adventurer who built a ton of the houses around here.

Wozma, an old man who ran the bar and had the fashionable hairstyle to match.

Dyne, a fishy looking middle-aged man with a turban around his head who owned the Dyne Company.

And finally, Cilia, the Guild receptionist... the manager of the Guild’s branch

office.

Six people. To sum things up, it was a gathering of all the people with the most power and authority around these parts. Myself included.

“Heya. Been waitin’ for ya, Keima.”

“What’s going on here? It feels pretty tense.”

“I figure you’ve got an idea. We’re gonna be discussing somethin’ serious about this [Cave of Greed] town.”

“Oh, it really is a town now, huh...? Wait, right. I brought some food. Here you go.”

“Oooh! That looks real good! Alright, Keima’s the town chief! Any objections?!” *Wha? Town chief?* But before I could figure out what was going on...

Quoth Kantara: “Keima’s the best choice we got.”

Quoth Kuusan: “Yeah, I can definitely trust Keima!”

Quoth Wozma: “No objections from me. Oh, is that fried food I spy? I certainly do love this stuff.”

Quoth Dyne: “Hey, no objection from me! He’s makin’ my company lots of money.”

Quoth the receptionist: “...I have no objections either.”

In other words, everyone but me agreed. *Uh... Could someone stop this please? I don’t like where this is going.*

“Wait, wait, wait. The heck’s going on here, Gozou? What’s all this about me being the town chief?”

“Ye seem like ye’ve got the most spare time! We’re all busy n’stuff. Dooon’t worry, being town chief’s just about being an arbitrator in disputes and not much else. Things’ll be basically the same for ye!”

“Why not Rokuko, then? She’s got way more spare time than me.”

“...Keima. Do ye really think Rokuko’s got what it takes to be town chief?” *Ah. You’re right. Forget I said anything.*

“But if you’re asking me, it must not be a serious job, yeah? Seems kinda like you’re just pushing it on to me to be done with it.”

“Yeah, kinda. Like I said, it’ll basically be the same as always. Ye’ll just need to swoop in when there’s a problem to settle things. We’ll help ye out.”

“Yeah? Well... If that’s all, well...” And so, I accepted the role of town chief, because why not. It felt kind of like I was being pressured into it, but I got the feeling nothing good would come from making someone else do it.

“Alright, with that settled. We’ve got somethin’ to talk about, Chief.” *Knew it. Pretty cliché for this kinda thing to only come up after there’s already a problem.*

“And what’s that, Gozou?”

“Ye gotta lend us some money.” His request was something a lot more... greedy than expected.

“Uhhh, what, did your bar tab get too big?”

“Eh? I’m not talkin’ about money for me. I’m talkin’ about money for the town.”

“...Oh? Really? Guess you’re talking about, like, a town budget. What do you want it for?” *He asked me to lend money, not give, so I could tell he wasn’t actually being greedy here.* Dyne, the merchant, grinned.

“My man, glad you know what’s up. Food for winter, firewood and such, y’know. Lots of stuff to buy. I’ll set up a trade route and Kuusan’ll build a storage building for the town to share. All doing our part, y’know?”

“...Uh, hey. How about everyone just goes back to their actual homes for the winter?” All that seemed kind of tedious, so I kinda just let that idea slip out. I’d be missing out on some DP, but I wasn’t desperate for more of it or anything. Plus, it’d be nice to relax in the onsen on my own once in a while. I could even get into the massage chair and sleep for a bit afterwards. Perfect.

...Huh? Everyone’s frozen in place, looking like they never even thought about that before.

There was a brief moment of silence. Eventually, Dyne spoke up and broke it.

“Don’t say that, man. The Iron Golems in the dungeon are hella high quality.

Don’t tell us to abandon all that sweet loot for a whole season!”

“Y-Yeah, he’s right, Keima. Some people’ve already started bringing their stuff here. Yeah?”

“Yeah! I’m sticking with Keima forever!” Kuusan backed Gozou up, brimming with confidence. *Uh, why’re you so invested in me? I don’t remember doing anything for you.*

“Well, whatever. That’s fine. My money’s not gonna be wasted though, right?”

“You’re gonna earn it back and more, trust me, dude. Tsia and Pavella are always hurting for iron. Not to mention that there’s about to be a pretty big demand for the stuff. During winter, too.”

“Big demand, huh? Are they gonna start a war or something? Guess they will need a lot of iron for their weapons and armor then.” *I’ve read about that kind of thing happening before.* Unsurprisingly, Dyne gave me a stunned look. *Looks like I was right on the money. Wow.*

“H-Hey, let’s all just calm down for a second here. Let’s not crash the gig we’ve got going here, yeah?”

“So rather than me *lending* each of you money, you just want to me fund the workings of the town?”

“Yeah, man! Sure am glad you’re a guy who knows how things work. And listen, you can trust me. You’ll earn it all back and more, for real.” Dyne slapped the table while grinning broadly. *Hmmm, yeah, I’ve got no idea how much they’re expecting me to pay here. But I guess this might be a good way to use all the gold coins I’ve been stocking. Nothing else I can use them for but emergency DP, really.*

I used my {Wallet} skill to take out gold coins and pile them onto the table. *I wonder how much I should give them. Maybe a hundred. That’s as much as Wataru pays me a month, so yeah, it seems good to me.*

“Will a hundred gold coins be enough?”

“A-A hundred?! Bro, Keima, those aren’t silvers, are they?!”

“Huh? No, they’re golds. Is that still not enough?”

“U-Uh, well, I’m gonna say that’s more than enough. Yeah! By spring you’ll have twice that number, iiif things go super well! If not, well, one hundred and fifty should be a piece of cake!”

“Sounds good to me. I’m leaving you in charge of the operating funds, Dyne. Show me what you can do. And yes, I’m going to check the ledgers, so don’t even think about embezzling any money.”

“I totally didn’t expect you to just take a hundred golds outta nowhere... Alright! I, head of the Dyne Company, am gonna give this all I got!”

By the way, they apparently only needed about five golds from me. Converted to Japanese currency, a hundred gold coins was equivalent to about a hundred million yen. It was definitely more money than a freshly built town really needed. Yeah. *But, well, I’ve already given it to them, and having more money is better than not. Also, I gave him control of the funds because eh, why not? He’s got the motivation for it.*

“When did you acquire that much money...? If I might be so bold, I think you are giving him too much. Aren’t you afraid of someone running off with the money, or something of the sort?” The receptionist expressed her concern. It would hurt to lose 100,000 DP worth of gold if someone ran off with it, but it was too late to back down. I’d look weak. Not to mention that it’d be a pain. My ideal town chief is someone who just sits there while leaving the finer details and actual work to everyone else while he sleeps. I made up that ideal on the spot by the way. *Right. If I want to make everyone else do the work, I’ve gotta earn their gratitude here.*

“Well, I trust him. Especially since you, an employee of the Adventurer’s Guild, are here with us. Besides, if he ran away with a sum this small, that would just prove that he was a bad businessman anyway. Dyne. Are you the kind of weak-willed coward that would run away with a paltry one hundred gold coins?”

“As if, man! I-I’m not s-s-s-so lame that this s-s-small sum of money would satisfy me! I’m not that small of a guy! If I fail here I’d just, like, genuflect! Or even kill myself! No running!”

I called it a small sum just to see what would happen, but maybe I shouldn't have. *Dyne, your voice is shaking. A lot. And if you're gonna kill yourself, please do so within the dungeon so I can get your DP. Thanks.*

"Well, anyway, that's how it is."

"I'm surprised. I didn't expect that mere moments after being elected town chief you would be able to make hard decisions of this caliber."

"Ahaha. This is the first time I've ever seen Dyne get this shaken." The receptionist gave me a compliment, which was rare for her. Wozma was grinning a meaningful grin beside her. *Guess it really must be rare for Dyne to sweat like this. Well, Wozma, it's your turn next.*

"And while we're here. I think we should have this bar's owner act as emergency town chief if anything ever happens to me. So. Looking forward to working with you, vice chief Wozma."

"Oh, me? Hmm... I suppose you are an adventurer, Keima. One can never know what might happen to an adventurer. Very well, I will accept that role." *Heh, good. You look like a diligent worker. I'm gonna offload everything I can onto you.*

"Alright. I figure you all know what's up, but I'll start giving everyone my instructions. First is our general goal here, which is obviously preparing for winter. Or more specifically, preparing to mine Iron Golems during winter." I looked at each of them and started giving them basic jobs to do.

"Kuusan, I want you to start building that storage building immediately. Behind the Guild's branch office should be a good place. Any extra room it has can be used as storage space for the Guild. Kantara, prioritize making nails and other things essential for the town. Cilia, please put up wood gathering quests in the Guild. You can discuss where the payment will come from with the Dyne Company. And you, Dyne, focus on buying materials and getting a cash flow running. For now, you can use the inn's storage room for holding the materials. Vice Chief Wozma, check over the Dyne Company's plans and make sure they're not missing anything. You can all sort out the more specific details yourself. Now, with that out of the way... Gozou."

"Yeah, yeah, I just gotta hunt tons of Iron Golems in the dungeon! Leave it to

me.”

“That too, but I have another, more important job for you.”

“Huh? What’s that, then?” I grinned and told him.

“Think up a name for this town. Thanks man.”

“Wha?! You’re gonna leave that to me?!” Gozou let out a surprised yell, just like I had expected him to.

“It’ll just be a suggestion, so don’t worry too much about it. And hey, if you don’t want to, that’s fine too. I’ll just name this place ‘Gozou and Roppe are Lovey-Dovey Town.’ Anyway, that’s that. Good luck.”

“Hey, what’s Roppe got to do with this?! Alright, alright already! I’ll think up a name for ya!”

In one fell swoop, I had offloaded all of my work onto other people. *Luckily, it looks like all of them are so caught up on what they need to do that nobody’s noticed I didn’t give myself any duties.*

“Looks like things are gonna be busy for us. I’ll do my best to be a good fake town chief. Welp, that’s that. I’m outta here. Night everybody.” *Alright, time to go home and sleep.*

I left the bar.

The Town Authorities’ Perspective

After Keima left, the other authorities in the town started eating the fried food he brought while talking about him, their new town chief.

“Sheesh, he’s sure got big balls. Can’t believe he started listing out orders right after we made him town chief like that.”

“Just goes to show how great Keima is! I’m gonna follow him for the rest of my life!”

“Good grief. He even went and made me the vice chief.”

“He’s treatin’ me like a minister of finance or somethin’. And man, he just popped out a hundred golds like it was nothing... He treated it like it was frickin’ change to him. He’s on anotha level from us, dudes.”

“I truly do wonder where he obtained that much money... He’s only a D-Rank adventurer.”

“Aaah, I remember Wataru talking about losing a two thousand and three hundred golds gamble to him or somethin’. He’s paying Keima a hundred golds a month to pay back his debt.”

“...He would do that to a Hero? Now that is truly heroic courage.”

In any case, they all agreed that he was far from a “fake” town chief. He made his plans after hearing their thoughts, gave clear instructions, and listened to their feedback. That was the work of an excellent town chief. Their initial plan had just been to ask him for a loan from the inn after he rejected the position, but he had both accepted it and promptly presented the necessary funds himself.

By becoming town chief and providing an operational fund twenty times larger than what they had expected, Keima had obtained absolute authority within the town. No one questioned that.

“I had been hoping to repay Keima as much as I could for lending me the slots and recipes he did, but I suppose that’s a pipe dream now.”

“Damn straight. And my shop’s getting hella good business thanks to him letting Ichika work there part time.”

“The Guild is quite thankful to him as well, given how many relief-centric quests his party completes...”

“Hahaha! There ain’t nobody like the town chief.”

By the way, regarding Ichika, she was actively seeking out part time jobs on her days off to buy extra food and play the slot machines. However, everyone mistakenly thought Keima was making her do that, given that she was his slave. Some even thought Keima was distributing his own wealth to the bar by having her play the slots there so much.

“He even figured out the best way to make money here...”

“There is no doubt that he has his own information network. He’s not the secretary of an inn backed by an A-Rank adventurer for nothing, shall we say.”

“Plus, when he said I could use the inn’s storage building, he was def predicting prices going up during winter and telling me to buy a ton now before that happens. And thanks to how much money he gave us, I can buy a hella lot more than I expected.” The bar owner looked stunned, having not expected Keima to look that far ahead. On the other hand, Gozou was pouring alcoholic apple cider into Cilia’s mug.

“...Hey, Cilia. What’s Keima’s rank right now?”

“He became D-Rank after his recent examination. Did you not administer it yourself?”

“Yeah, yeah. I just wanted to ask. Cuz I mean... D-Rank? That’s a lower rank than me. Can’t ye just raise’m up to C-Rank already?”

“Naturally, he has not accomplished enough to be raised to C-Rank yet. It hasn’t even been a year.” Cilia grabbed onto some fried food and gulped down her alcoholic apple cider in one go.

Also, Kuusan was shouting “SO FUCKIN’ GOOOOD!” while shoving fried food into his face and feeling even more admiration for Keima than ever.



Chapter 1

Day 251

And thus I became a Dungeon Master plus Town Chief. But naturally, I didn't use the dungeon's advanced functions to help the town. My nature as a Dungeon Master was secret, and needless to say, it was best I kept it that way. I decided to keep using my powers for my sake and the inn's sake alone. As long as I could guarantee myself a comfy place to sleep, I was happy.

Anyway. About the dungeon. I got the feeling that it was about time for some serious construction work. Reason being, the nineteen Magic Blades that Wataru had looted and brought back to town.

Due to rumors of his success spreading, more C-Rank adventurers than before were staying at the inn and steadily conquering more of the dungeon. That meant more people were exploring the labyrinth at any given time, which made it harder to move the walls around. Which in turn directly led to more adventurers challenging the puzzle area. The only punishment for failing a puzzle was being sent back to the first floor, but some adventurers would let their guard down and end up hurting their feet, which put them out of commission for a bit.

...Some of them did die due to hitting the ground in a bad way or wearing heavy armor. I didn't really attempt to capture or imprison anybody, so it was leave or die. *What about the garbage Hero Suzuki? He's an exception.*

"...Ah, someone just died." Rokuko, lazing around in my room for whatever reason, let out a murmur. As the Dungeon Core, she could sense anything happening within our dungeon. I had no reason to doubt that someone had indeed just died. *I feel like it's been a while since anyone actually died... Ouch.*

Rokuko was far past caring about people dying inside of her, so she soon returned to lazing around aimlessly.

"Did some Guild rookie let his guard down or something...? Ah."

I just remembered that some noble got trapped in one of my trap rooms

(specifically, one of those where spikes block the exit if you take the Magic Blade out of the pedestal. I had made the rooms intending for people to use them to test out the Magic Blades, but everyone ended up considering them traps.) Seems like the person who just died was that noble. Dang, he was still alive? His party got stuck in there a long time ago. I forgot all about them. I thought they had already died, honestly.

I took a look and saw that the smug noble who had pulled out the Magic Blade, Dorasan-whatever, had been stabbed by one of his companions. The companion then pried the Magic Blade from his cold, dead hands and returned it to the pedestal, successfully freeing the rest of the party. The sight of him putting the bloody Magic Blade into the pedestal was pretty touching. He had the expression of a man who had finally accomplished his goal after a hard and lengthy journey.

Yeah, you did good. I'll reward your efforts by clearing a path to the exit. I'm in a good mood thanks to becoming town chief, so yeah, I'll get you out of there alive. By the way, he'll be able to make all sorts of excuses for why he didn't come back with the noble. But thanks to lie detecting magic tools, he'll likely get imprisoned after some brief interrogation.

Eh, well, that's out of my hands. He's on his own once he leaves the dungeon.

* * *

In order to not forget anything important, I decided to go on patrol and see what my subordinates were up to.

Rei, Kinue, and Neruneh were chatting in the cafeteria. No customers were nearby due to lunchtime already being long over. Not to mention that the cafeteria was a lot less busy now that there was a bar nearby that also sold food.

Rei was earning some extra money by massaging people's feet. Her attack power of zero somehow led to her massages making the subject feel no pain whatsoever, which led to more than a few people getting addicted to them. There were a lot of unforeseen and mysterious consequences to her zero attack power, but she was somehow making the best of it.

"Rei. Everything good?"

“Yes, Master. I have recently become known as God’s Fingers. Humans certainly are easy to manipulate!” Rei, my silver-haired vampire, smiled brightly at me. It was good to have employees happy about their work.

“You know, I think you deserve a bonus. How would you feel about me giving you a {Create Golem} scroll?”

“Me...?! Learning your ultimate technique, Master?! It would be an honor!” *Ultimate technique...? Well, I guess I do pretty much only ever use {Create Golem}. But the idea here is that Rei does zero damage no matter what she tries, even using a bow and arrow, but this can be circumvented by her ordering a golem to attack in her place. This is the best thing I can do for her... though, uh, I wonder if the golems she creates will do zero damage too.*

“Y’know, I think you deserve a bonus too, Kinue.” Kinue had masterfully learned the recipes I vaguely explained to her and could now perfectly recreate Japanese cooking on her own. Though she used some ingredients bought with DP, such as soy sauce and miso broth, she also used sugar made from the beets and salt bought from Pavella merchants.

...That cooking classroom I held before failed miserably, but now I get it. I coulda just summoned someone who knew how to cook already.

“Are there any magic skills you want, Kinue?”

“Hmm... I would like some magic that would help me clean, or perhaps cook. Other than {Purificiation}.” Kinue’s pride wouldn’t allow her to use {Purification} while cleaning, but she didn’t mind using wind magic to blow trash away or anything like that.

“I’ll give you some Low-Rank magic scrolls, then. The fire skills might end up useful for cooking.”

“Oh my, thank you very much.” Kinue smiled with a refined giggle, much like an adult woman would. Rei was more or less the de facto leader of the monster girls, but Kinue came across as the most mature of them. *Ah, and Neruneh just comes off as an airhead.*

“What about you, Neruneh? Have you learned any magic skills yet?”

“...Ummm, Master. You said that you would teach me magic if I learned all the

skills Niku knows, buuuut... There's just one I really can't understaaand!"

"I'm guessing {Storage}?"

"{Storaaage}!" *Makes sense. Every other magic skill Niku knows is Low-Rank. {Storage} is the Mid-Rank one. Wait, and she's learned every Low-Rank spell I taught Niku? That's pretty impressive. She may not have learned {Storage} yet, but still, she's actually managing to learn stuff here. I'll teach her some magic if the mood ever strikes.*

...Actually, nah. That'd be a major pain. 'Cause I mean, in this world, learning magic without scrolls is basically memorizing a chant with perfect pronunciation. The learning process, then, is to repeatedly chant the incantation over and over and over. It's basically just work. A magic teacher has to teach their student the chant, listen to them chant it, correct their pronunciation, and then repeat. It takes diligence and a lot of determination. Once the student learns the spell as a skill, they can make mistakes here and there with the only result being a greater loss of mana, though at that point a little focus will be enough to chant it properly.

"Please give me a scroll too, Masteeer!"

"If you don't get used to learning them on your own, you'll never be able to use magic like I do."

"Ngh! It's true. Your magic is nothing like what's in the scrolls..."

"Alright, Neruneh. I'll give you another goal instead. If you can do this, I'll teach you magic."

"What is iiit?"

"Think of a way to make golems use magic. I'll help with any experiments you think might be successful."

"Okaaay! No take backsies, right? It's a promise, riiight?! Eheheheh. It's a promise for sure!" Neruneh laughed with determination. Golems being unable to use magic was the only thing standing between me and making Golem Blades into all sorts of Magic Blades beyond just sharpening ones, a key step towards expanding the dungeon. *Heh heh. Work hard and unravel this puzzle for me.*

I left the cafeteria. All that talk about skills reminded me that Ichika and Niku had both learned the Swordplay skill {Slash} thanks to all their golem-assisted repetition training. {Slash} was the only skill Ichika learned, but Niku learned {Slash}, {Double Slash}, {Accel Turn}, and even {Assassin Edge}. *That's wild. She learned all those while teaching Neruneh magic, too. Guess this is what you get when you combine the innate strength of a beastkin with a child's learning capabilities.*

I went to check up on them and found them dueling in the inn's garden with large wooden swords as part of their training. The sound of wood thumping echoed through the air, along with the occasional shouts of {Slash}. Not to mention some faux-skills. A faux-skill was just them using golem assistance to force their body to move in a certain way. The resulting attack wasn't too impressive compared to the real thing.

By the way, I tried asking Niku what the secret to learning so many skills was, but...

"You have to, um, let it happen. It's like, pow. But you can't just, ummm, leave everything to the golem. It's important that you pow pow pow yourself, too. Ah, {Double Slash} is fast, it's important you go fast. {Assassin Edge} is where you slice the throat. You go poooow." She tried explaining while acting the motions out, but unfortunately, I didn't understand any of it.

But the fact that Ichika only learned {Slash} despite her long history of fighting could only mean that talent and compatibility had a lot to do with it. *Oh, and I didn't want to do all that repetition training, so I just learned it through a skill scroll. Since {Slash} is a Low-Rank Swordplay skill, the [Slash Skill Scroll] only cost 500 DP.*

"Um, Master? It took me like, two months to learn that. Y'know what I'm sayin'?"

"Alright, alright. You can eat as many curry rolls as you want for three days."

"...I'm just gonna pretend you said for a whole week!" I let her have that. Since we could buy packs of six rolls for 5 DP, she had to eat six hundred rolls to match the 500 DP I didn't spend on her. Which would be... eighty-five rolls a day. *Pretty sure that's heart attack level. Good luck getting even with me, Ichika.*

Good luck.

"Do you want a reward too, Niku? You learned four skills, so you can have something four times as good as what I just gave Ichika."

"...Please pat my head."

"Huh? Alright." I patted Niku's head. Her damp black hair felt nice to the touch and her tail wagged rapidly.

"So, what do you want? A headpat alone can't be enough."

"...Nnn. This is enough." *Well look at this cutie.* I ruffled her hair with both of my hands. It was messing up her hairdo, but judging by how happily her tail was wagging, she probably didn't mind. *She's gotten a lot more sweet and dog-like ever since I gave her the last name Kuroinu (Black Dog). This is the power of proper beastkin naming.*

"I-If you insist, Master, I would like it if we... went to bed, and..." *Er. Looks like the Niku part of her name's influencing her too. Oh yeah, speaking of which. I don't think I've told Rokuko about me becoming town chief yet.*

I headed to Rokuko's room and entered with a knock.

"Ahahaha." Rokuko was laying on her bed and grinning at the red ring on her finger. She had been doing that all the time lately... I hallucinated Haku's footsteps and nearly genuflected on instinct. *I need to be ready for the day she actually comes. Hopefully I can get her to spare my life somehow.*

I looked at Rokuko for about half a minute, but she didn't notice me, so I decided to just speak up.

"Heeey, Rokuko?"

"Bwuh?! H-Hey, knock before you come inside! And wait for me to answer, too! This is the room of a fine young lady!" Rokuko hid her left hand behind her and collected herself. *Oh yeah. I knocked but didn't wait for her to reply.*

"My bad, my bad. I just wanted to talk to you about something."

"Eh? I wonder what it could be. Wait... I need to collect myself first."

"Uh, not sure what's going on in your head right now, but this is about work.

Can’t even imagine what you’re thinking about. Oh. Right. I’m town chief now.” I told the blushing Rokuko what I came to say and immediately turned to leave. *How did this happen? It’s a bit late for me to be saying this, but I’m pretty sure I didn’t trip any romance flags with Rokuko... All I did was drive the bandits out, expand her dungeon, and make an inn. I guess I gave her some melon rolls too? Oh, right. I kinda fought Wataru for her and took down Suzuki after he dissed her. Riiiight.*

I feel like I can hear Haku’s footsteps getting louder... I gotta survive. My bed awaits.

“Wait, wait, Keima. Town chief?” *Oh, she called out to me before I got all the way out.*

“Yep. There’s a lot of people staying here now, right? Well, there’s enough people that everyone’s calling this place a town now. One thing led to another and I was chosen as town chief.”

“Mmm, so basically, you have the most authority out of any human here. That’s good. This is my dungeon, after all.”

“...I’m the kind of person that likes avoiding work where possible, but after some thought, I realized a town chief’s main job is basically getting other people to do work for him.” You can’t play an RPG without a town chief unloading problems onto a Hero. The added responsibility would still pose some problems, but since I was stuck here as Dungeon Master anyway, eh. It’d all be the same. A problem for the town was a problem for me. *Might as well just accept my fate.*

“Mmm? But wait, what’s going to happen to the inn now that you’re the town chief?”

“I’d like to say that nothing’s going to change, but I don’t think I can live here any longer. People probably wouldn’t think well of their town chief living in a rented inn room.”

“Aaah, okay. Once you finish building your house, I’ll move in with you.”

“...Huh? But this inn is your home.”

“Eh?”

And either way, the entire town is part of her dungeon. Houses are basically like rooms to her, since she can just go anywhere she wants with a single step thanks to the dungeon's teleportation functions.

"...That's true."

"Yep, but moving sounds like a pain, so I'm gonna just build my house onto the inn... It'd be a pain walking here every day, after all."

"Okay, that sounds good. Are you going to do what you did with the employee dorm?"

"Something like that." To the outside, it would look like I built the expansion after asking the owner for permission. This place would become an inn plus chief's residence. *Guess I'll go ahead and get it built. If anyone asks, the mysterious construction mage Narikin did it. The other town authorities probably won't be too happy with this, but if they complain, I'll just crush them with my town chief status. 'Cause in the end, for show or not, I am the town chief.*

"Ah, but make me a room in your chief's residence too. That'd be super duper easy for you, right?"

"...Eh, yeah. Sure." *Guess I'll make the chief's residence a bit bigger than planned. No problem, there's still lots of space around the inn.*

* * *

Anyway, I recently had an idea that might make teaching magic easier. Perhaps golems could help, just like they did with physical skills.

My idea was centered around a phonograph. I would have liked to just buy an actual audio recorder with DP, but nothing computerized showed up in the DP Catalog. *Is it the transistors? What's so bad about transistors?*

...Anyway, phonographs were purchasable in the catalog thanks to their lack of computer parts. But they were a million DP each. Too expensive. I had no real choice but to make one myself.

Luckily, phonographs weren't particularly complex in nature. To record sound, the speakers vibrate and dig grooves into a record. To play that sound back, the

speakers vibrate according to the grooves in the record. So, how could I make that work with golems? Easy. Make the whole thing into a golem and have it repeat vibrations that it learns. I didn't know how well a golem could learn vibrations, but experimentation would make everything clear.

But what about the speakers? That was even simpler. I'd make paper or animal skin into a membrane that made noise when vibrated extremely rapidly. Tin can telephones were basically speakers, and the same deal worked with paper cups, which meant all I had to do was buy a twelve-set of paper cups for 5 DP and everything was good. I just had to fuse it all together into a phonograph. "Alright, time to experiment." I used {Create Golem} on a paper cup. After easily turning it into a golem, I held it against my ear like one would a tin can telephone.

"Record the following vibrations. Er... Ahem. Test, test. Today's weather is fantastic. Stop recording. Now, replay the vibrations you just recorded."

"Er... ahem. Test, test. Today's weather is fantastic." I heard my faint voice coming out through the paper cup. *Success. It even recorded my fake cough.*

I ordered it to replay the vibrations even harder, and although the resulting sound cracked a little, the voice coming from the cup ended up being as loud as my original one. Another success.

...Alright, now let's see how much it can memorize.

"Register those vibrations recording number one. Next, record these vibrations."

So, ultimately, I learned that the paper cup golem could at most memorize twenty seconds of vibration. Anything more and it would start to overwrite its own memory. *Guess memorizing vibrations is a lot harder than remembering a normal order. But twenty seconds should be enough for a magic skill incantation.*

It'd be annoying to constantly tell the golem when to start recording, so I drew a "record" and "play" button onto the cup with accompanying orders to record when I pressed the record button, *etc.* That put its vibration memory down to eighteen seconds. *Yeaaah, they definitely have a limit to how much they can remember. I never noticed until now cause I only ever gave them*

simple orders like “dig here” or what have you. This was some very fruitful experimentation.

Next, I tried recording a magic incantation, starting with water because why not.

“O Water, become a small ball. {Water}.” A blob of water appeared in the air, so I stopped recording. And not wanting the water to hit the ground, I caught it with the Paper Cup Golem and gulped it down. After a breath of air, I replayed the recording.

“O Water, become a small ball. {Water}.” *Ah, it replayed the recording just fine, even though it got all wet. But no magic happened. Still, a Paper Cup Golem can be used as both speakers and a cup. Very convenient.*

“But yeah, this probably won’t be enough to teach golems to use magic.” Either way, I gave the Paper Cup Golem with the {Water} incantation memorized to Ichika. Neruneh already knew it, so yeah.

Since they would be practicing with it alone, it was best to give them something that could replay the recorded audio on its own. *Ah. Wait, I just had a good idea. I could split the recording and replay parts like the mouthpiece and earpiece of a telephone. That’d be a lot easier to use.*

...Uhhhh, what was the magic Neruneh couldn’t remember again?

Day 225

I had become town chief, but that didn’t change my modus operandi. *God, I love sleep. My futon’s so warm. Nothing can top being wrapped in the toasty embrace of blankets during chilly weather. I honestly want to start a religion called Beddhism just to spread this message across the world.*

Actually, speaking of which, I wonder what’s up with religion in this world. If there aren’t any major ones, yeah, I wouldn’t mind becoming the founder of Beddhism. I could order believers to form a futon of bodies for me and... Actually, never mind. That’s the kind of thing that’s fun to think about but isn’t so great in reality. It’d be hot, heavy, and wouldn’t even compare to a feather futon. For sure. Dreams are best left as dreams, where they can remain beautiful. And it’s not like I couldn’t just ask the monster girls to do that for me.

I'm definitely not backing out of this because I imagined how much work it would be to be a religious leader and hated it. Definitely not.

...Wait. I can't believe I forgot this world actually does worship a god. In fact, I met him. I'm a Soldier of God even. Wow. If someone asks me if I believe in God, I could just tell them I met him. Hahaha. Though I don't know what his name was or anything.

...I'll just say I worship Beddhism.

So, after getting a hearty amount of sleep yesterday, I got to work trying to build the chief residence within a single night. Construction went really smoothly and it was done in no time, all thanks to {Create Golem}. Really, {Create Golem} was basically a cheat skill. It normally could only make Clay Golems, but still, those golems could move forever with mana and there was nothing more useful than golems. *Why isn't {Create Golem} more popular? The capital city's part of a dungeon, so it should be filled with mana at all times. Perfect for golems, if you ask me.*

As per Rokuko's request, I had made her a room within the residence. I also gave Niku and Ichika their own rooms, plus a guest parlor. There were a lot of rooms. Most might not end up being used, but still, it was important to make them now while the space still existed. Who knew how expensive land would get over time as the town grew? Those who strike first win.

...I can claim land and reserve it for the inn thanks to being town chief, but there were limits to that. Maybe I should start seeing if we can build upwards. Like, attach ourselves to the mountain or something.

I looked up at the residence I built and nodded in approval, before getting interrupted by someone rushing up to me in a panic. It was the adventurer slash carpenter, Kuusan.

"K-Keima?! What about your promise to let me build the chief residence?!"

"I didn't make a promise like that. Get outta here and build that storage building."

"Ngh! Right, I totally forgot to make you promise me that... And I've only made one storage building myself. Anyway, I'm pretty sure this residence

wasn't here yesterday... And yet it looks perfectly crafted, as if it were here all along... This is some incredible workmanship. But I'm the son of a carpenter! I can't let myself lose here!" Kuusan left it at that and ran off. *Wait, he's already built a storage building? Guess he's planning on making multiple ones. That's good too. And wow, he's fast. Looks like he's a much better carpenter than I thought.*

...Well, anyway. That's that for me. I'll leave all the annoying town politics to others and get back to work on the dungeon. I gave them plenty of money, I'm sure they'll be fine. Ahhhh. Life sure is busy when you're the town chief.

* * *

Since I would be sleeping in the chief residence from now on, I grabbed my futon and dakimakura (Niku) before getting to work sleeping. But that night... I woke up. Or to be more precise, Rokuko was kicking me awake.

"Keima! It's an emergency!" I awoke to the sight of Rokuko pressing her feet against me. Naturally, I had requested that she wake me up like this, and therefore was not upset in the least. Think about it like a foot fetishist. If you're going to get your sleep interrupted, don't you at least want feet to be there for you?

"Ngh! Wh-What's up...?"

"There's an invader in the dungeon! And he's dangerous!" If it were a normal invader, Rokuko wouldn't go out of her way to wake me up. Especially not recently, given how there are always adventurers inside the dungeon. Which means that it must be a pretty serious invader.

I opened the menu and checked the dungeon map.

"This one!" There was a red dot on the map indicating an invader. It had the name "Dangerous thing" tagged on it. Rokuko must have done that. *I didn't know you could tag these kinds of things. Nice.*

The red dot was racing through the dungeon at immense speeds. It ran into a party of four adventurers in the labyrinth area, and... their four dots vanished like the wind. They were destroyed in less than three seconds. *Uh... I'm pretty sure that was a C-Rank party. Bancho and Sharty were in it, I think. And yet,*

they were nothing to this thing. Whew.

"Mmm... Master, what's wrong...?" *Whoops, woke up Niku.* She looked at me while rubbing her sleepy eyes.

"It's an invader! Niku, now's not the time to be sleeping!"

"Ah! To the defenses!"

"Hold on. He just murdered an entire party of C-Rank adventurers. We need to hold back and observe him first. Rokuko, contact everyone and wake them up." I held Niku back and moved to the Master Room before opening up the dungeon monitor to get a look at our foe.

It was... a pitch black wolf? He was kinda hard to see. But his whole body was definitely black, sole exception being his crimson eyes. It's not that his pupils were red. Rather, it was like red balls had been put directly into his eye sockets.

"What kind of monster is this?"

"I don't know! Maybe a wolf monster? Can you tell, Niku? You're both dogs with black hair, there's a definite connection here."

"...I can't tell. But I feel like there's something weird about him."

The monster was rapidly progressing through the dungeon as we spoke. He got through the labyrinth area in no time, completely undisturbed by the traps and wandering golems scattered throughout. *But up next is the puzzle area! No wolf is getting through that!*

The black wolf paced round the room, sniffing the air, before eventually...

"GRAAAAAH!"

He bit into the [Gate of Wisdom]... shaped golem and tore it apart. *Hey, whaaat?! I know I just used stone golems for those doors, but c'mon! I can't believe the fastest way to beat the puzzle area is to use force... That's jut not right.*

"Rokuko, evacuate your Core to the inn."

"Okaaay. Can I just put it in my new room?" We castled the Dungeon Core and replaced it with a Dummy Core. *We should be safe now, unless anything*

crazy happens.

By the time Ichika and the others responded, the puzzle area had already been torn to shreds. I hurriedly called them into the Master Room.

“Sorry for the holdup! If you woke up for this, Master, it must be super serious!”

“Yep. An invader just broke through the puzzle area and is now at the spiral staircase. We’re gonna use the golems in the storeroom to try and hold him back. If we can’t beat him, we’ll guide him into the [Flame Caverns].”

“Roger!”

Worst case scenario, we would leave him for Ittetsu to take care of. He’d probably complain, but... It shouldn’t be too big for Ittetsu and Redra to handle. Probably.

The black wolf jumped to the middle of the staircase and fell down before landing silently as if it lacked any weight at all. It then leisurely walked through the storeroom area. Several wandering Iron Golems attacked the wolf, but it easily dodged their simple attacks and kicked them away. The golems flew backwards and slammed violently into the dungeon walls. They stopped all movement and became practical lumps of iron.

But what was most surprising out of all that was how the Iron Golems had clear, heavy dents where they had been hit. Out of all the monsters in our dungeon, Iron Golems had the most defensive power, but not even they could withstand a single blow from the wolf.

I swallowed hard. I was leaving control of the Haniwa Golem to Niku, but the one I had wandering the storeroom area was made of stone. No amount of armor would see it through an attack like that.

“...I’ll guide him away!” Niku saying that meant that she had determined her chances of victory to be exceedingly low, and was thus switching to plan B: pushing the problem onto the [Flame Caverns]. *Good thinking, Niku. I’d expect nothing less from you.*

“Leave the details to me, Keima! We’ll guide him to the right. Rei, shoot him with arrows from the right! Kinue, follow after Niku and attack the wolf while

doing so! If he breaks your golem, just assume control of another one and keep up the attack! But Niku, there's only one Haniwa there, so use him well! Neruneh, use the Spiky Spiky Turtle to chase him from behind!"

"Understood! Golem, gooo!"

"Rokuko! Like, what do you want me to do?!"

"Ichika, move the Wall Golems to block side paths and guide him forward! Don't worry about preserving a path to the Core, this is more important!" With Rokuko's instructions, Niku's Haniwa Golem, Rei's four-legged Archer Golem, Kinue's four-armed golem, Neruneh's Spikey Turtle Golem, and Ichika's Wall Golems all sprung into action. They were clear, precise, and effective instructions. So much so that I had nothing to do myself. *Wait. Do they even need me anymore?*

"Archer number three has been destroyed! But he's on the right path now! Assuming control of number four!"

"How is the Haniwa Golem holding up?"

"No problems so far. At this rate, it will last until the magma area." I checked the monitor and saw that although the black wolf was attacking the Haniwa Golem, Niku would deflect its punches with the golem's shield to avoid taking the blow head on. When the wolf tried to bite, Niku pushed the shield forward, which was bigger than its mouth. Not only that, but she was sprinkling attacks with the golem's sword, although the wolf dodged each blow.

A four-armed golem charged forward to get in the wolf's way, but was knocked back by a light tackle and... turned to a pile of broken stone. However, like a never-ending stream of food in a buffet, another four-armed golem rushed in to take its place. The Spiky Spiky Turtle attacked from behind at the same time, but with little result. Its stone spikes were soon crushed by the wolf's tail, turning it into a useless Stone Frisbee Golem. Having no other choice, Neruneh made it perform a kamikaze tackle, but it was knocked away by the tail before it could do anything.

It was hard to read the wolf's expression, but it was looking annoyed. Perhaps due to wanting to destroy all its enemies, or perhaps just annoyed by the stream of arrows being shot at it by the four-legged golem, the wolf kept

charging forward—right where we wanted him to. If we could keep this up, he'd be in the magma area with the door to the [Flame Caverns] in no time.

"Okay, we're almost there! Niku, how are you holding up?"

"I'm okay...! I can keep, going...! Ngh!" The Haniwa Golem's shield had finally broken. The black wolf noisily chewed up the chunks of stone and swallowed them. Really, it was impressive how long she had lasted with a simple stone shield. It must have taken an enormous amount of skill to deflect the blows and minimize the damage like she had.

The wolf immediately did a leg sweep. Lacking a shield to block it, the sweep shattered the horse part of the golem. Niku managed to detach the torso section, but it was already game over. She somehow managed to block a few blows with its sword, but the damage piled on and finally the Magic Blade... the Golem Blade died and turned into a normal sword. Despite that, she continued using it as shield, a feat possible only thanks to the fact that it was made from iron.

...Retrospectively, I should have made the shield out of iron too.

"Ngh! The sword won't last for much longer! We were so close...!"

"Just roll into the magma area! It doesn't matter if the Haniwa Golem gets destroyed!"

"Roger!" Obeying Rokuko's instructions, Niku rolled the Haniwa Golem down the stairs that led to the magma area. *It doesn't matter if it gets destroyed, huh? Just gonna toss it out there that I'm the one who has to fix it. Well, not that I actually care if it does.*

The Haniwa Golem rolled down the stairs while chunks of its stone body flew everywhere. The black wolf chased it down into the magma area... or at least, I thought it would, before it suddenly stopped on a dime and turned right around.

"What?! B-But why?!" Rokuko panicked in confusion. No helping that. Golems or not, we had sacrificed a lot of troops only for the plan to fail at the last moment. Even I was surprised. *The heck is going on here?*

...After that, the black wolf noticed the Wall Golems. After a bit of sniffing, it

destroyed them with tackles.

“Oh mega crap, he’s going straight for the Boss Room, dudes! Nothing’s stopping it!”

“...Guess we’ll have to end this in the Boss Room. Time for the Iron Haniwa Golem to shine. Niku, can you beat him?”

“I... I don’t think so.” She fought that well with a stone Haniwa Golem. I didn’t see any reason why she wouldn’t be able to give a good fight with an Iron Haniwa Golem. It actually had a shield made from iron, even.

“Maybe Rokuko should handle this...”

“Nah, you have experience fighting that thing. You’ll do better than her. I’m counting on you, Niku Kuroinu!”

“...Yes, Master!” I gave Niku a headpat to encourage her.

The coliseum was spacious and fighting the wolf there would be disadvantageous to us, given how mobile it was. Which meant that our best option was to concentrate our forces in the Boss Room and hold our final stand there.

“He’s coming!”

“Iron Haniwa, go!” The black wolf slammed against the Boss Room’s door and burst inside. A dark aura was visibly radiating off its black body. Facing him was the strongest monster in our dungeon, the Iron Haniwa Golem—also known as the Iron Haniwa. It was an Iron Haniwa covered in iron armor and sitting atop an iron horse.

“Graaaaah!” The black wolf roared. I probably would have pissed myself if I were actually standing in front of it. But the Iron Haniwa didn’t even flinch. Nor did Niku, the one controlling it.

“Quasi-Slash!” It swung its large Magic (Golem) Blade, designed to be used from atop of a horse, towards the wolf using a technique mimicking the skill {Slash}. The wolf dodged that first attack and lunged at the Iron Haniwa, who had lost its balance from the swing. Things looked grim, but the Iron Haniwa boldly dodged the lunge by falling off the horse.

“Rokuko, take care of the horse!”

“Got it!” Niku left controlling the horse to Rokuko so she could focus on moving the Haniwa itself.

Fundamentally, she fought the same as she did before. Block with the shield and strike with the sword. This time, though, it had the help of a charging horse. It may have lacked weapons, but it was also made from an Iron Golem. Even a simple tackle had plenty of destructive power at the right speed. And Rokuko made it run circles around the room to build up that speed before charging at the wolf. To give an example, it was like riding a bike in a wide circle before rushing down the road with it.

“Grrrr... GRAAAH!” But the wolf twisted and moved its body in impressive ways to dodge both the Iron Haniwa’s slices and the horse’s charges. I thought at first we had failed, but then noticed that it was attacking far less than before, likely due to focusing on dodging. *Hm... We just need to give him one more push.*

“Send out the boss’s helper golems. All of them. Equip them with bows and wooden arrows. Don’t worry about shooting at the same time, just fire! Try not to hit our allies!” The helper golems were normal Iron Golems, but they had actual equipment. That equipment allowed for a wealth of strategies, which made adaptability their specialty.

This time, I chose wooden arrows for them. Reason being, my primary goal was to distract the wolf, not hurt it, and wooden arrows would prevent any damage towards our allies. After all, a wood tip wouldn’t be doing any damage to a golem made of iron.

Swoosh! Arrows flew towards the wolf... and got knocked aside by its tail. Just as planned. The wolf began attacking even less, allowing Niku’s Iron Haniwa to attack more in turn. The battle now rested on whether the wolf’s energy or our concentration would run out first.

Or so I thought, but the Horse Golem immediately landed a solid body slam on the wolf. A massive iron horse running at full speed hit the wolf directly on the side, literally destroying it. The force had just been to—

“Wait, what?! It survived?!” The wolf... No. It wasn’t a wolf, not anymore. A

black clump of something clung to the horse's stomach.

"What the heck?! It's not a wolf monster?! Wait, it's... eating the Horse Golem?!" The black thing enveloped the Horse Golem, swallowing it whole despite its metal body. It then returned to the shape of a wolf. Before we could process what had just happened, it dashed through the room and destroyed all of the helper golems.

"Ngh?!" Niku's Iron Haniwa rose its defenses, but... the wolf slammed its head against the iron shield, turning into a mist that swallowed up both the shield and the golem's entire left arm. Then, its sword. And finally...

"...I'm so sorry..." Niku let out a pained whisper. The Iron Haniwa had been swallowed whole by the black wolf.

* * *

The black wolf left the Boss Room and entered the heart of our dungeon, the Core Room. Niku, naturally exhausted after all that, had fallen asleep on my lap. She was like a puppy.

"...Yeah, there's nothing we can do about this."

"Ngggh...!"

As we had brought out our ultimate weapon and still lost, the only thing we could do was watch as the wolf advanced further. That said, the Core Room contained only a Dummy Core, a basketball sized ball of treasure that radiated faint light and looked just like the real thing. It even mimicked the real Core's cozy warmth. But since it was just a Dummy Core, no harm would come to us from it being destroyed.

...The black wolf looked at the Dummy Core atop the pedestal and ignored it, choosing instead to lie down onto the ground.

"...What?"

"Um, I guess it doesn't want to do anything?" We kept watching him for a bit, but it looked like he had just fallen asleep. I considered the possibility of a surprise attack, but we didn't have any more manpower. Not to mention that it wouldn't be wise to attack him recklessly without knowing the limits of his

power.

“Either way, we’ve got no choice but to leave him alone for now.”

“Uh-huh...” Rokuko looked conflicted, but this all just reminded me of what things were like when I was first summoned.

Oh, right. I hadn’t looked at how much DP per day he was giving us. The number wouldn’t convert directly into strength, but it’d be good enough to get a general idea. I didn’t think to check before now since they weren’t a human. *Let’s see... 950/DP? Holy crap, this guy’s stronger than a lower-leveled Hero. No wonder we lost.*

...No, wait. We didn’t lose because it’s strong. We lost because we’ve been relying too much on golems. They can’t do anything against enemies resistant to physical attacks. I thought I was well aware of that, but I never planned any countermeasures.

We had reached the limits of what we could do with just golems. It was a pain, but we needed to introduce other monsters and increase our options when it came to fighting. But not much would come from just summoning a bunch of weak mob monsters. We needed something with a unique specialty, or maybe something with unlimited power or whatever...

“...Well, planning for the future’s important, but right now we gotta focus on how to get rid of this monster.”

“Uh-huh.”

I did have a few ideas on what to do. It refused to enter the magma zone, for instance, which opened up the possibility that it was weak to fire. *Hm... Might be best for us to try asking the [Flame Caverns] for help. Ittetsu might even know what this black wolf thing really is.*

* * *

After telling Ittetsu we were having an emergency, he rushed right to the conference room to meet with me. *I’m glad this Salamander’s got quick feet.*

“Fuckin’ hell, Keima, what’s goin’ on? It’s the middle of the night.”

“Sorry about this. Believe me, I wish I could be asleep right now, but it’s kind

of an emergency and you're the only one I can count on for help."

"Hahaha! Alright then, let's hear what's going on." Ittetsu let out a pleased lizard laugh and set on the opposite end of the table as me. *Huh... He's a four-legged lizard, but he can sit down too. I don't know why something this dumb would impress me, but it really is.*

"A weird invader just appeared in our dungeon, and, well... He got through our Boss Room."

"Wha?! He fuckin' WHAT?! You alright, lad?! That means he's in your fuckin' Core Room!"

"Yep, and he's hanging out there now. Our strongest monsters couldn't do anything to him."

"That's pretty damn bad. What kinda invader is it?" I opened up the monitor to show him the sleeping black wolf and explained how the battle with it went down.

"I tried leading him into the [Flame Caverns], but he just refused to go into the magma area in our dungeon."

"Makes sense... Wait, you were plannin' on pushing this fucker onto us?"

"I had faith that you could take care of him somehow, Ittetsu."

"Heh, of course I fuckin' could. I'm not a Core of the 100 lot for nothin'." Ittetsu's lizard mouth curved into a grin, as if he was happy I found him reliable. *Wait, the 100 lot? Great, now I'm curious and we're too busy for me to press the subject. Like, are Dungeon Cores made in batches?*

"Uhhhh, so, do you know what this black wolf thing is?"

"Mmm? Let's see here... He sure looks like a wolf type... dark type... ghost type..."

"Hm. Is he a Vampire's transformation or something?"

"Transformation? That could be... Wait, nah. I think I might have an idea here..." Seemed like something about that tickled Ittetsu's memories. He murmured to himself for a bit, gathering his thoughts. And then, he told me his conclusion.

“’Bout a seventy percent chance that’s a slime Variant. Probably a hybrid between a dark and ghost type.”

“...A slime? You’re saying that wolf shape is just a form it’s taking?”

“Yeah. Slimes move pretty damn slow when just squishin’ around, so when humans train’m, they usually end up taking the shape of animals. But this monster’s way too strong for that. Usually a slime mimicking an animal ends up pretty damn weak ’cause of changing its shape and stuff. So, this could be a totally different monster. That’s why I said seventy percent chance.” *People train slimes, huh? Must be monster tamers or something.*

“Any weak points...?”

“Hey, Keima? I’m thinkin’ it’s about time you pay me for my services here.”

“...I’ve got some powerful alcohol called vodka. I’ll give you a bottle.” I bought a bottle of vodka with DP and put it on the table. Each one only cost 100 DP, though they were human sized and might not be enough for him. Luckily, alcohol was an extremely welcome gift in this world and Ittetsu was happy to see it.

“Oooh! Alcohol, huh? That’s what I like to hear! You’re a drinker too, Keima?”

“Nah, I don’t really drink alcohol much.”

“Yeah? Guess I’ll drink it with Redra, then! The bottle’s a little small, but...”

“...Want two more bottles?”

“Hell yeah! Sorry for pressuring you like that, bud!” Ittetsu opened up the first bottle and cackled happily after getting a good whiff of the contents.

“Sure is rough having greedy friends. Not like this is gonna set me back much, though.”

“C’mon, don’t be like that. We’re living in connected caves, y’know? We’re basically brothers. Course, I’m the older brother.”

“Yeah, yeah. I sure am lucky to have a reliable big bro. So, does this thing have any weak points?”

“W-Woah, big bro? Stop it, you’re gonna embarrass me. Say it again.”

Whatever, bro. Just tell me the weak points.

"Hm, weak points, huh? If it's a dark type, some strong Light. If it's a ghost, somethin' holy. If it's a vampire... Eh, they've got lots of weak points. Anyway. If this thing is a slime, pretty much all magic will... Wait. If it's a dark type hybrid, it'll be strong to Darkness magic. Nothin' physical will do much damage to it. You wanna be hitting it with something Light, and there's not many strong Light monsters. Redra's fire breath would take care of it no time, though. For the right price I could send her over to help, y'know."

"...And how much would that price be?"

"About a thousand of these bottles." *So 100,000 DP, huh? I dunno how I feel about this.*

"Luckily, things have calmed down right now, so I'll try to take care of it on my own. I'll ask for help if things ever get really bad."

"Gahaha! Just remember, you can ask your big bro for help whenever ya need it. She might melt the whole Core Room with her breath, though." *Let's not go too far, now. But I'm glad I can ask for help if I need it.* I thanked Ittetsu and threw in five more bottles of vodka just for the hell of it.

"Hey, Keima? Not gonna turn these down, but you sure? This's more than the consultation fee."

"Yeah. I'm thinking this is the least I can do to thank you for waking up to talk about all this."

"Works for fuckin' me. I'll take'm. Just call if y'ever need my help again, yeah?"

"You got it." *Now, time to figure out a way to get rid of that black wolf thing. Won't be able to sleep peacefully otherwise... Haah. I don't wanna work.*

Day 256

I woke up to see Rokuko peering into my face.

"...Why did you sleep?"

"Huh? Er, well..."

“Grovel.”

“H-Huh? G-Grovel?”

“Uh-huh. Get on the ground and grovel. Okay?” And so, I was forced to prostrate before Rokuko. *Why? This is unjust. Sleeping is my right. As a human, I literally need to sleep.*

“So, why’d you sleep? I’m in trouble right now.”

“...Is that like, a biological question? Humans like me will die if we don’t sleep.”

“You’d be fine missing a single night of sleep. You were even napping right before it happened.” *I mean, that’s true. But think about it from my perspective. I was woken up in the middle of my nap. And yet, I resisted the intense sleepiness to fight the wolf as best I could. I even woke up Ittetsu and had a strategy meeting with him. I think I did pretty well, personally. Seriously. I didn’t actually end up helping the fight against the wolf at all, but I did my best!*

“Couldn’t you have just stayed awake for my sake...?” Rokuko’s cheeks puffed out as she began to pout. *Oh crap. She’s gonna be a pain in the butt if I don’t be careful here.* I thought long and hard about my response before replying.

“Nah, Rokuko. I can’t operate at my full potential without sleeping. So, basically, I went back to bed so I could help as you as best I can.”

“...Really?”

“Really really. I think about things while sleeping, so yeah, I was planning out how to deal with the wolf while I slept.”

“Hmmm. So, what’d you come up with?” Rokuko gave me a piercing, doubtful glare. She then crouched down to look up at and pressure me from below as I remained sitting.

Okay, what to do about this. Aaah... Speaking of which, Ittetsu mentioned something about slimes being trained by humans. Which means I can tame monsters? Alright, time to make up some bullshit along those lines.

“I heard from Ittetsu that monsters can be tamed. I was thinking that if we could tame that black wolf, he would add some serious firepower to our

dungeon.”

“I see. He would definitely be a strong ally to have. So, how do you plan on doing that?”

“About that. First of all, it’s very likely that the wolf is actually just a slime changing its shape. Probably because a human trained it to do so.”

“Uh-huh. So?” *Seems like she’s buying it.* I kept going.

“So, I’m thinking our next step is learning more about the wolf. I’ll try talking to it.”

“...You? How?”

The easiest option would have been to use the dungeon functions to talk to him directly, but unfortunately, we couldn’t choose one specific place to broadcast our voices. If there were, calling everyone together would have been a lot easier. Since, putting aside the monster girls, we couldn’t contact Ichika or Niku directly through the Dungeon Menu. But thankfully, I had just invented a voice producing golem recently.

“...I’ll make a golem talk to him. If everything goes well, I’ll get near him and try using {Air Voice}. I think there’s a chance he’ll be smart enough to understand human speech, given that he was trained by someone.” Mid-sentence, I remembered that I had learned the Wind magic skill {Air Voice} a very... very long time ago. Before I even went to town to buy Ichika. *Seriously, the only magic I ever use is {Create Golem}. It’s way too convenient. I’m pretty much a Golem Master at this point. Though, uh... That’s kind of why we’re in this mess now.*

“Mmm. I guess you actually did think about it.”

“Obviously. Who do you think I am? I’m your partner and Dungeon Master.”

“That’s right, you’re my partner! Sorry for doubting you.” Rokuko smiled and glanced at the red ring shining on her finger.

Better think of what to do if talking to the wolf fails. For now, I think a good plan B is just filling the Boss Room with magma and then melting the entire Core Room in a sea of fire. Wow, wait. That’s actually a pretty good idea.

"...I always get my best ideas while talking, for some reason."

"Hm? What was that?"

"No, nothing. Also, can I stand up now? I kinda wanna get back to sleep."

"...Keima? You know there's an invader who beat our boss and is staying in the Core Room now, right? You know I'm so scared I can't even sleep, right?" She made me sit cross-legged for about thirty more minutes. Not only that, but since "that's not much of a punishment for you," she even sat on top of my legs. I had become a human chair. But she didn't do anything more than that. She just kept sitting on me. I thought about saying something, but ultimately just sat in silence for thirty minutes while feeling Rokuko's soft butt press against me before finally speaking up and asking what she was doing. She stammered out "Th-That should be enough of a punishment!" and dashed out of the room without even turning around. *What was her goal here? My feet fell asleep, too. Sheesh.*

Ah, yeah, that's a good punishment. She actually got me good.

* * *

I couldn't just go back to sleep after undergoing Rokuko's human chair torture, so I got to work refilling the dungeon with golems. Making the specialty golems beloved by the monster girls was easy, since each only took a single cast of {Create Golem}, but the Haniwa Golem had a ton of parts and would take a fair chunk of time to rebuild. *Sheesh, who the hell gave this guy so many parts? We're not making plastic models here. God dammit, it was me.*

I got to work with the help of other golems and soon repaired the broken stone Haniwa Golem. While I was at it, I upgraded its sword and shield to be pure iron. As for the Iron Haniwa Golem, well, it had been eaten whole. I had to rebuild it from scratch. But I didn't give him any real improvements. *You know, it just hit me that a Clay Golem would be a lot more like a haniwa than either of these. Not gonna make one, though. That'd be pretty pointless.*

I also made a Messenger Golem with the explicit purpose of talking to the black wolf. It wasn't anything flashy, though. Just a normal Clay Golem carrying two simple Paper Cup Golems. The plan was to have the golem run to the wolf. I'd speak to the Paper Cup Golem which would then repeat my message where

the wolf could hear it. I could hear its voice through the dungeon monitor, so that was simple. Though it was very likely that this would end without the wolf speaking at all. After all, whether it was really a wolf or whether it was really a slime, monsters generally didn't tal— *Ah, wait, I literally just had a conversation with a talking Salamander. Who knows, maybe it will talk?*

In any case, my Paper Cup Golem differed from normal paper phones in that it would still be able to produce speech even if the wire got caught in a doorway or stretched against a corner or something. The key point was that each paper phone was a fully fledged golem. I just had to input the command "Voice playing cup, recreate all vibrations received by the receiver cup" and that was that. It was a command as simple as "if your right hand gets moved, move your left hand in the same way." Plenty easy to make after some simple experimentation. As the veritable Golem Master, I wanted to keep it up and develop this idea further, but I couldn't. We got spanked hard by this black wolf due to over-relying on golems.

I took a look at the black wolf through the monitor. It was still sleeping. *Does it like sleeping? Maybe he and I have more in common than we think, heh... Alright. Setting obvious flags like that should increase the chances of me successfully taming him.*

Yeaaah. That's just wishful thinking.

Anyway, I decided to keep rebuilding our golem armies while waiting for the black wolf to wake up. *Wait... Is it already awake?* I double checked but it was just lying on the ground, head down and black tail swaying side to side. Weird. It looked entirely as if it was protecting the Core. Which I wouldn't mind at all, for the record.

"Hey, Rokuko. I'm about to try talking to it. Get ready."

"Mmm, okay. I'll wait in the Master Room."

After warning Rokuko, I sent the Messenger Golem running to the Core Room with the black wolf. I could've just had it leave through the Dummy Core, but I didn't want to surprise the wolf or anything. Instead, I stretched out the paper cups pretty far, such that I was standing outside even the Boss Room. The plan was to have Rokuko immediately withdraw me if the wolf were to attack. I'd

rather not put myself in danger in the first place, but I figured it was best to keep on top of the situation as much as possible.

"Everything's ready here. Start whenever you want." That was Rokuko. She could contact me through the Dungeon Menu no matter where I was in the dungeon. But that only worked for those directly connected to the dungeon itself. *I really wish I could make it work with Niku and Ichika, too... Wait. Now's not the time to be thinking about that.*

"Alright, let's see how this goes." I moved the Messenger Golem while watching the Core Room through the monitor. Once the golem slowly peeked into the Core Room, the black wolf immediately stood up in one smooth motion. I gave up on sending the Clay Golem into the Core Room and decided to just start the conversation.

"...Hey. Who're you." The wolf's ears twitched. *Okay, time to see if it'll respond.*

"Grrrr... Weird golem. Who you?" *Oooh! It talked! This wolf knows human language!* I introduced myself.

"I'm the boss of this place. You can call me, uh, Uuma. Yeah. Who are you? If you've got a name, say it." Just in case it did have an owner elsewhere, I refrained from stating my real name.

"I have name! I, Rin! This is... your home? Give it. To me. If you do. I won't kill you." *Rin, huh? This guy sure talks with a lot of punctuation marks. But at least now I have an idea of what he wants. Give me your home, huh? He must want to live here... or maybe he just wants to make this his base. Could be that he just thought this was a perfect cave for hibernating through the winter.*

"Hey, Keima, what're you talking about?"

"Huh?" Rokuko contacted me. *What am I talking about? She should be able to hear me through the dungeon monitor.*

"It just sounds like you're barking or something to me." *Ah. Aaaah. No, uh, that's Mister Auto Translator doing his job. Everything I say is probably being translated into wolf language. That's pretty amazing.* I explained that in general terms to Rokuko.

“...So basically, we’re having a real conversation here.”

“Okay. His name is Rin, right? I’ll withdraw you if he tries attacking you.”

“Yep, please do.” I went back to diplomacy with the wolf.

“So, choose! Do you want, be eaten? Uuma!”

“Gimme a second to think.”

“Come fight me. Before I, get hungry. Heh. Heh. Heh.” *He’s pretty bad at laughing. That was practically deadpan. Maybe because he’s a wolf?*

“...Do you want food? What do you eat, Rin?”

“I eat. Anything. That’s right! Even, golems!” He opened his pitch black mouth wide and exposed his dark teeth, eyes locked on the Messenger Golem. *Okay, he gets hungry. Maybe I can sway him with food.*

“You eat golems, huh. How much do you want to eat? I’ll feed you as much as you want.”

“...You would. Betray? Your allies?” Rin spoke with emotional darkness in his voice. That was literally what I was doing, but I wish he wouldn’t phrase it in such a harsh way.

“That’s one way of putting it, but they’re just mindless drone workers. You can eat as many as you want.”

“What, really? But, Uuma. You are golem, right? You rule, this cave.” *Oh, I get it. He thinks I’m a golem, which means it looks like I’m selling my family or something to him. Dang, that’s harsh. I’m real nice to my actual allies.* I almost corrected him, but then stopped. I didn’t want to reveal that I was this place’s Dungeon Master. It was a secret Haku strongly recommended I keep. Nobody but my closest allies should know about it. If this guy had a human owner, and that owner came to retrieve him, my identity would be exposed.

But at the same time, it was important that I explain I wasn’t a golem. His reaction made it obvious he despised those who would betray their family and allies. If he thought I was that kind of person, negotiations would fall through. *Aaah... I guess since he thought I’m actually this golem, he was threatening me when he said “I eat golems too.” I just noticed that.*

In any case, I decided to tell him that I wasn't a golem without getting too specific.

"You're misunderstanding something. I'm not a golem."

"You're not. Golem...? In that room. Behind you. There was a, strong one. Was that, your. Parent?" *I already told him I'm not a golem. What's he not getting about that? Might have to consider making a Haniwa Golem family, though.*

"No, I made that."

"Ah?! You are, the parent?!" *Y'know, correcting your misunderstandings is getting pretty annoying. He's not wrong that I gave birth to it in an abstract sense, but I get the feeling it'll take a lot for him to understand that. Yeaaah... Moving on!*

"Basically, if you want to eat golems, I'll let you eat as many as you want. Whaddaya think?"

"...Golems. I don't like, too much. They taste bad."

"I-I see. Is there anything you do want to eat, then?"

"You!" *What the hell is even happening heeeere?! Crap! I have no idea what he's thinking! It's like we're living in different worlds or something!*

"...I've said, too much. I'm hungry now. Uuma. I'll eat you!"

"H-Hold on now. Eat me if you want, but why'd you come here? At least tell me that."

"I came, to eat you! Nom nom!" Chomp. The Messenger Golem disappeared into the wolf's mouth. I was immediately withdrawn into the Master Room. Rokuko must have done so after seeing the golem get eaten. Through the monitor, I saw that he was slurping down the Paper Cup Golems like someone sucking a spaghetti noodle. *I see he doesn't waste his food. Very mature.*

"Looks like he ate the golems. So, how'd it go, Keima? Was it a fruitful conversation?"

"Eeeeh... I feel like he kinda understood, kinda didn't..." Either way, it'd be worth trying again. After giving him some space for a bit.

A visitor came to see me not long after I paused negotiations with the wolf and returned to the inn. It was a dude with a turban wrapped around his head... *Uhhhh, right, this is the owner of the Dyne Company. The guy I gave a hundred gold coins to.* The moment he saw me, he came rushing forward while yelling in a panic.

"K-Keima, bro! Sh-Sh-Shit got real! Shit got too reaaaal! Th-Th-The town's in troubleee!" I understood that he had something important to tell me, but I had no idea at all what it could be. *Did somebody get stabbed to death?*

"The town's in trouble? What happened? Did you lose all the money I gave you?"

"I-It's not that! J-J-Just calm down and listen, alright?! Alright, bro?! Okay! I've got good news and bad news! Which do you wanna hear first?!" *You're the one that needs to calm down, man. This is the first I'm hearing about there being good and bad news.*

"Alright. Let's start with the good news."

"The good news, huh? 'Kay... We've conquered the fourth floor!" *The fourth floor... Oh, right. I never repaired the puzzle area. Oh fuck.*

"Aaah, okay. So?"

"Just like the Hero said, there was a spiral staircase behind it, and, well, apparently they turned around after seeing that, but... What's with you, bro? You don't seem that impressed. Didja already conquer it forever ago or something?!"

"Pretty much. So, is that all the good news?"

"No, here's the thing. All the puzzle doors were like, totally brutalized! They could walk right through them. They stuck around for a bit, but like, the doors just stayed broken. No sign of'm repairing themselves. This means we can go to the fifth floor and get as many Magic Blades as we want, man!" *Yep. Until I fix the doors, that is. Haaah... What a pain.*

"So, here's the bad news, man! There's a big chance there's a boss-tier monster wandering around the labyrinth! It's some serious crap, man! Truth is, someone found Bancho's corpse in there. He was a C-Rank adventurer, and one

about to get up to B-Rank too. But he got massacred. Must've been recent since his corpse was still there, but his armor had a big chunk of it bitten right off, so..." *Yep, that'd be Rin. Guess they're talking about the black wolf. And looks like I also forgot to recover his corpse. Teehee!*

...Both the good and bad news had to do with the wolf. Thanks to him destroying the puzzle area doors, adventurers have gotten to the spiral staircase area, but they're afraid of him wandering around within the dungeon. He's actually just sleeping in the core room, but the villagers have no way of knowing that.

"...What should we do, bro?!"

"Can't the Guild just post an extermination quest and an investigation quest for it? They could take the reward money from the operating funds I provided. I'll leave the rest to you."

"Oh, oooh! Right on! You got it, bro!" Dyne ran out of the room. *Yeaaah... Hopefully that'll be enough to take care of it. I'm not dying to make them an ally or anything.*

Oh, wait. Are people gonna interpret this as another Paradigm Shift? I sure hope no quests for guarding the entrance get sent out. That'd be such a pain, I've got so much to do right now. I wonder if I could reject the quest with my town chief authority...

* * *

The puzzle area was under watch and not in a situation where I could fix the doors, so I decided to just make the parts and wait. It was a good opportunity to let adventurers check out the storeroom area. There were a lot more Iron Golems wandering around there, after all. Actually, it was also a good opportunity to send experimental golems at some adventurers. I wanted to really emphasize what kind of theme our dungeon had.

So, while I was making some new golems, I called everyone to have a strategy meeting on what to do with the wolf. Though Neruneh and Kinue were busy at the inn and couldn't come.

"Alright, let's talk about what we're gonna do."

“Hold on, Keima. Why don’t you finish making golems before we have a meeting?” Rokuko rained on my parade.

“Killing two birds with one stone like this gets me in bed faster. Am I wrong?”

“Oh, right. It’s you we’re talking about.” Rokuko nodded to herself about something. I didn’t know what she was nodding about, but I was fine as long as she understood me.

“First, about the dungeon. I’m planning on making another branch in our dungeon before making new floors. It’ll be like it is now, with the coliseum area and magma area after the storeroom area, only with a new floor as well.”

“They’re still having trouble with the spiral staircase area right now, but will adventurers reach the storeroom really soon?”

“Yup, and there’s no helping that. We need to work fast and build the entrance to it right away. I’m thinking this is the perfect spot for a new and improved puzzle area. Once that’s down, we’ll start expanding our dungeon downwards. I’m making the golems we need for a puzzle area right now. I’ll leave the details to you, Rokuko.”

“Okay. I’ll order some golems to dig out space in front of the new puzzle area.” *I didn’t even have to tell her what to do. Yep, that’s my partner for you.*

“...So, what are we going to do about the black wolf?”

“...His name is Rin. Negotiating with him is gonna be a problem. He understands what I’m saying, but he doesn’t really *understand*, if you know what I mean.”

“He did eat you, Keima.” *Hey. He ate the Messenger Golem, not me. Aaand that reminds me I need to build another one of those. I’ll go ahead and make ’em in bulk in case he eats one again.*

Ichika raised her hand.

“So, Master. What’d the wolf talk about? I, like, don’t even know a word of wolf language, dude.”

“Right. I tried asking him what he wanted. Best as I could tell, he just came here looking for a place to stay and food.”

“So basically, he’s gonna play nice if we let him stay in the Core Room and bring him some food sometimes?”

“...Yeah. He is playing nice right now, at least.” Rin, seemingly satisfied by his golem meal, fell asleep not long after I left. *Good grief.*

“Anyway, we can communicate with him. If we just keep negotiating with him and stay determined... as annoying as that will be... things should go well.”

“Stay determined, hm? You know, Keima, for some reason I feel like ‘determined’ is both a really good and really bad way to describe you.”

“Thinking about it, Master does work quite a lot.” *Yeah... Yeah, I’m working pretty much constantly when I’m not asleep. Dang.*

“Master’s always, like, sleeping when other people are taking time off and stuff.”

“So basically, he sleeps too much!”

“I believe that Master’s workload is far greater than average despite how he’s awake for less time than most.” *Hey, we’re getting off topic. Enough with the flattery, we’re talking about the wolf here.*

“So, about the wolf. I’m gonna keep negotiating with him, using the same kind of golem as before. We did strike up a conversation that way, after all.”

“You’ll be on your own, Keima. Nobody else knows wolf language.” Apparently, when I was talking to the wolf, only my first “who’re you” was in human language. Everything after that was in wolf language. It looked like I was barking to myself. *Good work, Auto Translator. Rin understood me when I spoke in human language, which makes it safe to say he can speak it himself. Which meant someone just had to understand wolf language in order to talk to him.*

“Um, Master. Can I have a second?”

“Huh? What’s up, Niku? Could you understand wolf language too?”

“Y-Yes. Somehow, I did. Maybe because I’m a dog beastkin.”

“Oooh! Those dog ears aren’t for nothing, huh? Goood job. Good job.” I rubbed Niku’s ears. Her tail wagged happily. *This is a nice coincidence. Maybe she can succeed where I failed thanks to her being a “black dog” too.*

“Alright. I’ll leave the next round of negotiations to you, Niku. Make that wolf join our side!”

“Understood! You can count on me!”

I went ahead and made a black Messenger Golem for Niku so that Rin would know she wasn’t me. Though I wasn’t sure he would tell the difference. *Maybe it being black this time will change everything. Hmmm... Might be fun to try making a golem out of actual black material or something, instead of just painting a normal one.*

* * *

Once Rin woke up, Niku controlled the golem and sent him forward. Rei was tagging along with Niku so she could observe Rin through the dungeon monitor. As for me, I was waiting in the Master Room. My job was to do nothing if anything happened.

...Rokuko was in charge of withdrawing them if anything happened. There was a good reason why I wasn’t doing so myself. Rokuko could only withdraw Niku and other slaves to the Master Room thanks to how I had convinced her that slaves were items. The fact that was possible meant the dungeon was designed to allow it, but... to be honest, we were using a loophole. It was probably a function that was intended to unlock over time after our dungeon grew to a certain point.

So. If you asked me if I could treat Niku and Ichika like items too, well, I wouldn’t have a solid answer for you. I was keeping this a secret from Rokuko, but I really didn’t think I could. Doubt like that would just be putting them in danger if I was in charge of withdrawing them, and I didn’t want Rokuko to find out by me failing to withdraw them. Makes sense, right? After taking all that into consideration, I gave myself the task of doing nothing. All I had to do was watch.

Though honestly, I did spend some time making the black Messenger Golem and preparing food for Rin. That was plenty of work, if you ask me.

“Hello?” Niku immediately used the Messenger Golem to speak to Rin. He lazily looked towards the golem, then his red eyes flashed open wide in shock.

“Wha?! Y-You’re, Uuma?! Why! I ate you!” *Well, it is another talking golem that looks the same. A different color must not be enough for him to notice it’s a new golem.*

“Why! Answer why, you’re alive, Uuma!”

“...That is my Master.”

“Oh. I look closer. You’re black. Different. I see. But Uuma, I already ate. Which means. You are now, mine.”

“...No? That’s not true.” *The strong rule, huh. He sure has the mind of a wild animal. That’s not gonna fly with Niku, though.*

“...Not true? You would. Remain loyal, to the dead? Magnificent.”

“Yes. I belong to Master in life and death.”

“I see. So. What business. Do you have, with me?” Niku paused, then responded to Rin’s question. *Wait... I feel like she was referring to her own death, not mine.*

“Please join my pack.”

“Never! I need, no, master!” He shut her down instantly. *Yeah, I expected that. The real negotiations start here.* The black Messenger Golem that Niku was controlling took out a hamburger.

“If you join now, you get this delicious hamburger for free.”

“I don’t want, your bait! I’ll eat! You! Too!”

“Aren’t you hungry? Here, you can have this candy too. It’s sweet and really nice.”

“I told you! I don’t! Want! Bait! GRRR!” She took out some candy, but that just made Rin violently angry. *Wait, seriously now. It feels like Niku’s barely understanding him. Nikuuu, come ooon, you’re making him maaad.*

“You’ll join my pack regardless of the candy?”

“Laughable! If you want, to rule me, first, defeat me! Then I will. Think about it.”

“I see, you’ll join my pack. Thank you very much. Here, have the candy.”

“No! I care not! I will, eat you!” And so, the black Messenger Golem was swallowed whole. Rokuko immediately withdrew Niku and Rei into the Master Room. *Welcome back.*

“...He ate the golem too, but he accepted the candy. Next time should go well.”

“Hey, Niku... Were you being literal when you said you could just *somewhat* understand wolf language?”

“Hm? Yes, I was.” She just went and said it. *Yeaaah... Dang. I wish she had just been humble.*

“...He interpreted that conversation a lot differently. He got mad. Like super mad.”

“Ah?! I-It didn’t work?! I thought for sure that he was just being shy...”

“Not in the least. Though, he did say he’d consider joining us if you beat him in a fight, so it wasn’t a total bust.”

“I-I’m so sorry...” *Well, whatever. It’ll be a pain, but I’ll do the negotiating myself. It’ll be... a major, major pain, but... Haaah... Good thing I made some non-black Messenger Golems for this exact situation, I guess.*

“Leave the rest to me.” I patted Niku’s head and started preparing for some negotiation.

* * *

“Heeey, Rin. You’re awake, right? Let’s talk.”

“Another, new one?!” Rin looked at my Messenger Golem with red eyes.

“Hahaha. I’m Uuma. So, is this a nice place to live?”

“You’re, Uuma?! Why are you, alive?! I ate you!”

“Make no mistake. That’s not enough to kill me. Wanna eat this golem again and find out?”

“This can’t be... I ate it. I ate, the golem. I know it.” *Yep. You ate the Golem, but that’s all. The man behind the curtains is still totally safe.*

“Is the, black one, alive too?”

“Oh? Why do you ask?”

“I ate it, but it didn’t, taste that good. It tasted. Like you, Uuma. Like a normal, golem.” *Uh... Golems come in flavors? Are there strawberry-flavored golems out there?*

“Uuma. You’re a, Unique Monster, so I thought, you would taste, good. Or maybe, interesting.”

“Golems are made from clay and stuff. I’m pretty sure they all taste the same.”

“Unique Monsters, taste good.” *Maybe he just has a fundamentally different sense of taste. Normally, you don’t eat clay. Maybe trying to bait him with Japanese food just isn’t going to work.* I took out the dog food I had brought with me.

“I brought this food in case you wanted it.”

“What is it?”

“Dog food. You don’t have to eat it, just thought I’d mention I brought it.”

“Don’t want it.” *Okay, he doesn’t want it. Sooo... What should I do with it now? Not like I’m gonna make Niku eat it.*

“So, I heard you’d join my team if we beat you in a fight.”

“Wanna fight?”

“Yeah. Not right now, but if you’ll join me, I’m definitely game for a fight.”

“Alright. I’ll eat you.” Rin opened his mouth wide, baring his fangs. *Hey, c’mon! I said not right now!*

“Down you go!”

“...Fine. I’ll be back.” *What should I do about this guy? He’s just not listening to us.* I thought about what to do while being withdrawn back into the Master Room.

Day 257

Despite acting cool and telling Niku to leave everything to me, my golem still

got eaten again. My authority as a master was crumbling, and I needed to do something about it.

"...What should I dooo." I murmured to myself while eating onigiri in the cafeteria. Kinue had made it for me to serve as lunch. I bit into the white rice and found that fried eggs were inside of it. They were sweet. *Dang, these actually go pretty well together. Never heard of egg onigiri before, but this isn't half bad.*

Anyway, I had thought of several possible ways to take care of that wolf... Rin. But I had no idea if any of them would work. I needed to investigate him a bit further. *Alright, time for some experimentation.*

Rin's presence had shot up our daily DP intake enormously, so I was leaning towards plans which involved him joining our side. Though having him around all the time would be a little, uh... stressful. It was hard to sleep with a fighting monster like him around. *Yeah, whether it's taking him down or getting him on our side, I want this over with quickly.*

At the very least, he hadn't touched the Dungeon Core (that's a dummy anyway) and didn't seem interested in it. That was nice. *If only I could get him to promise not to ever touch it, or something. Rokuko's Core has been in her room ever since he came, and that's pretty nerve-wracking. Things would get real bad real fast if a thief or something broke into her room... Not that anyone could manage doing that unnoticed in this town. Mmmm. I'll strengthen security around Rokuko's room just in case, anyway.*

My lazy thoughts were interrupted by Gozou entering the cafeteria.

"Heya, Keima."

"Hm? Oh, hey, Gozou. It's been a while. Haven't seen you around here in a long time."

"That's cause I've been hangin' in the bar! But anyway. I was thinkin' about accepting that investigation quest the Guild put out. Wanna take it with me?"

"You know that quest came from the town, right? In other words, it came from me. I'm the town chief." *Though the bar's owner is vice chief and thus, more or less, the real chief.*

“Ain’t no rules against accepting quests ye put up yourself. The Guild accepts them as quests and adventurers do’m, that’s all.” *Is that seriously okay? You can finish as many quests as you want that way, as long as you have some money. It’d be easy as heck to boost your rank in no time. Hm... I guess that’s how young nobles rank up so fast. Apparently, adventurers who get a high enough rank are granted a noble title. It all comes together.*

“Naturally, ye can only get up to C-Rank completing yer own quests. And the Guild checks to make sure they’re real quests, so if ye give yerself easy stuff, you’ll never rank up. Getting to B-Rank takes a recommendation, too, and there’s no point if ye can’t pass the examination.”

“Makes sense. But still... You can get all the way to C-Rank like that?”

“Usually the quests end up bein’ about collecting rare items and whatnot, so the Guild commission gets dang expensive. Not that nobles care. A lot of ’em rank up to C to save themselves the effort and then never rank up past that. That’s why C-Rankers are a mixed bag like they are. Lotta strong folk, lotta weak folk.” *But still, C-Rank? Our dungeon’s classified as a limited C-Rank dungeon right now. If anyone can just pay their way to C-Rank, hmmm... I might consider doing that, depending on how much it ends up costing. Oh, but ranks above C-Rank have a written test too. That’ll be a problem for me. Though apparently you can earn exemption if you’re ridiculously, abnormally strong.*

“So, what are the details of the quest? I didn’t give the specifics myself.”

“Right. They want us to investigate whether or not there’s an abnormally threatenin’ monster in the dungeon’s second or third floors. The labyrinth.” *Guess I can’t tell him there’s not one. At least, not one in the labyrinth.*

“And how are we gonna find this deadly monster?”

“Numbers. We’ll go on in and sweep the area. Truth is, nobody’s seen it for days, so we’re thinkin’ it’s gone further into the dungeon. Also. Ye should know that we’re also checkin’ to see whether a Paradigm Shift is about to happen. Anyone not searchin’ the dungeon will be guarding the entrance.”

“Alright, I’ll join you. Mind if I bring Nik—Kuro with me? Rokuko too.” Searching the dungeon would be a pain, but it’d be even more of a pain to guard the entrance when I knew nothing was coming. Especially now that it was

cold out.

"Nah, Rokuko's exempt." *Why? I wonder if Haku's using her Guild authority to stop Rokuko from putting herself in any danger.*

"Hey, I'm the town chief. I should be exempt too."

"Sure, but yer party's gotten further into the dungeon than anyone else. Can't go in without any of ye with us, it'll hurt morale. Are you gonna make lil' Kuro go in all on her own?" *Hard to argue with that.*

"...Fine. I'm also pretty sure the monster's gone further into the dungeon. I'll consider this an opportunity to have a nice walk through the labyrinth."

"Hear, hear. Me an' Roppe are joinin' in too. Let's help each other out, though we gotta split up with our parties once we're in the labyrinth."

"I'd feel a lot better about this if Wataru were still here." *Hmm... I wonder what would happen if I threw Wataru at Rin. He is a Hero, after all, and he earns more DP than Rin. I bet he knows all sorts of crazy strong magic, like {Sandstorm} or something.*

"So, what were ye worrying about?" Gozou sat next to me and took a swig from his beer-filled thermos. It was a specialty product from our dungeon (or in other words, Japan) that kept the liquid within insulated. Apparently he carried around hot beer when he could.

"Yeah, I was thinking about... you know, Jobs. What do you think about Monster Tamers?"

"Tamers, huh? That's the Job with taming monsters, yeah? I hear you gotta be able to communicate with monsters to be one of them. You thinking about Job Changing?"

"Job Changing? Well, maybe something like that. I'm thinking it might be better for me."

"It's rough, friend. You gotta learn each monster's language first. You can buy'm like skills, but even the languages of weak monsters cost ten golds eac— ah, right. That's nothin' to you. Guess you might be a perfect Tamer then." *Wait, monster languages are like skills? I never knew that.* I stealthily searched

the Catalog of language skills, and... *Nothing. Hmm. Maybe I need to do something to unlock them?*

“What would you think about taming, say, a Slime?”

“A Slime? Oh, those’re strong. Physical attacks don’t do crap against’m. But they’re weak to magic.”

“Yeah? I’ve heard of people training slimes to morph themselves into the shape of a wolf. Is that normal?”

“Yup. Lots of people raise’m in tubes, too. Convenient for carrying them around.”

“Wow. If you taught them magic, could you make them into Magic Blade or something?”

“Hahaha! Friend, lemme tell you, Magic Blades ar—mmm? Wait, could you? Mmm?! Hold on, I gotta go tell Kantara about this!” Gozou ran out of the cafeteria, leaving his thermos on the table. *Huh? Did I just make a major breakthrough? Well, alright. Sure hope this leads somewhere. I really want to make more Magic Blades.*

Either way, I decided to tell Niku about the quest. And I figured it would be best to confirm with the Guild that I’d be joining the others in the dungeon, just in case. Gozou was so stunned he forgot about his beer, even.

There was no such deadly monster on the second or third floors, and the Guild had given everyone maps of the labyrinth, so we finished the quest up in no time. *But seriously, I can’t believe they managed to make maps this accurate... They’ve figured out how the moving walls work and where they all are. I’m glad we finished the quest fast, but I think I might need to rework the labyrinth area a bit. I can change which walls move and where, so... Yeah, I’m glad I did this quest.*

* * *

With the town business settled, I returned to focusing on dungeon business. Since Rin said that my golems tasted weird last time, I figured it would be smart to try flavoring them. And so, when I built my next Messenger Golem, I filled it with hot magma. The body of the golem was a container for the magma. *Time*

to get Rin to eat this.

By the way, I got the feeling that touching the magma would actually straight-up melt my hand off, so I had the golem put the magma inside himself after opening a hole to its empty stomach, which was then sealed. Just getting close enough to seal the opening was still rough, though.

“Heeey, Rin. It’s meal time.”

“Fwaaah! I knew it! You live, Uuma!”

I sent my magma-filled Messenger Golem towards Rin, who was just waking up.

“C’mon, eat me.”

“...Uuma. Your head, got hit? Normal people. Don’t want to, get eaten.” *Whatever, just eat me already. The magma’s cooling down.*

“Aren’t you hungry? I bet you are. And you should know by now that I won’t die even if you eat these golems.”

“Yes. Fine. I’ll eat you. But... Uuma. You taste, pretty bad.”

“I figured you’d say that, so I tried changing my flavoring a bit. Now go ahead, eat me!”

“F-Fine. I’ll eat you... nom!” He opened his mouth and swallowed me with one bite. I watched his reaction through the monitor, but it didn’t seem to hurt him at all. *Guess magma isn’t his weak point. That’s one possibility down. Or maybe it just wasn’t enough magma? Well, either way’s fine. Lots of other things I can try out. Sulfuric acid, a strong alkaline solution, sleeping drugs, etc. I’ll keep searching for something that he either gets hurt from eating or can’t eat at all. Whether he becomes our ally or remains our foe, knowing his weak points will only be beneficial to us.*

The name of this strategy? Operation: Gernie Gott’s Every Flavored Golems. *Hopefully we can find something Rin doesn’t like. Oh, and I got this idea from Kinue’s onigiri. Thank you, egg-filled onigiri.*

Side Chapter — A Day in the Life of Niku Kuroinu

The day of a slave starts early. But a slave working as a dakimakura gets up when Keima does, so their day starts fairly late. Since Niku did not have such work last night, her day unfortunately started early.

Niku, upon waking up in the morning, picked her socks. That choice was very important to her. Reason being, her master Keima looked at her feet more than anywhere else. Niku didn't really understand what a foot fetish was, but if her beloved master desired it, she had no problem wearing the same socks for three days without ever using {Purification} on them.

...Yesterday, she wore socks with light blue stripes on them that reached up to her thighs, but today she decided on wearing plain white ones. It seemed that Keima didn't particularly like striped socks. She had no way of explaining why, but judging from experience, she felt that she was assigned dakimakura more often when wearing plain socks of a single color.

"...Mmm." After getting the socks on, she started performing light stretches and such to loosen her body. In order to avoid wrinkling her maid uniform, she did the stretches wearing nothing but the underwear she slept in and her socks. Only after thoroughly stretching did she put on her maid outfit, the Maid Outfit Golem that her master had given her. It assisted her movements, allowing her physical potential to shoot upwards.

...Even the socks she just put on were both golems.

"...Okay." With her morning preparations complete, it was time for her to go to work. Since the chief residence she lived in was connected directly to the inn, her commute took less than a minute.

Her morning duty was to work as a waitress in the cafeteria where adventurers ate. She and the other employees of the inn took turns doing this job in shifts. Niku couldn't always participate in the morning due to her dakimakura duties, and in that case someone else took care of her shift. Ichika had expanded upon Keima's normal shift system by introducing a special "Hot

and Steamy Bedroom Shift” (named by Ichika) for Niku to take when busy. So far, she had only used it when working as a dakimakura.

As an aside, none of the other employees were unhappy about having to occasionally cover her shifts. Rather, they suggested that she stop working in the cafeteria entirely in order to lessen her overall workload.

In any case, the inn offered free sandwiches for breakfast. It helped that the only other place to eat in town was the bar, but still, the sandwich was quite popular thanks to how good it tasted. The secret was using white bread instead of cheap rye bread.

Niku started by eating such a sandwich and got to work handling customers.

“Fwaaah. Morning, Kuro.”

“Oh, good morning.”

Generally, the first person to wake up and visit the cafeteria was the Guild receptionist Cilia. Reason being, as a Guild receptionist, she needed to wake up before the adventurers did.

Cilia glanced around and, after confirming that they were the only ones there, put her hand on Niku’s head and rubbed it.

“...Haaah... This gives me the energy I need to survive all day...”

“I see...” Niku personally wasn’t fond of someone other than Keima patting her head, but she tolerated Cilia because she gave her a tip for it. Niku’s plan was to save the tips and eventually present them to her master to make him happy.

She took the five copper tip and brought Cilia a sandwich. Since Kinue wasn’t there yet, it was a simple job involving only going into the kitchen to withdraw a sandwich she had in her {Storage}. Since time was stopped within the {Storage} subspace, the sandwich was fresh as new. It would be a problem if others discovered she knew {Storage}, however, so she used it only after entering the kitchen.

Eventually, the adventurers who were staying in the inn came pouring in. Most of them weren’t too worried about the threatening monster. They figured

they'd be fine and could at least manage to run away, but Niku knew any of them would die in an instant if Rin actually fought them. Unfortunately for those adventurers, Niku didn't care enough about strangers to warn them of this.

After cleaning up the remnants of their breakfasts, Niku began her own daily training. When training with magic skills or practicing commanding golems, she would first go into the dungeon, but generally she practiced within the town or a field near the inn. She had a lot of mock battles with Ichika in particular. The hidden intent there was to show the townsfolk her training, and intimidate them with the knowledge that Keima commanded strength as powerful as hers. Though recently the intensity of her training had shot up, as she wanted revenge against that black wolf.

She knocked the knife out of Ichika's hand and pressed her own against her throat. Both of their knives were wooden training knives that Keima made in ten seconds.

"...Whew lad. I dunno if I can keep up with you much longer, dude."

"You think so?" Ichika was wearing a Maid Outfit Golem as well. Since Ichika already had the strength of an experienced C-Rank adventurer on top of that, she had a huge advantage over Niku. And indeed, Ichika had been stronger than Niku when they first started training together. But after two months, they were equal, and now, Niku was stronger.

The difference between them was how effectively they could use the golem's assistance. Ichika had developed her own style of fighting over the years and thus the golem assistance was basically just a boost of power to her muscles. But Niku's training had begun from zero with golems. She knew how to use the golems to fight better and faster. As a result, she could use the golem's senses to block attacks from blindspots and even dodge arrows *after* seeing them get fired, both things no normal fighter could do.

Normally, performing such ridiculous maneuvers with a Wearable Golem would damage the wearer's body, but beastkin were especially tough and had latent regenerative powers perfect for dealing with the bodily stress. Thus was born a small warrior capable of acrobatics beyond human comprehension or

ability.

“You’re stronger than me without golem assistance, Ichika.”

“For now, man. For now.” Ichika knew that Niku would soon be stronger than her even without golem assistance. Niku had talent. Developing that talent was one form of entertainment for Ichika. It’d be a lie to say she wasn’t envious at all, but still, she liked seeing Niku get stronger. Why? Because the stronger Niku was, the better she would be able to protect Keima, and that meant she’d get to eat a ton of tasty food for a lot longer.

Niku continued her training until lunchtime at noon, whereupon she returned to working as a waitress in the cafeteria. The inn had only recently started to hold lunches, at the strong request of those staying in the inn and the towns people. It served as good practice for Kinue to improve her cooking, and the townspeople got to eat a fairly large amount of food for cheap. Any leftovers could be put into {Storage} and used the next day, so Kinue didn’t need to hold back at all.

Once the customers thinned out, Niku ate her own lunch. Today she had onigiri filled with mayo hamburg steak. She had asked Kinue to make them especially for her, and recently it had become one of her favorite foods. She particularly liked using her mayonnaise hand-made by her master.

Rice and meat went particularly well together.

After licking up the last of the rice, Niku headed to the front desk. She worked as a receptionist throughout the afternoon. That said, there wasn’t much actual work she had to do. Put some money into the piggy bank-esque box golem, hand over the change, food tickets, room keys, *etc.* to adventurers, and that was about it. Niku could do simple mental math herself, but she left the calculations to the golem since it never made mistakes. Plus, it was easier that way. Keima had called it a Register Golem, and even Niku knew what a ridiculously big deal it was, technologically speaking.

Resting was an important step to growing stronger. (To this day, she regretted training so hard that she collapsed and put a burden on her master). So, while waiting at the desk for customers, she put a golem that had the {Create Golem} incantation recorded against her ear and listened to it on loop. Hearing her

master's voice filled Niku's heart with warmth and made the struggles of the day melt away. That she could now listen to it at will thanks to this golem was a miracle to her and reinforced her belief that Keima was a genius.

As an aside, the golem was made to look like a Pavella seashell. If anyone asked her what she was doing, she could just reply that she was listening to the sounds of the ocean.

When a visitor checked out, she took the key from them and put it into the Register Golem. The keyholder stick was a golem as well, and returned each key within the box to its original location. She sometimes watched it to make sure it didn't move the keys to the wrong place, but so far, that had never happened.

"Heya, little girl. We wanna rent a room."

"It's fifty copper coins a night. We offer free sandwiches in the morning. Other meals cost extra." Some new, first-time visitors came to the inn. It was a party of three male adventurers.

"Fifty coppers?! And food costs extra? That's damn expensive, how about you make it a little cheaper?"

"No."

"C'mon, don't be like that. Please?"

"If you aren't staying, leave."

"Whaaa?! This is the only fuckin' inn here! Gimme a break, I'm desperate here! You're gonna turn away lil' old Slay?" Niku looked up and saw no desperation in his eyes. Just arrogance. From that she determined that he would not be a paying customer and got to work booting the cheapskate out, by pressing a button on the underside of the desk. Immediately, a Clay Golem came forth, wielding a wooden training greatsword and wearing an arm band adorned with the crest of the Adventurer's Guild.

"Huh? The fuck is this, a Clay Golem? He's even got a weapon, now that's funny." The cheapskate, surprisingly enough, kicked the Clay Golem and knocked it down. It seemed that he either had poor eyesight or was just an idiot. That arm band had been officially given to the inn by Cilia the receptionist... rather, Cilia the Branch Chief in return for a lower room price. As

a result, the Clay Golem was technically an official employee of the Adventurer's Guild. Most adventurers understood the significance of that and quieted down, but the cheapskate had actually attacked the golem.

Basically, the moment he did that, he became a foolish criminal that defied the Adventuer's Guild... in other words, a foe that Niku was fully in her rights to take down.

"Nnn." Niku jumped over the front desk, grabbed the cheapskate's legs, and using the golem assistance, threw him at the door. He hit the other members of his party in the air and they all tumbled out of the inn together. The three of them blinked in surprise, unable to comprehend how a girl as small as Niku had managed that.

Niku unsheathed her steel Golem Knife and casually walked outside of the inn.

"Fucking hell! Rittin, Dogi! Surround her! We'll take her on together!" The three of them got so angry they basically started acting like bandits. There were more than a few stupid people like them working as adventurers. But even with that said, their stupidity was something special. They were probably thugs that became adventurers to get a form of identification to get a loan, then wasted all the loaned money on nothing, and ultimately came to a recently discovered beginner dungeon after hearing they could make some quick cash there.

Technically, even F-Ranks could enter the [Cave of Greed] due to its limited C-Rank status, but it was doubtful whether they even fulfilled the requirements for that. Given how the leader recognized the Clay Golem, it was possible that they had done a bunch of smaller jobs to survive for awhile and ended up as E-Ranks before the debt got to be too much.

"...Gray Rats are smarter than you three."

"What was that?! Fuck her up!"

As an aside, the Gray Rats performing in the rat races were aware that they were providing entertainment and thus intentionally set the races to be more exciting for the viewers. They even recently held a meeting among themselves, a sign of just how abnormally intelligent they had gotten. Niku had just let out a murmur about that after it came to mind, but to the cheapskate, it felt like she

was goading him.

The two lackeys came at her from the sides, but swung their clubs so slowly Niku almost yawned while slicing them apart. She then ducked and did a leg sweep to knock the three of them onto the ground. They fell right in front of the Adventurer Guild's branch office.

"And a bonus." While she was at it, she grabbed the cheapskate in front of her and threw him again, right against the Guild door. She immediately regretted that decision, since there might have been someone right behind the door, and a slave that causes problems for others just puts a burden on their master.

In any case, she entered the Guild. Inside was the receptionist and four adventurers who were staying at the inn. The cheapskate was on the ground.

Niku gave a slight bow.

"...Did he hit anyone?"

"Oh, not at all. Don't worry, Kuro."

"Nnn. That's good. He's more stupid than the usual troublemaker. He kicked the golem with the arm band. I'll leave the rest to you." Niku left it at that and returned to the inn, entrusting the cheapskate's treatment to the Guild. He would at best receive a firm warning and at worst be expelled from the guild. Being banned from the entering the [Cave of Greed] was a likely possibility. But either way, it had nothing to do with Niku and she didn't care.

Niku sat behind the desk again and listened to her master's voice.

...Occasionally, a dim-witted adventurer would try to intimidate or threaten Niku after seeing that she was a Beastkin child. They must have thought that they could stay for free by making the receptionist mark them as having paid when they hadn't. Ichika would probably have been able to shake them off more elegantly, but Niku handled things as well as she could. She finished her shift at the front desk with no other issues.

Evening came and she headed to the cafeteria, reflecting on how much good rest she had gotten today as receptionist. Working as a waitress required her to memorize the faces and orders of customers, so it was actually a good workout

for her brain.

Suddenly, Keima entered the cafeteria holding a D-Rank food ticket. Niku dashed with extreme speed to the cafeteria, got a D-Rank meal from Kinue, and brought it straight to Keima.

“Master.”

“Oh, Kuro? Working hard as always, I see. Good job, good job.” Keima rustled Niku’s hair. She gave a small smile. Well... In her head, she was grinning ear to ear, but her face muscles weren’t very good at their job. In return, her tail swooshed through the air, wagging happily. If she had one complaint, it was that he didn’t call her Niku since other adventurers were around.

She noticed his eyes briefly glance down at her feet. To tell the truth, she wanted to strip her shoes right off and expose her feet to him, but he had told her not to do that. So, she held her desires in. Her master did not prefer to express his love for feet in front of strangers.

“...Come to my room tonight.”

“Ah! Yes!” Niku trotted back to the kitchen and told Kinue that she had pillow duty, who nodded in return. She would thus be put on a Hot and Steamy Bedroom Shift for the morning.

She finished her waitress duties in a good mood and started cleaning her body to prepare for her pillow duties. It was important that she focus on only cleaning the visible dirt and such on her body, nothing more. She also needed to keep her socks on.

Niku took off her maid outfit, lightly wiped her body with hot water from the onsen, and changed into her pajamas... a dress sewn from soft cloth. She generally slept in her underwear when alone, but she made sure to wear the dress when working as a dakimakura. Perhaps due to her old lifestyle, she felt uneasy sleeping with a lot of clothes on her body, but that wasn’t the case when she was in bed with her master.

...Also, Ichika had told her it was best not to be so indecent.

With all that done, she headed to her master’s room. After making a stop at the bathroom, that is. Her master went to bed early and woke up late. She

needed to prepare such that she would neither wet the bed at night nor need to leave bed early to relieve herself.

After finishing up there, Niku was completely ready. She walked up to her master's bedroom and took deep breaths in front of the door. Her heart always beat so fast.

She knocked and entered the door. Her master always already snug inside her blanket. Each day, he had to manage the dungeon and inn, study golems, cooking, and magic, and on top of all that, he had his duties as town chief. Anyone could be a waitress, receptionist, or adventurer, but only her master could do everything he does. He was busy every day. Niku thought he was amazing for that. Amazing and unbelievably cool.

"Nzzz, you're here...? Zzz..."

"Yes!" Niku took off her shoes. Her master's room was Japanese-styled, and thus it was important that she removed her shoes before entering it. Actually, no. It was important that she strip her shoes off and make a show of it. She wanted him to see the fruits of her sweaty labor.

...Yes! He was glancing at her feet through the blankets! Niku had somewhat perverted hopes in her heart, as prayed that by showing off her appeal, her master would finally treat her like a proper "niku" and approach her sexually. (Keima just assumed that her tail was wagging because she was in a random good mood. He didn't know what her true desires were. Or maybe, he did know and was just ignoring them.)

She slowly peeled off her knee socks to prepare for sleeping. As an aside, her plan was to "accidentally" leave her socks in Keima's room. Ichika had advised her to do so, as it would make him very happy, and so Niku naturally made a point to do so.

...To tell the truth, she wanted to take off her underwear and "forget" it as well (to leave more of her scent in his room), but unfortunately, she hadn't found a good opportunity to do so yet. She had thought about just not wearing the underwear and sneaking it in, but her master had told her to always wear some.

Niku replaced the thick futon cover with a lighter one, turned off the lights,

and slid into the futon. She then had Master squeeze her. His heat felt nice.

...When adjusting her position in the futon, she made sure to rub her body against his to mark him with her scent. The fact her dress flipped up during that process was entirely incidental. She didn't do it on purpose so that she could feel her master without a layer of cloth in the way. Yep. It was just a simple accident.

Niku absolutely loved the scent she smelled on master while rubbing his body. She needed to stay awake as long as possible to enjoy it more.

Keima's breathing grew steady and from that she knew that her master had fallen asleep. In the end, he had once again not fallen to her temptations. Despite how much she had rubbed him with her feet to try and seduce him, he was sleeping with a peaceful expression on his face.

Niku gently rubbed her body against his more, taking care not to wake him up, and even gave him love bites. Love biting was a very common display of affection among beastkin. The slave collar didn't react to them, so there was no problem whatsoever.

After taking her time and love biting him to her heart's content, Niku decided to go to sleep. She would work hard for her master's sake again after waking up. And tomorrow for sure, she would get him to have sex with her! Or at least, that's what she prayed while falling asleep.

Side Chapter — A Normal Adventurer's Day Off

Heya. My name's Nanmo. Believe it or not, I'm an adventurer! Huh? My clothes look boring like a villager's? Nice eyes you've got there. Truth is, I'm also a villager living in this town! The town built in front of the [Cave of Greed]. Yeah, it doesn't even have a name yet. I hear they're still thinking one up.

Things have been rough lately on account of a super strong wolf monster, but eh, I've got fast legs! I'm sure I could run away from anything! Anyway, I have today off 'cause I hunted an Iron Golem yesterday. A single Iron Golem is enough for one to live cheaply for several days. I even split half of it with my partner Inne.

The trick is, I sell the Iron Golems directly to the Dyne Company without using the Guild as a mediator. I get fifteen silvers each, which makes them some pretty great prey to hunt. The only downside to all this is that their iron corpses are so frickin' heavy, you've gotta be careful about monsters attacking you while you're carrying them back.

Oh, right. And Kuusan actually built me a house, so I don't need to worry about paying inn fees. Though it's a little cold inside. There's no furnace, but it's got a fireplace, so I manage. Of course, I pay close attention so a fire doesn't break out. And since I can use the chief's onsen for free, I'm living cheaper now than I ever did in Tsia.

Now. Today's breakfast is cheap bread. I had it made in the Dancing Doll Inn's oven after buying some flour from the town's storerooms. It was cheap and bad flour that Dyne bought through his connections, but any bread baked by Kinue tastes amazing, really.

Nom... Yeah, it's hard. Cold bread gets hard, naturally. Naturally...

But Kinue baked this bread! Therefore, it's delicious! Man, girls who can cook sure are great. And Kinue's a top-class babe, too. She's got the floaty personality of like, a fairy or something. I totally wanna marry her.

I'm gonna visit the inn today. Maybe I'll try giving her some jewelry as a gift?

The Dyne Company sells tons of accessories and stuff. Actually, why do they even do that? They're selling so much random stuff.

Anyway, I drop by their store and buy an iron ring made from an Iron Golem hunted within the dungeon. A whole Iron Golem corpse sells for fifteen silvers, but this itty bitty ring still costs fifty whole coppers. *What a ripoff*, I think while buying it.

Okay, and today's receptionist is... Woah! Looks like it's Neruneh! She looks a lot more plain than Rei or Kinue, but she's actually got tons of magical talent. I saw her practicing the other day. She was focusing so hard on her practice that she ignored me when I called out to her. No, no. She didn't ignore me because I'm a boring nothing to her, she was just focusing so hard she got shut off from the world.

Whoops, I went off topic there. Hahaha. Well, basically, I'm saying Neruneh is yet another girl I wanna marry. Don't you think having a sorceress wife as your main party member sounds great? I sure do.

"Heya, Neruneh. Nice weather we're having."

"Welcooome. Mmm, aaah, right. Are you staying the niiight?"

"Nope, I'm just here for the onsen!"

"The onsen is free for villageeers, but everyone else has to pay ten coppeeers."

"Hey, uh, I'm a villager! Here, I have my identification with me!" I show her the iron tag that identifies me as a villager. The town chief commissioned the blacksmith Kantara to make these, and each one of them has a unique number engraved on them. My number's eighteen. Pretty nice number if I do say so myself. Huh? What's nice about it? Hahaha, nice numbers are just nice numbers, man.

And seriously, what a jokester Neruneh is. I've come here so often and she still pretends not to recognize me for laughs. We're so close we may as well be married already. Hahaha! Sure is rough being a popular guy!

"Aaah. Okay, you can go iiin."

“Yep, thanks. Wanna come to my place tonight and have some fun?”

“Aaah, sir, we don’t do that kind of thing heeere.” I go to the onsen while glancing regretfully at Neruneh.

Sometimes, there are other villagers in the onsen. Ohhh! That’s Gozou, one of the elite nine with one digit villager numbers! He drinks tons of beer and is super muscular! Now this is a dwarf!

“Heya, Nanmo. Ye got today off too, huh?”

“Indeed, as I hunted an Iron Golem yesterday.”

“Sounds good. How many did ye bag? Three?”

“One, with my partner. And you?”

“Ahhh, I went spelunking with Roppe and Keima the day before yesterday and got five.”

Five with three people...? Fifteen silvers each, five of them... Uhhh, that’s like fifty silvers, right?

“Seventy five silvers. We got twenty five each.”

“Ah, yes, I knew that. Math that simple is common knowledge.”

“Woah, ye can do math? I leave that kinda stuff to Roppe.” Yep, that’s Gozou for you. But twenty five silvers, huh? Makes sense he’s drinking so much when he’s earning the big bucks like that. And uh... He said he went with Keima, but uh, isn’t that the town chief? Our chief is an adventurer? I didn’t know that.

“Between you and me, it’s always a ton easier to find Iron Golems when we’re with Keima. He’s got a good nose on’m. He can sniff’m out.”

“The town chief has a good nose? Hm, I’ve never heard of Iron Golems having a strong smell or anything. Can he smell iron?”

“Are ye daft, lad? Sayin’ someone has a good nose just means they’re sharp.”

“Wow! That’s interesting. I’m gonna brag to Inne about how I have a sharp nose now.”

“Sounds good... Hey, you wanna drink?”

“Thank you!” I take a swig from Gozou’s thermos. One good thing about this town is how easy it is to spend time with more experienced adventurers. Suddenly, another adventurer enters the onsen.

“Hm? Guess I’m not the first one here.”

“Oh, Keima! Heya man, we were just talking about you.”

“T-Town chief!” That adventurer is Keima, the town chief. Weird, he’s not very muscular for an adventurer. Carrying equipment and loot all day usually gives adventurers a more stout build than what he has.

“Either way, here, have a beer. Drink up, friend.”

“No thanks. I don’t drink alcohol that much.” In a shocking display of ingratitude, Keima turns down the beer. He’s about the only one in town who would turn down Gozou’s beer. Everyone else loves to drink it, especially since all his drinks taste so good.

“Tch, ye gotta have fun sometimes, y’know. Anyway. How about you go golem hunting with this guy sometime?”

“Wha?!” That was sudden. I-Is this my chance to earn over twenty silvers in one day?!

“Not a chance. Pass. I just went with you the day before yesterday, Gozou. Don’t tell me you spent all your money already.”

“That kinda cash is nothin’ when you’re buying beer! But really now, these golems are the damn best. Not often ye find money this easy. Ain’t even that many people here yet.”

“Yet, huh...? I guess a lot more people will be coming here. Which means more work for me, as chief... Hah. So sleepy.” W-Wait? Did my dreams of twenty five silvers die in an instant? Oh noooo...

“U-Ummm. Ch-Chief? Er, I didn’t know you were an adventurer.”

“Huh? Yeah, I am. D-Rank.”

“Woah! We’re the same rank...! You don’t look like much of a front row fighter, so I guess you tend to stay in the back?”

“Yep. I’ve got Kuro to do the fighting for me.” Kuro being... ohhh! That Kuro! I see, so she’s a member of the chief’s party. She’s a girl and has the crazy first name Niku, meaning sex slave, but what’s even more crazy than that is how strong she is. Lots of adventurers ask to spar with her, and most of them walk away with more than a few bruises. Emotional bruises, too. I’m one of those adventurers. She beat me fair and square. Honestly, I think it’s kinda cheating for a girl like that to be so much stronger than she looks...

“Do you specialize in any kinds of magic? Oooh, but if that’s a secret, don’t worry about it.”

“Sorry, but it’s a secret.”

The town chief soon got up and left. What a cool guy. Seems like he just came here to warm up a little before bed. Er... He’s already going to bed? At noon? Talk about being lazy.

“Seriously, I can’t believe Kuro’s in the town chief’s party... Wait. Does that mean he’s the Master she’s always talking about?”

“Yup, that’s Keima. Kuro’s head over heels for’m.”

“...Er. She told me that her master named her Niku. I, uh...”

“Nanmo. People’s kinks are best left alone. Don’t think about’m, don’t ask about’m.” Holy crap. I’m just gonna pretend I never heard about any of this. Oh, and by the way, my kink is belly buttons! I love cute, squishy, round ones! Seems like Gozou has a thing for girls that drink a lot of beer... Oh, right, Roppe. I understand everything now.

Anyway, after getting all warmed up in the onsen, I decide to eat lunch. I hope I can get some homemade onigiri from Kinue.

I head to the cafeteria. Fingers crossed that Kinue’s there.

“Kinueeee.”

“Hm? Kinue is on the night shift today.” So spoke a silver-haired beauty, Rei, after I walked into the cafeteria. She’s got a perfect body and she’s great at massages, too... I wonder why so many of my potential wives work in this inn?

“Oh, really? That’s fine. I’m just glad I get to see you, Rei!”

“Today’s lunch is onigiri. Five coppers each.”

“Your silver hair’s as pretty as ever today. I think I’ll have one onigiri. And a smile from you too, please.”

“A smile costs five coppers, which will bring your total up to eleven coppers.”

“Oh, you’re actually selling them? Neat, that’s... Wait. Isn’t eleven too much? That should be ten coppers.”

“Hm? Ah! I... This is a special price, just for you, sir.”

“Woah, hell yeah! Take my money!” Heh, a special price, just for me...! Feels pretty good.

I give Rei eleven coppers.

“Now then, here is your onigiri... And here’s your smile! Cheeeese!” Wooooah! What a smile! Now I really wanna marry her. Her smile’s bright and gentle like the sun itself.

By the way, Rei’s onigiri tend to have way, way, *way* too much salt in them, but I can still eat them without much trouble. Weird. Must be because they’re packed with her love.

“Heh, that’s a nice smile. How about you come back to my place and we have a nice dinner together?”

“I’d rather you just buy me an S-Rank meal! Just hand over the ticket and I’m happy! Cheeeese!” Oof, I don’t think I can pony up five golds like that! Heh, she sure is shy. But we have a connection. I know that she would actually love to eat dinner with me. Why? ’Cause otherwise, she wouldn’t give me a deal like that. She basically proposed to me just now. Good grief, I have women falling all over me.

Today’s onigiri seems normal. It’s filled with some kind of black stuff, but... It tastes kind of like Pavella kelp. Not bad, really. I could taste Rei’s love in it.

Okaaay, that’s lunch done. What to do now...? Oh, right! The rat races should be starting soon, if they haven’t already. Cool, I’ve got the time! I’ll go check them out! I head to the recreation building. Entry is free, of course, and just watching the rats race is pretty fun.

“Woah, what’s up, Inne? Didn’t expect to see you here.”

“Hey, Nanmo. You came to see the races too, huh?” It’s my partner Inne. He’s holding gambling tickets in his hands... Ahhh, yeah. There’s no helping this guy.

“Are ya winning, friend?”

“Yep, I’m pretty sure I’ll win everything back after this next race.” Yeah, sounds like he’s getting dunked on. Hmm... Maybe I could make some money by betting on whichever rats he doesn’t?

“Who are you betting on?”

“I got some money on both Walky Walker and Blue Avenger.”

“Alright, I’ll bet on some of the others... Oh man, Speed of Sound Sonic’s up. Why didn’t you bet on him?”

“This is his second race today. I’m betting he’s still tired from the first one.” Maybe, but he’s my pick. I buy five coppers worth of gambling tickets on Speed of Sound Sonic.

The race went like this: Walky Walker stopped for no reason right before the goal. Blue Avenger turned around halfway through the race and ran back to the start. Ultimately, Speed of Sound Sonic won. He started the race walking slowly, but started a mad dash right after Walky Walker stopped. He slid right by and won the race. Also, Buzzington took a nap at the starting line.

...My five coppers turned into seven. You know, I feel like luck is on my side today! Yeah!

Mmm. Nice weather we’re having today (Avoiding Reality).

I mean, come on. I thought for sure today was my lucky day. It all started off so well. I bet on Elec-Mouse next and won again. But it all went downhill from there. Land of Dream’s failure swept away all the money I had with me. I really should have guessed things would go like this after seeing that Ichika was the one selling tickets today.

“...Looks like today’s my last day off. I’ll go hunting for an Iron Golem tomorrow.”

“Haaah... I’m so mad. If only I quit while I was ahead...!” I head to the

cafeteria for dinner while sighing. We have a storeroom for wheat flour now, so villagers can buy bread for a copper apiece.

When I reach the cafeteria, I see that my beloved Kinue is there. Kinue gives off such a lovely, gentle aura. She's like a green fairy, one so mature that everyone ends up seeing her as a comforting other mother.

"Oh my, welcome. Are you here for bread again, Mister Nanmo?"

"Ahaha, yeah, it's kinda sad..." Kinue, in all her radiance, remembers my name without fail. Surely that means she has special feelings for me... which reminds me that the ring I bought her is in my pocket.

"Right, Kinue. I have a present for you today."

"Oh my. And what might that be?"

"Th-Thish wing!"

"My my, it's delightful... Here, have some free bacon, my treat." Kinue slices my piece of freshly baked bread open and slides a piece of bacon into it.

Kinue... She really is a fairy! A pure being, beyond human comprehension...! This is proof that we're on the verge of getting married.

"Um, would you mind putting on the ring for me, so I can see it on you?"

"Fufu. I'm at work, so just for a second." Kinue took the ring I bought her and slid it onto her left hand's ring finger in front of me. Due to work, however, she immediately took it off.

...Yeah, I'm glad I didn't gamble this baby away. For some reason, they let you trade accessories for gambling tickets over there...

"See you tomorrow. Please order some proper food next time."

"R-Right!" I take my bacon-stuffed bread and return home, pleased. She remembered my name and made my dinner for me (bread). I don't think it'd be an exaggeration to say that we're already married.

"Man, Kinue really is the best. She gave me some cheese as a bonus, too."

"Inne, she gave you that out of respect for *me*. Be grateful."

"Yeah, yeah. Let's get to bed already. We're hunting golems tomorrow." I get

into my futon. We could make a fair chunk of change from gathering magic stones from Golems, but Iron Golems are really just so much better...

I fall asleep, wondering when my next day off will be.

Chapter 2

Day 265

Several days had passed since I started experimenting with Rin. Wozma, owner of the local bar and vice town chief, came calling for me.

“Keima, an adventurer who accepted the extermination quest has arrived. Would you mind greeting her, as town chief?”

“...That sounds like a pain in the neck. I’ll let you handle that, vice chief. Always remember that I’m just the chief for show.” Wozma shook his head sadly.

“I’m afraid that’s not possible this time. The adventurer is the High Priestess of *the* Holy Kingdom. If we do not welcome her properly, things could get quite bad for us. And she apparently has something she wishes to discuss with you...”

“...I see. I don’t know what the Holy Kingdom is, but messing with them seems like it’d just give me more work. But first. What’s the Holy Kingdom?” After blinking in surprise and confirming that I really didn’t know what the Holy Kingdom was, the vice chief gave me an explanation.

The Holy Kingdom was what you would call a theocracy, and it was one of the countries bordering the Empire. The High Priestess was a symbolic leader figure within the Holy Kingdom, and she wielded immense Holy powers. I glanced at the map and saw that someone in the Guild was earning us 250/DP. *Hm... This must be the High Priestess.*

Wait, wait. I feel like I did this exact same thing when Wataru the Hero of Debt first came here.

“Now that we’ve established all of that... The High Priestess visiting us is quite an unwelcome shock... She might flip this village upside down.”

“Hm? What’re you talking about?”

“The Holy Kingdom worships the God of Light and backs the Church of Lux. Unfortunately for us, the Church of Lux vehemently rejects the very existence of

dungeons. They claim they are created by demons. If the High Priestess were to conquer the [Cave of Greed], this town would likely cease to exist." *Oh fuck. That's pretty bad. Can't let Rokuko meet with her if that's the case... Guess that just leaves me. Dang. What a pain.*

"But this dungeon is managed by the Adventurer's Guild, and is ultimately property of the Empire. Wouldn't them destroying it cause an international incident?"

"Yes, but this is the High Priestess. It would not be odd for her to ignore such things in the name of her faith." *Riiight... So she's a religious nutjob, basically. I see what he's worried about. Religion can make people do some scary things.*

Buuut she's only worth 250DP. There's a big gap between her and Rin. She might end up on equal footing with him since she specializes in the element he definitely seems weak to, but still... I just hope they take each other out. Two birds with one stone.

"...Alright. I just need to go greet her, right?"

"Yes. Thank you, chief."

And so, I needed to go talk to the High Priestess as town chief. *Sheesh. What do these guys think a fake town chief is for? Stop making me work and actually do things. Are they trying to say that greeting visitors is the kind of empty work that fake chiefs do?*

...Oh, actually, that is what fake chiefs do. The whole point of being chief for show is people looking at you. Outside appearances matter. Aaaaah... I just wanna sleep.

* * *

"Greetings, High Priestess. I am Keima, chief of this humble little town."

"Greetings to you as well, honorable town chief. I am Alca Lu Ri Chium Nicke Hydride. Please feel free to call me just Alca." I was sitting face to face with the excessively long-named High Priestess within the chief residence's guest parlor. She, Alca, smiled at me with her long and wavy teal-green hair flowing down her sides. At a glance, she looked about like what you'd expect a beautiful nun to look like.



Anyway, I decided to be as smarmy and flattering as possible with her.

“Dear me, I’m afraid I could never address you so rudely, your holiness. You’ve come all this way to fulfill the humble quest we posted, even...”

“Indeed. Forgive my bluntness, but may we discuss the reward for completing the quest?” *Oh man, she’s getting straight to the point. Either she’s surprisingly rude or she’s pretty used to adventuring.*

“Of course,” I replied, staying on guard.

“Excellent. For completing this quest and exterminating the monster threatening your town, I would like permission to destroy the Dungeon Core. That is all.” *Yeah, that’s gonna be a no. It took exactly zero seconds for negotiations to break down. Great.*

“I’m afraid that’s not possible. That would be a death sentence for all the villagers here. As town chief, I can’t accept that condition under any circumstances.”

“Would letting that monster run free not be just as much of a death sentence? The only difference is how long it would take for them to die. Though, of course... The noble Holy Kingdom from which I hail will gracefully assist the villagers in abandoning their homes and traveling to safety.” *So basically, when it comes to destroying Dungeon Cores, they won’t just work for free, they’ll actually pay money themselves. Well, too bad. It’s not happening this time. I’ll die. As a Dungeon Master, I’ll literally die if the Core of my dungeon gets destroyed. (But the Core won’t die if I do. Just saying.)*

“This town does not even have a name yet. Is now not the best time to evacuate?”

“.....” *Wow. I can’t believe we haven’t chosen a name yet. What’s Gozou doing? I told him to think of one. Looks like we’re going with my original idea, Gozou and Roppe are Lovey-Dovey Town. GoRoLove Town for short.*

The High Priestess must have interpreted my pause as me agonizing over the decision, rather than me internally being a dick to Gozou, so she pressed further.

“And of course, if you decide now, we will even offer monetary rewards. The Holy Kingdom would also be more than willing to accept the townspeople as new residents. As you are the town chief, I would not mind granting you ownership of a small plot of land in the country.”

“A small plot of land, in the country?” *Not even a big plot, huh? That’s kinda cheap. Though I wonder if a normal town chief would be pumped to get an offer like that. Maybe she’s being really generous here.*

“Indeed. Under typical circumstances, the land would cost you at least three hundred gold coins. It is only because of my authority as High Priestess that this exception is being made for you. I accept all your gratitude.”

“Wow. Awesome.” *Yeah, I really don’t care about any of that.*

“Now that we have that settled, shall we get this into writing?”

“Ah, no. If you won’t accept the quest’s posted reward, then I’m sorry to say that we have no further business with you.”

“What?! A-Are you mad? Th-This is land within the Holy Kingdom we are talking about! What more could you want?!”

“Sorry, but I’m not interested.”

“N-Not interested?! Y-You have no desire for land in the Holy... The Holy Kingdom?!” The High Priestess’s eyes widened in surprise. It looked like she sincerely, from the bottom of her heart, could not comprehend what I had just said. *I mean, not many people would pick land over their life.*

“E-Excuse me. Hmm... I see. You are not interested. Hmmm...” The High Priestess took deep breaths to calm herself down. She looked like she was thinking about something.

“Basically, like I said, we are offering the posted reward and nothing else. Under no circumstances will we give you permission to destroy the Dungeon Core.”

“...Understood. If you’ll excuse me, then.” The High Priestess stood up and started to leave the room.

...She walked slowly and kept glancing furtively back at me, but I didn’t say

anything. I figured that she was probably waiting for me to say *Wait! On second thought, yes please!* or something. She may have thought she was being subtle, but she really wasn't.

"...*glance!*"

"Is something wrong? Are you looking for something?"

"Not at all..."

In the end, it took the High Priestess three full minutes to leave the room, seven minutes to stop waiting outside the door for me, and then another ten minutes to slowly walk out of the chief residence. *Just get the heck outta here already.*

* * *

"A plot of land in the Holy Kingdom? It seems she's fairly serious about this." So said Wozma, who had followed me to the meeting in Rokuko's place. *Hey, uh, y'know I'm just the chief for show, right? Would you mind being a little more proactive here? I totally forgot you were even here with me. Sheesh. Guess I should expect a bartender to be good at vanishing into the background while listening in on conversations.*

"About that plot of land, though. Do you think land in the Holy Kingdom would be better than this inn?"

"...I'm afraid I have no idea. Personally speaking, however, I prefer the three meals a day your inn provides." *Food and shelter is more important than owning land, huh? Makes sense. People would definitely rather stay here than move to my theoretical plot of land in the Holy Kingdom, then. Not to mention that all they'd be doing is granting me permission to live on the land. I'd have to fund everything after that myself. Hm... If I were to launder the support money they'd give, I wonder how many years I'd be able to relax and do whatever I want.*

"So, chief, what do you plan to do?"

"I mean, you saw me turn her down. That's my decision and it's not gonna change... Though it is possible that the High Priestess goes into the dungeon like any other adventurer and just conquers it like that."

“The High Priestess is not free of political restraints, so I would not expect her to do such a thing, but...”

“The permission of a town chief is all it’d take to avoid an international incident?”

“Perhaps she is just looking for an excuse to avoid blame? Or perhaps she feels the need to justify herself, morally.” *Someone following a personal code? Makes sense, I do the same thing. Whenever someone wastes food, messes with my property, or interrupts my sleep, I don’t protect them in the dungeon. They can die for all I care.*

“Eh. Either way, I’m not gonna give her permission.”

“I agree with that decision. The dungeon will continue to bring us profits for as long as it exists. To trade it for a single moment of profit would be nothing but foolish.” *Looks like I’ve got a vice chief that knows how to think. Perfect. I’m sure he’d handle the town just fine if I ever have to disappear somewhere.*

“Anyway, the High Priestess is probably gonna be staying in our inn. Let’s try and be good hosts, or whatever.”

Afterwards, the High Priestess rented the Grand Suite and enjoyed her personal bath after eating a B-Rank meal.

Day 266

A new day began. The High Priestess came visiting once again. She was wearing a bright smile, having likely recovered from yesterday’s shock.

“Thank you very much for your warm reception. Ahaha, you truly do know how to treat visitors well.” She was misunderstanding things, tons. *Inns are businesses. If you pay money, we’ll show you a good time. A time just as good as how much money you paid. I’m pretty sure we made her pay before staying in the suite. Doesn’t she realize that she just bought the warm reception she got?*

“My attendant also said that her room was quite nice.”

“I’m glad to hear that.” *I didn’t know she had an attendant. Makes sense, you can’t really have a High Priestess go around adventuring on her own... Oh, wait, I guess the attendant paid for her room? And since they didn’t sleep in the same*

room, the attendant must have gotten a normal one. Huh. And actually, shouldn't that attendant be here too?

"Operating this inn is how I make my living, you know. We gave you the service you paid for. There's nothing more to it than that."

"I never imagined that I would find such gracious lodgings this deep into the country... Aha, very well. I will offer an additional fifty coins on top of the land in the Holy Kingdom." *C'mon, that's just two nights in the suite. Now she's just scamming me... Wait, no. No, no. That'd be about ten million Japanese yen. That's actually a lot of money. Sheesh, I knew it, our suite room costs way too much. I'm not gonna change the price, though. That'd be insulting to Haku and her judgment.*

"So, I imagine you will now grant me permission to destroy the Dungeon Core?"

"That's not happening. If you insist, please return after getting permission from the Emperor."

"....." The High Priestess looked at me like she couldn't understand me at all. Really, I felt the same way about her. Who knew what was going on in her head. But I was sure that this time I had gotten through to her and made it clear that I would not be letting her destroy the Dungeon Core. *Hurry up and kill Rin or get outta here. Try and get the Emperor's permission if you want, even. Just get out of my hair already. The quest's reward is only five golds, so I'm sure you're losing big money every second you spend here.*

"...Very well. For now, I will enter the dungeon."

"Oh, does that mean you'll do the quest for the posted reward?"

"I will think about that while I'm there." The High Priestess stood up and left the room, this time without glancing back at me constantly. *Oh, thanks for your help, Wozma. You can go home now. But y'know, I really would've liked it if you had joined the conversation at least once. What? You didn't want to talk to the priestess? Fair enough.*

After heading back to my room, Rokuko popped in.

"That High Priestess lady... She looks like trouble, definitely."

“You were watching, Rokuko?”

“Uh-huh. Even I can tell that she’s going to be a real pain in the butt!”

Anyway. After all that was said and done, the High Priestess briefly stopped by the inn before going into the dungeon alone. *Wait... What about her attendant?* Before I could investigate further, the High Priestess stumbled into a trap on the first floor and died.

Wha?! I hurriedly opened the monitor to check on her, and immediately saw that a trap sword sprouting from a door was skewering her right through the chest. *S-Seriously? All that buildup for this?!*

I checked our DP, but saw that it hadn’t gone up as much as it should have from her death. That mystery was solved when seconds later the High Priestess’s body dissolved into particles of light and vanished.

“...What? Did you do something, Rokuko?”

“Nope, nothing. Are you sure you didn’t do something, Keima?” Naturally, I hadn’t.

Suddenly, a being worth 225/DP appeared in the town area of the dungeon. It specifically appeared within a room of our very own inn, so I hurriedly checked the monitor. What about the privacy of our customers? *Yeah, I don’t care.*

Within the room was the teal-haired High Priestess lying on a futon, accompanied by a middle-aged man wearing a priest outfit.

“Lady Alca! Are you well?!”

“...Mmm... Ah?! Is that you, Shento? Where am I...?”

“A room within the inn, my lady. Please forgive me for subjecting you to this squalor.”

“It is quite alright. As it was merely the first floor of a beginner dungeon, I let my guard down and died once on the spot. A little rest would be very welcome now.” There was no mistaking it. She was the real High Priestess in flesh and blood, though she did seem a little weaker than before.

“Wow... What do you think’s going on here, Keima?”

“Seems pretty clear to me. She said herself that she *died once*, so she has some power that lets her revive after death. We saw it happen.”

“Neat. I guess High Priestesses are like Phenny, huh?” *That’d be pretty bad for us. If she can revive infinitely like Phenny, then she can unlock the power of trial and error. Surprise traps will only ever work once. They’re nothing to someone who can revive. From a dungeon’s perspective, that’s about as horrifying an enemy as you can get. She might end up being the perfect prey too, but... I’m gonna have to keep changing the traps up each time she dies to keep her on the edge. Eaaaach time... Haaah...*

Day 269

Could she revive because she was the High Priestess, or was she the High Priestess because she could revive? I had no idea, but either way, this High Priestess could revive after death. Three days had passed since that revelation. Once per day, she would challenge the dungeon, return to town after dying, and rest in the suite room. Her DP income shrunk by ten percent right after dying, but returned to 250/DP before long. We got about 1,500 DP whenever she died. I didn’t know how it worked, but she was reviving just like Phenny the Phoenix.

Also, despite being a B-Rank adventurer, she was dying from a ton of super simple traps. She didn’t fall for the same trap twice, but still.

“This world is ruled by the God of Light. Dungeons are horrible things created by demons to interfere with the God of Light’s rule. Therefore, dungeons must be destroyed. What do you think? Will you now graciously give me permission to destroy the Dungeon Core?”

“No.”

The High Priestess had a lot of time to kill while recovering, so she came to harass me again and again. I had to deal with her myself each time, which got extremely annoying extremely quickly. *This girl’s definitely my dungeon’s ultimate foe. Definitely.*

By the way, I was claiming it was important that my vice chief be present for the meetings so that Wozma would have to suffer with me.

“Haaah... I dedicate my all to convince you, and yet...”

“The Empire owns this dungeon, not me. Oh right. You can try getting permission from the Adventurer’s Guild’s guildmaster too.”

“That will not be necessary. The dungeon is part of the town and thus it belongs to you, the town chief.” *That’s not how it works. Come on. I mean, the dungeon does belong to me, but not for that reason.* I decided to change the subject before things went in an unwelcome direction.

“By the way, I see that you’re rarely with your attendant. Why is that?”

“It is best for Shento to keep his distance from me when possible. Such is safer for us both, after all.”

“Really? You may be the High Priestess, but is it really safe for a girl like you to be on your own?”

“Indeed, as he holds the Convenience Altar. As you know, the High Priestess can revive infinitely many times as long as the Altar is prepared. Though naturally Shento must regularly pour a fairly large amount of mana into it.” *As I know, she says. I guess that’s pretty common knowledge in the Holy Kingdom or something. And now I know that the High Priestess can safely revive wherever they’re holding that altar thing.*

“That’s the first I’ve heard of it, actually. Did you know about all that, Wozma?”

“No, it is news to me. Erm... High Priestess, we will pretend we didn’t hear what you just said.”

“...Oh my, forgive me. I had no idea that other countries knew so little of me and the Holy Kingdom.” *Never heard of you before. But man, she sure leaked the secret to her immortality fast. I’m guessing she’s testing me or something? Either that’s actually common knowledge in the Holy Kingdom, or she was just super careless... Judging by what I’ve seen from her so far, it’s definitely more likely that it was just a mistake. That said, I can’t ignore the possibility that she’s just acting here. If she’s not just acting here, holy cow, what an absolute idiot.*

Could be that she suspects I’m a Dungeon Master since I keep denying her permission to destroy the Core... That’d be scary. It’s scary that I can’t say for

sure she hasn't. But if the High Priestess really is just an exceedingly dense girl, all this caution is just a waste of time... Sheesh. This is one enemy I'm not happy to have.

On top of everything else, she keeps directly and indirectly asking me about the Core in what feels like an incredibly annoying psychological assault. Wozma won't talk at all unless I practically force him to. Can you understand how agonizing that is for me? I want him to do all the talking, not none of it.

"However, I see that you've finally let something slip, town chief."

"Huh? What are you talking about?"

"Haha. Forget I said anything." *The heck?*

After about an hour more of discussion, wherein I paid extra attention to what I was saying, the High Priestess left. In other words, I had lost an hour of sleeping time. *Guess I'll set up a few traps and get to sleep. Who cares, she'll revive anyway.*

* * *

Putting aside the High Priestess for now, it was time to deal with Rin the black wolf some more. I had fed him several *flavored* Messenger Golems and today was the day I would try what seemed to be his greatest weakness.

"Heeey, Rin. I'm here to hang out."

"...Fwaaah. What, Uuma? You came again? What flavor, today? Can I eat?"

"Yeah, go ahead. Try my right arm." I held out the golem's right arm. Rin chomped right on it. He no longer hesitated at all before doing so. I could poison him if I wanted to. *And I was poisoning him! Not that it ever worked. Which is why I tried something else today.*

Rin chewed on the golem arm for a bit, but soon scrunched up his face and spat out the crumbled chunks of rock. Rock, and the salt I had packed into the arm as flavoring.

"Mghaaah?! Spth, spth!"

"Oh? What's wrong, Rin? Did it taste bad?"

“The worst! I never knew, food could even, taste this bad...! That’s enough, you can leave.”

“Hey, don’t be like that. Let’s talk some more. There’s this weirdo that’s really been stressing me out lately.

“O-Oh... Maybe you taste, so bad... because of stress? Mnn...”

Salt. Indeed, Rin’s weakness was salt. Hydrochloric acid worked too, but apparently plain salt tasted worse. Well, it “worked” in that it burned a little. He still liked the flavor overall.

Maybe salt on its own had some kind of holy property or something. Like cleansing salt, or something. Or maybe it was just stealing water from his body, like throwing salt on a slug. Either way, the only thing Rin ever straight up refused to eat was salt. When he ate an entire salt-packed golem, he threw up while rolling on the ground in agony. I just had him eat a single arm today and it still hurt him a little. *Alright, time to prepare a bunch of salt-packed iron armor and weapons to take Rin down.*

...They’ll probably rust.

“Hey, Uuma. At this point, you, may as well, be my follower. Don’t you, think so?”

“Huh? I don’t follow.”

“Think. You are, offering up, food to me. So, you’re my, follower.” *Okay, now that I think about it, I am pretty much coming here to get eaten every day.*

“And, sometimes it’s bad, but you’re, flavoring it, so I don’t, get bored. You’re, a good guy.”

“Hearing that makes all the effort worth it.” *No way... Did my original plan to win him over with food actually work?*

“So, to make your, food taste good, I’ll get rid, of whatever is, causing you stress.”

“Really?! That’s great.” *Though you’re the source of half my stress, bud. Hm... Maybe I should try asking him to leave this room. I’ve already thought of a convenient excuse to get him out of here. Now’s the time for that excuse to*

shine!

"Ahhh, well, the truth is, you being in this room is pretty stressful for me."

"Wha?! It's, my fault?!"

"Yup. I hate to break it to you, but this... this is a bathroom, y'know? I haven't been able to relieve myself in a long time since you're always here, Rin."

"H-Hold on, th-this is a, bathroom? No way... Er, golems, use the bathroom?" *Oh, nice. I was worried Rin might not understand what a bathroom is, since I've never seen him peeing or anything.*

"Yup. It'll be embarrassing, but want me to show you?"

"Bwuuuh?! H-Hold on, th-that's not the, kinda thing, you do in, front of others!"

"Nah, I mean, you won't believe me unless I show you, right? Wait right there, I'll do what I gotta do... ngh!" I made the golem squat down, then dropped the Light magic tool I had hidden within its body. The small, shining ball hit the floor and rolled a little.

"Whew, that's a relief. And now I just gotta do this."

"Bwuh?!" I took the Light magic tool, pushed it against the Dummy Core, and withdrew it. From Rin's perspective, it looked like the Dummy Core had absorbed my golem poop. *Gross, isn't it? I bet you really don't want to eat this thing now. Operation: "Make Him Not Want To Eat The Dungeon Core" complete.*

Rokuko, who had actually withdrawn the Light magic tool into the Master Room, contacted me.

"You know, Keima... I know that's just a Dummy Core, but it feels pretty awful seeing you treat a Core like that."

"What choice do we have? Suck it up." *I know this is a pretty terrible thing to do. But if it wasn't terrible, it wouldn't convince Rin to leave it alone.*

"...A-Alright. I'll leave, this room. But, Uuma. Your, er, poop. It shines, and is, warm?"

“Yep, and it’s sticky too. What, do you want some? Pooping in front of others really is nerve-wracking, but I’ve still got some left.”

I made the golem pat its stomach, and Rin hurriedly shook his head.

“No. No. I don’t want, any. But... Mnn. Do you have, a room as, warm as, this one?”

“Hm? If that’s all you want, I can make any room just as warm as this one. Gimme a second.”

“W-Wait! Y-You’re not, going to, rub your poop, everywhere, are you?!” *Dude, that’s just gross. I can understand why you’d be worried about that, though. Too bad it’s a bit late for that. How many golems have you eaten with poop still inside them? I’m gonna be nice and not bring that up.*

“I won’t. Just gonna fiddle with the temperature a bit. Leave it to me.”

“Okay. That’s fine, then.”

...And so, I had successfully gotten Rin right where I wanted him. I reflexively did a victory pose, both as myself and as the Messenger Golem.

High Priestess’s Perspective

The High Priestess went into the dungeon the same day Keima did. Alca had powers practically specialized for conquering dungeons solo. She was strong enough on her own, sure, but her ultra rare skill {Revival} allowed her to come back to life after dying. All knowledge prior to death was retained, so given enough time, she could conquer almost any dungeon.

Since she could revive after death, she had been entrusted with numerous expensive scrolls a mortal soldier would never even get to touch. It wasn’t a coincidence that many of these skills were very useful for conquering. Her {Storage} skill allowed her to enter the dungeon without worrying about food or water. {Healing}’s practicality was obvious. She even had skills like {Detect Dungeon Traps}, which specifically detected traps created by a dungeon.

For some reason, however, the High Priestess’s {Detect Dungeon Traps} skill didn’t work very often. I had no idea why. Naturally, it wasn’t perfect despite its origins as the God of Light’s protection—the skill couldn’t detect traps that

humans had built. That said, it'd normally detect dungeon traps ten out of ten times, but in our dungeon, it only detected about three out of ten.

The High Priestess had relied on that skill while dungeon crawling for some time, so it being useless was a rude awakening. She eventually swapped to just relying on her adventurer instincts for noticing traps. But since it had been so long since she actually looked for traps, she got totally fooled by a lot of them, which made her progress slow going. That said, each one she discovered was recorded with her {Mapping} skill, so she never fell for the same trap twice. Every corridor she walked through was recorded in high detail as well. Add on top of all that the map she got from the Guild, and she was conquering the dungeon far faster than your average adventurer.

Finally, the High Priestess broke through both floors of the labyrinth area. She took a second to reflect on all the deaths it took to get this far.

"...I believe I shall advance further." There was nothing special beyond the labyrinth area. A puzzle area once existed, but it was apparently no more. However, she had been told not to go any deeper than the labyrinth when exploring. A dangerous monster had taken refuge somewhere beyond this point.

That posed little problem to Alca, so after checking for traps, she advanced further. Very few things could make the High Priestess turn back when dungeon crawling. She would either conquer the dungeon and walk back herself, or reach a dead end and have no choice but to leave. In any other situation, she would leave the dungeon through death. That way was faster and more reliable.

The High Priestess walked forward through the dungeon, as she always did.

Past the fourth floor was a spiral staircase. She couldn't detect any traps with her skill, but judging from past experience, they certainly existed. Thus, she slowly walked down the steps—suddenly, a wall thrusted out and nearly knocked her into the center hole of the spiral staircase. She switched gears and hurriedly raced down the stairs.

Actually, correction. The stairs suddenly gave way and she fell straight down.

"Nghaaah?! ■■, ■■■■■■ — {Healing}...!" The impact broke several of her

bones, but she wasn't dead yet. She healed her shattered bones with Restoration Magic. If not for {Healing}, she would have had to commit tactical suicide to retreat from the dungeon.

Once her wounds had healed, she resumed her exploration. After climbing down (falling down?) the rest of the stairs, there was a room. An unpleasant air tinged with the scent of an animal wafted out the moment she opened the door. It wasn't cold, but the palpable murderous intent gave her goosebumps.

She looked ahead and saw a black wolf.

The instant after she saw it lunge forward, she was dead.

"Guha!"

"Have you awoken, Lady Alca?! Are you well...?"

"...I'm fine. I suppose I died again." The High Priestess awoke within an inn room. She had lost consciousness in the process of being swallowed after the wolf ripped off her upper body. She could still remember the sensation of its teeth crushing her body and ripping it to pieces. It was an experience so agonizing and horrible that a normal person would be traumatized. But the High Priestess seemed unaffected. She had gotten used to death over time.

One could say she was worthy of being a High Priestess because she had little resistance to death, and had the strength of mind to endure countless brutal deaths. Though perhaps her mind already broke long ago... In any case, as long as the High Priestess looked like a normal human and could hold a normal conversation, that was good enough for the Holy Kingdom.

"Our target... The monster we're hunting did me in."

"I see... The monster threatening the town, then."

The High Priestess lifted up her heavy, freshly revived body and spun her arms in a small circle to loosen up her shoulders. Shento let out sigh of relief upon seeing that she was well.

"Have you decided upon accepting the quest?"

"I'm not quite sure yet. I think I will investigate further before making a decision. Though now that the monster's eaten the poison... The quest might

already be done.” The High Priestess kept various poisons on her person at all times. Therefore, the moment a monster with no poison resistance ate her, victory would be secured. The poison was both a method of weaponizing her body and a way to commit suicide if she were to become unable to move for whatever reason. There were poisons hidden within her clothes and within her body.

...She hadn’t done it this time, but in the past she had taken slow-acting poison that would take effect about the time she wanted to return.

“In any case, I will investigate the dungeon tomorrow. Hopefully the problem has already solved itself.”

“I pray that is the case.” Her attendant, Shento, nodded in agreement with a sorrowful smile.

The Convenience Altar did not allow for much excess mana to be saved within it. If it lacked enough when the time came, the High Priestess would end up reviving atop the Great Altar of the Holy Kingdom.

“...It has about forty percent left. I shall fill it back up before tomorrow.”

“Yes, please do, Shento. This is a duty only you can fulfill.” The mana within the altar could only be refilled by those possessing energy of a similar wavelength. Shento was one of the very few individuals who fulfilled those requirements, and was in some ways more precious than the High Priestess herself. After all, unlike her, he couldn’t revive.

“Certainly. It will be done, Lady Alca.”

“I will take a short rest now.” The High Priestess got onto her side and closed her eyes. She must have been exhausted, given how she immediately fell asleep. Shento turned to face the Convenience Altar as the High Priestess slept defenselessly beside him.

“...Resist temptation, resist temptation...” And thus, without turning back around even once, he began an unbroken prayer and offered up his mana for the High Priestess.

Keima’s Perspective

I watched the High Priestess revive within the inn after getting turned to dust by Rin's chomp. *Okay, that should be enough for today. She's back down to 225/DP. I figured that'd be a little lower since her whole upper body got ripped off, but I guess that kinda thing has nothing to do with it.*

"Wow. You put the wolf right after the staircase area, huh?"

"Yep. Traps don't work on the High Priestess twice, so the best thing to do is just put a really strong monster in front of her and have it block her path. A monster strong enough to win without the element of surprise is ideal." Though if I were in her position, I'd be complaining about this game being total shit and poorly balanced. *But hey, it took a lot of work to get Rin there. I think that evens things out.*

"Hey. Uuma. Is your, stress, gone now?" Rin called my name and barked out a message.

...Good, good. I'll send him a Messenger Golem packed with sweet syrup. Rin loved the sugar water-filled golem I sent earlier, so yeah.

Oh? The High Priestess didn't stay in your stomach, but she had a nice sharp flavor that you really liked? So, basically, she was like a nice little treat for you. Sounds good. Keep on eating her, friend.

Day 270

The next day, Rin ate the High Priestess again.

"I can eat, this one, as much as, I want. Just like, you, Uuma."

"Yep. Go ahead and eat her as many times as you want." *Speaking of which, I wonder if the High Priestess has some kind of Holy element attached to her or something. I wouldn't think so, given how she tasted good to him. Maybe she's actually a mega slut who sins on a daily basis...? Dunno, I get the feeling that "sharp" flavor of hers comes from holiness.*

Anyway, I decided to roll the 1,000 DP gacha every time the priestess died. Indeed, the 1,000 DP gacha. The gacha I had never used even though it literally summoned me here.

...I was the fairly realistic type, and I tended to dislike leaving things to

chance. Our DP budget had been fairly tight for a while, so tight it wasn't wise to dump resources into something that might give nothing in return. But thanks to the High Priestess renting the grand suite, we were getting twenty five gold pieces a day. Not to mention how much absolute bank we were making from both the priestess's own DP income and Rin's too. We were practically rolling in a sea of DP, which meant we had plenty of leeway for rolling the 1000 DP gacha every day.

Really though, Alca sure is crazy rich... And she still only offered fifty golds when negotiating? That's just cheap. You're paying that much every two days you stay here, y'know. You've already paid me way more than fifty golds.

"Anyway, here's the glorious reward I got for today's 1000 DP gacha." A toilet scrubber. Seriously. *Pretty sure I could buy this for 5 DP. And I didn't even know you could anything other than monsters from the gacha.*

"...No good, hm? You sure have bad luck with the gacha, Keima. This kind of thing needs more, like, you know... Love and spirit? You gotta do it like, pow! Pow!"

"What the hell are you even saying?" Rokuko had only ever pulled the gacha twice in her life, but she tried teaching me how to use it properly with a smug look on her face. *Well... I guess those two times she did get a super rare monster and a person from another world. That is some pretty wild luck. Alright. I'll have Rokuko pull tomorrow's gacha.*

I heard a knock on my door. It was Ichika.

"Masteeer. The High Priestess, like, totally wants to talk." *She's not done yet? Come on. Haaah... Do I really have to? This is such a pain. She's probably here to report that she found the quest monster. Guess she waited until today so she could double check first.*

"Sorry, Rokuko, it's the High Priestess. Go camp out in the Master Room for a bit."

"What's that supposed to mean, Keima? Are you saying you care more about spending time with the High Priestess than with me? Geez..." She sounded pouty, but Rokuko was grinning wide. Ever since I gave her that ring, she had started teasing me like that more often. *Who taught her to act like this?*



“I obviously care more about spending time with you. But if you meet with the High Priestess and she attacks you, I’ll die. Literally. I’ll physically die.”

“...I know that, ahaha♪.” *Wait a second. Am I flirting with her? I can already feel Haku’s murderous rage, even though I was just stating a fundamental fact about a Dungeon Master’s relationship with their Dungeon Core.*

After watching a pleased Rokuko enter the Master Room, I headed for the guest parlor. Ichika brought the High Priestess Alca before me immediately. As usual, Wozma came with her, intent on disappearing into the background.

“Now, might I ask what business you have with me today?”

“Yes. I have discovered the quest monster.” The High Priestess, sitting on the sofa opposite to mine, smiled.

“Does that mean you will accept the quest?”

“Gladly, but on one condition. Please grant me permission to destroy the Dunge—”

“I’m afraid the answer is still no. You will need to ask for the Emperor’s permission, not mine.” I shut down the High Priestess’s request immediately. But she didn’t back down.

“Such exaggeration. All you must do is nod your head, town chief. A single nod and a plot of land within the Holy Kingdom is yours, in addition to fifty gold coins. Could there be anything more simple than a single nod?”

“I decline.” I shut her down again. It just wasn’t going to happen. I didn’t even need to think about it. A normal town chief with nothing but greed in his head would probably have nodded, but she was basically offering money for permission to kill me. No way was I ever going to say yes, under any circumstances.

...It just hit me that there might be some sort of magic contract involved with this. Maybe she unlocks a Core-killing instant death spell the moment I give her permission. You can never know what to expect in a world with magic. Mmm, yeah, I’ll need to stay on guard here, no talking to her while half-asleep. Can’t let myself make even a single dumb mistake. I really just want to tell her to get

the hell out of here already.

"You must know that I am the only one who will be capable of exterminating that monster."

"Oh? How are you so sure about that?"

"Because it is the truth. That being is an evil monster of pure darkness." *Okay, now she's starting to sound like an edgy teenager or something. And I mean, she's trying to act cool, but I've seen her get eaten in seconds twice now. She died so fast she didn't even put up a real fight. Either she's bluffing or she's got a trick up her sleeve.*

"But it will take some time for me to exterminate it... Please make your final decision then."

"Give it up. You're not ever getting permission to destroy that Core. If you're not just gonna do the quest like normal, feel free to leave town."

"Um, like I said, I'm the only one capable of defeating that monster."

"Nah."

"Yes. Listen well, town chief." After that, I had a long day of ignoring lectures on the Church of Lux and blowing off Dungeon Core related requests. *Not like she's gonna accept the quest anyway.* On top of that, she kept going all the way until dinner time, whereupon she started shooting me blatant glances while remarking on how hungry she was. *What, we've got a High Priestess addicted to our food now, huh? Well, get out of here and eat on your own. Alright, alright. We can eat, but leave afterwards.*

"This *tea rice* as you call it is quite delicious. Mmm, thank you very much for the meal. You truly are an excellent negotiator, Keima. I shall confer with the Kingdom to see if I can offer you better rewards for your cooperation. Oh, and I would like seconds, please."

"Fear not, all additional charges are added onto your room fee. Also, we don't serve seconds."

"Oh my, Keima, you're quite good at this. Ahaha." I didn't know what I was "good at," but the High Priestess ignored my cold glare and ate her rice with a

broad smile on her face. Naturally, as she wasn't Japanese, she didn't understand that serving tea rice was basically saying "this crap is all I'm gonna serve you, so get the hell out of my house." *What about my meal? I'm gonna take my time and enjoy it once you get the heck outta here.*

The High Priestess left after enjoying her fill of the tea rice. *Alright, time to charge her extra.*

Day 278

Bad news, friends. The High Priestess has gotten addicted to the rat races. *This is one priestess that doesn't know how to act her role. Up until yesterday, she either stayed in her room after dying or came to interrogate me, but here's what happened...*

"Masteeer, the High Priestess is looking for you, dude."

"...I'm not really in the mood to see her. Alright, tell her that I'm sleeping right now and can't meet with her. These instructions are me talking in my sleep. I repeat, I'm talking in my sleep right now."

"Wooow, that's some hella realistic sleep talk. Anybody talking like this has gotta be asleep!"

That's how I got her off my back yesterday. But the High Priestess got upset, and to calm her down, Ichika apparently took her to the recreation building. The result?

"You can watch while sitting, so this is like, totally a good way to rest!" Ichika bullshitted her way to getting the High Priestess gambling, and in no time she was completely addicted to the races. She lined up next to the other gambling addicts (adventurers) and clutched her betting tickets.

"Buzzington! Go forth, Buzzington! This is a direct order from me! Aaaah, no, no! Why are you running backwards?!"

"Give it up, Miss High Priestess. Buzzington's only ever won a single race in his life. Everyone calls him Loserton now, he's a joke."

"Truly?! That would explain why his rates were the highest..." By the way, that single victory happened after a near-bankrupt villager bet all he had on

him. Naturally, it'd be a pain if he actually went bankrupt. My goal was to slowly squeeze money out of my villagers, not crush them all at once. I put items in the dungeon -> Villagers recover those items in the dungeon and sell them for money -> I earn that money back after they gamble -> I turn the money into DP and such, which allows me to put more items in the dungeon. It was an infinite loop of profit for me, a good system that worked well. Not to mention that I got DP just from them existing in the town. *I love a well-oiled profit machine.*

Oh. Right, right. Here's how the High Priestess acted when she came over today.

"Now then. I will offer you a small plot of land in the Holy Kingdom, five hundred gold coins, and official permission to continue operating these rat races."

"Nope. Oh, and it looks like a race is about to start. I hear Speed of Sound Sonic is competing today."

"Oh my, is that true?! Ah... Forgive me, I should not act so shamelessly." Not only had the High Priestess blatantly tripled the money she was offering me, she started trembling with excitement the moment I brought up the races.

"Ah. Please, make no mistake. I would not act so shameless in front of just anybody, you know."

"Is that so...? I'm honored."

"Ahaha. N-Now, if you'll excuse me, I must be going."

"Huh? You're leaving already? Okay then, have a nice day." The High Priestess left my chief residence in less than a minute, sparing not even a single glance backwards.

...Wow. My rat allies, you all are truly wonderful servants to have. Give her the taste of victory and then squeeze her dry. Actually, it might be smart for me to try challenging her to a dice match. You can make a lot of money with those. Just like I did with Wataru the Hero.

* * *

I started lazing around in my room since the priestess was gone, but I soon

had another visitor. It was Kantara the blacksmith. I went to the Cafeteria to meet up with him and saw that he was holding an iron short sword.

“Heeey, Keima! Take a look at this!”

“Huh? What, did you finally make a Magic Blade?”

“Heh heh, this is the first step towards that. Only managed it cause of yer advice, but... Behold! The Light Blade!” The sword Kantara was holding had a Light magic tool on its pommel. *Yeaaah... This kinda looks like someone stuck a sword blade onto a lantern. Why make the pommel shine?*

“Wasn’t my advice about taming monsters and putting them on blades or something? What do magic tools have to do with that?”

“Y’see, I wanted to experiment with tamed monsters... But there ain’t any good ones for that around here. So instead, I tried using this here magic tool.”

“Using a magic tool instead of a monster, huh?”

“That’s it? Didja know? Top researchers are trying to make Magic Blades outta magic tools. But naturally, that makes’m weak and they break in no time. Not to mention that alchemists ain’t so good at smithin’. But this is putting an alchemist’s magic tool on the hilt of a smith’s sword! The tool’s working and the sword’s still strong! This is revolutionary!” *Really? This is revolutionary? In Japan, sticking things together and seeing if it works is just common sense.*

Suddenly, Neruneh interrupted Kantara’s speech with a cruel remark.

“Wouldn’t it be more convenient tooooo, like, hold the magic tool in one hand, and the sword in the otheeer?”

“...Ah!” Kantara paused.

“Y-Ye’ve got a good point there. Mmm, dang, and I really thought this was gonna change everything.” *Uhhh, sorry man. My girls are brutal. But that Light Blade could blind some people if used well, and there are lots of combinations you could make, so I think this has a lot of potential.*

“More importantly, how did you get your hands on that magic tool? You mentioned something about alchemists a second ago. I guess you can hand make them?”

“Hm? Yeah, ye can. Alchemists can make simple ones. Tools from dungeons are a lot better as ye’d expect, but the difference isn’t as bad as Magic Blades.” *Guess there’s a skill for that. Or maybe you can make them through skill, like a blacksmith making swords?*

“Would you mind telling me how they’re made? I wanna try it out.”

“What, ye’re interested? Hmmm... This is really somethin’ I shouldn’t be spreading around, but I owe you one, Keima.”

“Oh, you’ll tell me? Thanks.”

“Let’s make this a little more private. C’mon, let’s go to my smithery. I’ve got me tools there too.” And so, Kantara decided to teach me how to make magic tools. *I might be able to use this knowledge to make golems that can use magic. I’m getting pumped now.*

We headed to Kantara’s smithery. Since this had to do with magic, I let Neruneh tag along too. She had been listening in our conversation and Kantara said she could come along after she asked with sparkling eyes. *Weren’t you not supposed to spread it around or something? Is Kantara the kinda dwarf that can’t help but say yes to everything...?*

After reaching the smithery, Kantara took a pen, iron plate, and some other tools off a shelf and spread them across a table.

“Now, ye both know what magic tools are. Ye pour mana into them and they do somethin’. If you get the core of how to make’m, it really ain’t so hard. And this baby is the core.” Kantara showed us a magic stone.

“...Aren’t magic stones the energy source for magic tools?”

“Yeah. But they’re also the main thing ye use to make’m. Lemme explain. This is a magic stone taken from a water type monster, so it can be used to make a simple magic tool.” Kantara ran the pen along the magic stone. A closer look revealed that the pen’s tip was a needle, and that he was writing something onto it.

“Ye can strengthen the effects by drawing special designs. Be sure to really dig the needle in.” Kantara buried the magic stone with copies of a certain math-esque design that looked like a square and triangle fused together. Then, he

drew the magic circle on the square iron plate that was about ten centimeters wide. He drew the design and letters in the tiny space afforded to him. “Ye just gotta draw this like this. It’s a water-type design.” *How the hell is he drawing with one hand like that?*

“This part’s real important. You gotta write all this stuff in one go.” He pointed at each letter one by one and explained them so I would be able to recreate them perfectly. *Ahhh, actually, I can read these letters. They say stuff like “Pour water,” “Convert mana,” “Absorb magic stone,” and so on. Heh, this is nothing to my dear friend the auto translator.*

In no time, the magic circle was complete.

“Now that the circle’s done, we melt the stone inside of it. Like this.” Kantara pushed the magic stone against the magic circle, whereupon the stone melted onto the circle. The moment it finished melting, the circle shone with a bright blue light. That apparently meant it was ready. By activating the circle after placing a magic stone on it for energy, water would come out of the location described on the circle.

Also, you just had to put the iron plate into a tool somehow to make it a magic tool. Kantara quickly fashioned a water pitcher with experienced hands. And thus, the [Infinite Water Pitcher] magic tool was born. It took about ten minutes to make, from start to finish. *That was real fast.*

“Simple, right?” Kantara grinned at me.

...I didn’t understand any of that! For some reason, I seriously didn’t get any of what Kantara had just said to me. Thankfully, however...

“I seeee... So you just need to do this here, and this hereee...”

“Oooh! Those’re some nice lines! Yeah, that’s right, just draw a long one there.”

“Mmmm, I think I want this one to be fire typeee...”

“In that case, you just gotta draw this line from above, really line’m up... Like this, and this.”

“Oooh, okaaay!”

My companion Neruneh understood everything. *What's up with this girl? And you know, thinking about it, a ton of my subordinates are actually pretty talented. Heck yeah. Competent workers make my life a lot easier.*

"Teacheeer! Is this how it worksss?!"

"Excellent, my assistant! Remember, magic circles are fluid. You can draw them however you want!" At some point, Neruneh became Kantara's assistant. *Wait, you can draw magic circles however you want? Really?*

"Then, then, could I carve one of these into my body?! Wouldn't that be suuuper cool?!"

"Oooh! That would really hurt! You're a girl, don't do that kinda thing!"

Why would you even want a water-squirting magic circle on your body...? Wait, maybe I could carve on a golem and make it use magic... Hmm. Or maybe just straight up turn a magic tool into a golem. I'd worry about that interfering with a golem's own magic circle, but if anything's possible, it might work.

"I feel like an amplification magic circle would work really weeell... Don't you think sooo?"

"Hrm, you know, I've never tried engraving a magic circle onto someone's body. Assistant! Carve it into my body! Do so on my chest, since I don't use it for smithing! Just gouge the meat out with this knife...!"

"Rogeeer! Like thiiis?"

"Gyaaaaah! That huuurts! But keep gooooing!" *The hell are these two doing? From my perspective, it just looks like she's stabbing a knife into his chest... and honestly, that is what she's doing. Dang. Not an ounce of hesitation.*

"Ah! Sorry, I got super absorbed in thaaat. Sorry, Master."

"Nah, you're fine. If you like making magic tools now, go ahead and feel free to make plenty for me."

"Leave it to meee!" Neruneh smiled with the bloody knife in one hand. *Oh geez. This girl's a natural mad scientist...*

"H-Hey, keep going. I hate the pain, but I'd hate it even more if ye stopped before finishing."

“Ah. Okaaay, teacheeer.” Neruneh spun around with a flutter and resumed stabbing Kantara with the knife. *Whew, this is hard to watch. But it looks like they’re having fun, so I’m just gonna go home. I’ll have Neruneh make some magic tools for me later. Really, it’s hard to believe she’s got so much talent for making magic tools. Looks like she’s not a member of the Apprentice Witch species for nothing.*

And apparently I’m gonna have to learn this world’s writing system and magic circle designs to make magic tools. Sounds like a pain. Pass. I’m just gonna leave everything to Neruneh, yeah.

Day 279

The High Priestess died like a chump again, so I had Rokuko roll the 1,000 DP gacha. Twice this time, just for fun. The result?

“Oh, a Dummy Core! I can tell because I’m obviously an expert on Dungeon Cores!”

“Why the hell is it purple? Looks like a ball of poison or something. What’s up with that?”

“Dunno. Maybe it’s like, feeling sick or something?”

“...Didn’t you just say you’re an expert on Cores? And wait, Cores get purple when they feel sick?”

“We got the shining purple Dummy Core, and...”

“This is a... a skill scroll, I guess? Looks like a {Chef} scroll... I’ve never heard of that skill before.”

“Seems like the perfect skill to give to Kinue.” A purple Dummy Core and a mysterious skill scroll. Both were worth a lot more than 1,000 DP. The Dummy Core would cost 5,000 DP... putting aside its purple-ness... and the skill scroll wasn’t even in the catalog. *The hell is with her insane luck? If I could look at her stats screen, I bet her Luck stat would be ridiculously high.*

Though, thinking about how she scraped by before summoning me, she needed that kind of luck just to survive...

“Anyway, I’ll give this {Chef} skill to Kinue, aaand... We can just put this

Dummy Core into {Storage} for now. Maybe we'll put it in the new Core Room we'll build after we finish the new puzzle area we're digging out space for. It can stay in the Master Room until then." The purple Core was kinda giving me a bad feeling, but we were too busy to worry about it right now. I was, admittedly, starting to think we should really avoid using it at all costs. Might be better to just pretend we never saw it and stick it into {Storage}. Time stops inside of it, so yeah.

My thoughts were interrupted by Rokuko poking me in the side. *That tickles, what gives?*

"Hey, Keima. What're we going to do with Rin? Aren't you going to try and put him under your control?"

"Huh? Put him under my control...?"

"I mean, he's listening to your requests now, isn't he? You can make him just like monsters you've summoned with DP, like, he'll have to listen to your orders and you can place him wherever you want, that kind of thing."

"Ahhh... I didn't know you could do that. Would've appreciated hearing that a little earlier."

Rokuko began to give me a lecture, full of pride. Putting monsters under your control required their assent. Plus, it wouldn't work if they didn't fully understand that they were placing themselves under the dungeon's control—I couldn't trick them. That said, there were ways to force monsters into servitude. You just had physically dominate them. That was pretty much the only way to get unintelligent, feral monsters under your control. The catch was that you no longer got any DP from monsters under your control. *How does that even work?*

"And that's everything Haku told me."

"Neat, that's about how I thought it'd work." *Hm... Losing his 950/DP a day would hurt. Things are going well with him right now, so I'm not too worried. We're saving up a ton of DP thanks to him. Add on top of that the High Priestess's DP and yeah, it's DP fever time.*

Meh. Either way, he's gotta agree to serve me before that happens, and I have

zero confidence in my ability to dominate him in a fight. Gonna just forget I heard about this too, I think. I doubt anything will come from it, but maybe I'll try asking Rin and see what happens.

I immediately went and asked Rin if he'd serve me.

"No." He declined immediately. *As expected.*

"Alright. It'd be a big help if you joined me, though... I guess you'd just really hate serving me?"

"Yeah. You're weak. I'd hate, serving you. Plus. Once winter ends, I'm going back, to my journey." *Ohhh, he's only staying here for the winter. Makes sense. I guess he just broke into our dungeon to hibernate. Hm... I wonder if he'd be unable to leave the dungeon if he joined us. Probably not, since Haku and Chloe leave their dungeon like it's nothing. And Haku's the Dungeon Core too, so yeah, I imagine monsters can leave.*

"Does your journey have some kinda goal?"

"...Yes. I'm looking, for, my master. They're not here." *Master? Is Rin actually a female wolf, with a kinky husband?*

"...No. I'm talking, about, my leader. Boss. Owner. Also, I have, no gender." He... I mean, they corrected me, having guessed what I was thinking somehow. *Surprised Rin doesn't have a gender. Guess their body doesn't have either, uh, male or female parts despite taking the form of a wolf. Then again, Ittetsu did mention the possibility of it being a slime. Probably reproduces asexually.*

Wait. More importantly, their owner? I guess that's referring to whoever tamed them. Guess Rin was a loyal dog looking for its lost master all along. Er, a loyal slime, that is.

"You have an owner, Rin? What kinda person are they?"

"Stronger, than me." *Seriously? They must be crazy strong, considering what a monster Rin is...*

"I am, this strong, because my owner, trained me."

"Guess that means they're your teacher too, huh?"

"Yes. Uuma, if you find, an owner, you should have, them, train you, too." *I'll*

lend my golems to anyone who can make 'em stronger, if that's even possible. But anyway. I seriously wonder who Rin's master is. Being stronger than them is no easy feat.

With that mystery discovered, I decided to end things for the day.

"Alright, well, you can go ahead and eat me now. Open wide."

"Mmm... No thanks, I'll pass. You're in my, pack now, Uuma. Also, I'm not, too hungry."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. Thanks, to you." *Hm. Guess this is a sign we're getting closer, maybe.*

For the first time, my conversation with Rin ended without my golem getting eaten.

Day 280

So, let's change the subject and talk about making magic tools.

Neruneh got a grasp on the essentials in no time and soon learned to make the same Fire, Water, Earth, and Light magic tools that Kantara could. That said, the only thing they could do was produce material related to the element, which made them very much beginner level magic tools. *I still think that's pretty amazing, though.*

I decided to immediately put that knowledge to use with golems. I'd make an Iron Golem and have her carve a magic circle on it. Then, I'd put a magic stone of the same element into it and complete the process.

Once all that was done, we had...

...A Sand Golem which could make sand come out of its stomach. It was coarse, rough, and served no particular purpose.

...A Water Golem that could spray water from its knees. All that led to was wet feet. It served no particular purpose.

...A Fire Golem that could make its face catch on fire. *Sorry, uh... It served no particular purpose.*

...A Light Golem with a shining right hand. Yeah, you know the drill by now.

We had four golems that served no particular purpose. The Fire Golem could've been useful if it, like, shot fire out of its mouth like a dragon, but as it was, it just looked like a really embarrassed girl. *I mean, I guess these are kinda the non-physical, magical attacks I was looking for...? Kinda? Yeah, no.*

"I feel like dungeon traps are just way stronger than any of these. I could just use a [Water Source] for water."

"A-Awww, but... The kind of magic tools an apprentice like me can make will never ever beat dungeon traaaps. That's like asking a new adventurer to fight gooood." *That's true. Either way, being able to build on and improve golems like this is a big plus. Yeah... I see a glorious future where I'm mass producing a whole line of Magic Tool Golems.*

"At least we finally have golems that can use magic. I think I'll call them Gargoyles."

"There's a monster species called that toooo. They're statues that use magiiic."

"Oh, you're right. Uhhh... guess I'll stick with Magic Tool Golems, then, with Gargoyle-type as a way of referring to what they are. Neruneh, I want you to keep researching magic tools so we can make more of these magic-using golems."

"Okaaay, understooood."

By the way, Gargoyles cost 10,000 DP each. Even when made out of stone. *Looks like Gargoyles made out of copper cost 20,000 DP... That's really expensive. Yeah, I'd rather just try to make them on my own.*

"Anyway, I'll get you all the tools and magic stones you need for this. Oh yeah, and I'll make a room for you to research in, too. It'll be hidden in the dungeon, but I'll put a Dummy Core inside so you can come and go as you want."

"Research... room... a laboratooory!" Neruneh fist-pumped with both arms, eyes shining.

"Master, thank you so muuuuch! I'll do my best! I'll do my beeest!!!"

"R-Right. Good luck."

“Also, ummm, do just want me to research magic tools? Do you mind if I research magic skills too?”

“Huh? Let’s see... Oh. See if you can try to figure out how to make magic skill scrolls while you’re at it. Those have to do with magic circles too, right?”

“Undeeerstooood! The Neruneh Lab will dedicate itself to researching magic and magic circleees! We’ll research so muuuch!”

“Yep. Looking forward to your results.” Neruneh really got pumped whenever magic entered the equation. But still, I didn’t expect her to get that happy over getting a lab room. I guess Apprentice Witches really just love to research magic...

“Ah, um, Masteeer. I’d like some magic skill scrolls as research sampleees. Also, also alsoooo, if you can, ummm, I want an assistant... Can I have ooone?” The scrolls, well, she did need some research samples. Wouldn’t be too hard to buy her a few Low-Rank skill scrolls like {Fireball} and {Light}. But an assistant? *Hmmm... I don’t think a goblin would work here. Not sure what monster I should get her, though. Another Apprentice Witch...? Nah, a different monster should help keep ideas fresh.*

“Okay, whichever monster Rokuko pulls from the gacha next will be your assistant.”

“Okaaay! Thank yoooou! It’s Gargoyle making tiiime! Yay, yay, hooray!” cheered Neruneh. *Y’know, Neruneh’s so hyped about this lab, I bet a white lab coat would look perfect on her.* I searched for one in the catalog and bought it for 30 DP.

“Here, Neruneh, have this. It’s your lab uniform. Feel free to wear it on top of your usual clothes.”

“A white... coaaat? This doesn’t really look like something a witch would weaaar...” *Aw man, she’s disappointed. Dammit.*

But the lab coat really did look good on Neruneh. So good that I got the urge to massage her feet. Not that I actually acted on that. Hopefully Rokuko would score a good assistant from the gacha.

With that in mind, I went looking for Rokuko. Or so I said, but really, I just

looked at the map and saw that she was in the Master Room. She must have just gone in there to pull the gacha. I had told her that she could pull the gacha once every time the High Priestess died, so I guess that Alca had just gotten eaten by Rin again. *That High Priestess really never learns.*

And conveniently, there was a green dot next to Rokuko, indicating an ally. That meant she pulled a monster. I spoke to Rokuko through the dungeon.

“Heeey, Rokuko, can you hear me?”

“Ah, Keima. I can hear you. I just finished pulling the gacha. We got a monster this time.”

“Yep, that’s perfect. What monster is it?”

“Um, let’s see. It’s a Gargoyle. Kinda looks like a statue.” *Seriously...? What the hell is up with her insane luck?* And thus, Neruneh’s assistant for researching Gargoyles ended up being a Gargoyle. Though it felt more like a valuable research sample than an assistant.

“Masteeer, I don’t really understand you sometimeees...” *This isn’t my fault. It’s all because of Rokuko’s bad... I mean, great luck.*

By the way, the Gargoyle was a statue of a winged demon. This introduced the profound philosophical question of whether or not a stone statue could fly, but the answer was no. Its wings were just for show. *Won’t they just get in the way?* Just like golems, the Gargoyle couldn’t talk. It just obeyed orders without a word.

...Its joints were made of stone and looked completely solid, but for some reason, they could bend just fine. Watching them was as baffling as it was unsettling. They felt like hard stone to the touch, so I could only imagine that they were pliable like material under the influence of {Create Golem}.

“Anyway, having the real thing nearby should help your research. I’ll go ahead and build your lab in the dungeon, so yeah, research magic tools to your heart’s content.”

“Thank you so muuuch!” Neruneh, wearing the white lab coat, responded with enthusiasm. Since she ultimately put on the lab coat, I guess she was happy to have it.

Since we had plenty of DP now, I built her lab with a mobile Dummy Core within it. I could've economized more, but well, it was just 5,000 DP for the Core and 400 DP for the two rooms: 5,400 DP total. That was about two, three days' worth of DP with Rin and Alca around. Though, actually, Alca was paying us twenty-five gold coins a day to stay in the grand suite. That alone could be converted into 25,000 DP. And given how she had been here for about half a month, we were making a total killing. Our vault was overflowing with gold coins, metaphorically speaking. Most of it was actually in my {Wallet}, though maybe it was about time to convert it into DP.

...I wonder if the High Priestess is about to go broke from staying in the grand suite, not to mention all the gambling. Hopefully she'll go back to the, uh... Holy Kingdom or whatever it was if that happens.

I built the laboratory right above the Core Room. Despite being vertically on another level, they were treated as being on the same floor. If someone wanted to enter the lab, they'd need to go absolutely nuts and destroy the ceiling of the Core Room. There was pretty much no chance of anyone doing that without hints.

"I'll help you with your research too. I've got {Create Golem}, after all."

"Ooooh, Master, I'm sure your {Create Golem} could make golems with the magic circles already carved into them. All we'd need to do is melt a magic stone into theeem."

"...I'd really have to break my back if I wanted to mimic those super complex designs." *Also, don't we have to carve stuff into the magic stone before melting it? That sounds like it'll take a lot of time and effort... Anyway, she can just practice making Water magic tools for now. Yeah. I'll prepare a bunch of magic stones for her. I can select which element the magic stones are when buying them from the DP catalog, so that'll be easy. Should be obvious by now, but man, DP is so convenient.*

...Ah, and I need to make a golem for fighting Rin while we're at it. Can't just buy one of those with DP, either. What a pain. I can buy the materials from the catalog, at least.

High Priestess's Perspective

Yet again, the High Priestess returned to the inn after being eaten by the black wolf within the dungeon. But she didn't feel particularly bad about that. Reason being, the inn's grand suite was so comfortable she at times felt the desire to stay at the inn forever. After all, the inn even had a fantastic recreation room that held the truly splendid rat races. The food was unbelievably tasty as well, and there was a free onsen available at all times. The inn was so high quality in every way it was hard to believe, considering its location.

The High Priestess was in a good mood thanks to winning a little in a few recent rat races. She ended up gambling it all on the next race and losing her winnings, but no matter. To her, she was essentially gambling with spare change. Losing it didn't impact her much.

"Haaah. Truly, this bedding is spectacular. I would like bedding such as this in my own home, even." Alca plopped down onto her bed while sipping the orange juice she had ordered from room service. Each glass of juice apparently cost a silver coin. Oranges were a major Pavella export and thus not expensive at all, but the flavor indicated that it had very valuable sugar in spades. With that in mind, the price was more than reasonable. A steal, even.

Also, as an aside, the cost for the juice was taken from the tab that Alca's attendant had paid ahead of time.

"...Hmm. But truly, Keima certainly is stubborn. Why does he refuse to grant my request when he's welcoming me so warmly? He's even performed the acts of Selfless Offering, Beloved Meal, and Charitable Advice for me, and yet..."

Selfless Offering, Beloved Meal, and Charitable Advice were three separate actions defined by the Church of Lux.

Selfless Offering, wherein one offered their precious belongings to another. At this very moment, Keima was offering her an immense bounty of rich foods despite the harsh winter. Although she was paying a trifling fund in return, under normal circumstances a small and poor village would never offer up this much valuable food during the winter. It was clear Keima was pushing himself beyond the limits of what she was paying him. Selfless Offering, the act of one giving their valuables to another, originated in a Church of Lux historical parable

where a woman offered up her clothing to a freezing saint in the winter.

Beloved Meal, wherein one offers their own food to the one they love. Keima had recently treated the High Priestess to a meal of tea rice, and had not prepared any for himself. Beloved Meal, the act of preparing food solely for another, originated in a Church of Lux historical fable where a homeless orphan offered his food to a saint suffering from starvation.

Charitable Advice, wherein one speaks the truth to those who want to hear it. Keima had informed her of when the rat races were beginning, and although that made her feel shameless, those were the exact words that the High Priestess had wanted to hear. Charitable Advice, the act of giving another the information they want without knowing for sure that they want it, originated in a Church of Lux historical fable where a villager gave a lost and confused saint directions.

Selfless Offering, Beloved Meal, and Charitable Advice were all expressions of passionate love. In other words, judging from the teachings of the Church of Lux... It was clear as day that Keima had fallen deeply in love with the High Priestess. She had tried prodding him for confirmation, and the smile he returned her while firmly denying her request made it clear that his feelings were real.

"...This is the first time I have ever witnessed love this heated, this passionate." Anyone who had studied the Church of Lux's teachings would understand how Keima felt. The High Priestess herself didn't feel bad about it. Thinking back to his flirting, she even blushed a little. She felt that in order to repay his love, it was absolutely necessary for her to get rid of the black wolf threatening his town somehow.

It may have looked like she was making no progress on that front, but in truth, she was slowly learning how the black wolf fought. On day three, she dodged his opening attack for the first time. Now, she could dodge three attacks in a row. If she could buy a little more time, she'd be able to activate her special High Priestess magical skill. That would be her victory.

The black wolf was likely a Darkness-type monster. That made him the perfect opponent for the High Priestess. However, due to a fundamental difference in

raw strength, he was dominating her. She just had to somehow buy a little more time.

A knock resounded and her attendant called out through the door.

“Lady Alca, do you have a moment?”

“Mmm... Please, come in.”

“Excuse me.” Shento opened the door with a click and walked inside. *Hm... Speaking of which, I wonder how my attendant has been spending his time. Ah?! Has he been betting on the rat races this whole time...?!* Or so the High Priestess thought before discarding the idea. She knew her diligent attendant would never do something that.

“Now, what might it be, Shento?”

“We do not have much money remaining.”

“I knew it, the rat races...! You mustn’t gamble, Shento!”

“Hrm? What are you talking about?” Shento blinked in confusion. Alca had jumped to conclusions.

“Nothing, nothing. In any case, if we are lacking funds, we need only to request more from the Holy Kingdom. I will write a letter now, they should send what we need immediately.”

“Yes, please do.”

The letter should only take a few days to be delivered if they post a suitable delivery quest to the Guild. That said, it was impossible to tell whether whoever took the quest would actually complete it. Which meant that, realistically speaking, it was necessary to post the quest several different times.

“Now then, what to write... Ah. I shall mention that the honorable town chief is welcoming us warmly, and that we have not yet received permission to destroy the Dungeon Core. Perhaps if those back home speak with the Empire, we can get permission directly from the Emperor.”

“I see. That makes sense, as the town chief has stated that he has only declined to allow us to destroy the Dungeon Core due to the laws of the Empire. That should solve this conundrum.”

“Yes. He is a fine man, but his refusal to negotiate is somewhat of a flaw. Though from another perspective, it shows that he is a diligent individual worthy of trust.”

“He would be an excellent retainer, I believe. It might be wise to officially scout him and bring him back to the Holy Kingdom with you.”

“I shall include that in the letter. Hm... I believe about five should suffice.” Alca wrote the same letter five times and handed them to her attendant. Still, it was surprising that they had run out of money already, given how much they had left the Holy Kingdom with. Where in the world had it all vanished...? Regardless, the letter would take care of everything.

“I suppose we should economize while waiting for the additional funding to arrive. Perhaps I should bring back the Iron Golem corpses I’ve been leaving behind. That should pay for our food, no?”

“It would be much appreciated. Please forgive me for increasing your burden.”

“Fear not. You and I are allies, Shento.”

Truth be told, they still had enough funding to last the entire winter if the High Priestess were to move out of the grand suite and into a normal room, but Shento didn’t even consider that possibility. The High Priestess lived a life of death and suffering. He wished only for her time alive to be the most comfortable possible. He could not, and would not, ever suggest that she sacrifice her peace of mind for money.

After seeing Shento leave with the letters, Alca returned to her bed and laid upon it. As her body sunk gently into the comforting mattress, she whispered to herself, “I truly do want this bed,” and then fell asleep.

Keima’s Perspective

What the hell did she mean by Selfless Offering, Beloved Meal, and Charitable Advice...? I shook my head in confusion while looking at the monitor, but decided not to think about that for now. I had more serious things to worry about.

The High Priestess had written a letter. Apparently she was requesting additional funds and help getting me to give permission to destroy the Dungeon Core. Economically speaking, the letter was somewhat good for us in that it would lead to her staying longer and continuing to supply us with a wealth of gold and DP. But it'd be really bad if we went too far and the Holy Kingdom got pissed at us. A dungeon with the ire of an entire theocracy built around destroying Dungeon Cores wasn't long for this world. Literally.

And so, I called Rokuko over to hold an emergency strategy meeting.

"Wait, Keima, were you peeping into a girl's room? Is that the kind of guy you are?" She glared at me with cold eyes. *Hey, I take offense to that. I'm just spying on my enemy here. 'Cause yeah, don't forget, she's our enemy. Not like I was looking at the delicious curves of her feet. I definitely didn't watch as she removed her socks and exposed her defenseless feet to the air. No way. And I especially didn't use the monitor to look up at her feet from the floor. If I wanted to do something like that, well, Niku and Ichika's feet are always available. I'm not that desperate.*

"So, what are you going to do about this? Make it so the money never arrives?"

"Wow, Rokuko, you guessed it. That's exactly what my plan is. How'd you figure that out...? No way, are you an imposter?"

"Um, no, that's just the obvious thing to do. The real problem is how to execute it. Are you going to swap the letters out? Or maybe get in the way of the couriers?"

"Seriously, are you okay?! Do you have a fever or something?!" At some point, Rokuko had become cold and calculated. I hurriedly put a hand on her forehead to check for a fever.

"O-Of course I don't have a fever! Don't look down on me too much, okay?"

"Your forehead does feel a little hot..."

"That's just your imagination!"

"Yeah? Alright then. You just had me worrying since you got so smart all of a sudden."

“Well, thanks for worrying about me. Ahaha. And feel free to compliment me more, I can take it.” *Alright, she’s getting cocky and carried away. There’s the Rokuko I know.*

“For real though, what are we going to do? It’ll be hard to do anything with the adventurers that take the quest once they leave the dungeon area. I guess we should try to take the letters once the Guild has them.”

“I want to avoid the Guild having too much responsibility here. Nothing good will come from their involvement. And even if we wanted to swap the letters out, there’s that wax seal, so...” Alca had put the letters into tubes, sealed them with wax, and then pressed her High Priestess seal against it. It’d be obvious if we opened them.

“Couldn’t you just fix the seal with your magic? Like, we could cut open the tube and just fix that without messing with the wax at all. Though if the wax has some special magic properties we might need to handle it differently.”

“...Rokuko.”

“What? Did you fall in love with me all over again?”

“Are you seriously... the real Rokuko...?”

“Yes, I’m the real Rokuko!”

“Prove it by showing me your feet.”

“You can recognize me by my feet?! Well, okay, if it’s just my feet... H-Here.” Rokuko took off her socks and showed me her feet.

...Yep. A thorough look-over confirmed that she was the real thing. The truth is, she had a very distinctive... lack of anything distinctive on either of her feet, but nonetheless, I could tell they were her feet. Also, I checked the map and confirmed that she was real. *I mean, it would’ve been pretty bad if she was a fake, so this is fine. I wonder if she rolled an INT-boosting item in the gacha or something.*

“Sorry for doubting you, you’re legit.”

“That’s what I was telling you... So, anyway. Do you have a plan?”

“...Yep, you bet. I’m gonna complain.” My strategy was direct and incredibly

straightforward. I would write five letters myself and send them to the same address the High Priestess sent hers to. Since the letters would have the same address, adventurers would see an opportunity for profit and take both at the same time. I'd go ahead and tell the Guild to encourage giving both quests at once.

With that done, there was no need to interfere with Alca's letters. And if none of her letters reached their destination, none of mine would either. Didn't have to worry about that at all.

"Wow, your plans are always in a league of their own, Keima."

"There is one hole in it, though, and that's whether anyone would even bother reading a letter from the chief of a nameless town. That's where you come in, Rokuko."

"Me?"

"You're Haku's little sister. Or in other words, you're the little sister of Haku Laverio, founder of the Empire."

"Oh, I get it! We'll borrow Haku's authority!" Haku had grown quite fond of staying at our inn. I was sure she wouldn't mind us borrowing her name. And all things considered, Rokuko's word might have more sway than that joke of a High Priestess.

And so, I got to work preparing five letters under Rokuko's name. They were complaints that read like this: "The High Priestess is wasting all her money to eat our winter provisions. We continue selling to her because we need money as all towns do, but we have our limits. Would you please tell her to restrain herself?" I wrote the letters to be somewhat harsh.

We sealed them with wax, pressed the seal of the Empire against them, and they were ready. Haku had actually given us this seal to use when Rokuko wanted to write letters to her. Normally we only used it when sending letters directly to her, but... I didn't want to involve Haku herself and owe her a big favor. That'd be terrifying. I was technically putting myself in debt to her just by using the Empire seal, but I felt like I remembered her saying Rokuko could use it whenever she wanted, so it should be fine.

...And Haku will definitely be overjoyed if Rokuko sends her a thank you letter afterwards. Definitely. Yeah. If I show her any weakness, she'll exploit me as much as she can for as long as she can. A simple thank you is all she'll get from me.

Rokuko finished writing the letters as I lost myself in thought. Each of the five letters were ready to go.

"And done. It was kinda tiring to write the same thing five times."

"Good work. Eh, if we can mess with Alca's letters somehow, I'll give it a try. Anyway... I'm gonna go hurry to the Guild. Gotta make sure the quests are taken together."

"Uh-huh, thanks."

The High Priestess had apparently made her attendant take the letters to the Guild, as he was leaving the branch office right as I reached it. I rushed in with Rokuko's letters at the ready.

The Guild receptionist accepted my quest and requested a somewhat high reward of one silver for each delivery quest. The extra cost was due to the quests involving leaving the country and taking a second quest at the same time. At this point, though, five silvers were like nothing to me.

The quests were put up on the quest board almost immediately. She put them right beside the High Priestess's quest, although a little higher to prevent overlap. People would definitely see them together and take both now.

Also, I failed to get my hands on the Guild-secured High Priestess letters. Perhaps due to them being locked in the Guild safe, I couldn't withdraw them. *I wonder if there's just a rule against withdrawing others' property without permission or something. That'd make sense. Otherwise, I could pull some nasty tricks like withdrawing a warrior's armor or weapons in the middle of a fight. Let's just say that preparing letters of our own was the right idea and leave it at that.*

"Ahaha, I knew your plan was the right one, Keima!"

"Y-Yeah." Despite the fact that her plan didn't work out, Rokuko seemed happy for some reason.

...Anyway. The High Priestess is going broke, huh? I wonder how much money she has left. Might be smart for me to start wringing her dry for all she's worth sooner rather than later.

Day 281

I had Kinue, our Silky, learn the {Chef} skill that Rokuko had gotten from the gacha. And the result was...

"You're better at cooking now?"

"Not only that, but time stops as I cook as well. Literally." According to Kinue, the skill didn't just enhance her cooking abilities. Time for everything outside of the food she was making would stop until she was done. From her perspective, she was just cooking normally, but from an outside perspective, she started and finished in an instant. Also, she couldn't do anything but cook during that time.

"...Not even when waiting for a pot to boil?"

"Unfortunately not. I can't clean the room or anything while waiting for a pot to boil. Although I can in fact stack and wash dishes." *That's rough. I guess some kinda special Space-Time magic activates when she's cooking?*

In any case, I prepared some ingredients so I could see the skill for myself. The recipe and ingredients came from the DP catalog. She would be making a strawberry shortcake.

I called over Ichika and Niku to be taste testers. Also, I didn't call for her, but Rokuko came too.

"It's a skill I rolled, right? I obviously want to see it in action."

"I mean, you don't have to make excuses like that. I'm not opposed to you watching."

"...Seriously, why didn't you call for me too? You're making me feel like I'm being left out." Rokuko pouted, jealous. *Guess I'll call for her the next time I do something like this.*

"I will now begin cooking. First comes preparing the ingredients, and... done. The cake is ready."

“Holy crap! It hasn’t even been ten seconds yet!” Before me was a neatly sliced strawberry shortcake. It hadn’t appeared from nowhere, either. I could see that the phoenix eggshell oven had been used. Kinue’s shortcake had beautifully formed layers of white cream, yellow sponge, and red strawberries. It looked super tasty.

“That really did happen in an instant. This skill is more amazing than I thought.”

“Totally, dude. You’re plannin’ on giving Kinue to me someday, yeah?”

“To you, Ichika? Hahaha. Not a chance.”

“Tch, bummer.”

By the way, Kinue, Rei, and Neruneh were officially considered to be Rokuko’s helpers on the inn paperwork. They were basically my trainees. Ichika had joined the dungeon before them, but she was my slave. I couldn’t go around assigning employees to slaves. Though I could make an exception if Kinue really insisted.

“...From my perspective, I was cooking for over an hour. I believe that being unable to do anything but cook for such a long time would be mentally strenuous for normal humans. As a housework fairy Silky, however, I am quite fine.”

“Yeah... That’s a pretty rough restriction.” The skill was basically a god-tier skill for those who loved cooking more than anything. It was definitely a skill specifically for passionate chefs. They could cook for as long as they liked without interruption.

...I’m sure glad I didn’t use it on myself. I’d love something similar for sleeping, though.

“Keima, this is sooo good!”

“It’s so sweet, it’s melting in my mouth... Nom, nom...”

Rokuko and Niku were already cramming the cake into their mouths. They were really having at it. *I think I’ll have some too... Wait, what? There’s none left?*

“Ah, sorry. This is the last of it.” Rokuko had just stuck her fork into the last bit of cake.

“Seriously? You guys eat way too fast. I wanted to try it too...”

“It’s not too late for that. Here.” Rokuko pointed the fork at me, cake resting at the tip.

...All eyes were on us. *I know what this is. She wants to feed me, huh?*

“Come on, open your mouth.”

“...No, just give me the fork.”

“If you don’t open your mouth, I’ll eat it myself!” *What kinda threat is that? But I really do want to eat the cake... Tch, Rokuko really is getting smarter. She must have leveled up or something like that.*

“Alright, looks like I’ve got no choice...”

“Uh-huh. Just accept your fate and eat it.”

“...No choice but to fight back! Don’t think you can control me that easily, Rokuko!” I turned my back to Rokuko and spoke to Kinue.

“Kinue, sorry, but would you please make another cake?”

“Yes, as you wish... And done.” She made another cake in an instant. *Yeah, no matter how many times I see it, that {Chef} skill is amazing.*

“Niku, Ichika, eat that cake too! Help me!”

“Gladly!”

“Sorry, Master, but I’m not about to ignore Rokuko’s orders!” The three of them piled onto the freshly made shortcake.

But I didn’t even flinch. I let them have it. Why? Simple.

“I’ll just eat this other cake instead.”

“Bwuh?!” Rokuko spun to look at me, her mouth full of cake. In front of me were three other shortcakes.

...It was simple. I had secretly held up four fingers when asking Kinue to bake another cake. Our oven was more than big enough to bake four shortcakes at

once. I doubted they'd be able to eat all four of them. And I couldn't eat all four on my own, either, so I put the rest into {Storage} One each for Rei and Neruneh, since they weren't here, and as for the other one... I speedily cut it up with my fork and stabbed a piece.

It tasted nostalgic, like a cake I would have eaten before coming to this world. The high quality ingredients I had purchased with DP certainly helped, but most of it likely had to do with Kinue's skills as a chef.

"Yum. This cake's just as good as the kind they sold back in Japan. Maybe better."

"I am honored to receive your praise, Master." Kinue gave me a soft smile.

"Ngh! Y-You're pretty good, Keima! But don't forget, I'm the one who rolled the {Chef} skill in the first place! That means this is my victory too!"

"Nom nom nom..."

"Haaaahn, I'm like, soo happy I get to eat this kinda rad dish. Fancy expensive stuff packed with sugar is my jam, dude." *Oh yeah. Cake is sugary and expensive. I'll try selling some to the High Priestess. I wonder how much I should charge? Maybe ten gold coins per piece.*

I looked out the window while mulling that over and see that snow had begun to fall. *Sure is winter out there.*

...Wait, did we ever decide on a name for the town? Heeey. Gozooou. The town's gonna be called Gozou and Roppe are Lovey-Dovey Town at this raaate.

Side Chapter — Ichika and the Bar's Slots

30 DP a day, or in other words, thirty coppers a day. That was the wage of a Dancing Doll Inn employee. Since room and board were free, those thirty coppers were like an allowance that the employees could spend on anything they wanted. Considering that a night's stay at the Dancing Doll Inn cost fifty coppers with food costing extra, it was fair to say that the employees had it good.

"Alriiight, I'm gonna win this time for sure! I'm gonna win and eat a frickin' mountain of curry rolls!" Ichika pumped herself up while heading to the bar yet again. She was holding her daily thirty copper wage in hand. Since Ichika didn't save money on principle, those thirty coppers were all the money she had to her name.

Her goal? The bar's slot machines.

"Heyaaa! Is my sweet little slot machine free right nooow?!"

"Oh, hello, Ichika. Welcome. Your usual machine is open."

"Thanks, man! Tiiime to make some bread, this time for sure...!" After fist pumping at Wozma, Ichika headed straight for the fifth slot machine out of six. The last three machines, closest to the walls, were the kind where you could bet from one to three copper coins. One coin would only pay out if the middle row lined up, two coins unlocked the upper and lower rows, and three coins unlocked diagonals. Paying more increased your chances of winning. The fifth machine, second from the wall, had become Ichika's regular hangout and Wozma made sure it was empty when it was about time for Ichika to get off work.

Ichika put three coins into the slot machine and pulled down the lever. The machine's drum spun around...

"One shot, one kill! Hyaaah!" Clink! Clink! Clink! Ichika smashed the button, and the pictures ended up all over the place with none lining up. A miss.

"Ngh! Nine more tries... Hyaaah!" She put in more money, lowered the lever, and hit the button. And... it was another miss. But Ichika didn't give up. She had

enough money for eight more tries.

“Hmph... I never look behind me! CHAAARGE!”

“Hey, Ichika. Ain’t gotten bored of that thing yet?”

“Hm? Buzz off, Gozou. You’re, like, totally hurting my concentration here.”

“Gahaha! What’s wrong with a little chat? So, y’think yer gonna score big tonight?”

“My dude... I’m gonna hit the jackpot! Maybe! I think!” Ichika rolled another miss as she spoke.

“Bad guesser, huh?”

“Take a closer look, moron! Everything’s lined up but the left column, and that one’s just a little off! That’s a sign I’m gonna win next roll for sure!”

“Y’think? Ain’t that just superstition?”

“Here we go...! Hyah!” Ichika rolled another miss. Gozou shook his head, but Ichika just grinned.

“...Heh. Don’t bust your nut so soon, dude. This always happens before a jackpot.”

“Jackpot?”

“Getting a miss after that is a sure sign of pattern five... a jackpot is guaranteed to happen in the next five rolls, for sure! Definitely!”

“Alright, then let’s see it.”

“Hmph. Just watch, buster.”

Clink clink clink. Clink clink clink. Clink clink clink. Ichika rolled three misses in a row.

“Two shots left, eh?”

“H-Hey, that’s plenty. I’m totally not worried.” Clink clink clink... Another miss.

“Ngh, ngggh!”

“Alriiight. If you roll a jackpot next, I’ll treat you to some fried food for free.”

“No take-backsies, ‘kay?! Nooow, watch this!” Clink... clink...

“O-Oooh! Look! There’s two 7s lined up in the center!”

“Nice, nice. Let’s see the last one.”

“One shot, one kill...! One shot, one kill...! Hyah!” Clink. She rolled a 7... in the top right. Another miss.

“Gyaaaaah! FRIGGIN’ DAAANGIT!”

“Gahahahaha! I knew it.”

“Grrr, friggin’...” Clink clink clink... Ichika, feeling glum, rolled the slots and pressed the button. Three pictures lined up and the slot let out a dinging bell sound. She had done it.

“Oooh! Gozou, I did it! Gimme some fried food!”

“Lucky you, a row of 9s. Ye didn’t get it in five rolls, but eh, I’ll give ye a piece anyway.”

“Th-Thank you so much...!” A row of 9s meant that the slot would pay nine coppers, enough to roll the slot machine at max capacity three times. It happened just often enough to be kind of worthwhile, about once or twice every ten rolls. Gozou held up a piece of fried food stabbed with a toothpick in front of Ichika’s mouth as she clung to the slot machine. Nom. Nom nom nom. Ichika, smiling a blissful smile, rolled the slot machine again while eating the fried food.

...Ultimately, Ichika dumped everything she had into the slot machine.

“Ngh, today just wasn’t my day! I’m heading home... Haaah...”

“Yeah, see ya tomorrow.”

Depressed, Ichika left the bar.

...And immediately afterwards, a war over who would get to use the fifth machine next began.

“Hey, out of the way. I’m up next.”

“As if, you got to use it yesterday. It’s my turn!”

“Hey now, why do you think I got off it for her in the first place? It’s my turn to win today!”

At some point, a rumor had spread among the bar regulars that Ichika’s slot machine paid out five times more often after she used it.

“Ahhh, look at them go. Not a brain between them.”

“What, you’re not gonna join in, Roppe?” Gozou sat back down next to his partner Roppe and took a gulp of beer.

“Don’t be dumb, Gozou. I don’t buy that rumor at all.”

“Y’don’t?”

“I mean, where do you think that rumor came from? I’m pretty sure I heard Keima spreading it around. He was like, ‘Ichika failed so hard it should be easier to win now,’ or something.”

“Pretty sure it was, ‘Ichika lost so much money, the machine should be packed and ready to pay out.’ Something like that.” At some point “It will be easier to win” turned into “It’s way easier to win,” then “Several people actually have won more,” then “I won more,” and so on and so on until eventually settling on “It’s five times easier to win.” The truth was that Ichika’s machine got so popular after she used it that the likelihood of someone winning increased by sheer numbers. If you keep rolling, you’ll eventually win. The more people rolling, the more wins there will be. In short, it honestly was a machine that had more victories than any others.

...It also had more misses than any other machine by far, but gamblers had a tendency to not think about inconveniences for them. And so, thanks in part to that rumor, the slot machines had become very popular among the adventurers.

“...Eh. Guess it’s just ’cause gamblers just love superstitions.”

“Especially gambling adventurers, I suppose.” Gozou shrugged, thinking that yeah, the two were very similar.

“Heck yeah! I won!”

“C’mon, switch with me!”

“Heh heh. This is why I can’t quit the slots.” As always, the bar remained boisterous and busy deep into the night.

Side Chapter — Winter Monsters

Winter. The season of frost where snow falls and builds up upon the ground. In order to save heating costs, I allowed townspeople to use the onsen for free. Naturally, I planned to start charging them taxes at some point to earn a monetary profit for them, but for now I was letting them pass with just their daily DP income. More than half of the townspeople didn't have a steady income, after all.

But despite being such a cold winter, my room was warm and toasty. I had put tatami mats on the ground. There was no problem with that since we could claim they came from within the dungeon. Each mat cost 300 DP. *Heheh. Feels great to have lots of disposable income. And these tatami mats are trapped, too! You aren't allowed to step on them with dirty feet! In order to enter my room, you have to take off your shoes... Heheheh, in other words, I get to see as many feet fresh out of shoes as I want!*

Too bad only Rokuko and Niku really come in here. Too bad indeed. I want to see other feet. Besides Rokuko, Niku is way too young. Though thinking about it, Rokuko's almost always in her loli mode when hanging out in my room. Why? I'm not a lolicon. But I'm also too embarrassed to tell her to go into her adult form so I can look at her feet.

Which led me to come up with a genius plan. I wouldn't wait for them to come here; I would build a break room for inn employees and place the same trapped tatami mats inside of it. *Heheh, going on the offensive with traps. Now I'm thinking like a Dungeon Master.*

In order to encourage my employees to enter the room, I built something special for it. The symbol of winter. The winter monster itself. A kotatsu.

"So this is what you made for us, Master?"

"How in the world does one clean such a thing?"

"I helped him make iiit. I engraved modular magic circles so you can adjust the heat by altering the width of the lines. In many ways this is veeery revolutionary technology... Aaah, so waaarm."

It was a regular square kotatsu that sat four people. Neruneh entered it from the side in front of mine. Since Neruneh had made it with me, she fell for its magical charms before any other employee. The break room had its first victim. Her simple brown socks were pretty nice.

"...If it is acceptable, I would like to try it out as well. Please excuse me for sitting beside you, Master."

"I will join in as well. There is still much time before I need to get back to cooking, after all." Rei and Kinue took off their shoes to step onto the tatami. *Nice black stockings, Rei. You know what's up. And Kinue? Keeping it green with your socks too, I see. Personally I'm not such a big fan of green, but sticking to a single color really boosts a girl's points, I think.*

But soon, both of their feet snuck beneath the kotatsu and left my line of sight. *Crap...! I can't look at them now! This kotatsu was a waste of time... I should have just made a standard break room. Monster of the winter my ass. Whatever.*

"Oooh, this truly is warm..."

"This is a pleasant degree of warmth."

"Eheheeeh. We spent a lot of time adjusting the heat to be juuust right."

"Yep, we sure... we sure did. Haaah. Oh well." I let out of a sigh of grief over the visual feast taken from me and tried to move on. The kotatsu was still nice to have on its own.

But right before I fully gave up, something bumped against my feet. Curious, I grabbed it... and immediately heard a "Hyaaahn?!" It was Rei's feet. She had bumped them against mine after stretching her legs.

"F-Forgive me, Master. I seem to have bumped your feet."

"I don't mind. Bumping feet is part of a kotatsu's charm!"

"Oh, are you supposed to stretch your legs? I will as well, then... ah. Excuse me."

"Hey, don't worry about it, Kinue. The underside of a kotatsu is basically unclaimed territory. We're all on equal footing here, heh." *Th-This is pretty nice.*

I shouldn't have looked down on the mighty kotatsu. I've done another 180 and now I'm back to positivity.

"Ah, Keima! I heard you built something new, is that thing it?"

"Hey, Rokuko. Yeah it is, come on i—Ah. All four sides are taken."

"Mmm... Guess I'll squeeze in beside you then, okay?" Rokuko jammed herself next to me, infiltrating the kotatsu by force.

"C'mon. There's not enough space."

"What's the problem, aren't we partners?"

"Yeah, yeah. Partners in body and soul and all that. Ehhh... I should've made it a little bigger." I went with a square design this time, but it might have been better to make it a long rectangle. Or maybe just a bigger square in general. It's always fun to crawl beneath a kotatsu and sleep with just your head sticking out.

Anyway, yeah, Rokuko got into the kotatsu by pressing against me and really squeezing in. *Gah...! She's soft and smells so nice!*

"Wow, this really is warm... But you three, get out. Your feet are in the way."

"Eeeh? No waaay. This is so warm, I never wanna leaaave."

"Agreed, this is quite nice..."

"Also, do you truly want us to leave, Lady Rokuko? If we do, there will be open spots for you to move to."

"...Ahhh. Actually, you three can stay."

I'm glad the Dungeon Core and monster girls are getting along. Uh... Don't worry, they didn't get so absorbed in the kotatsu's power that they ignored a direct order from the Dungeon Core. I'm pretty sure I didn't have her make a magic tool that dangerous.

Afterwards, everyone was so reluctant to leave the kotatsu that the entire shift system nearly broke down, so I had to give all employees strict orders to follow their given schedules. But before that, I enjoyed my time in the kotatsu, despite Rokuko pushing her somewhat sweaty body needlessly hard against

me.



Chapter 3

Day 283

I ended up helping Gozou with his Iron Golem hunting. The dungeon was a scary place, what with the deadly monster lurking inside, but the Guild was compensating by paying more for discovered loot. Though as I knew everything about the dungeon, nothing about it was scary to me. This was easy money. Plus, I had something I wanted to talk to Gozou about. Very convenient.

I spoke to Gozou while advancing through the dungeon and taking down Iron Golems.

"So, did you ever decide on a name for the town, Gozou?"

"Huh...? Ah. My bad. I-I thought up a name, but never told ye it." *Yeah, he just forgot.*

"Really? I know I'm just chief for show, but c'mon, that's harsh."

"...I remember ye bringing that up before, but I'm not so sure ye really are chief just for show."

"I see, I see, you've decided on Gozou and Roppe are Lovey-Dovey Town. That is a pretty good name."

"Guh?! N-No, that ain't it, chief! I thought up a proper name... Goren." *Seriously? You just changed a few letters of golem. Come on.*

Actually, though... Goren Town? Eh, it's not bad. At this point I'd be fine with basically any name, but honestly, our dungeon and inn are basically themed around golems, so it works pretty well. Though, uh... I wonder if golem is actually pronounced golem in this fantasy world. Probably, since there's a skill called {Create Golem}.

"Does that mean anything?"

"...Sounds kinda like Golem Town, that's about all."

"That's pretty half-assed, but alright, I'll take it."

“Guh?! Sh-Shouldn’t ye think a little harder about this?!”

“Nah, I mean, you spent weeks and weeks thinking up this splendid name, Gozou. There’s not gonna be anything better than it, I’m sure. Hm... I’m gonna hold a gathering in the bar and announce the name to all the villagers. You can take part and tell them what the name means.”

“Sorry! I thought it up on the spot just now, so gimme a break!”

“Haha, knew it.” Gozou and I shared a laugh together.

“But yeah, we’re still going with Goren. I like the sound of it.”

“Yer joking, right...?”

And so, our nameless village became Goren Town. That name was a lot better than Gozou and Roppe are Lovey-Dovey Town.

“Oh yeah, speaking of which, it’s started to snow recently. Have you guys finished stocking up for the winter?”

“Pretty much, we’ve got what I need. And friend, ye letting townsfolk enter the onsen for free was a big help. We needed a lot less firewood and heating magic tools than planned. The flour in the storeroom is kinda old, but there’s plenty of it. We won’t go hungry this winter. And I hear this trade route’s real important for Tsia and Pavella. Merchants are gonna pass through this town all throughout the winter.”

So basically, the town was stocked up for the winter. Even if those stocks ran out, we could replenish supplies from merchants. I wonder if they expanded the roads with those one hundred golds I gave them. I was getting plenty of cash from the admission fee of the tunnel, so yeah. Tons of easy money for me. *This is the power of investing, I guess. Wait... Didn’t he say he’d pay me back twice as much as I gave him or something?*

“Gozou... Merchants are pretty amazing.”

“Yup. But you’re somethin’ special yourself. I dunno how much you’re making, but you sure dumped a huge load of cash at the drop of a hat.” *I mean, the High Priestess has been dumping so much money on us lately I can hardly think of one hundred golds as being that much anymore. If he does double my*

investment, I'll give them two hundred golds next.

Day 298

The Holy Kingdom's reply to the High Priestess finally arrived. Their letter contained... an order for her to return immediately.

"...They want me to return? But I haven't done anything yet!"

"It says you need to take responsibility for something, whatever that might be. Quite a threatening letter."

"Responsibility? I truly wonder what they're talking about."

Looked like Rokuko's letter had reached them as well. Made sense, since a letter for Rokuko had also arrived. It read: "Please forgive us, we have no intention of starting a war. The High Priestess is acting on her own accord, not ours. Please send our regards to the Emperor." Basically, just a bunch of excuses, plus a guarantee that they would demand the High Priestess return home. *Geez, I'm sure glad we didn't start a war here. I wouldn't be able to make up for that.*

"I simply do not understand. They are officially summoning us back immediately... It seems they won't be sending additional funds."

"Ngh, I knew I shouldn't have bought that cake...! But I had no hope of resisting its allure! And they had only eight slices left, too! I have no regrets!" *Yep, the cake. I gave her a free slice and told her another would be ten gold pieces, but she just went and bought eight of them for eighty golds. She didn't hesitate for a second, even though they're going broke. Sweets sure are something.*

Fresh eggs, plenty of refined sugar, rich milk, and high quality flour. It was a cake made with all of those extravagant ingredients, not to mention how its flavor was boosted by the {Chef} skill. Ten golds per piece in a small country town like this was actually a steal. After buying the slices, Alca stored them in her {Storage}, so they would never rot or go bad.

As an aside, although I could buy more ingredients and have another cake made at any time, those were indeed the last eight slices I had at the time, so I

didn’t lie to her.

“Since our letter arrived, I suppose we could at best stay here for three more days before they get suspicious...”

“In which case, our only choice is to conquer the dungeon and reap what rewards we can from that. My sympathies to the town chief, but at this point, we must proceed under the philosophy that it is easier to ask for forgiveness than for permission. In order to reward Keima for supplying us with such valuable goods, I will proceed with using the fullest extent of my power.” *What the hell do you mean, it’s easier to ask forgiveness? Seriously? That’s how you’re gonna play this? Sheesh... Guess I need to prepare our defenses to get ready for this.*

I left monitoring the High Priestess to Rokuko and went to talk to Rin. They were laying on their side in the cozy, warm room I had prepared for them.

“Heeey, Rin. You awake? We’ve got something to talk about.”

“Hm? I’m, awake. What is it? Uuma?”

“Y’see...” I told Rin that the annoying High Priestess would keep attacking for the next three days. If they could hold her off for that long, everything would be fine.

“Good luck, Rin.”

Rin responded while rolling around a little. I couldn’t feel any enthusiasm from them, maybe because they were entering hibernation mode or something. *Hibernation... Sounds good. I wanna sleep all winter too. Ideally, I wanna sleep all spring and summer and fall too.*

With that done, I returned to the Master Room. On foot. Rokuko wasn’t in the Core Room. She was probably monitoring the High Priestess in her inn room. Without Rokuko to withdraw me, I had to return on foot. It was kinda inconvenient. *Sure would like an employee dedicated to withdrawing me back into the Master Room.*

“But still, I wonder what she meant by the fullest extent of her powers. What’s she like at full power?” I entered the Core Room and got into the Master Room through the Dungeon Core. I could use the Dummy Core in the inn to

immediately get back to my room, but I decided to stay and think first. After all, the Master Room was warm and bright. Not a bad place to think. It was better for thinking than the futon in my room, anyway.

Judging from her past fights, I found it hard to think that Alca could beat Rin in a one on one fight. It took her all just to dodge three or four of their attacks. Even with magic, it would be a hard fight.

Suddenly, there was an earthquake. *Huh...? This is like, a two or three on the Richter scale? Yeah, nothing to be worried about... Wait. Wait, wait, wait. Isn't the Master Room in an alternate dimension or something like that? Why'd it shake?* After I blinked in confusion for a second, Rokuko burst into the Master Room.

"Keima! W-We're in trouble!"

"What's wrong? That was a weak earthquake, nothing to worry about."

"Earthquake? What are you talking about? That was the High Priestess attacking us!" *Uh... What? No way, did the High Priestess hit Rin with a spell so hard it caused an earthquake?* I checked the map, but saw that Rin was safe and the High Priestess was standing in front of the dungeon. Her attendant was standing by her side, the Convenience Altar on his back like a backpack.

He gave her a bow and returned to the inn. Alca went ahead and entered the dungeon.

"What the heck happened?"

"Look at this. I recorded the last few minutes." Rokuko opened the menu and showed me the recording.

...The video showed the High Priestess offering a prayer to the altar in front of the dungeon. She was murmuring to herself, expression deadly serious and forehead sweaty. I tried raising the volume.

"Fuck dungeons destroy dungeons die die fuck Cores die dungeons fuck destroy die all enemies of the God of Light should die fuck dungeons destroy them may the God of Light's seal aid me in destroying this dungeon fuck die die Dungeon Core die..." *What the absolute hell? This girl is freaking scary. And she's starting to shine brightly, too. Mana is normally invisible, so that's*

probably a sign there's a ton of it building up around her... What's she doing, seriously?

"I've never heard a spell incantation this long... Do you know what spell it is?"

"Oh, it's an incantation...? That's a freaking hardcore chant, holy crap."

Finally, the incantation reached its ends and she said the final keywords.

"In agreement with the divine pact of the Gods, I seal this dungeon for three days — {Trinity}." The mana that had built around the High Priestess shot straight towards the dungeon. That's when the earthquake happened. But the town didn't shake at all. Only Rokuko and all the dungeon monsters felt the shaking. Niku and Ichika, being human and beastkin as they were, didn't feel anything. *Uh... Does that make me a monster? I guess so, dang. Or maybe it was just because I was in the Master Room?*

The video ended there.

"But what did she mean about sealing the dungeon? Did that do anything...?"

"Seal...? W-Wait, look! Keima, look at the DP Catalog!"

"Huh?" I opened the menu, checked the DP Catalog, and... Everything had large red stickers on them that read: "Inaccessible: 71 Hours Remain." *I guess she sealed our primary dungeon functions.*

We couldn't place rooms or traps, and we couldn't summon any monsters. The only thing we could really do was repair damaged walls and traps. Even the gacha was sealed. We couldn't buy armors or weapons. *Oh, but it looks like we can still buy daily life stuff like food, plus treasure items like gems. I dunno what that "divine pact of the Gods" is about, but this probably has something to do with it.*

"Yep... Our dungeon's definitely sealed now." Being unable to place new traps or rooms meant that we couldn't expand or modify our dungeon. We were no longer capable of subtly altering the dungeon while she was in it. Even in offensive terms, we couldn't summon new monsters, nor could we strengthen existing ones with better equipment. All we could do was sit and watch. Or at least, that'd normally be the case.

“Oh, ooooh...! This is the worst!”

“We can still manage since we have {Create Golem}, but man, a normal dungeon would be totally screwed right now.”

“Y-You’re right! Good thinking, Keima! Now beat that High Priestess down!”

“Yeah. Guess I’ll get to work building golems.” *But speaking of our dungeon monsters... I wonder what happened to Rin? Eh. At worst, they probably just felt a little shaking. Nothing to worry about.*

* * *

The High Priestess requested a meeting with me. It was the same kind of meeting as always, with the vice chief tagging along, but something was different this time. Her eyes had resolve in them. *Did she figure out my true identity? That’s terrifying to think about, but I gotta go. Town chiefs don’t have much authority over outsiders... ngh, I never should have become town chief! Though I guess any other person would’ve given her permission to destroy the Dungeon Core, so I guess I can’t complain too much.*

After getting Rokuko ready to withdraw me just in case, I sat down in front of the High Priestess. Wozma being present to see me disappear into thin air would be a necessary sacrifice. I could just pass it off as me using some kind of teleportation skill.

“The unfortunate truth is, circumstances have changed such that I will be forced to leave this town within three days. I thought it best to inform you of this.”

“I-I see. That is unfortunate, yes.” *Wh-Whew, she hasn’t found me out. That’s a relief.*

“...In bright news, I think I would like to accept your proposition.”

“Huh?” Proposition? What is she... Oh, is she taking my advice to get permission to destroy the Core from the Emperor? I wouldn’t think so, given what I learned from spying on her...

“Therefore, please prepare to depart. We will be heading to the Holy Kingdom in a few days.”

“...What are you talking about?”

“Our marriage, of course. I accept you as my husband.”

“Huh...? H-Hold on, wait a second. Where is this all coming from?”

“Ahaha. I never dreamed I would one day receive such a passionate confession of love.” *Are we on the same page here? Hello?*

“And so, town chief... rather, and so, Keima, I would like you to come with me back to my home. It’s first-rate land in the Holy Kingdom, normally unobtainable for an Empire citizen such as yourself, but an exception will be made once we are wed. Isn’t that an honor?”

“...Er, High Priestess?”

“Please, let’s shed such formalities. Authority has no weight before love. I would like it if you called me Alca.”

“High Priestess. Forgive my rudeness, but I’m the chief of this town... I can’t leave it behind.”

“Goodness, please address me as Alca... ah, my apologizes, you must be feeling very embarrassed right now. Ahaha, how silly of me. Feel free to call me what you like until you calm down.” *I’m not embarrassed and never am gonna be embarrassed around you.*

“Also, fear not. Once the Dungeon Core is destroyed, the dungeon will fade away and so too will the town. In which case, you will cease to be town chief and be free to come with me.” *Yeah, ’cause I’ll die. I’m a Dungeon Master. I die the second my Dungeon Core does.*

“...As I’ve said before, I cannot permit you to destroy the Dungeon Core.”

“I understand. Truly, I do.” The High Priestess gave a gentle smile. *No you don’t. You seriously don’t.*

...A cold sweat ran down my back. The way she refused to understand me felt just like Rin... actually, she was even more dense. *A-Anyway, I gotta turn her down.*

“Er, the truth is, I already have a partner...”

“A partner other than me, Keima?” *You’re not my partner*, I thought while nodding.

“And you’re saying you do not wish to leave her.” The High Priestess briefly fell into thought. She then clapped her hands in front of her chest and continued.

“Then she can come with us. Quite a good idea if I do say so myself.”

“...What?”

“The Church of Lux teaches that *the wealthy ought to increase and spread their wealth*, or in other words, recommends that individuals seek multiple wives and multiple husbands. Ah, but I have not had a single husband in my life, so fear not. You will be my first, Keima.” *They legalized harems there? I bet the nobles there sure are having the time of their lives.*

“Personally, I would not mind having a female partner. As she would be your partner as well, there is surely no issue with this... ah, but if she’s not human, please settle with keeping her as a mistress. Especially beastkin. Those are good as cattle or pets, but under the Church of Lux, they are legally not people.” Apparently, she had no issue with marrying women, but did have issues with beastkin. Also, the Church of Lux was apparently a human supremacist organization.

“Now then, Keima. Please grant me a kiss to seal our bond.”

“No, as I’ve said...”

“Here is my foot.” *Alright, let’s hear what the lady has to say.*

“The Church of Lux teaches that the one proposing must kiss the feet of the one they’re proposing to in order to seal the vow. This is a vow of marriage, so please kiss the skin of my foot directly. For mistresses you kiss them through the sock, and for slaves you kiss them on the shoe, but I’m sure a man of culture such as yourself knows all of that.” *I had no idea.*

The High Priestess sat on the sofa and began stripping off her shoes before my eyes. She pulled off her socks as well, dropping them to floor before stretching out her legs and pointing her toes at me. *Ngh...! She’s trying to seduce me...!*

“Ahaha. Are you feeling embarrassed again? You truly are shy, Keima. But when we return home, you will need to perform this kiss in front of an even greater crowd within a church. I believe it is best for you to get used to this now. So... Please, go ahead.” Alca wiggled her bare toes in front of my eyes. *Ngh... Ngggh!*

Suddenly, the door to the parlor burst open.

“Stop right there! I’m the only one who gets to play with Keima like that!”

“Rokuko?!”

“Oh my... Oh my oh my, Keima. Could this be her?” The High Priestess smiled and temporarily pulled her foot back. That was a real shame, but... er... never mind. *I thought I told Rokuko to stay in the Master Room. Not that I mind her coming here.*

“That’s right! I’m Rokuko, Keima’s partner! He has me, so he doesn’t want to marry you! Give it up!”

“Ahaha, so cute. Please feel free to call me Lady Alca.” *Oh, she’s sticking with lady there, huh?*

“Hmph, I don’t need to call you lady! In fact, you should call me Lady Rokuko!”

“Very well, I will call you Rokuko. After all, you’ll be returning to the Holy Kingdom and joining my family as well.”

“No I won’t be! Keima and I are staying here and living together forever!” Rokuko glared at the High Priestess, growling. *I wonder why she looks so cute right now. I mean, she’s literally growling. Maybe this is like, the suspension bridge effect? Oh no. Rokuko’s saving me so heroically I’m falling for her. Kyaaa.*

“Oh my, how troubling... You do know that this town will be gone soon, yes?”

“No it won’t! Don’t decide things on your own!”

“Well, have it your way. You may stay here and visit us on occasion.”

“Stop joking around! Listen up! I’m the most important person in the world to Keima! Look, he’s even given me a ring!” She showed her crimson ring to Alca. It was the ruby-enveloped orichalcum ring I had made for her.

“Oh my, what a splendid ring... Would you please make one for me as well, Keima?”

“No.”

“...That is problematic. It’d be unthinkable for a secondary wife to have a more splendid ring than I, your primary wife... Ah! I know. You can give me that ring, Rokuko.” Naturally, that stunned even Rokuko. But after a moment’s pause, she stuck out a trembling finger and shouted.

“Okay, let’s make a bet! You said you would destroy this dungeon within three days, right? If you can do that, I’ll let you have this ring! But if you don’t manage it, then give up on Keima and leave! Okay?!”

“Very well.” The High Priestess smiled. And thus, she left to prepare.

“...Good thinking, Rokuko. Both you and I will die if she destroys the Dungeon Core. No matter what, she’s not getting me or the ring. Time to get to work making whatever defenses we can, I guess.”

“R-Right. I kinda just said that without thinking, but I see what you mean.” *Oh. She was smart by accident again.*

I’ll just keep in mind the possibility that we could feign the dungeon’s death with a Dummy Core. Maybe going to the Holy Kingdom with the High Priestess wouldn’t be so bad... Uh, no, I’m not thinking about getting to kiss her feet. That’s irrelevant.

* * *

I headed to Neruneh’s lab, where she was researching Magic Golems... or rather, Gargoyles. Thankfully the use of Dummy Cores saved me a lot of time getting there. She was sitting at a desk and engraving a magic circle into a Slab Golem with her assistant Gargoyle standing by her side. I glanced over her shoulder and saw that it was a fire-spitting magic circle. It was fairly small with a diameter of about three inches. There were seven more like it, and they were all lined up in a circle.

“Ah, Master. What do you think? I got inspired by the cake you gave us the other day and made this! I think using eight magic circles in a circle will heat up cakes more efficieeently.”

“...It’s like the eye of a stove. Looks like your research is going well, huh?”

“Uh-huuuh. Right now, I’m researching how to activate multiple magic circles with one stone, and how to draw smaller magic circleees. The slabs you made for me are really easy to draw on, so I managed to get them really smaaall.” She was right, the circles were super small. I kinda wanted a magnifying glass... wait.

“To make magic circles smaller, do you just need to draw... I mean, engrave the lines smaller?”

“Uh-huh. All you need to do to make a magic circle is engrave the lines and melt the magic stone, so smaller lines make a smaller circle just fine. It’s just, my eyes aren’t good enough to draw anything smaller than these...” I opened up the DP catalog. *Yeaaah, tons of stuff is locked down. But magnifying glasses are a daily life item, so I bought one without issue.*

“This is...?! What’s going on, everything looks super big now! Wow!”

“Aren’t there glasses and lenses in this world?”

“Lenses? Glasses? There aaare. Those are sight enhancing equipment, right? Sometimes Soldiers of God have them on when summoned, and there are lots of replicas... What about theeem?” *Ahhh, makes sense. Assuming none of those heroes were super old, it’s possible there are no convex lenses in this world.*

“You know, I’ve heard that you can use water droplets to make things below them look biggeeer...”

“Those are convex lenses too. Though it’d be hard to carve a magic circle using something like that.” *Anyway, we’ve solved the sight issue. All that’s left is her being dexterous enough to draw smaller circles... I’ll try to figure something out.*

“Okay, enough about that. How many magic circles can you draw in one day by yourself, Neruneh?”

“U-Ummmm... Ten per day, I thiiiiink... I’m not sure I could do any more than that and keep the carvings accurateee.”

“...The problem’s just carving the lines themselves?”

“Just? That’s the most important part of making a magic circleee. After that

there's only plopping on a magic stone and letting it melt. If I could carve magic circles faster, I could make a hundred, two hundred, infinitely many a day as long as I had the magic stones for theeem." *Now that's what I like to hear. Why? 'Cause magic stones are treasure items and I can still buy them with DP.*

"Alright, then let's do it. Two hundred a day." Neruneh looked at me like a deer caught in the headlights.

I had thought of a plan to mass produce magic circles. I kept it secret since it'd be embarrassing if it failed, but if all went well, we could make as many magic circles as we wanted a day, be it two hundred or five hundred or more. If the High Priestess was getting serious, well, I had to get serious too.

First, I had Neruneh draw a magic circle into a slab. Then, I pressed iron softened with {Create Golem} against it and manipulated the iron to fill in the gaps, mimicking the shapes of the lines. With that done, I had a [Mold].

Next, I softened another iron slab with {Create Golem} and pressed the [Mold] against it. When I pulled back the [Mold], the lines of the magic circle remained pressed into the second slab. All I had to do was melt a magic stone into it and the circle was done.

"And there we go."

"Holy cooooow..."

The magic circle activated just fine after I put a magic stone onto it. Neruneh, staring at the completed magic circle, was stunned.

"I had no idea you could do this... Wooow, this is amazing. We can make as many circles as we want with this, riiiight?"

"Right. One hundred, two hundred, however many we want." Basically, I had made a stamp that could mass produce magic circles.

"You know, this is something only you could do, Master!"

"Huh? I don't think so. Making a mold is annoying, but once you've got one, you can press it into soft clay and stuff no problem. If you want the clay to last longer afterwards, you just have to heat it. Solid clay isn't the most durable stuff in the world, but eh, there are lots of ways to deal with that. Hm... You

know, you could just make a [Mold Making Mold] and then mass produce stone molds. After using the stone molds to make iron magic circles, you just need to break the stone molds and... done?" Neruneh froze. She was probably working it out in her head if that was possible. *I mean, seals are basically stamps just like this, so I feel like someone's probably already thought of something similar. Maybe they kept the techniques secret to ensure the value of magic tools stayed high? It's possible.*

"Master, that's... that's possible! This is a scientific revolutioooon!" Neruneh was extremely moved.

"While you're at it, you could make molds of letters and symbols to mass produce text too."

"Oh my gooosh! Master, you keep casually saying things that will change the woooorld! Hold on, let me get my memo paaaad!" Neruneh hurriedly got out a memo pad. *Relax, I'm not gonna run away or anything.*

And so, we now had a way to mass produce Gargoyles. I mean, Rin would probably do a good job of protecting on his own, but I needed to prepare for the worst case scenario. The High Priestess, when serious, might actually be able to beat Rin. *Worst case scenarios sure are scary. Thus, I prepare for them. I'll make a team of golems that can beat the High Priestess even if she gets past Rin somehow.*

High Priestess's Perspective

It was day one of getting serious. Despite that, Alca was ready to end things immediately. She speedily advanced through the dungeon, heading straight for the room with the black wolf camped within. She had gotten fairly used to the dungeon by now. Plus, thanks to the effects of {Trinity}, the dungeon was in a weakened state that allowed her to advance even more easily than before.

Weakened dungeons couldn't build new traps or increase the number of rooms. The seal only lasted for three days, but it was extremely useful for conquering dungeons. The best part about it was that while weakened, the boss monster wouldn't regenerate or revive. The black wolf in this dungeon was likely no exception. Which meant she only needed one victory. Once she killed

the black wolf, the dungeon was finished. All she had to do afterwards was dodge traps and unearth the Dungeon Core.

...There was no mistaking that the black wolf was this dungeon's boss, judging from its strength. Dungeons that haven't been conquered sometimes have their boss wandering the bottom floor. Indeed. She had encountered that phenomenon a few times before. The stronger and more violent the Dungeon Boss, the more likely it was. The violent black wolf that attacked intruders on sight without warning was the very embodiment of such a boss.

...*Slap!* The High Priestess struck her cheeks to build up enthusiasm. She then started gathering mana before entering the wolf's room. She peered inside while mumbling a chant to herself. The wolf was focused on the doorway... naturally, it had heard her slap herself. Alca clicked her tongue and entered the room before finishing her chant. The wolf leaped forward in response. The way its tail was wagging was kind of adorable, but its gaping mouth with its massive teeth bared was not so cute.

"Graaaaaah!" The wolf roared. But that was no longer enough to make the High Priestess flinch for even a moment. She knew firsthand that a moment's hesitation would lead to death on the spot.

She pulled herself back to dodge the first blow. Teeth slammed shut right before her eyes. She continued dodging, making sure not to end the chant early. She saw the wolf's right ankle move, and thus immediately squatted down. Its right claw slashed through the air from the side, passing right over her head. She felt the wind rush over her. Had it been one of those times where it swung vertically, she would have died. Her scalp got scraped and several strands of hair drifted to the ground.

The High Priestess felt a chill run down her spine. Despite her cold sweating, she knew from experience that the fight wasn't over yet. The wolf used the movement from its swing to charge forward. A massive boulder or rampaging horse carriage would look less threatening than it. The priestess used her momentum from crouching to roll to the left, avoiding it.

And finally, finished the incantation. The wolf's side was luckily right in front of her. The High Priestess subconsciously smirked, knowing that the power of

love had guided her to victory. She thrust out her right arm and yelled.

“...{Judgement Ray}!” Her arm flashed the moment she shouted the skill name. A second later, a pure beam of direct light shot out of her arm and pierced Rin’s body. The beam of light continued on through it and slammed into the ceiling, resulting in a large crater.

...It was her victory. The High Priestess grinned. But, the wolf didn’t collapse. Alca’s vision dimmed and sparked. She was losing consciousness due to having exhausted her mana supply.

Before she knew it, the High Priestess was lying atop a bed in the inn. She could see the Convenience Altar.

“Have you awoken, Lady Alca?”

“...Yes.” What had happened? She shook her foggy head and thought about what had happened prior to her revival.

{Judgement Ray}, the King-Rank Holy magic skill. It was above High-Rank and even Special-Rank. It was attack magic so powerful that a single beam spawned by it could sweep through and destroy an entire army. A holy strike gifted by God to destroy evil. The idea that it wouldn’t work against the clearly evil black wolf was unthinkable... and indeed, it had smashed a large hole into its side.

The hole was the size of a large barrel, big enough for a child to crawl through it. But despite that grievous wound, the wolf had bitten her. First, it ripped off her thrust out arm, then it chomped her head to pieces. Her memories were vague, but that was how she had died this time.

“Did you manage to use {Judgement Ray}?”

“Yes, using all of my mana. King-Rank skills truly bear a heavy cost.” Despite unleashing one of her trump cards, she was still eaten alive. The High Priestess sighed.

“...But I inflicted a wound most grievous upon it. The wolf should be dying as we speak...! I have won. The power of love truly is strong.” Although, regardless, she always won given enough time and deaths. She was nearly whisked away from this dungeon before winning, but just in time... she had won.

In either case, she decided to report her success to the Adventurer's Guild after confirming from the wolf's corpse that it was dead. Once that was done, she would have cleared one of her two goals for coming to the dungeon. After that, all she had to do was destroy the Dungeon Core.

"I have won our bet, Rokuko." The High Priestess let out a sigh of satisfaction.

Keima's Perspective

"That was, um, surprising."

"I thought you died for a second there, that was intense." Rin was fine. The hole in their side scared me for a second, but apparently they opened that hole on their own. *Guess that's the kind of tactic I should expect from a slime. Though thanks to that, there's a huge crater in the ceiling.*

"I had, a bad feeling, when she grinned, and thrust out, her hand."

"Good going, Rin. You're the man, Boss."

"Heheh. It's 'cause, I'm strong." *That sure is a lotta confidence. But I've gotta say, the High Priestess is stronger than I thought. I didn't expect her to dodge that many blows and launch a huge spell like that from up close. I certainly couldn't do that, even if I knew I'd revive from death. Seriously.*

"I'm, a little hungry. Uuma, I'm gonna, eat you, alright?"

"Huh? Yeah, sure. Have the whole thing."

"Omph. Nom nom nom..." The messenger disappeared into Rin's mouth in seconds. I got the feeling that it had been a while since they ate me. *And they said "I'm gonna eat you," not "can I eat you," as if they were gonna do it no matter what I said. Not that I mind. Yeah, I don't mind.*

And it looks like the High Priestess really does have no chance of beating Rin! Our dungeon's defenses are unbreakable! Yeaaah... Saying that feels like tripping some bad flags, so I'm just gonna stop there.

Anyway, the High Priestess didn't look like she'd be going into the dungeon again today, so I got to work mass producing Gargoyles. I was in the process of making Fire Arm Gargoyles that had thirty fire Magic Circles pressed onto their arms. So far, I had made ten. They were fundamentally just normal Iron Golems,

though I replaced their shoulders with clay to prevent them from burning themselves. *Their iron arms get super hot, y'know? Don't touch 'em unless you wanna get burned. Heheheh. Maybe I should make their arms shine, too. Would be even better if they screamed while on fire.*

The main problem with them was their enormous magic stone consumption. Each required 10 DP worth of magic stones to burn their arms for one hour. Not to mention that each magic circle needed a magic stone to activate, so each one cost 300 DP to make.

Regardless, magic stones offered us so much potential. Gargoyles are indeed the things of dreams... *Wait, does this fire still count as physical damage, not magic damage? Mmm, I might be able to test this by summoning a ghost type monster. I'll save that for when the High Priestess's seal goes away.*

High Priestess's Perspective

It was day two of her getting serious. The High Priestess stealthily peeked into the black wolf's room to see if it had died... and made direct eye contact with it. She dashed backwards to get distance between her and the room. Or in more direct terms, she ran the heck away without hesitating for a single moment. Again, she knew from personal experience that a second's hesitation would lead to death.

"Haaah, haaah... Haaah..." After getting decently far away, the High Priestess paused to catch her breath.

...Impossible. Was it an immortal wolf? The hole opened yesterday had already closed. How could this be?

Her only choice was to kill it in a single shot. Would it die if she destroyed its head?

An immortal beast? Regardless, one of {Trinity's} effects was to slow the regeneration of dungeon monsters. Doubly so for dungeon bosses, which mea —

...The High Priestess suddenly noticed that something was off. She couldn't find a single thing connecting the black wolf to the other monsters she had found within the dungeon. Generally, dungeons had their own trends and

themes. Some were fire-based, some were filled with demihuman monsters and others with beasts. Normally, those monsters lived in the dungeon serving the Dungeon Boss. This dungeon had within it, putting aside the Jellies that appeared in just about every dungeon, goblins and golems. They belonged to the Earth element, if anything.

Demihuman goblins and magical golems. They shared little connection, but still. Out of nowhere, there was a beast-type black wolf with an aura of Darkness. Thinking from a normal perspective, it was weird that the Boss had nothing to do with goblins or golems. It would have made more sense for the wolf to be, for example, human-shaped.

That said, it wasn't uncommon for some dungeon monsters to differ greatly from the boss monster, but still... She had never heard of a boss monster with absolutely no relation to the other monsters before. Darkness element. Beast-type. Overwhelming physical strength and regeneration powerful enough to make it seemingly immortal. Not a single thing about the wolf matched the dungeon. That was clearly abnormal.

"...Could it be? It's hard to believe, but... I have encountered cases of this before. It's possible." The High Priestess had an idea. Could the black wolf be a wild monster with no relation whatsoever to the dungeon? She had the hunch, and she felt that it was correct. Her research prior to entering the dungeon indicated that it was originally known as the [Ordinary Cave] and produced nothing but goblins. It underwent a paradigm shift, after which traps and golems began appearing within it. Not to mention Magic Blades. Wolves didn't enter that equation at all. It was much more believable that a fearsome wild monster had broke into the dungeon and took up residence within it.

...Speaking of which, the High Priestess had been summoned here after a mysterious monster had decimated adventurers on the second floor. She had heard from the Guild that the Puzzle Area's [Gates of Wisdom] had been destroyed as well. In other words, there was significant evidence that the monster had entered the dungeon from the outside. To sum things up, it was very likely that the black wolf was feral and had no relation to the dungeon.

In which case, {Trinity} was having no effect on it. That was very troubling, but at the same time, meant that it would not revive if she managed to kill it even a

single time. All she had to do was give it her all and win.

The High Priestess strengthened her resolve and prepared herself. She began chanting the incantation for {Judgement Ray}. The spell's immense power against evil beings was balanced with its incredibly long incantation. It was normal for King-Rank skills to have long incantations, but as a result, {Judgement Ray} tended to not be used in battle and instead found a role in public executions, serving as a symbol of God's light striking down sinners. Despite that, the High Priestess had no doubt in her mind that it was the best weapon she had against the black wolf. And this time, she would vaporize the wolf's head with it.

She peeked into the wolf's room just before finishing the incantation. The black wolf... wasn't there. That puzzled the High Priestess. But the incantation had started and she couldn't stop now.

She timidly took a step into the room. At first she thought that it would be hiding in the blind spots, but that wasn't the case. Had it left the room? That was very possible if it was a monster unrelated to the dungeon. It would be more odd for it to stay in the room knowing that someone nearby was hunting for its life. The only beings that would do something like that are those that can't move due to outside circumstances, idiots, or those confident in their ability to win.

But what should she do? The incantation was almost finished. She'd collapse from lack of mana after casting it, and that was a death sentence if she missed. A death sentence she couldn't afford when she had so little time left.

"Grrrr..." She heard the wolf growling. It was behind her.

"...{Judgement Ray}!" The timing was perfect. Better than any time before. She spun around with the beam bursting from her hand, and by chance it passed right through the wolf's head.

"I did it?!" The wolf's head exploded. But Alca still felt its brimming wrath. The strength left her body and she allowed gravity to pull her to the ground.

...The headless wolf's claws slashed right where her upper body used to be.

"Impossible! How can it move without a head?!" As her mind blurred from a

lack of mana, the High Priestess saw something impossible to comprehend. Clumps of dark something bubbled around the wolf's neck, and soon its head regenerated.

"Ha, haha... What in the world are you...?!"

"Graaaah!" *Chomp.* It tore Alca to pieces with its freshly grown head and teeth.

...She had one day remaining. How she could beat the black wolf in that time, she had no idea whatsoever.

Keima's Perspective — Day 299

"...Did you dodge that one too?"

"No, it hit. That was bad. It destroyed, some of my, body." Apparently, the beam being so ridiculously strong actually helped out. It vaporized everything it touched so fast there wasn't even time to feel pain. Although the force of the beam dug through them and pushed back the surrounding parts of their body, the wound didn't spread nor did it really hurt. Once they regenerated their head, they were back to normal. That wouldn't have worked if Rin was a normal monster... *Wait, don't Slimes have a core somewhere? Rin's gotta have one too. It must not be in their head, though... I guess you can put it wherever you want? Makes sense, that sounds like something a Slime should be capable of doing.*

"So. Keima. I'm eating you."

"Do you want seconds? I'm guessing you'll want more food since you had to regenerate some of your body. I can make a ton of golems for you if want."

"Sounds perfect. Give." I used the enormous amounts of clay around to mass produce golems and send them to the room with Rin in it. Since I could still use golems to dig out space without using DP, we had plenty of clay and stone lying around. *Plus, all the Spawners we placed around the dungeon are going a lot slower now. I need to get to work making lots of golems.*

Rin ate the golems as they flowed into their room. It was like an all you could eat buffet where all the food was brought to you. *Though I guess there aren't any buffets in this world... Yeah, just forget I said anything.*

“Whew. Feeling, better now.”

“Glad to hear it. Just one more day, friend.”

“Mm.” To finish things off, Rin ate the Messenger Golem I was controlling. *Now this is a guard I can count on. If we can last one more day, it’s our win. Though I get the feeling that losing today is gonna really demotivate Alca. Maybe she’s just gonna go home tomorrow?*

High Priestess’s Perspective

Alca rubbed her temples. What should she do? Neither piercing its body nor blowing off its head worked. Nor did poison, so... The only option left that she could think of was destroying its entire body in one shot. But she knew that the wolf would never let her do that. The difference in their power was staggering and insurmountable. That she landed the head blow today was pure luck.

...In any case, she decided to relax in the onsen. She didn’t have much time left at the inn. At the very least, she wanted to enjoy it while she could. It hurt deeply that she would be forced to leave without completing the quest or conquering the dungeon, but... Those worries could wait. Her greatest regret was her relationship with Keima. At this rate, she was going to return home without ever rewarding his love. But as High Priestess, she could not bring herself to break a promise by bringing him home with her.

“If Keima were alone, he might have been willing to defy fate to be with me, but...” That girl, Rokuko. Alca had heard rumors of how she and the town chief were close, but nothing about how possessive she was. They might have become friends if they had met under different circumstances.

The High Priestess put on a bathing suit and entered the onsen. Large baths such as it were even better than she had imagined. They were a luxury that enriched her heart.

This time, there was an inn employee in the onsen. Her name was Ichika, a slave with a Pavella dialect.

“Heya, High Priestess. What’s up, girlfriend? You’re looking kinda down.”

“...You can tell?”

“Course I can. Want me to massage your shoulders or something?”

“No need, there is a massage chair in my room.” Ichika splashed her way to the High Priestess. As fellow enthusiasts of the rat races, they had met and conversed many times in the recreation building.

“I hear Buzzington’s gonna be racing today. Whaddaya think? This could be our chance to earn some big bucks.”

“...Hm, you might be right.” That would require luck, however, and Alca felt that she had expended all her luck hitting the black wolf’s head with {Judgement Ray}. Though if she was going to lose anyway, she might as well bet on Buzzington and hope for a miracle.

“Girl, there’s def something bothering you. Wanna talk about it?”

“Mmm, well, how should I put this... It’s not exactly something I should be sharing with others.”

“Now, now. You’ll feel totes better after getting it off your chest, y’know?”

“...Well, I suppose I wouldn’t mind telling you, Ichika.” And so, after ensuring she wouldn’t tell Keima anything, Alca told Ichika her problems. She had to go back to the Holy Kingdom soon. There was a black wolf in the dungeon so strong she couldn’t beat it. Her bet with Rokuko. And also, she got the feeling that her attendant had recently begun to look at her butt with impure thoughts.



“That just means your attendant’s a healthy dude! And wait, you made that kinda bet with Rokuko...?”

“Shento can be persistent, but I prefer Keima’s passionate approach. His advances and gifts were splendid... ahaha, love! I could feel his love!” Alca considered being given anything difficult to obtain as being given a splendid present, and whether or not she paid money for that present was a trifling question not worth thinking about.

“Wait? That’s not gonna work. Like, yeah, that’s totally not gonna work. Master’s already got a partner, so like, right?”

“There is no religious problem with this. People should surround themselves with as many partners as necessary, as long as they have the resources to do so. To quote the scriptures: Give birth, increase in numbers, engulf the lands, and dominate all. And as I am the High Priestess, I have the resources.”

“The Church of Lux is pretty serious, dang! And wait, are you the one getting a harem here?!”

“Of course. I am the High Priestess, after all.” Alca puffed out her chest with pride. *What even is a High Priestess*, thought Ichika, even though the answer was right before her eyes.

“A-Anyway, a black wolf, huh? If you can’t win, why not just forget about him? Quests just aren’t worth dying over, for sure.”

“As I said, I must defeat it in order to obtain Keima.”

“W-Wait, hold on, girl. A-Are you for real? You’re really going after Keima?”

“Hm? Why would I not be? Love is best responded to with love, is it not?”

“Ummmm... But you can’t beat the wolf, right?”

“.....” Alca placed a hand on her forehead, thinking.

“Why sweat so much over beating it? Knowing when to give up is real important.”

“I understand, but still.”

“And I mean, Rokuko was with him waaaay before you. You’re kinda like,

crashing her gig here.”

“He is the one who approached me. In other words, regardless of the past, his love currently belongs to me.” Once again, Alca puffed out her chest in pride, expression smug.

“So, think you can beat the wolf?”

“That is my problem. Haaah, and what a problem it is. I will not be able to spread the glory of the Holy Kingdom at this rate.”

“Hey, let’s not sweat that kinda small stuff, y’know? Let’s go watch the rat races and have fun!”

“Ahaha. You truly do love the rat races, Ichika. I would love to have Keima establish similar races in the Holy Kingdom.” Alca cheered up a little thanks to Ichika’s encouragement. As an aside, she bet a small fortune on Buzzington that night and lost it all.

It was the dawn of the final day. Alca’s feet were heavy as she trudged to the dungeon. She had no brilliant plans to defeat the black wolf. But also had no intention of running away. There was a saying in the Holy Kingdom: Throw yourself upon the enemy, such that your corpse weighs them down. The High Priestess intended to live by those words and challenge the dungeon in hopes of causing whatever harm she could. But as she was lacking any enthusiasm whatsoever, she dragged her feet while advancing forward and crushing golems.

“...Oh? Was there always a wall here?” No, there wasn’t, and something was wrong. Her {Mapping} skill confirmed that there should have been a passage before her. The dungeon should still be unable to build new walls due to the {Trinity} skill. Had its effects worn off early?

...No. A side effect of that skill was that she became greatly weakened around the dungeon after it wore off. As it stood, she could still wield her powers to their fullest effects. Something else was wrong.

Regardless, a wall is a wall, so she took a detour around it. She soon found a passageway elsewhere in a location previously blocked by a wall. {Mapping}, {Detect Dungeon Traps}... For some reason, several of her skills ended up hardly

working in this dungeon. What an odd dungeon it was.

Eventually, she reached the room with the black wolf. Whether she liked it or not, she was there. It took a fair amount of time, thanks in part to her lack of enthusiasm.

“Now then... What to do, I wonder.” She paused in front of the room to form a plan. Would it be better to begin chanting right away or to take a thinking break?

“Hey.”

“...Hm?”

“Hey. You.” She heard a voice from somewhere. An adventurer, perhaps. Had someone other than her gotten this deep? She couldn’t see anyone... and the voice felt as if it was creeping out of the shadows themselves.

“Where are you?”

“Above.” She looked up. And there she saw the black wolf, standing on the ceiling with its four legs.

“...What?” It was walking across the ceiling with such confidence she began to question whether she was the one upside-down. But there was something that nagged at her. Who had spoken to her? No, never mind. She had actually figured that out already. There was nobody else around, after all, and most importantly, the wolf’s mouth was moving.

“You sure, come down here, a lot, human.” He didn’t bark or howl. He spoke thickly with frequent pauses.

“Y-You understand human language...?”

“Something, odd about, that? I can speak, lots of, languages. Graaw grrrr... See?”

“Was that wolf language? I don’t know how to speak that one.”

“...I see. You’re, an idiot.” It was true that highly intelligent monsters could understand and produce human speech. Dragons were famous for that. There wasn’t anything particularly shocking about a wolf as strong as this one being capable of speech.

Not to mention, this revelation just strengthened the High Priestess's suspicions of the wolf having come from outside of the dungeon. If the wolf had been born in the dungeon, it would have been very recently, and it was hard to believe that a newly born dungeon monster would have spent enough time with humans to learn their language. Not to mention that few humans had ever gotten this deep into the dungeon. It made much more sense that it had learned the language elsewhere and subsequently entered the dungeon.

The black wolf suddenly dropped from the ceiling, spun in the air, and landed on its feet. Alca reflexively raised her guard. But it didn't make any move to attack her.

"Why the ceiling?"

"To kill, time?" Apparently, there wasn't much significance behind it being on the ceiling. How it had kept itself up there was a mystery, but she knew for certain that had it launched a surprise attack on her from up there, she would have died before having enough time to scream. In other words, it didn't intend to kill her. Or at least, not yet.

Alca didn't know what it intended to do. The most likely answer was that it wanted to tease her, given how it could kill her at any time. She was like a ball of yarn rolling before a cat's feet. The wolf had all the power and authority. But she was fine with that. This was a good opportunity for her to observe it. She had already obtained new information, that being that the wolf could understand language. She was even having a conversation with it. Regardless of how the wolf felt, she was earning valuable time and information. An opportunity to defeat it might even arise given enough time.

After a deep breath, Alca spoke to the wolf.

"So, what business do you have with me?"

"You are, pretty tasty."

"...I'll have to take your word for it, as I've never eaten myself before."

"Basically. You are, offering up, food to me, right?" The High Priestess smiled bitterly on the inside. Apparently, the wolf had just been looking at her as free food this entire time. She had pushed herself to literal death, suffering agony

beyond the greatest torture, and ultimately, even her greatest attack landing a clean hit was nothing more to the wolf than cute prey fighting back a little before being eaten. Not only that, but prey that went out of its way to come be eaten.

"H-Hmph. So, what are you planning?"

"Heh." The black wolf let out a hoarse laugh. A shiver ran down Alca's spine each time she saw his teeth, those that had stolen her life so many times before.

"I'll let, you, serve me."

...It took the High Priestess about thirty seconds to understand what he had just said.

Keima's Perspective — Day 300

"...What?" Rin suddenly asked the High Priestess to serve them. My head went blank for a second. *Wait, seriously? They could speak in a human language this whole time?!*

Anyway. What was it that Rin had said when I joined their pack or whatever? They said that I was offering up food to them, which made me their follower. Something like that. Let's think back to what the High Priestess has been doing every day for a while now. Once per day, she'd enter the dungeon. Aaand get eaten by Rin. What's the difference between that and Rin eating my Messenger Golems?

"...Absolutely nothing! Dammit! This is real bad!" *Taste-wise, the High Priestess was definitely higher rank than me, too. We gotta do something. Someeethiiing...* I decided to go ahead and call Rokuko over. Using the Dummy Core there, I went straight into her room from the Master Room.

"Hey, Rokuko! Things got real bad real fast! Emergency meeting!"

"Wha, Keima?! Warn me before you come in here!" For some reason, Rokuko was in the middle of changing. *Whoops. Sorry.*

"Let's worry about that later."

"How about no! Wait, what do you mean, things got bad? What happened?"

“Rin made the High Priestess their follower too.”

“Okay, I understand. Let’s worry about this changing thing later, that sounds really bad.” *Yep, Rokuko sure has been smart lately. I’m glad we got on the same page fast.* Rokuko hurriedly got on a shirt and we headed to the Master Room. All of that took about thirty seconds total.

“So the High Priestess is their follower now... What happened after that?”

“Dunno, they haven’t moved. For now, just call over everyone who’s free. We’re gonna be going on the defensive.” Suddenly, the High Priestess unfroze. I leaned forward to eavesdrop on her conversation with Rin.

“Your... follower?”

“Yeah. Follower. A good follower, offers up food, to their boss, right?” *Waaait, is Rin gonna tell Alca everything about me? I mean, they still think I’m a golem, so that shouldn’t cause too much issue, but still...*

“You’re my follower, so if anything’s, bothering you, go ahead and, tell me.”

“...Ummm, very well. There is one thing I’d like to ask you. Did you come from outside of this dungeon?”

“Call me, boss.”

“Wha?”

“Boss.”

“Y-You want me to call you, boss?”

“Yes.” That was apparently very important to Rin. They wouldn’t budge on the subject.

“...B-Boss, did you come from outside the dungeon?”

“Yeah. ’Cause, I’m strong. This place, is mine.” I had gotten used to it by now, but it really was difficult to have a conversation with Rin. To summarize what they had just said: *Yes. I came from outside the dungeon. Basically, I’m super strong, so I conquered this place and took this room for my own.* What was my secret to understanding them? Just time and effort.

“...You took over the dungeon? I suppose that’s not unthinkable...”

“Yeah. So, if that’s all, I’m gonna, eat you.”

“P-Please wait just a moment! E-Eat me? Do you eat all your followers?”

“Hm? What’s, the problem? You come back, no matter, how many times, I eat you.”

“...Today is different. More importantly, um... I would like to see the Dungeon Core. Do you know where it is?”

“Dungeon Core? What’s that?” *Oh yeah, speaking of which, Rin didn’t recognize our Dungeon Core. When I invited them to our side, I was pretty vague about it and didn’t give any real details. Too bad they turned us down.*

“...Is there a shining orb about yea wide around here?”

“Mmm... Yeah, there’s something, like that.”

“Please bring me to it! Where is it?!”

“Aaah, somewhere, over here. Follow me.” They didn’t know what a Dungeon Core was, but they knew about a shining orb. After all, they had started off sleeping in the Core Room. Rin started walking off with the High Priestess following behind them. *Alright. Defensive measures, begin. Everyone’s in the Master Room now, ready to fight. Except Kinue. She’s taking care of the inn for us.*

“Master, the Haniwa is ready to go at your signal.”

“I’m already moving the Wall Golems around, dude. I went ahead and made them take a huge detour, ‘kay?”

Niku and Ichika displayed competence, as usual.

“The Archer Golem is prepared and ready, Master.”

“I’ll comamnd the Gargoyle Platoooon! You gave me so many magic stones, I made a ton of theeem!”

“Oh, a new platoon! Can I use some of them?”

“Suuure, use them as you liiiike!” Rei took command of the multi-legged Archer Golem while Neruneh and Rokuko commanded the Gargoyle Platoon.

“Alright, time to start defending... but first, let’s evacuate the Dungeon Core.

The actual real Core's still in the room where Rin was sleeping before, so yeah."

"Okay. I should just Castle it into my room, right?"

"Yep. Go ahead." I had put the Core back into its room after Rin left it, as it was still in the deepest part of our dungeon. The other route was still in development. I got the feeling that I had put too much time and effort into researching Magic Tools lately.

...Once the Dungeon Core was back in town, we could begin defensive measures without needing to worry too much. Even if they got to the Dummy Core and destroyed it, nothing would happen. Rin could take the High Priestess straight to the Core Room and we'd be fine. *Man, I sure love being safe.*

"Ah..."

"Hm? What's up?"

"Castling is unavailable... For fifteen more hours. It's sealed." Rokuko paled as she spoke. *Huh? Wait, does that mean...*

"Are we maybe, uh, stuck here?"

"There's no maybe about it. We have to fight them now." A cold sweat ran down my back.

"Y'know, it's been a while since my old friend Death has come to pay a visit..." I let out a murmur and the Master Room fell silent.

"...Keima. Why the heck...?"

"Ah, sorry. I didn't mean to bring everyone down."

"That was super cool! I wanna say that next time too, 'my old friend Death,' haha!"

"Please, stop. I'm sorry. It's my fault. Spare me." I apologized to Rokuko, ignoring her beaming grin, and got to work initiating our defensive battle. Basically, we'd win if we could kill the High Priestess a single time, since she had to leave town by tomorrow.

High Priestess's Perspective

Alca, the High Priestess, quietly followed the black wolf as they guided her.

She thought back to how this had happened. The wolf... Boss had apparently considered her actions to be a form of submission, a daily offering of food. Fairly good food, at that. Perhaps she had been accidentally performing Selfless Offering and Beloved Meal from their perspective.

"...Without even knowing it, I lived in accordance to the principles of the Church of Lux's teachings, and thereby made the wolf reform through the power of love. I'm quite impressed with myself." That was the conclusion she came to. Speaking of which, the wolf's pitch-black tail looked quite cute as it waved in front of her. It was as if she had become a Tamer. The original High Priestess had tamed reformed monsters just like this. Indeed, Alca was quite proud of herself.

Either way, though, it was quite nice to be guided through the dungeon without getting lost.

"Mmm...? Was there, always, a wall here?" Correction: They were lost. But the wolf followed up by saying something unfathomable.

"...I think I'll, break it. Sniff, sniff... yeah. I can, break it."

"Eh?! You can break it?"

"I can. 'Cause, I'm strong. I can, break it, if you want." What an extraordinary monster this wolf was, to be capable of destroying dungeon walls. But the High Priestess knew that, even when under the effects of {Trinity}, the dungeon could somehow repair its walls incredibly fast. Even a completely destroyed wall would be reformed within a tenth of a second. In the past, she had gotten stuck inside a wall and died. It hurt to have lost an entire day like that.

"No, that won't be necessary. Let us look for another path."

"Alright." The black wolf turned around. And a moment later, Alca heard the whistling of wind.

"Ngh!" She reflexively tilted her head to the side. An arrow immediately flew right by where her head had been. Nonetheless, pain ran through her. A second arrow had been hidden in the shadow of the first, and it pierced her shoulder. A direct, well-aimed hit. She glanced at where the arrow had came from and saw a golem wielding a bow with both hands. No, actually, "both hands" was a poor

way to phrase it, as the golem was a Variant with four arms and legs. The arms stretching from its back wielded a second bow.

However, the wolf immediately ate it. There was no second volley.

“Ngh, a mere golem could be so strong...? ■■、■■■■■■■ — {Healing}.” She forcibly pulled the arrow out. The twisted metal of the arrowhead ripped her flesh, but she paid that no mind. The wound was tingling, which meant poison. She slathered anti-poison medicine on it and cast her own healing magic. Her torn flesh regenerated thanks to the healing powers of mana.

The black wolf returned to her.

“Hey. It, attacked you, so, I ate it. Was that, bad?”

“...No, you saved me.”

“Mmm. Good, then. Let’s go.” The black wolf resumed walking, as if nothing had happened. Alca followed behind it. If they hadn’t helped her, she would have likely been hit with another poison arrow, which would have delayed her self-aid. Suddenly, she realized that the wolf had gone out of their way to protect her.

“Hm.” The wolf’s tail flicked. Four arrows fell to the ground. Alca had also noticed that a new archer had appeared. But she hadn’t noticed that there was a second one too. Indeed, two Variants had attacked her. Both had the extra limbs... It was abnormal for multiple Variants to have the same traits, so perhaps this was just a new species of golem. If named, they would perhaps end up being called Hecatoncheir Golems.

“What, are you, gonna do?”

“...I will destroy them.” Alca took out a battle hammer from her {Storage}. Nothing was better for taking out golems, in her opinion, and Variants should be no exception.

This time, the wolf didn’t help her. But they didn’t attack her from behind, either.

She returned to them after easily defeating the golems.

“Alright. Let’s, go.”

“Yes.” The High Priestess had always explored dungeons alone. She always died alone and conquered alone. Things would be different if she had any allies that could revive after death, but unfortunately she had yet to meet any. Though she might have found such a person if she actively searched for them, but... Either way, she had never been protected by anyone before. Surprisingly enough, she had even been protected by the being she was being paid to eliminate.

...She felt her heart thump. Perhaps some of the poison had gotten into her bloodstream before she purified the wound.

“Hm? There’s, a wall here, too... I’ll break it.”

“No need, I have {Mapping}. Let us search a little longer. Breaking the wall will be our last resort.”

“Alright. That’s fine... Just be sure, to follow, closely. You’re, pretty weak.”

“I suppose I am... Ahaha.” The High Priestess listened to the wolf and followed behind them as they searched for a path. It was also the first time she was the one following another through dangerous territories. In the past, even in the instances where she requested guidance, Alca had always ended up walking in the front. It was the High Priestess’s duty to protect others as long as she was alive. After all, she was stronger than any other.

And yet, she was now being protected by the black wolf, someone stronger than her. Alca walked through the dungeon, feeling quite unlike she had ever felt before. She even thought it might be nice if conquering the dungeon took a bit longer than expected.

They were ambushed by multiple golems along the way, but either Alca easily dodged their attacks or the black wolf blocked them to protect her. At some point, a spiked turtle-like golem Variant appeared, but from Alca’s perspective it wasn’t that different from a normal golem and went down without issue.

To speak just of monsters would be to ignore the many traps. Alca fell down pitfalls, but had the back of her shirt bitten by the black wolf who then pulled her back to safety. Once they opened a door a sword shot out, piercing the black wolf right through the chest. But the sword didn’t leave any scars on their chest and they seemed fine. The High Priestess offered to cast {Healing} on

them, but the wolf was just confused, asking why healing was necessary when they weren't tired or hurt... Regardless of how the sword had apparently stabbed right through it.

Eventually, the majority of the floor was recorded on {Mapping}. They were running out of options. But right as they began to discuss going through with breaking a wall...

They found a golem sitting defenseless in front of a wall. It looked like a normal golem at first glance, but it ended up being the most unique Variant yet.

"Yo. Finally here, huh?" It spoke human language.

"Mmm? Uuma. What are you doing?"

"That's my line. Rin, what are *you* doing?"

"I'm, guiding, her. Uuuh... What was, your name, again?"

"Um, ah, right. I'm Alca." The High Priestess answered honestly, albeit stumbling a little.

"I'll, introduce, you two. This is, your comrade, Uuma. Uuma, this is, my new follower. Play, nice."

"Eh? Comrade?"

"...I'm Uuma. Another one of Rin's followers. I'd really appreciate it if you just left the dungeon right now." It spoke in an odd, gravelly voice, but it had unmistakably introduced itself.

"...Um, you are a golem, yes?"

"Surprised to hear a golem talking? I'm not so sure there's anything weird about me. Rin talks too, y'know." Alca was more surprised at how fluently it could talk rather than the fact that it could talk itself. More importantly, however...

"Rin?"

"That's, my name. Call me Boss, Uuma." The wolf's name was Rin. Alca carved that name into her heart.

"Hey, Alca. We're comrades, so do me a favor and leave the dungeon."

“I cannot do that. Today is the last day I have.”

“Yeah? Well, sorry to hear that. Boss, I’m gonna kill this girl. Don’t get in my way.” The golem Uuma slowly stood up, back to the wall.

“Wait. Why would you do that?”

“Should be obvious. You’re an adventurer trying to conquer this dungeon, and me? I’m a dungeon monster, unlike Boss. What else am I gonna do but stop you?” Uuma answered with a very human-like shrug despite being a golem. But regardless, it was indeed natural for a dungeon monster to fight to protect its dungeon.

“Research has shown that intelligent monsters can survive even after the death of their dungeon. Would that not be more convenient for you, Uuma?”

“Nope, not at all. Protecting the Dungeon Core’s my job.” Perhaps he was the dungeon boss. But why would the boss be sitting around outside of its room like that?

“You’ve probably noticed by now, but if you wanna get through this floor, you’ve gotta kill me. I’m gonna fight with all my allies to stop you, though. Rin. Would you mind backing off for me? Normally, all those traps and arrows woulda killed her a long time ago.”

“Mmm. You’re right. And you’re weak, too, Uuma. I’ll, protect, you both. ’Cause I’m, the boss!”

“What?”

“Huh?”

Apparently, Uuma struggled to understand Rin just like she did. They both looked at the wolf in confusion.

“...Alright, I’m gonna fight her now. Don’t interfere.”

“No. I’ll, protect her.”

“...Would you at least turn around and stop going through the dungeon?”

“Mmm? No. I promised, her.” Uuma shook his head, exasperated, and turned back to the High Priestess.

“You might as well give up here. You’re not gonna find what you’re looking for past me. I already took care of it.”

“...That’s a lie, isn’t it,” Alca murmured.

“A lie? Got any proof? I’ve said nothing but the truth.”

“I have the {Eyes of Truth}, a skill that can identify lies. You are quite guilty right now.”

“I see. So, what are you gonna do about that?” Alca silently swung her battle hammer. But a black tail shot out and blocked it.

...Uuma didn’t even flinch. Either he had a lot of confidence, or he knew Rin would protect him.

“...Rin, don’t interfere.”

“Interfere? With what?”

“It’s been a long time since we’ve struggled this hard to understand each other. Hey, Alca. Turn back. You’ve gotta take me down if you wanna go any further.”

“Boss? He is forcing my hand here. Will you allow us to fight?”

“There’s, no helping, you two. Guess I’ve got, no choice. Uuma. I’m gonna, eat you.” A second later, Uuma was inside Rin’s stomach. So much for protecting them.

“Um, Boss. Were you not going to protect us?”

“Don’t worry. Uuma can, revive as much, as he wants, too.” The nearby wall crumbled, likely due to Uuma’s death. It revealed a passageway continuing further on.

Keima’s Perspective

“...Whew. That’s one job done.”

“Good work, Keima.”

There was a high chance that she recognized my voice, but thanks to the flaws of golem voice reproduction, I wouldn’t be surprised if she didn’t notice. If she

asked me anything, I would just say it was mimicking the voice of the first adventurer to reach that floor. And I mean, that wasn't a lie, either. It was mimicking my voice and I was the first adventurer to reach that floor.

Anyway, I had been forced to go out there since it was impossible to kill the High Priestess with Rin around. It ended up just being a quick meet and greet before an equally quick death, though. I would have liked to kill the High Priestess then and there if I could've. Regardless, she and Rin were going down the passageway behind the wall I had been sitting in front of. In other words, they were heading straight to the magma area with the door connecting to the [Flame Caverns].

I had said "You might as well give up here. You're not gonna find what you're looking for past me. I already took care of it" back there, and yeah. The thing she was looking for, a Dungeon Core, was in fact in the [Flame Caverns], and I certainly hadn't taken care of it. Yep! I hadn't told the truth! *And it looks like the High Priestess does have a skill to detect lies, just like I expected. That could've been a bluff, but she said I was 'quite guilty' after I did indeed lie. Should be fine to just assume she does have the skill and keep operating under that assumption.*

...Though, it must be a pretty amazing skill if it detected lies through the golem. Maybe it was a bluff? Ah, nah. It's very likely that the Holy Kingdom prioritized giving her all their rare skills. Her rate of survival is a solid one hundred percent, so there's no risk of losing their investment.

Anyway, they beat me and the path forward opened. But that path didn't lead to our Dungeon Core. By the time Alca realized she had been tricked, the day should be already over. We could relax. The golems, traps, and poison arrows made from leftover toxins I bought for Rin had all ended up ineffectual, forcing me to go out myself, but that was fine. We would be fine once they got to the [Flame Caverns]. That dungeon wasn't sealed, after all. *Uh... They're not sealed, right? Just because we're connected? They would have come over and complained if they got sealed, I'm sure.*

"We did it, Master. Rokuko."

"...You've gotten a lot better with that Archer Golem, Rei."

“Yes, I have trained quite extensively with it, as golems are the only means by which I can inflict damage. I used my DP wages to buy an archery skill scroll... Ahaha. Though I remain unable to beat Niku. What’s that, Niku? You are just a normal beastkin child? Ahhh, you can easily dodge my arrows since you can see them flying through the air? Ahaha, that’s ridiculous, ahahahahhaha.” Rei let out dry laughter with her eyes looking distant and war-torn. I had seen her skills before, but she was really was getting stronger every day. I probably couldn’t beat her in a golem fight myself anymore.

Rin and Alca reached the entrance to Rokuko’s magma area, which connected to the [Flame Caverns]. Rin had previously avoided going further here, but it didn’t seem like they had any particular weakness to magma. Apparently, they had the very agreeable reasoning that it looked too stuffy and hot for comfortable sleeping.

As an aside, they’d be totally fine drinking magma like water. Which is messed up. Like, what the hell, seriously?

“Boss. The atmosphere of the dungeon changed quite significantly here.”

“...I’ve never, gone through, here. So, I don’t, know where, to go.” Rin and Alca advanced forward, jumping from stepping stone to stepping stone. *Is it just me, or is Alca totally fine with calling them “Boss” now?*

“...There’s no point in sending normal golems to fight Rin.”

“I guess the Gargoyles we made won’t get to fight this tiiime.”

“It’ll look suspicious if they don’t find anything, so I’ll send Phenny after them. Go on! Beat’m up, Phenny!” At Rokuko’s orders, Phenny attacked them.

“Ah! That’s... a Phoenix?! And it’s a different color than any I’ve ever seen before! L-L-Let’s catch it!”

“Mmm? That must, be one of, Uuma’s, monsters.”

“Tame! Let me tame you, please!!! The original High Priestess had a Phoenix partner! Please! I-I also want a Phoenix partner!!!”

“Phenny, run!” Alca tried capturing him, so we had Phenny run away. She tried jumping into the sea of lava to chase after him, but Rin stopped her.

“He’s, someone else’s, follower. You have, to stop. If you want, him, ask Uuma.”

“Aww... Wh-When I destroy the Dungeon Core...! Please come to my side, before the cave collapses...!” *I wonder if she’ll give up on destroying the Core if we promise to give her Phenny... ah, Rokuko, don’t glare at me like that. Yeah, we couldn’t do that. Ahahaha.*

Eventually, they found the door leading to the [Flame Caverns]. Finally, I can go to sleep peacefully... or so I thought, right before the High Priestess spun around and pulled Rin back.

“Boss, it looks like this is the entrance to another dungeon. The [Flame Caverns], if I would have to guess. Let us go back.”

“Mmm? This is, someone else’s, home? Alright. We can visit, later.”

...Wait, how’d she know that? Seriously? What the heck are you, High Priestess...?

“...What do we do now, Keima?”

“We’ve got no choice but to beat them back now. Guide them straight to the Boss Room. I wanted to save them for later, but it’s time to show off my new army. Also, we’ll use the anti-Rin golems I made.”

“Wha? When’d you make make those, Keima?” *C’mon, you know I’m gonna prepare for everything I can. I don’t wanna die here.*

High Priestess’s Perspective

“It seems we ended up going in the opposite direction that you initially intended, Boss.”

“...I see. Good job, noticing that.”

“Indeed. This much is natural for me. To attempt such a trick is impressive, however. I see that Uuma is quite the strategist.”

“You think, so? Uuma’s, weak. Anyway. Let’s, go.” Alca looked quite proud as she retraced her steps across the stepping stones. She was walking right behind Rin as if it was the most natural thing in the world. Unfortunately, the Phoenix

was nowhere to be seen. It must have been hiding somewhere.

...Very unfortunate indeed.

They finished crossing the rivers of hot magma and returned to the original dungeon made of stone brick walls and flat stone paving.

“This is the direction you initially intended to go, wasn’t it?” They walked through the dungeon as Alca used her {Mapping} to check her map of the dungeon. In the past there had been a wall in front of where they stood, but it crumbled after they defeated Uuma.

“...I see. Uuma is the key to reaching our destination.”

“Mmm. That’s, annoying.”

They advanced forward, encountering no traps in particular, and soon found another golem sitting in front of a wall. It was Uuma. Uuma looked similar to other golems, but his aura was so different they could both recognize him immediately. The very way he sat on the ground felt reminiscent of a human being.

After seeing Alca and Rin, Uuma lifted up a hand in greeting.

“Yo. Kinda hoped you would keep going in that direction, y’know.”

“That was a clever trap. A normal adventurer would have fallen right for it, Uuma. I did not expect you to exploit my [Eyes of Truth] in such a manner. This has proved to be quite a learning experience.”

“Haaaah... I’m gonna ask one more time. Leave this dungeon.”

“I refuse.” The High Priestess rejected his request with a bright smile. Uuma sighed and shrugged.

“What about you, Rin? Any way I can get you to stop her?”

“Mmm? Nah. Don’t think so.”

“Looks like I’ve gotta take you both down, then. Listen up. I’m gonna be waiting in the room up ahead. Come inside when you’re ready to die.”

“Heh heh, heh. Think you, can beat me? Alright! Give it, your best shot!” Rin swallowed Uuma whole. The force of their charge ended up destroying the wall

behind him too.

...There was a door behind it. An extravagant door that practically announced itself as leading to the Boss Room. The room Uuma had spoken of was no doubt behind this door.

“Do you think that Uuma will be capable of defeating you, Boss?”

“Heh, heh. Who knows. He’s weak, but... smart. Really, smart.” Uuma appeared to be as smart as a human... no, even smarter than a human. A being that intelligent was this dungeon’s boss, and Alca had to defeat it. She braced herself.

The door opened while creaking heavily. Inside the room were two knight statues made of gleaming iron. They were sitting on horses, fully armored and with lances in hand, but the front guards of their helmets were raised such that their faces were visible.

...Both were completely blank, like unmarked eggshells.

Where was Uuma hiding? They slowly walked forward.

.....

Uuma didn’t show up even after a brief wait.

“...He’s, late.”

“He certainly is taking his time.” Perhaps he was tricking them into letting their guard down. Or perhaps he had been referring to the room past this one.

“Let us proceed. He might be waiting in the nex—” Death. Alca took two fast steps back. A lance stabbed into the ground where she was a moment prior. It shot back up, but Rin jumped between them and blocked the slice.

The knight statue had moved, revealing itself as a golem. It was the first time she had seen a golem knight complete with a golem horse, but anything was possible when it came to the dungeon boss. Its surprise attack had been effective. If not for Rin, she would likely have died then and there.

“Heheh. Uumaaa! This is you, Uuma, isn’t it! You’re looking, real tasty, now! Ha!” Rin laughed in excitement.

“...Alright. Let’s do this.” The Knight Golem spoke while lowering the front guard of its helmet. That was unmistakably Uuma’s voice. He took a few steps back and entered a fighting posture.

“I’ve been waiting for this! Let us duel!”

“Heheheh! Hahaha, hahaha! Here I, come! Uuma!” Rin and Uuma dashed forward at the same time, slamming into one another... Or so Alca expected, but instead, Uuma speedily jumped off his horse mid-dash. The horse alone charged forward toward Rin.

“This strategy, again...?!” Rin opened their mouth impossibly wide to swallow the horse, and a second later, the horse ruptured and launched an avalanche of something white into their mouth.

“Nghaah?! Bwaah! Sppth, sppth! This is, s-salt?!”

“There’s plenty more where that came from. Eat up.” The door behind Uuma opened up and a white horse charged through. After four more horses came through, the door slammed shut.

“W-Wait, Uuma? Are those, all, made of salt?!”

“There’s plenty more where that came from. Eat up.” Uuma spoke the same line as before with a flat, emotionless voice. White horses made of salt... the Salt Horses mercilessly began chasing after Rin.

Alca, watching Rin distance themself from Uuma and the horses, blocked the swing from behind with her battle hammer.

“I’m afraid that even with salt softening your footsteps, you stand out far too much, Uuma.”

“.....”

“Oh my, do you have nothing to say? Don’t hesitate to praise my sharp senses. Or could it be that only one of you can talk?” It was the second Knight Golem. It had tried to launch a surprise attack on her while they were focused on the first golem. But Alca had expected someone like Uuma to pull such a trick, and to some extent had known what he would do before he did it. In fact, she was actually disappointed that she had outplayed him so easily.

“...Alright. Let’s do this.”

“Indeed. It will all be over soon, my comrade.” Their battle began with Uuma saying the same thing he had to Rin.

Uuma’s swordplay was similar to that of a trained knight. But his execution of the techniques was sloppy, making him seem about as experienced as a C-Rank adventurer. Alca piled on attacks with her battle hammer. She couldn’t expect any help from Rin, given that all their attention was dedicated to avoiding the Salt Horses chasing them. But she knew this was one battle she could win.

“Ahaha. Compared to Boss, you’re nothing!” The sound of metal slamming together echoed through the air. Alca’s battle hammer was made of black steel, a metal far more hard and durable than iron. In contrast, both Uuma’s armor and sword were made of simple iron. Each time he blocked one of her strikes, his sword let out a screech and bent a little.

“Come on, come on! You can’t beat me like this! Hyah! Take this, and that!” Uuma’s technique grew increasingly sloppy, as if reflecting his panic and the damage he was taking. Alca continued her merciless barrage of attacks.

Suddenly, Uuma stumbled and crouched down. He threw his sword aside and spread out his arms, thrusting them forward.

“What’s this? You want me to spare you? Ahaha. I’m afraid that even if you throw away your sword, I still need to defeat you if I want to reach the Dungeon Core. Therefore, I must finish you off.”

“...Eat up.” Uuma’s right hand shot up, finger pointed to the ceiling. Alca, staying on guard for a surprise attack from Uuma, looked up. There was nothing. Actually... No, wait. The ceiling was white.

A second later, the ceiling collapsed. It was actually a massive hoard of salt. That meant nothing to Uuma and his Salt Horses, as they were golems, but Rin and Alca were forced to shut their eyes as the heavy layer of salt slammed onto them.

“Mghaah! Sphh, sph! Ngggh! Tastes, so bad! So, so bad! Geeeh! Sph!” Alca could hear Rin groaning in pain. Apparently, a Salt Horse had taken advantage of the distraction to jump into their mouth. Was salt Rin’s weakness? Yes, it

must have been, and that was no doubt exactly why Uuma had somehow prepared so much of it.

“Ngh!” She opened her eyes, battle hammer at the ready, and saw Uuma in front of her. Perhaps due to the freedom offered by his lack of a weapon, or perhaps due to being unaffected by the rain of salt... Uuma’s left hand was much, much closer to Alca than it used to be. And a second later, a thin something burst with great force from his hand, piercing her right through the heart.

“...Wha?” Alca coughed up blood. It had apparently cut through her lungs, too, or perhaps her wind pipe. The iron breastplate she was wearing had been cut straight through.

“A golem... casting, magic? When did you, chant the incantation...?” She wanted to chant a healing spell, but Uuma likely wouldn’t give her the time or opportunity to do so. But even if he did, blood was pooling in her lungs and she could hardly even breathe. Her words ended up choppy and broken, much like Rin’s. Alca knew from experience that she was already dead.

“Cough. Ahaha... I let, my guard, down. It seems, this is my, loss...”

“.....” Uuma said nothing of how his magic worked. He couldn’t afford to give parting words of wisdom to a dying adventurer. Reason being, this was one adventurer that would come back to life. She would think up a method for countering his power if he revealed what it was. So, he said nothing. He answered none of her questions.

That said, Alca could extrapolate from the evidence in front of her. Her clothes were wet, which meant it had likely been some kind of Water magic. Since it pierced her iron breastplate in a single instance, it was likely magic of High-Rank or above. Uuma was not a golem, but rather a Gargoyle. She didn’t know the details, but it’d be safe to say that he could cast that high-level Water magic without a chant. Which meant that next time, she could win. Next time for sure.

...However, that next time would have to wait. Alca wouldn’t be able to enter the dungeon for some time. That was one restriction of {Trinity}.

“Mmn?! H-Hey, you there?! Did he, beat you?!”

“Ngh... Forgive me, Boss... I will, return, someday... I swear it...” Alca slowly shut her eyes, unable to resist her darkening consciousness. *Aaah... I think I would have liked for Rin to eat me one last time. Though I don’t think they would, given all the salt.* Somewhat odd thoughts flashed through her mind as she died.

Keima’s Perspective

“Alright! We killed the High Priestess!” I reflexively struck a victory pose. *I’m so glad I beat her. If she survived that, I would’ve had to start a war of attrition with the fifty Fire Arm Golems I stocked up on. It’d be super uncool if we had to reveal our Gargoyle army after hiding it for this long. Anyway. Rin doesn’t care about our Dungeon Core themself, so with the High Priestess out of the way, it’s our win.*

“...That was crazy strong. Was that the Gargoyle stuff you’ve been researching, Keima?”

“Yup. A weaponized arm, styled after Gargoyles.” Water Cutter. That was the true name of the attack which had pierced Alca’s heart. I had hidden water-creating magic circles in the golem’s left arm—about a hundred of them. I piled up thin partitions inside its arm to fit all of the circles in one place. The result was a very dangerous weapon that initially made the entire arm explode. *Man, I’m sure glad I built a second room just for testing next to the main lab.* Ultimately, I started by filling the arm with water, carved the magic circles into plastic made from water bottles, and slid in layers of black steel to complete a triple layered setup.

Each magic circle could make about a cup’s worth of water in a split second. One of those was forced into a single arm—a large arm, since it was a Haniwa Golem—and all of them activated simultaneously. The resulting force was immense, albeit temporary. I also mixed in a single Earth magic circle that produced sand, in order to increase the beam of water’s piercing potential. I started off using crushed ruby powder, but the water’s force was already so great that it didn’t accomplish much more than sand already did. By the way, the beam of water pierced a three centimeter thick slab of black steel during testing. Also, the wire we used as a cork shot out at high speeds after the first

shot, increasing its lethality further. *Yeaaah... The launched cork is deadly enough on its own even without the Water Cutter beam.* The Water Cutter cost 2000 DP to make, with most of that coming from the black steel ingot and the magic stones used to complete the magic circles.

"Only problem with this thing is it drains a high quality magic stone (500 DP) dry in a single second. We can't fire it too often."

"Ouch... Um, wouldn't it have been better to just summon a monster stronger than Rin? Like, before we got sealed, I mean." *Designing this did take a lot of funding... W-Well, I mean, who knows if we could've won without it. And really, thinking about it, I worked really hard this time. I had to make two of these Gargoyle-type Iron Haniwa plus a bunch of Salt Horses. It took a lot of effort to shave off the unnecessary armor from the Iron Horse Golems. Salt Horses basically scream "I'm made of salt," and that's because I had covered the iron skeleton of a Horse Golem with salt. Also, I made that Ceiling Salt Golem just to be a dick to Rin. Man, I really did work hard. I think I've earned my sleep.*

"...Seriously though, that was pretty close."

"Uh-huh."

"The only lines I recorded for the golems were 'Alright. Let's do this,' and 'There's plenty more where that came from. Eat up,' so yeah." I had built the golems in a hurry, so that was the best I could do. My plan was to have the voice make them think they were fighting Uuma, and then surprise them by moving the second one. Too bad the High Priestess blocked my surprise attack, though I honestly expected as much from her.

"Wait, that's what you were worried about?"

"Huh? Yeah. Even if they beat the knights, all they'd find was the staircase to our new Puzzle Area. Not that it's done yet." *Yup. That may be the Boss Room, but I never once said the Core Room's behind it. I sure am glad I tricked them into going there. Of course, the actual Dungeon Core is in a totally different room. I've been expanding the storeroom area while fixing all the stuff Rin broke, so they had no real way of knowing where I had moved it.*

"Um, Master... How long should I keep chasing them?" Niku called out to me while chasing Rin with the Salt Horses. Rin couldn't get away from them no

matter how hard they tried. *Man, Niku's a real master at this stuff. I'm impressed.*

"Right, right. I'm gonna send out a Messenger Golem to talk to them. Keep up the chase and stop when I send the word. Oh, and Rokuko. Go ahead and withdraw all the salt on the ground. We can reuse it when training Rin."

"Understood."

"Okaaay."

Good answers. I prepared a Messenger Golem and sent it to the room where Rin was fleeing from Salt Horses.

* * *

"Heeey, Rin. Want me to stop them?"

"Wha, Uuma?! You're, back to normal?! I... Nghaah!" After I called out to Rin with a normal Messenger Golem, they looked over at me in surprise... and let their guard down just enough for a Salt Horse to slam into their side and give their whole body a taste of salt. Since Rin had the power to eat anything using any part of their body, that must have hurt a lot. I had withdrawn both Haniwa golems after arriving at the room, so there was only one "Uuma" in the room.

"Nghaah?! S-S-Stop them Uuma! These are your, subordinates, right?!"

"I'll stop them if you agree to serve me."

"Ngh! That's, not happening! Crap! I didn't want, to do this, but I have, no choice... O hole of darkness which consumes all, hea—"

"Woah, hold up, alright already. I'll stop them, so quit with that sparking stuff." Black lightning had started to spark around Rin once they began the chant, so I hurriedly sent Niku the order to stop. Rin saw that and ended the chant. *Wait, by "hole of darkness which consumes all," did they mean a black hole? There's a spell for that? Jesus. I wanted to take this opportunity to make them serve me, but looks like they've still got some cards up their sleeve I don't know about...*

"Hmph. Shoulda, done that, from the start."

"Haaah... I wanna tell you to leave the dungeon now, but eh. I'll let you stay in

that room I made for you.”

“Mmm? You’re acting, pretty cocky, Keima.”

“Yeah, cause I won this time.”

“...Meh. Sure. Whatever. I’ll let, you think, that.” Rin nodded, slumping over a little. They looked pretty exhausted.

“Anyway. I’ll feed you five golems a day if you make sure no invaders get past your room, Boss.”

“Yeah. I’ll protect, this place, while I’m, here. You can, count, on me.”

“Don’t go further in the dungeon just ’cause I’m your follower, alright? I’ll make you eat some more Salt Horses if you do.”

“...Alright. That’s, fair.” Rin obediently nodded, a sign that they really did hate the Salt Golems. *Asking for anything more would just be pushing it, so I’ll just leave it at that. Even if I did ask for something more specific, Rin might just forget and act like it never happened. Plus, Rin’s earning us 950/DP a day, plus more when in a shut room. Just having them around is pretty nice. Though it can be pretty risky, like with what happened this time.*

Anyway, considering that they beat back the High Priestess for us every day up until today, I’ll let them off easy. A-And it’s not like I’m forgiving them since I couldn’t beat them, okay?!

“By the way, how long are you gonna be staying here?”

“Mmm? At the latest... spring. I’ll leave, when it becomes, spring. Uuma, you coming, too?”

“Nah. I can’t leave this place even if I want to, and I won’t anyway.”

“Darn. With you around, I wouldn’t have, to worry, about food.” *He just wants to eat me, huh? I don’t get it. If golems are fine, why not just eat the ground itself?*

Day 301

Alca had said something about returning, so I thought that she might go back into the dungeon right away, but that luckily wasn’t the case. She came asking

for a meeting with me, the town chief, after a brief rest. There was about an hour left until the seal expired.

“I am extremely sorry to announce that I was incapable of completing the quest... If not for the Holy Kingdom’s summons, I would be able to stay for longer, but...”

“Well, there’s no helping that. I saw you go into the dungeon every day, so I’m sure you did your best. Thank you.”

“I am quite thankful you feel that way... Unfortunately, I must now leave town. Out of respect for the promise I made with Rokuko, I will give up on marrying you for now, Keima.” *I kinda want her to give up on that forever, but considering how much DP she earns us... actually, nah, she’s too dangerous. Don’t come again, please.*

“May we meet again soon, Uuma.”

“Uuma? Who’s that?”

“...Forgive me, I misspoke. There was a golem deep in the dungeon whose voice sounded quite like yours, Keima.” *Okay, yeah, she’s definitely using her lie-detecting skill right now. But tough luck. I don’t lie that easily.*

“Oh, a talking golem? I have gone far into the dungeon before. Perhaps it was mimicking my voice.”

“I see... By the way, it called itself Uuma, and I believe it is this dungeon’s boss. It appears to be working with Boss... that is, the dangerous monster threatening your town. Do you know something about this?”

“Unfortunately, I know nothing worth talking about.”

“...Truly?”

“Yes, truly. I can swear it upon the name of the God of Light if you’d like.” *It’s all stuff I’m hiding from her, so yeah, nothing would be “worth” talking to her about. I’m telling the truth.* If she asked if I was hiding anything, I planned on saying all adventurers had things they wanted to hide, but she didn’t press me any further. *Just the way I like it.*

“If you say so, Keima, I will believe you. Now then, Keima. Would you mind

closing your eyes for me?”

“Closing my eyes? Like this?”

“Don’t peek even a little until I say so, okay? Are your eyes firmly shut?”

“...Yes, they’re shut.” I shut my eyes and didn’t peek, in order to avoid suspicion. If she did anything dangerous, Rokuko would withdraw me immediately, but I was still a little uneasy.

“...May you have God’s blessing, my love.” I heard Alca’s voice right next to me, and then felt something soft and squishy press against my cheek. A warm, gentle breeze flew over me and enveloped my body.

“You may open them now.” I opened my eyes and saw that Alca was smiling brightly, as if nothing had happened. *I’ll ask Rokuko what she did later.*

“What was that all about?”

“I will give up on you for now, due to my promise with Rokuko... But I never promised to give up forever. Thus, I prepared a little insurance for my return. A-A wise man of culture such as yourself should understand what I mean, yes?” *Insurance? Man, I bet she did something pretty weird to me.*

“Now then, I must be going.”

“Right. I’m sure you don’t need me worrying about you, but please be safe... ah, would you like some sweets as a parting gift? They’re called cream puffs and I just got my hands on them. You can buy five for just one gold coin.”

And so, the High Priestess Alca began her journey home to the Holy Kingdom with five cream puffs in hand. The fact that I sincerely worried about her having enough money to make it home, despite how much trouble she put us through, can be our little secret.

* * *

“Oh! Look, Keima! We can summon monsters again!”

“Yep. We can make rooms, walls, and passageways again too.” An hour after the High Priestess left, the effects of {Trinity} wore off without issue. I checked the DP Catalog and confirmed that we could buy everything without issue again, and while I was at it, moved the Dungeon Core back into Rokuko’s room. The

deepest part of the dungeon had become the safest place for it while the High Priestess was around, but I really hadn't expected the castling function to end up sealed. What kind of emergency tool was it if it didn't work when we needed it most?

"Also, it looks like new functions have been added to the menu! This is just what I found, but we can project our voice anywhere into the dungeon now, and we can set Spawn Points. Now we can both spawn and withdraw things!"

"I wish we had those a little earlier." Maybe we had unlocked those functions as a reward for surviving {Trinity}, or maybe our dungeon had just leveled up or something like that. Either way, it was probably a sign we should expand our dungeon even further.

...Y'know, if there actually is an achievement system with rewards, maybe we should be experimenting a lot more aggressively. Like building one hundred floors with nothing in them. That'd still cost 500,000 DP, though, thanks to all the staircase rooms we'd need.

"Rin's still here, but now I can finally prop up my pillows and really sleep."

"You sure love sleeping, Keima."

"All humans crave food, sleep, and sex. It's in our instincts. But anyway, yeah, I'm gonna go sleep. Gonna sleep for a long time. Like, three days straight. I might get up to use the bathroom and eat, but I'm mainly gonna be sleeping. Only wake me up if something really important happens, got it?"

"Yeah, yeah, I know the deal by now. Sleep tight, Keima." Rokuko waved as I went to my room in the chief residence. And so, after having a golem prepare my futon, I jumped in and fell right asleep.

Day 304

Three days later. I finally woke up and, as it had been a while, decided to pay Rokuko a visit. *Man, I sure slept hard. Was sound asleep for most of it. I'm feeling pretty good now, so maybe I won't mind doing a little work.*

I went to Rokuko's room and saw Haku smiling broadly while rubbing Rokuko's head. By the way, Rokuko was sitting on her lap.

“Why, good morning, Keima.” Haku greeted me, her pleased smile not faltering for a moment. *Ah. Uh. Right. Good morning, Haku... Er, might I ask when you arrived?*

“Yesterday afternoon. I was waiting for you to wake up before leaving today. Very bold of you to keep me waiting like this.” *WHAAAAAT?! I told you not to wake me up, Rokuko, but this is a pretty big freaking deal! I was just oversleeping ’cause I worked so hard recently, come on! This is my punishment for only leaving my room to use the bathroom! I could just use the DP catalog to buy toothpaste and stuff!* I was panicking a ton in my head.

“Hold on, sister. I told you I was letting Keima rest because he worked super hard, didn’t I? He woke up after three days like he said he would, so what’s the problem?”

“Ah, yes, that’s right. Out of respect for Rokuko, I will pretend you never kept me waiting like this.”

“Th-Thank you very much.”

“Now then. There is quite a lot I would like to talk to you about. It’s been some time since I’ve been able to visit due to my busy schedule. Wars truly are tiresome, profitable though they may be.” *Ahhh, right. People high up in the world like Haku just think of war as a means of making more money. I’ve heard rumors about a war, but dang, she’s actually fighting one...*

“Losing soldiers means losing their DP, so the Demon Army’s broad goal is no doubt to stifle my income. They know my position isn’t weak enough to falter from such a thing, but as the yearly ranking is approaching, I imagine they want every advantage they can get.” *Right, right. I remember her talking about the Demon Kings of this world being Dungeon Cores led by a single Great Demon King.*

“Er, what do you mean by yearly ranking?”

“Oh, you don’t know? There’s a meeting of Dungeon Cores once per year. We are then ranked based on how much DP we currently possess. I believe I was seventh place overall last year.” *Oh yeah. I think I remember Rokuko mentioning something like that a long time ago. And wait, seventh place? There’s six people stronger than Haku? Well, not people. Dungeon Cores.*

“In any case, sixth place was the general of the Demon Army, Dungeon Core Number 6. More commonly known as the Great Demon King, of course. They aren’t attacking me themselves, but factions within the Demon Army are trying to earn some brownie points.”

“That does sound like a pain.”

“Indeed. Would you like to cover my duties for a little while?” *Absolutely not. No. Never.*

“Ah, we’ve gotten off topic. Regarding what’s happened here lately, I’ve heard most of the major details from my pawns.”

“...Your pawns, Haku?”

“Yes. I didn’t warn you about them, but the owner of the bar, Wozma, and the talented carpenter Kuusan are both my pawns. You’ve met them, yes?” *Wozma and Kuusan? Really? Both of them have a lot of authority in this town. Heck, one of’ms the vice town chief.*

“I called them my pawns, but both are humans unrelated to dungeon matters, so be aware. Try not to talk to them about DP and Dungeon Masters.”

“Ah. Okay.” *Even Kuusan’s her pawn? She sure has a wide reach... Oh, right, she owns the whole Adventurer’s Guild. Obviously she’s not lacking in human resources to exploit.*

“So, according to Wozma and Kuusan’s reports, you’ve been doing a fine job as town chief.”

“I’m just pushing the work onto other people.”

“Hmm? Well, you may think that if you like. Wozma was originally an official working in my Imperial Castle. Entrusting him with matters of administration was a very good call. He is quite the talented man.” *Now that’s what I like to hear. An official working in the Imperial Castle? He’s like, a top-tier elite. I’m gonna throw all the annoying work at him without hesitating a bit.*

“In any case. As I said, a lot seems to have happened while I was busy, and I truly do have *quite* a lot I would like to talk to you about. Are you ready?”

“Y-Yes. What do you want to know?”

“The black wolf and High Priestess are pressing issues... but first, I would like to know about the ring you gave Rokuko.”

Acting on pure instinct, I fell to the ground and groveled before Haku.

Side Chapter — Rokuko’s Ring and Haku Laverio

Heya, it’s me, Rokuko. I, the Dungeon Core of this dungeon, am sitting at the receptionist desk myself. It’s been a loooong time since I got to do this, since I had to hide from the High Priestess for my own safety. Geez, Keima sure is a worry wart. But that also means he really does care about me, so... I’m okay with it.

Anyway, I’m here sitting at the desk kicking my feet, when suddenly Haku comes in! Chloe’s right behind her, like always.

“Haku! It’s been so long!”

“Ahaha. Hello, my cute little Rokuko. Is the grand suite free? I would like to stay the night there.”

“It’s free! Ah, do you want the same food as usual?”

“Certainly. Would you like to eat with us, Rokuko? It’s my treat.” Keima’s asleep, but it’s been so long since Haku’s visited that I need to give this my all. Ummm, Keima used his {Purification} on the grand suite after the High Priestess left, so it should be okay.

Suddenly, Haku looks at the box on the receptionist counter and blinks in confusion.

“...And what might this box be? I don’t believe it was here the last time I visited.”

“Huh? Oh, this? Eheheh.. This is called a register!”

“Oh my, and what kind of box is that?”

“Ummm, let’s see... Suite room, two people, one night! Food, three A-Rank meals!” The register reacts to my words and spins like a slot machine to display the price. Sixty-five gold coins. That’s probably right. It’s... It’s right, definitely.

“So, it calculates the price for us, and when we put money into it, the keys and food tickets come out on their own.”

“My goodness! That seems quite convenient. Does it ever make erroneous calculations?”

“It’s more reliable than people, for sure.”

“...I would like one of these myself. I believe with the help of registers like this one, I would be able to get much more work done much faster.” Haku stares at the register with a sharp, serious look in her eyes. She looks like a totally competent, awesome Dungeon Core. So cool!

“Mmm, I’ll ask Keima if he won’t mind me giving it to you.”

“Oh my. Can’t you decide that on your own? And where is that Keima, anyway? I can’t believe he’s forcing you to work on your own like this.”

“Keima just worked really hard and wants to sleep until tomorrow, so I don’t want to wake him up if I don’t have to.” Sorry, Haku, but I really want to let Keima rest. Umm, and he did say he’d wake up tomorrow, so it should be fine. He’ll... He’ll wake up in time. D-Definitely.

“Ohhh? Well, if you say so, Rokuko. In any case, it’s been a veeery long time since I’ve visited, hasn’t it? Let’s have a long talk about all that’s happened.”

“I’d love to!” I take sixty-five gold coins from Chloe and put them into the register, whereupon three shiny, golden A-Rank meal tickets and the grand suite key come out. I take those and head to the grand suite with Haku. Oh, and of course, I had someone cover my shift.

“...Now. I’ve been wondering this since I got here, but is that ring on your finger the one that Keima gave you?”

“Ehhh?! Um, Haku, er... D-Did you know about it?”

“...Wataru the Hero told me about it. He really did something he shouldn’t have this time...” Oh, okay. That Hero of Debt told her. I guess that makes sense, he’s the one who told me about rings in the first place. It’s not weird that he’d report it to Haku.

“In any case, this is quite a fashionable ring. Moreso than I’d expect from Keima. It suits you well, Rokuko... Mmm? Is it just me, or is something off about this ring?”

“Wha? Something off? Where?”

“...I thought it was a gemstone ring, but there’s a golden ring inside of it. I’ve never seen a ring like this before. It must have been very expensive.”

“Ahaha, well, that’s ’cause we’re partners!”

“I see, and that he put so much passion into making this ring for you can only mean one thing... Ahaha. It seems we will need to discuss this matter quite thoroughly.” I don’t know why, but I get the feeling I can see a dark aura radiating off Haku. It’s probably just my imagination.

“So, from what material did he make this ring, I wonder?”

“Ummm, he said rubies and orichalcum.”

“Oh my, rubies and orichalcum... This is an orichalcum ring? One coated in rubies...? Hold on just a second. A ring like that would cost at least ten million DP, if not significantly more.”

“He did say it was expensive, but... Is it really that much?”

“Can you see orichalcum rings in your Catalog? Well, even if we assume you luckily managed to find some in this mountain, it would still be quite expensive.” At her prompting, I open up my DP Catalog and search for an [Orichalcum Ring]. Ummm, let’s see... Treasure, rings, orichalcum... 1,000,000 DP?

“Um, it says 1,000,000 DP...”

“Naturally. The method for smelting orichalcum is a dwarf secret, and it takes even those dwarves at least a year to forge an orichalcum sword. A ring would be easier, but even so, the DP price reflects what an undertaking it’d be.”

“Ooooh...” When the heck did Keima make this ring for me, and how? Oh, wait, the raw orichalcum itself only costs about 10,000 DP. Our town blacksmith is a dwarf, so he probably asked him for help... actually, wait, this is Keima we’re talking about. He definitely just used {Create Golem}. Same goes for the ruby, surely. Mmm... But I guess I shouldn’t tell Haku this.

“Um, by the way, there’s a dwarf blacksmith in our town. He might have asked him for help.”

“...Even if he did, I have no idea how he could have given it this ruby coating.” Okay, I knew that wouldn’t get past her. Ngggh... I want to tell her, but I can’t. I’m sure Haku knowing wouldn’t be a big deal, but Keima really made it clear I should never, ever tell anyone about his {Create Golem}.

“I’ll give you 100,000,000 DP if you let me have that ring.”

“...Ah! N-No, Haku, don’t say that. This isn’t the kind of thing I can just give away.” That was close, my heart wavered for a second. Who can blame me? I could summon an Ancient Dragon with 100,000,000 DP! It’s just, like, I know Keima could craft another one of these rings really easily. I couldn’t make Haku pay 100,000,000 DP for something so inexpensive.

“.....It seems I must purge that man.”

“Um, Haku? I, um... You’re thinking out loud.”

“Oh my, I’m sorry. Ahahaha.” Haku gives me a peaceful smile. Why’s she so mad...? Oh, maybe because she thinks we wasted DP on this ring. Though it would cost way more than we have to buy it normally.

After that, we talked about the High Priestess, Rin, and the recreation building. Apparently, the effects of {Trinity} differed depending on who used it.

After that, I took a bath with her, ate dinner with her, and slept in the same bed as her to show her a warm welcome to our inn. And then, right after I invited her to my room in the chief residence, Keima woke up and came for a visit.

He immediately started grovelling before her as if it was the most natural, normal thing in the world to do.

...Well, that sure is some nice form! He gets full points for looking pathetic yet heroic! Oh, by the way, he apparently got her to forgive him by agreeing to provide her with registers. I don’t really understand what happened, but that’s my Keima for you!

Side Chapter — Wataru the Hero and Rin

“What in the wold?! A monster that dangerous has taken over the dungeon? Leave it to me!” I told Wataru about Rin... that is, I told him about the deadly monster in our dungeon. After discussing Rin with Haku a few days ago, she said, “Very well, I’ll lend Wataru to you. I’m sure he’ll take care of it somehow,” and after returning home actually did send Wataru over. Truth be told, both Rin and Wataru were strong enough that either one of them could beat the other in a fight, and personally, either of their deaths would benefit me quite nicely. Especially since Haku would apparently pay off Wataru’s debt if he died before paying it all back.

In any case, Wataru the Hero accepted the quest right away. *Alright. Time to see if Rin can beat a Hero. Either way, this is gonna be a pretty fun show.*

* * *

Wataru advanced briskly through the dungeon and soon reached Rin’s room.

“...Alright then.” He opened the door and immediately saw the black wolf inside, ready for battle.

“Graaaah!”

“Oh man, he looks strong... Stronger than a dragon, maybe?” Rin attacked

first. They opened their mouth wide and tried to bite Wataru... But he swung his fist sideways, smashing it against Rin's nose and sending them flying to the left. Rin slammed into the wall at an immense speed, and with a loud squish, turned into a black stain against the stone.

"...One hit kill? No, wait. That nose definitely felt like something familiar. Don't tell me this is a..." Wataru's prediction was correct. Rin hadn't died yet. The stain on the wall collected itself and returned to the shape of a wolf.

"Oh man. I knew it, he's that kind of monster. Must be a slime."

"Graah...! I won't, let you, pass!"

"Oh, you can talk... This is just getting worse and worse. I really don't wanna fight you." Wataru drew his sword as he spoke. His opponent was already baring their teeth. If he didn't prepare to fight, he'd be dead in no time. The look on his face made it obvious he was regretting accepting this quest so lightly.

"Graaaah! O Fire, burn and swell, explode — {Fire Bomb}!"

"Woaaah! Hold on, I didn't hear anything about you using magic!" Wataru sliced Rin's launched explosive fireball down the middle. The two resulting halves passed by Wataru and exploded behind him.

"Mmm. You're, pretty good."

"Man, that surprised me. Okay. Alright. Let's talk! We don't have to fight!"

"Mmm? I'm, listening."

"Wait, seriously? I mean, um... Cool. That's great." Wataru couldn't hide his surprise that his shot in the dark had been taken seriously. Naturally, he didn't want to kill a being intelligent enough to be communicated with, monster or not. Unless it was some kind of sadistic murder or something. Although Rin had killed some adventurers in the dungeon, Wataru could forgive that. As adventurers always entered dungeons prepared to die at any time, their deaths in many ways were just the natural order of things, and he hadn't heard of anyone outside of the dungeon being harmed. Thus, Wataru decided that it would be worth trying to negotiate with them.

“Now. To start, with, I’ll eat you. Be still.”

“Wait, what?! Why?! Why are we starting with you eating me?!”

“We can talk, about that, later. Let me, eat you, first.”

“How are you gonna talk to someone inside your stomach?! That’ll kill me!”

“No? I talked, with two people, in this dungeon, after, eating them.” Wataru was genuinely surprised that there had actually been two people they ate and then talked with. Though Rin just wasn’t being clear and failed to note that one of those people was actually a golem.

“With that, settled. I’m eating you.”

“Gaaah! Time out, time out! Look, here, I’ll share my lunch with you. I hope you can settle for this sandwich.”

“Sand, wich? What’s that?”

“...Heheh. Y’see, the inn by the front of this dungeon sells food, and I asked them to wrap up a meal for me so I could have it for lunch! This is a sandwich made with super tasty white bread, and it’s made even better by the mayo!”

“Alright, I’ll eat it, so, hand it over.” Rin gestured Wataru forward with their paw, likely enticed by the flavor.

“{Storage}, and done. Here. I’ll put it on the plate and leave it here, okay?”

“Mmm.” Wataru put his sandwich on a white place and set it down in the middle of the room. After he stepped back decently far, Rin approached the sandwich and sniffed it... before eating both it and the plate whole.

“Hey! I really liked that white plate... W-Well, whatever, I have four more. But these plates only come from this dungeon...”

“I’m, impressed. These, sandwiches, taste good. They’re smooth, but crunchy.”

“...Are you talking about the celery? Uhhh, I have some more, do you want seconds?”

“Give.” This time, Wataru put the sandwich on a wood plate he wouldn’t miss and then put it on the floor like before.

“Hey. That looks, different! Graaah!”

“...Seriously?! You liked the plate?! The plate tasted good to you?! Friggin’, fine! Here.” Wataru placed just the white plate onto the ground. Since he has gotten a set of five of them from a chest, he only had three left.

“Mnn? Nothing, on top, this time?”

“You really wanna steal everything I have?! Sure, fine. Here’s your sandwich. And this is the plate.” Wataru put a sandwich on the plate, and then Rin, as expected, ate both it and the plate.

“Mmm. Nom, nom. Chomp... mmm. Sandwiches, taste good. But, really, the top part, doesn’t, add much.”

“Dammit, give me back my lunch! And I’m telling you, the bottom part is just the plate! The top part is the sandwich!”

“Heheh. Seems like, you have, good taste. Alright. We can, talk. Give me, one more.”

“Gee, thanks! Gaaaaaah!”

By the way, Wataru’s unique Hero skill {Ultra Good Fortune: Level 1} was likely working in the background. Who knows how it happened, but eventually they started drinking together and had a grand old time. He ended up sleeping down there, but thanks to the room’s heating, he didn’t catch a cold.

* * *

“So, basically, we ended up bonding a lot.”

“Uh, Hero? You really came back without defeating the monster?” The Hero came trekking back out of the dungeon. Rin was still safely guarding their room in the dungeon. *Sheesh, you stink of beer. Be decent and use {Purification} already. And weren’t you gonna stop drinking until you paid back your debt? Just kidding, I know you’ve broken that rule a thousand times.*

“Nah nah nah, I mean, I definitely didn’t just come back empty-handed! I made a good promise with him!”

“A promise?”

“Even if he finds an adventurer, he promised not to kill them if they offered up a white plate without resisting!” Wataru the Hero beamed a smug grin, proud of his accomplishment. *I want to punch him.*

But that’s not a bad promise. Rin doesn’t break promises, as far as I know. Things should be fine unless they accidentally forget what happened today. And... I think I’ll raise the prices of white plates a little. I can think up a more specific figure later.

“Ah, also, he’ll only beat adventurers half to death if they give him a non-white plate!”

“Errr... Can we really trust that?”

“I think we can.”

“Your evidence?”

“Uh... My gut? I mean, I don’t think he’s actually a bad monster.” He was basically right, but still, it ticked me off somehow. But as town chief, and as a fellow adventurer, I couldn’t really go too hard on him.

“...So, what should we do when we want to go deeper into the dungeon?”

“...Oh!”

“You really didn’t think of that?! Idiot!”

“Er, I mean, hold on! He said he’d leave once spring comes! We just have to wait until then!” *You got that much information out of Rin? What a guy.*

“Oh, also, Rin’s not actually a wolf-type monster. They’re a Hero’s pet Slime, named Slirin.” *Wait, seriously? That’s the first time I’m hearing the name Slirin.*

Basically, one thing led to another and Rin avoided being exterminated by a Hero. I wouldn’t be paying him the reward for finishing the quest, but as town chief, I gave him five white plates to repay him for the valuable information. He was pretty happy since all his own plates got eaten by Rin, so yeah, it was a pretty good reward if I do say so myself.

Epilogue

Day 354

Winter turned to spring. The snow melted and a gentle warmth enveloped the land. Some say that spring is the season for meetings and goodbyes. That was no exception for our [Cave of Greed], where a goodbye was being said.

“You’re leaving, Rin?”

“Yeah. It’s been, nice. Uuma.” The black wolf—or rather, the mysterious black Slime (Wolf Form)—Rin had promised to leave once their winter hibernation ended, and so they were. I thought up a plan to trick them into thinking there was an eternal winter going on, but that ran the risk of them discovering the truth, and I didn’t intend to go that far to keep a ticking time bomb in our dungeon.

“Oh. Right. I made, this. Take it.”

“Huh? What is it?” Rin tossed a ball my way. I caught it with my Messenger Golem hand. It was a baseball-sized black orb, so dark that it practically sucked in the light around it. *The heck is this?*

“It’s a, Gravity Bomb. Almost anything, hit with this, will, die.”

“Woah, don’t throw that kinda thing around. I don’t wanna explode.”

“Heh, heh. Surprised? Don’t worry. It has, a, keyword. Hold it, say the word, then throw it. The keyword is, Black Plate.” *It has a safety mechanism...? That’s surprisingly thoughtful.*

“Black... Oh, whoops. Better not say it right now.”

“Heh, heh, heh! Didn’t, fall for it, huh! You really, are, smart. Uuma.”

“Hahaha. Mind if I have another one? I wanna see if it actually works. On you, Boss.”

“Yeah. You can, have, more. I make them, myself, so there’s, a limit, though. Also... They don’t, work on, me.” Five black balls rolled out from within Rin’s

black fur and dropped to the ground before they kicked them over my way. *Are you a powder keg or something? You're seriously like a walking nuclear bomb.*

"That's, all I can, give. Use them, well. That's it. See you, later."

"Yep... Wait, are you coming back? Next winter, maybe?"

"Don't know. But don't die, before, I do... Aaah. But you, can't die, Uuma. Mm. Anyway. See you." Rin left the cave, cackling.

Rin was seen boldly leaving the cave in the middle of the day by several adventurers who protected themselves with white plates. Apparently, Rin ate all of the plates like candy.

"...They're gone."

"Aaah, you know, it feels like a huge load's off our shoulders now." I let out a heavy sigh. Yeah, an unpredictable nuclear bomb camping out in our dungeon was just about as stressful as you'd expect. I felt an odd sort of relief, like the kind of relief you feel after finally getting something stuck between your teeth out after a long time of struggling.

Rin leaving the dungeon meant that our DP income took a big hit, but that was another problem entirely, and they had earned us so much over the winter it was far from a major problem. Not to mention that they gave us a very useful-looking parting gift in the form of these Gravity Bombs... *I wonder how strong they really are. Not strong enough to destroy a dungeon, right? I honestly don't know where I should store these things.*

"Good work, Keima."

"...Yeah." It suddenly hit me that Rokuko had never told me what the High Priestess did that day. I had though there'd be a video of it since Rokuko was watching us through the monitor, but apparently she deleted the logs. *Well, if Rokuko doesn't want me to know what happened, I guess I'm fine not knowing.*

Rokuko walked up to me.

"Keima. I-I think I'll reward you, w-w-w-w-w-with... a kiss!" Her voice cracked and she looked up at me with bright red cheeks. *You're so nervous your pupils are dilating, y'know.*

“Wh-What’s with you all of a sudden?”

“Oh, feeling nervous, are you?” Rokuko’s smug grin twitched rapidly as she spoke.

“...Yeah, you’re not fooling anyone. Don’t force yourself to act tough.”

“I’m not forcing myself! Come on, get your lips ready! You can keep your eyes open if you want! Or you can close them!” She grabbed onto my head and wrenched it so I was looking right at her. *Christ on a bike, when’d she get so strong?! Ow, ow ow!*

“Gah, nggh, ow! You’re gonna crush my head! Woah!”

“Nnn, nmmm...” Rokuko closed her eyes and brought her face up to mine. Then, she...



Forcibly kissed my nose with her eyes still shut. She licked the tip of my nose.

“...Um? Why is it hard...?” *My nose kinda tickles, you know.*

Rokuko pulled away and took a deep breath. Then, she realized she had been kissing my nose.

“...I missed.” *You missed.*

“J-Just you wait! I’ll kiss you next time for sure!” Rokuko ran off, spouting the line of a cartoon villain.

It took a minute for me to unfreeze after Rokuko left. *Yeah... That surprised me so much I just froze up and didn’t say a word. My neck hurts.*

“What did she mean, next time...?” I rubbed my nose and for some reason remembered how soft Rokuko’s lips were. *Haku gave me a pass for the ring stuff, but I’m pretty sure she’s gonna actually try to kill me soon.*

Extra Episode — Pavella Date, “The Day We Ate Too Much”

“We’re going on a date, Keima!”

“Huh?!” Rokuko suddenly looked at me and dropped a metaphorical bomb. *A date...? What is that, really?* It took me a second to understand what she had said. *That’s like, the thing lovers do. Dates. Romantic trysts. A star-crossed rendezvous... Wait. Are Rokuko and I dating?*

“...You’re always sleeping, Keima. What’s wrong with going on dates every now and again? I mean, isn’t it the town chief’s job to flirt with his girl in front of the town youth?”

“Town youth? I’m probably the youngest guy here, you know.” In this world, adulthood was recognized as beginning at the age of fifteen. Wataru, for instance, was treated as full-fledged adult. And since our town was basically a large gathering of adventurers, the only people were grown adults. By the way, the youngest person in town was definitely Niku... though maybe Rokuko in her loli form was younger? *Her real age is a mystery, so I’m gonna say that doesn’t count.*

“Whateveeer. Same thing. Come on, let’s go on a date.”

“Where would we even go? There’s nowhere worth going in town. Do you wanna go all the way to Tsia?”

“Nuh-uh, we went there before. I’m thinking we could go to Pavella this time.” *Oh yeah. We dug a whole tunnel through the mountain but never actually went there.*

“...I heard Pavella’s just as big as Tsia, so yeah, I have been thinking about going there someday.”

“It’s settled, then! We’re going! Get ready soon!” Rokuko dashed out of my room to prepare. *But I didn’t say I’d go yet... Eh, whatever.* Either way, it was obvious that if Rokuko and I went alone on a date, things would go very poorly very fast. Thus, I decided to bring a bodyguard with us. I figured it would be a

good opportunity to bring Ichika, but...

"Ahhh, um, is that an order? I'll go if you order me to, but honestly, dude, I totally don't recommend going anywhere near Pavella with me. I sure fucked up some shit there, y'know...! So yeah, I'd be super pumped if you did me a solid and brought back some food. Thanks!" If she didn't want to go home, well, I had no reason to force her. But that didn't change that Rokuko and I going alone would just be asking for trouble. Thanks to turning our clothes into golems and preparing all sorts of little tricks, we could probably take care of some average C-Rank adventurers, but that'd be a pain. *Alright, I'll bring Niku. She's the strongest in our group, and although I've been forgetting it all the time lately, she actually is a member of my adventurer party.*

"So. We're on a date. Why is Niku with us? I mean, I get it, but still."

"Don't complain if you get it."

"You better not interfere with our date, okay?"

"Understood." Niku nodded to Rokuko's order. *So she says, but Niku's still gonna be tagging along normally. I wouldn't want to make her stand next to our table at a restaurant and just watch us eat or something.*

We passed through the Tsia Mountain tunnel and ended up in Pavella territory. By the way, we were riding a horse-drawn carriage. *Apparently, Dyne paid to have a large road constructed connecting the tunnel to Pavella. Guess that explains why I've seen a lot of richer-looking merchants passing by lately.* The horses were real, living horses borrowed from the Adventurer's Guild, but the carriage itself was a Golem Carriage. It was disguised to look like a normal carriage with a large canopy. *Suspension? Obviously I built in a suspension system. I'd get sick otherwise. Not to mention, suspensions aren't that rare since a Hero from the past spread the technology. Though my suspension is made from a golem, so it absorbs shock a lot better than other carriages.*

The carriage was subtly running against the ground, pretty much entirely removing the load from the horses. And on top of all that, the reins on the horses moved on their own to direct them to our destination. Niku was sitting in the front seat just for appearances' sake and didn't actually need to do anything. *I, uh... I was planning on sitting there myself, but Niku wouldn't*

budge.

"Ahaha. Since Niku's driving, we get to be alone in the carriage together!"

"Yup. Guess I'll nap until we get there."

"...You're not even going to consider talking to me?"

"I mean, we can have a conversation anywhere, this isn't special. Like, we literally do talk all the time."

"But we could talk about our trip to Pavella right now. Did Ichika recommend any restaurants or anything like that?" *Ngh, Rokuko's being pretty persistent today.*

"We had a little talk, but I don't want to spoil the surprise before we get there. Plus, she said it was pretty old info and the place could be out of business by now."

"If they might be out of business, why not talk about them now before we find out?"

"...Do you wanna have a conversation about food that gets you hungry and all pumped up to eat, only to find out that the restaurant's gone?"

"Okay, I get it, let's not talk about them." Rokuko backed off and sat quietly. Next to me. The space in front of us was free, but she went out of her way to sit next to me. *I can't lay down... Oh, right.*

"If you're gonna sit there, lemme use your lap as a pillow. I wanna sleep."

"Eeeh?! Y-You sure are bold, geez... O-Okay. C-C-Come here?" Rokuko patted her thighs. Since she gave her permission, I rested my head on them without hesitation.

And so, I used a warm, soft, and even nice-smelling lap pillow to my heart's content.

* * *

"Keima! We're here."

"Mmm...? Alright." I woke up to Rokuko lightly slapping my cheeks. *Going back to bed... seems like a bad idea. Let's wake up.*

“Aaah! Um, my legs are pretty asleep right now! It really sucks! C-Could you lift your head a little slower?”

“And here we go!”

“HYAAAAAH! K-Keima, you dummyyyy...!” I shot up off her, causing Rokuko to let out a high-pitched cry and start convulsing.

“E-Even the carriage’s bouncing, isss, hyaaah! Oh, no...! Aaaah...!”

“Here, {Healing}... All better? Either way, it should go away soon.” After I used a Restoration Magic skill on her, Rokuko let out a sigh of relief.

“Whew, uh-huh, all better. Thanks, Keima. But I’m gonna get back at you for moving your head like that!” I didn’t know how she planned to do that, but either way, I decided to give her some melon rolls once we got back.

“Master, we need your Guild Card to get through the gates.” *Oh yeah, Niku did some good work sitting at the front seat like that. Gotta give her a hamburger once we get home.*

The port city of Pavella, visible from Tsia Mountain. The broad outer walls surrounding it were pure white, as if covered by a layer of plaster. *Actually, this probably is plaster. There’s the ocean right there, they should have all the shells they need to make it.* The buildings inside had a similar look. Most of them were basically white cubes, like something you’d expect a beginner at M*necraft to make. Overall, it definitely looked like a Mediterranean city. *Not that I’ve ever been to a Mediterranean city. And I wonder, why does it feel like I’m visiting a summer resort when it’s still winter?*

The entrance fee to the city was two coppers per adventurer and one silver per carriage, but since I had taken a delivery quest while borrowing the horses, we got to enter for free. Really, doing the quest basically gave us some free money to play with while we were here.

“Oh, by the way, do you know where the Adventurer’s Guild is?”

“Hm? First time in Pavella, eh? My man, just go totally straight down the road, then take a super hard right when you hit a wall. Should be just a little ahead past that. Really, it won’t be too hard to find on your own, dude.” The guard gave me instructions while waving his hands around and talking in a standard

Pavella accent. *Y'know... I really don't know why the auto-translator is turning the Pavella accent into dudebro speech, but at least it works.*

"Everyone talks like Ichika here, huh? This feels kinda weird."

"Yeah, I mean, Ichika was born in Pavella." We decided to start off by taking the carriage to the Adventurer's Guild. Just like the guard said, we found it in no time. *Though either way, I can technically see Pavella on my map, and Niku is good with directions on her own.*

I didn't know where to put the carriage, so I left it in front of the Guild building with Niku before going in myself. All eyes fell on me, but I ignored them and told the receptionist I had a delivery quest. A staff member immediately directed me to where I needed to go. Luckily, since I was on a delivery quest, they would temporarily shelter my carriage for me. *Saved money there.*

And so, we finished our Guild business without getting wrapped up in any special events, but apparently we weren't getting off so easily either. On our way to the restaurant Ichika recommended, three thugs stepped forward and blocked our path. *Yeaaah... You really shouldn't go down back alleys in cities you're not familiar with.*

"Bro, you gotta pay the fee if you wanna go through here."

"Give up your stuff and the ladies if you know what's good for you, man."

"We'll like, spare your life if you do us a solid here and don't resist." *I mean, flash your knives all you want, I literally have a sword here. Do I really look that weak? Guess choosing a loli as a bodyguard will have that effect.*

"Beat the crap out of them. Don't kill them if you don't have to."

"Take 'em down, Niku! Three of them in thirty seconds!" After I gave Niku instructions to get rid of them, Rokuko added on a pretty mean extra condition. *And haven't I told you to call her Kuro when we're in front of other people? It is easy to forget, but still.*

"How is this, loli, so strong...? Guuuh..."

"Wh-What the heck happened...? Gah..."

"....." (The silence of a man uncertain if getting bones crushed by a loli is a

blessing or a curse) Either way, she still beat them in less than thirty seconds with little trouble. She had jumped off the walls to bounce all over the place, crushing them all before they even knew what was going on. *What, did she learn that from Rin? I dunno if I should be the one saying this, but Niku sure is getting more and more inhumanly strong.*

"Now, mind if I ask you for some directions?"

"N-Not at all. What would you like to know, my good sir?" I picked up one of the beaten-down thugs and asked for directions.

"I heard from a former adventurer that there's a restaurant called the Azure Fishery around here."

"Wha? The Azure Fishery... er, yeah, I know about it. It's pretty famous around here, but it's kinda hard to find if you're not in the know. I'll take you to it, bro." The bruised thug guided us straight to our destination. But it didn't have a sign or anything, so it just looked like the back door to a normal house. *Is this really the restaurant Ichika recommended to us?*

"This is the place? Mmm, I don't know, there's no sign or anything."

"What? I mean, dude, this is the Azure Fishery we're talking about, they can't just have a si—Ah. Fear not, ma'am. This is undoubtedly the Azure Fishery. Well then, that'll be all." The thug ran off as if fleeing from something. Rokuko looked at me, eyes asking me what we should do. Niku was a short distance behind us so as to not "interfere."

...Alright. There's no backing out now. I knocked on the wooden door.

"...Shell." A man spoke from behind the door. It was a code word. Ichika explained the whole process to me, and apparently we had to have this exchange to eat here. *Must be a place that's members only. That explains the lack of a sign.*

"Er, bird."

"...Who's bird?"

"The Food Monster's yellow bird."

"...Come in." The door opened. Inside was a counter with rooms behind it.

Felt like an inn, really.

"...Er, how much does it cost to eat here? We want a table for three."

"Six silvers. I got some good sea urchins right now..." *Oh, urchins, huh? Not bad.* I paid six silvers. *But isn't this a little expensive?*

"Wait in the third room. It'll be about half a bell if I can finish it. Be patient." He gave us a key. *Uh... If you CAN finish it?* Also, half a bell was equivalent to about thirty minutes. Pavella, Tsia, and other large cities measured time by ringing a large bell once an hour during the day. *Maybe I should set up something similar for our town... Actually, nah. That'd definitely get annoying when I'm sleeping.*

Anyway, Rokuko, Niku, and I walked to the third room.

"I'm glad the restaurant she recommended is still in business."

"We get to eat in a special room, too. Though this is basically an inn room." Since there was a wooden box with a pair of sheets on it, we could easily guess that this building was also an inn. *This is probably a secret restaurant just for members of some secret community. Friggin' Ichika, couldn't you just recommend us a normal place?*

After waiting on the bed for a bit, our food was delivered at exactly thirty minutes past our arrival. We were served three wooden plates with pasta and cooked sea urchins split down the middle. Their shells were red like boiled lobster and looked pretty spiky. There was pasta stuffed into the shells, too.

"...C-Can you really eat this?"

"If this is like the urchins I know, it should be pretty good."

"Should I taste test it, Master?"

"Nah, I'll try it out first. Here we go." I poked my fork into the cooked urchin and brought it to my mouth.

...The moment after I did so, a sweet flavor and soft texture spread throughout my mouth. I had known from the strong ocean smell that this was something you would either love or hate, but even so, the flavor was a lot stronger than I expected. It didn't have any of the bitterness I remembered

from Japanese sea urchins.

“Woah, this tastes pretty amazing.”

“Really? I’ll try some too, then...”

“I will as well.”

Niku and Rokuko both ate some sea urchin. Rokuko’s eyes widened, impressed, but Niku stiffened and her ears jerked. *Guess she didn’t like it.*

“Eh, don’t worry about it. This is kind of an adult’s meal anyway. I’ll put your food into {Storage} and give it to Ichika once we get back to the dungeon.”

“...I’m sorry.” Niku’s tail slumped down. I moved the food off her plate and stored it to give to Ichika, leaving the shell and taking only the inside parts so that my {Storage} wouldn’t get discovered.

“Aha, an adult’s meal. You really are still a kid, Niku, whereas I am a fine lady!” Rokuko brought another bite of urchin to her mouth, pleased. Seemed like the urchin’s flavor suited her just fine.

“I’m looking forward to this pasta too.” The pasta didn’t just have urchin on it, there were tomatoes and various fish there too. The spinach-looking vegetable on top gave it a nice look, too.

I spun the pasta around on my fork, making sure to get lots of sauce on it before eating. My mouth was filled with even more of the urchin’s sweet flavor. That mixed well with the tomato’s sourness and the fish’s soft flavor. The scallop’s juices were pretty amazing too. The pasta even bounced around in my mouth pleasantly as my teeth chewed through it. *Oh? There’s cheese in here too. It brings everything together and really fits the dish.*

“Keima, you’re grinning.”

“Really? Just goes to show how great this pasta tastes.”

“...Sniff sniff. Nnn...” Niku sniffed the pasta, but didn’t look too enthusiastic about it. Probably didn’t look too good to her. *Guess Ichika’s getting a real feast when we get back.*

“Ah! This really is tasty. He really didn’t hold back on the spices. I know Pavella spices are cheap, but still, I can understand the price now... Niku, are

you really not going to eat this?”

“I don’t want it. Ichika will enjoy it more than me.” Rokuko ended up grinning while eating the pasta too. *Okay, time to finish my plate... Aaah. This is too good. It’s taking me to heaveeeen.*

Oh, right. I’m definitely gonna stop by a food stand and buy something for Niku.

After enjoying my our fill of the urchins, we got up to leave the restaurant.

“Aaah, I loved this place. It’s not often I get to see you smiling, Keima.”

“I definitely want to come here again. You’re a good cook, man.”

“...Thanks. Come again in about... a month. No sooner.” *What?*

“Sorry, but uh, why would we need to wait a month?”

“...Do you not know about the urchins? Tch, Sorin, give a proper introduction next time. The thing is. Urchins have poison. Eat too many, even ones I make, and you’ll have seizures. Might die if you don’t get {Cure Paralyze} cast on you. I’d do so for a small fee here, but...” *Bwwuuuh?! I mean, I do remember that some urchins have poison in the spikes or something, but man. I didn’t expect the urchins of this world to have poison in their bodies. I’ll... I’ll learn {Cure Paralyze} once we get back to the dungeon.*

“Woah. I didn’t expect that.”

“...Don’t tell anyone that you ate urchins. Without a {Detox} skill and proper handling, they can have addictive properties. It’s illegal to buy or sell them.” *Seriously? Urchins sure are a big deal in this world.*

Anyway, putting aside that Ichika definitely needed to be punished, we had just come to Pavella and there was a lot we could do despite how satisfying that meal was. We decided to head to the main street for a bit.

“According to Ichika, the food stands here sell all sorts of things you can’t find in Tsia.”

“Hey, look, they’re cooking something weird over there! Oh, the sign says shrimp! Shrimp!” I looked over and saw giant shrimps exactly like those from Japan getting chopped horizontally and cooked. They were also cooking squid,

scallops, and all sorts of variously colored fish. *Th-These aren't poisonous too, are they? I don't think they'd sell poisonous stuff on the main street, so it should be fine. Right?*

"Niku, since you didn't get to eat anything, you can buy whatever you want here. Keima will buy it for you."

"Er, yeah, I will. I mean, obviously. I will definitely pay. I was going to do that anyway, so... Ah, whatever. Is there anything you want, Niku?"

"Ah, y-yes! I want to eat this."

"Oh, let's see..." I took a look and it was rabbit meat on kebabs. *Is it just me, or does this feel like traveling to a foreign country only to have your children beg to go to a worldwide burger chain?*

"...I'll buy some of that later."

"Hey, bub, you sayin' my meat ain't that great?" But right as I tried to step away from the stand, the mouse beastkin cooking the meat called out and glared at me.

"Aaah, nah, I didn't mean it that way. It's just that we can buy rabbit meat for cheap where we come from, so yeah."

"Hah! The meat I'm sellin's in a league of its own! I've got years of experience cooking meat to perfection, and the salt I sprinkle on it unlocks a nice tingly flavor... Not to mention that this meat is top of the class! It doesn't smell bad like the meat everywhere else! I'm the only stand in Pavella that knows the secret to making meat like this! You're wastin' your money if you buy from anywhere else!"

"Oh, you're bleeding the meat."

"Hey hey hey hey hey hey!" The mouse beastkin hurriedly blocked my mouth. His hand stunk. He looked around, eyes shifting, before letting go and whispering to me.

"What, are you friends with my teacher?"

"Teacher? I dunno what you're talking about, but I'm the one who sold the information about bleeding meat to a kebab stand in Tsia."

“For real?! That’s amazing!” *Don’t scream. You’re hurting my ears.*

“N-Now that you mention it, I do remember him saying an adventurer with a dog-eared loli slave taught him about it. And you fit that bill, for sure... Alright! That changes things! Now I’ve got no choice but to bow my head and beg you to try my food, for free of course! Just tell me whether or not it’s actually good, okay? Please!”

“...Well, you heard him, Kuro. What’ll you do?”

“Thank you for the food.” Niku took the rabbit kebab held out to her. After sniffing it for a bit, she plopped it in her mouth.

...Her expression remained flat, but her tail wagged in happiness.

“Seems like she liked it. Good job.”

“Oooh! Dog beastkin are famous for their sharp senses, and now I’ve got a seal of approval from one of’m! Heck yeah! Time for me to call this recipe my specialty and make a brand for myself!” The pleased mouse beastkin laughed heartily.

“Yep, good luck with that.”

“Hahaha! I owe ya one!” His head shot down in an exaggerated bow. *Yeah, he’s actually a pretty nice guy. Hahaha.*

“Oh, are you done? Can I have my kebab now?”

“...You just ate pasta, Rokuko. You really want more?”

“He said he’s the best in Pavella, didn’t he? I’m interested.” I went back to the kebab stand, which had developed a sizable crowd from our exchange, and bought three kebabs. *Aaand this time he made me pay.*

“Hey, what’s that stand selling over there? It says fried octopus on the sign, but...” I glanced over and saw a fried food stand just like the kind you’d see at a school festival or something. They were definitely using the kind of iron plate with round cavities fit for making fried octopus.

“...Octopus? Those round balls are made of octopus?”

“Nope, I’m pretty sure the octopus is inside of them.”

“Pretty smart, bro. You’re totally an adventurer, right? Then you gotta try some of this! ’Cause I mean, fried octopus was invented by Ishidaka the Hero! They were such an amazing adventurer, you’ll definitely get some of their luck by eating this! Here, just gotta pay five golds!”

“Eeeh?! Th-That’s really expensive, but okay... give me a second.”

“Stop, Rokuko, the stand we just went to said the same thing. They mean five coppers. It’s a joke.” Imagine an ice cream parlor or something asking for a million dollars instead of a single dollar. Same thing.

“Sorry, she’s not so familiar with this kind of thing. What a cute airhead, am I right?”

“C-Cute? G-Geez, Keima.”

“Hahaha! I wouldn’t mind if you did pay in golds, man. Just don’t count on getting any change.”

“That’s no good. Here, five golds.” I handed over five coppers and got eight fried octopus balls. They already looked exactly like fried octopus balls from Japan, but the fact they actually included two seven-centimeter kebab sticks really took things to the next level.

“How do you eat these?”

“You stab them with the stick and eat them just like that. The trick is to use both at once to keep the ball steady.” I ate an octopus ball to show them how it was done. *Gah! Oh crap, so hot!* I hurriedly grabbed my water canteen and gulped some down.

“Ngh, gulp! Fwaah... Man, food that’s just been fried really is hot on the inside. B-Be careful, you two.”

“Uh huh, we will. Niku, let’s eat a lot slower.”

“...At least my sacrifice will have some meaning.” *You know, even the sauce tasted a lot like stuff I’ve eaten in Japan. Might be smart to add sauce to the list of treasure in our dungeon. I’ll experiment a little.*

“Soo hooot! Fwaah, aaah! Wateeeeer!” *Aaah... Yeah, yeah. I warned you.* I handed my canteen to Rokuko.

We weren’t planning on staying the night, so it was about time to leave. In the end, we only really did things related to food, but if we stayed any longer the sun would set on the way back. No point risking a bandit raid or anything like that.

I returned to the Guild with a red-faced Rokuko and got back in our carriage, now filled with stuff addressed to Golen Town. Niku was sitting in the driver’s seat for the way back too.

“Honestly, this was worth the trip. There’s a lot of places we didn’t go, so yeah, let’s take another trip here sometime soon.”

“Sounds good!” By the way, Rokuko (still red-faced) sat opposite to me on the way back, so I didn’t get to use her lap as a pillow again. I slept on the heavenly pillow in my {Storage} instead.

“Masteeer, how was that restaurant I recommended? Did you bring me anything baaaack?” Also, I smacked Ichika over the head as punishment for the urchin incident.

Afterword

Volume 4 came out! Hooray! It's thanks to all of you for buying the books! I would like to think that Volume 5 will definitely be coming out soon. But we've just about caught up to the webnovel, so if we keep publishing volumes after that, the publication rate will probably slow down. Any comments on that, Mr. Editor? I-san?

Personally, I would like to quit either the webnovel or the published versions to focus on just one. But stopping the webnovel right now wouldn't be so great. It's frustrating. I don't want to lose my position in either community, especially the one that got me started.

I finally received actual art for a male character other than Keima. But at the time of me writing this afterword, I'm not sure if that character will receive an illustration in this volume. One is probably being drawn right now. Maybe. Also, there have been male mob characters drawn before, but this is the first actual male character with a proper background and everything getting drawn. Thank you, Youta-san.

Speaking of which, the receptionist finally got illustrated this time. She's a mature beauty that really makes you want to scream "Woohoo! Please step on meee!" I mean, of course, I wouldn't scream that myself. I'm an adult that knows the right time and place for things, so I would hold the urge back.

...Cilia, the Adventurer's Guild receptionist, was introduced in Volume 1 and shows up so often she feels like a main character, even. Why hasn't she been illustrated up until now...? Honestly, we just needed to prioritize other characters first. There haven't been many full illustrations for new characters, so I believe they'll be making some simple body shots of them... Wait. If that's the case, what'll happen if the next volume doesn't come out? Any comments on that, Mr. Editor? (Again)

By the way, I really wanted art for Wataru the Hero of Debt, but he didn't show up much in volume 4, so I gave up on the idea. Sorry, Wataru. Your art will have to come later.

Okay. I’m about to start leaking some hot secrets about this volume, so here’s a spoiler warning for those reading the afterword first. Be sure to read the volume before the rest of this.

In this volume, the settlement in front of the [Cave of Greed] was recognized as a town and placed on official maps. Keima ended up as town chief without issue here, but the truth is, when writing the webnovel I planned on making someone else town chief. They would make all sorts of unreasonable demands and just be a problem in general. But would Keima just be silent as someone forces work on him and cuts into his sleeping time? Nope, and Keima would just ultimately steal the position of town chief, so I figured, eh, he might as well just start off as town chief.

Also, I... huh? I’m out of space already? Dang, I was planning on spilling more secrets, but I guess I can’t.

Oh, but before I go. There’s a short story bonus for completing an online survey about this volume.

Now then, everyone, may we meet again at the end of Volume 5.

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Lazy Dungeon Master: Volume 4

by Supana Onikage

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Lazy Dungeon Master